

University of Nevada, Reno

**“I Ain’t Tied to No Law:” 1.5-Generation Undocumented Immigrants and
Alternative Paths for Inclusion**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts in Anthropology

by

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

We recommend that the thesis prepared
under our supervision by

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Entitled

**“I Ain’t Tied to No Law:” 1.5-Generation Undocumented Immigrants and
Alternative Paths for Inclusion**

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for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

1.5-generation undocumented immigrants, those who were brought to the United States as minors, use a variety of methods to counter their exclusion from U.S. citizenship and membership. Through participant-observation in online communities of 1.5-generation immigrants and in a statewide coalition of immigration activists in Nevada, as well as semi-structured interviews with immigrants from around the country, I explore the varied uses of social media and activism in the United States in the years since 2010 when the DREAM Act failed to pass through Congress. Today, immigrants use social media and activism to advance community solidarity, to move away from the rhetoric associated with the DREAM Act, and to advocate for immigrant rights. Due to a growing understanding that immigration reform is unlikely in the near future, young undocumented immigrants seek alternative ways to live without legal citizenship. They have done this by creating strong communities that foster inclusion and to resist legal exclusion. Such communities provide networks of support for 1.5-generation immigrants. I argue that, by forming community, 1.5-generation immigrants create the inclusivity that a lack of access to citizenship denies them. Thus, community formation suggests an alternative path to inclusion: by directly and indirectly resisting immigration law, 1.5 generation immigrants emphasize the importance of cultural citizenship over legal citizenship.

Thank you to my collaborators in this project. It is their voices, their ideas, and their stories; I am merely putting it on paper. Their strength and their bravery in crafting inclusive communities, fighting for their friends and families, and working towards a better world for all of us is beyond commendable. As an ally, it is my sincerest hope that I represented them to the best of my ability, ensured that their voices were at the forefront, and that my work can provide some benefit to them and their community. I am in their debt.

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out,” of choosing to not be afraid or stigmatized due to one’s immigration status. Despite this essential aspect of their movements and identities, the individuals in my research allowed me to use pseudonyms for them, so as to remain in line with ethical research guidelines and UNR’s Internal Review Board. As such, I cannot fully thank those who made this research and thesis possible, but I hope they will know that they are truly special people. They make me proud to be a part of this country because it has given me the opportunity to share in their experiences, even if our country cannot find a way to fully accept them. They are the backbone of this country, and I have never met, and do not expect to ever meet, more exceptional people. I can only hope that my thesis reflects their beauty and that it provides meaningful resources to their community to help ensure that they are provided with the rights that they have so desperately fought for and have more than earned.

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You are ENOUGH
You have ENOUGH
You do ENOUGH
Relax!

It was exactly what I needed to hear, exactly when I needed to hear it.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AP – Advance Parole

CCC – Center for Community Change

DACA – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

DAPA – Deferred Action for Parents of American Citizens and Legal Permanent Residents

DHS – Department of Homeland Security

DREAM – Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors

EWI – Entry Without Inspection

ICE – Immigration and Customs Enforcement

LPR – Legal Permanent Resident

NILC – National Immigration Law Center

NO CIR – Nevada Organizational Coalition for Immigration Reform (Pseudonym)

TPS – Temporary Protected Status

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INTRODUCTION: Community as Resistance

“Oppression thrives off isolation. Connection is the only thing that can save you.”

- Yolo Akili (2013:47)

In late 2015, Undocumedia, an organization that creates and shares easy-to-read graphics

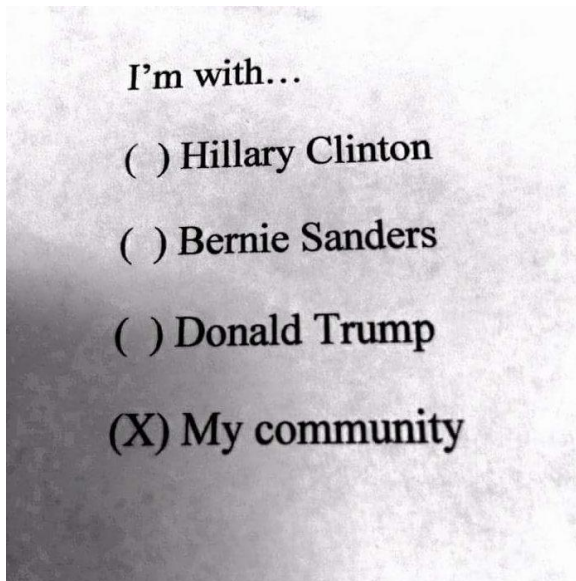


Figure 1.1 From Undocumedia

to provide detailed information about important immigration policies, shared an image that demonstrated their reactions to the 2016 presidential election (Figure 1.1). This picture clearly resonated with the organization as it remained pinned at the top of their Facebook page for several months. It shows a piece of paper with the words “I’m with...” and provides the options “Hillary Clinton,” “Bernie Sanders,” “Donald Trump,” and “My community” with the option “My community” selected.

This image demonstrates the ways that undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children are utilizing community formation in order to create their ideal vision of the world. While community formation has always been an essential aspect of this community’s activism and advocacy, it is only in recent years that it has taken a prominent position. By making community central to their work, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants seek to be more inclusive so as to counter exclusion and create lasting change among themselves rather than relying on the

government to craft this change. Community formation among 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants provides important insight into alternative paths of resistance and change.

1.5-generation undocumented immigrants, those who were brought to the United States as minors, use a variety of methods to counter their exclusion from U.S. citizenship and membership. Through participant-observation in online communities of 1.5-generation immigrants and in a statewide coalition of immigration activists in Nevada, as well as semi-structured interviews with immigrants from around the country, I explore the varied uses of social media and activism in the United States in the years since 2010 when the DREAM Act failed to pass through Congress. Today, immigrants use social media and activism to advance community solidarity, to move away from the rhetoric associated with the DREAM Act, and to advocate for immigrant rights. Due to a growing understanding that immigration reform is unlikely in the near term, young undocumented immigrants seek alternative ways to live without legal citizenship. They have done this by creating strong communities to foster inclusion and to resist legal exclusion. Such communities provide networks of support for 1.5-generation immigrants. I argue that, by forming community, 1.5-generation immigrants create the inclusivity that a lack of access to citizenship denies them. Thus, community formation suggests an alternative path to inclusion: by directly and indirectly resisting immigration law, 1.5 generation immigrants emphasize the importance of “cultural citizenship” (Rosaldo 1994) over legal citizenship.

For the purposes of this research, the term “1.5-generation undocumented immigrants” refers to individuals who entered the United States as minors and who do

not currently have legal status in the United States outside of limited executive actions. These individuals have in the past referred to themselves as DREAMers, dreamers, Dreamers, or some variation thereof in reference to the DREAM Act, and have more recently adopted the term “DACAmended,” in reference to the executive action, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Others have used the term “undocumented youth.” During the course of my many conversations with undocumented immigrants, I have heard all of these terms challenged, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3. I will utilize these and other terms throughout the thesis while understanding their limitations in describing individuals and communities. In addition, I will use “1.5-generation undocumented immigrants,” “undocumigrants,” (a term I have created to describe 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants) and “1.5-generation undocumigrants” interchangeably throughout the thesis. The descriptor “1.5-generation” indexes immigrants’ location as liminal and in-between first-generation immigrants, such as their parents who came to the United States as adults, and second-generation immigrants who were born in the United States to first-generation (or 1.5-generation) immigrant parents. The experiences of immigrants who came to the United States as youth are unique from the two generations that border them and so it is important to have a variety of terms and language that—even if problematic in certain ways—can nonetheless describe and distinguish this group of immigrants with shared experiences.

Community Through Cultural Citizenship

By crafting inclusive communities which seek to bring in parents and other immigrants who were excluded by the messaging employed in favor of the DREAM Act and other compromised immigration reform actions, undocumented immigrants seek to create inclusivity in direct resistance to the exclusion they face as a result of our broken immigration system. Additionally, such community building allows undocumented immigrants to create a network of resources, information, and care that allows them to live, and often thrive, outside of the legal immigration framework. This serves to take emphasis away from the idea that inclusion and liberation can come from immigration laws and instead establishes that belonging must come from community. While activism designed to make progress by changing laws, nationally and locally, has not ceased, 1.5-generation immigrants are creating a world in which their community, not the government, fosters inclusion and access to the basic rights that should be available to every human being, regardless of legal status.

In her essay *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (1984), Audre Lorde describes how working within a system can damage the efforts of marginalized groups, a lesson that resonates with 1.5-generation immigrants. Through community-formation and a movement away from government-centered solutions to their lack of legal status, 1.5-generation immigrants have sought to craft their own tools and even their own house outside of the master's house. However, in their pragmatism, they have not given up on attempting to renovate the master's house. They have instead chosen to pursue both paths. The creation of an inclusive, loving, pro-immigrant community is one way in which this "separate house" is being built. But undocumented immigrants

are also continuing to fight for immigration reform to ensure that the master's house does not tear down their own. These community-based solutions are the direct result of the unprecedented levels of obstructionism and inaction demonstrated by the U.S. government in their failure to reform an immigration system that has been called "broken" by individuals across the political spectrum. These solutions are also the result of a community that came to be precisely because of activism centered around the passage of the DREAM Act. The rhetoric and strategies employed by undocumented activists have evolved beyond these limited goals and the result is a strong community that gives us all hope for a better future.

I first observed the importance of community for undocumigrants during my time as an undergraduate at UCLA. Through my involvement in 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant organizations at UCLA, it became clear to me that the struggles of living as an undocumented individual were painful, exhausting, and frightening. This struggle had new dimensions for 1.5-generation immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, raised in the United States, and who considered themselves to be, first and foremost, members of the United States populace. Despite struggles, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants managed to achieve relative stability through the formation of exceptionally profound and strong communities. Undocumigrants at UCLA and beyond have worked to create a community that provides them with emotional, academic, mental, and financial support that has allowed them to craft lives full of hope and potential. This support system provided ready-made friends and colleagues upon entrance to UCLA, and in many ways, allowed them to live particularly full lives. Ultimately, the communities that undocumigrants formed allowed them to counter their exclusion from

membership in the United States in a variety of ways, and in many ways, provided them with support that is lacking in the lives of many U.S. citizens.

When I first began reading anthropological perspectives on immigration, Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life" (1997) emerged as a perspective through which to understand the lives of undocumented immigrants in the United States. As such, it seemed like an obvious choice to use as the theoretical framework for my research. Nicholas De Genova uses the concept "bare life" as that which "may be understood to be *what remains* when human existence, while yet alive, is nonetheless stripped of all the encumbrances of social location" (2010:37). Therefore, "bare life" is created for immigrants by removing their access to "social location" through the threat of deportation, the denial of access to social services, and through exclusion from membership. Still, "social location" is derived from more than the state alone. In fact, "social location" is most often derived from spheres completely outside of the state for immigrants who have been excluded from our legal system. Social location for these immigrants derives from their communities, their cultures, and their experiences. While this leaves them without many of the aspects of daily life that citizens so often take for granted, undocumented immigrants do not lack "social location." The state works to maintain social hierarchies and limit formal membership by attempting to withdraw access to stable work, social services, and the ability to live without fear of deportation, and yet, 1.5-generation immigrants are undeniably members of the nation.

As I continued to think about my past work with 1.5-generation immigrants, as well as the research questions I was developing, it became increasingly clear that while 1.5-generation immigrants unquestionably face real struggles due to their lack of legal

status which inhibit their lives in serious ways, they have managed to craft quite “full,” as opposed to “bare,” lives for themselves. I understand this to be a form of direct resistance against a government that seeks to maintain the importance of membership by ensuring that poverty, fear, and a lack of connection define the lives of those without formal membership. While 1.5-generation immigrants face fear of deportation, as well as exclusion from many aspects of daily life and society, they have built strong communities that provide them with many of the opportunities and support systems that they are denied due to their lack of legal status. While community building cannot fully replace access to citizenship or legal residency and the rights that are contained within them, it does provide immigrants with support systems that many with these privileges do not have. While undocumented migrants are not free from struggle or oppression, they are also full of love and hope and opportunity and community. We cannot understand immigrants as people without fully understanding both their struggles and their optimism. It is through community that they have managed to find hope even in the shadows.

A lack of progress on immigration reform since the 1990s, even when championed by a Republican president and despite widespread public belief that our immigration system is broken, has left many within the undocumented community frustrated. Due to the government’s inaction around immigration law, we more and more often see individual immigrants coming together to create the type of world that they want for themselves and for their children. Thus, while the power of national governments over the lives of immigrants cannot be understated, understanding the ways that groups of individuals create full lives for themselves through community

formation—even in the face of exclusion, struggle, and oppression (and perhaps even because of these challenges)—can provide a path to a better world for all.

In the case of 1.5-generation immigrants, struggles with stigmatization and fear (Abrego 2011), lack of access to education, work, and other taken-for-granted daily aspects of living in the United States with documentation (Abrego 2006; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Gonzales 2015), and poverty, racism, and other vectors of oppression (Gonzales et al. 2014) have been well documented. Similarly, resistance through direct means, such as organized social movements, has been well documented (Gonzales 2008; Nicholls 2013). What has been less often studied is resistance through the creation of inclusive communities. Inclusive communities create the kind of world in which undocumented migrants want to live, and community formation is a fundamental and integral aspect of the activism and advocacy of 1.5-generation immigrants.

Although I describe how 1.5-generation immigrants live full, happy, and hopeful lives with a sense of possibility by building community, I in no way want to diminish the oppressive and harmful effects that racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and lack of legal status have on their lives. Without question, 1.5-generation immigrants face real and profound struggles of a kind that those with birthright U.S. citizenship do not. Most of the people I interviewed expressed hope and excitement for the future while simultaneously expressing anger and frustration with a system that repeatedly excludes them. I interviewed individuals who received frequent racist and anti-immigrant threats and lived in constant fear, as well as those who said that they tried desperately to find hope and happiness in their lives, but most often felt defeated. Nonetheless, even these individuals

continued to fight for a life of inclusion and equality, and they credited their communities with the inclusion that made it possible to move forward.

Without diminishing the harmful aspects of oppression and anti-immigrant rhetoric, I hope to express that undocumented immigrants find ways to be enriched by their experiences. They are thoughtful, intelligent, kind people who find ways to live full lives and to help others live full lives despite constant struggles. This fact shows their strength. The world tries to beat them, to defeat them, to force them to self-deport, and to give up on their lives, but millions of immigrants refuse to do so. Through their communities, many are able to resist attempts to ensure their oppression by forming strong, inclusive communities that create the kind of world that they have been unable to realize through formal channels. Understanding this resistance through community formation is an important step towards understanding how we can create the kind of world that is inclusive, loving, and supportive, even in the face of continued inaction on immigration reform. The ability of immigrants to craft full lives in the face of laws that aim to exclude them is perhaps one of the most fundamental forms of resistance against an unjust immigration system.

The Creation of a Community

In his book, *The DREAMers*, Walter J. Nicholls (2013) lays out the ways that DREAMers fought to have a voice for themselves in the immigration movement. He discusses their history and their construction as a group by “national immigrant rights associations and their allies in Congress” who “believed that a niche opening existed for undocumented

youths, precipitating the creation of the ... DREAM campaign (2013:11).” Nicholls argues in his book that these organizations were largely controlled by citizen allies and older generations of immigrants and that DREAMers were given very little say into the direction and messaging of their movement. These organizations crafted “messages, talking points, and emotional stories“ that stressed “the most strategic qualities of the group, silencing those other aspects that may distort their central message” (2013:11) These talking points stressed that DREAMers were fully enculturated and assimilated into the United States, that they had high academic achievement and would contribute to the economy, and that they were innocent in having been *brought* to the United States rather than coming of their own volition.

Nicholls details the growth of the DREAMer movement from 2001 to 2010. During this time, 1.5-generation immigrant activists fought to have a seat at the table of these immigration associations and to be listened to by their allies. While fighting for this role, they often broke off from the messaging of larger organizations and eventually decided that they could only fight for themselves if they created their own organizations and worked independently. As Nicholls argues, this allowed 1.5-generation immigrants to begin to craft their own messaging, their own strategies, and their own organizations which would affect the trajectory of the entire immigrant community (Nicholls 2013). Nicholls ends his book with the statement that

These struggles for rights [by DREAMers] are therefore not a harbinger of postnational citizenship. They are constrained by rules of the game that continue to center on the nation-state ... the existing rules of the game continue to favor those discourses that resonate with national norms and values over these more radical alternatives ... The greatest challenge for rights activists in the coming years is to develop ways to push for maximum equality in national contexts that are necessarily exclusionary and unequal (2013:181).

The timing of Nicholls' research meant that he was unable to adequately acknowledge how 1.5-generation immigrants were grappling with these very questions. This research began in 2015, after the end of Nicholls' research period, and addresses the ways that undocumented migrants have addressed these very concerns.

This thesis focuses on developments since the 2010 failure of the DREAM Act to the present, which have included movement away from the rhetoric of DREAMers and a greater emphasis on community formation as a central form of resistance. These changes and developments have occurred largely at the intersection of several factors. First, the continued failure of the DREAM Act or any type of progressive immigration reform, comprehensive or otherwise, to come to fruition coupled with record numbers of deportations under the Obama administration has frustrated hopes for progress among many undocumented migrants. These governmental actions have left many 1.5-generation immigrants with the distinct impression that while rights and legal inclusion may come from the government, true liberation cannot come from government action alone. Second, the 1.5-generation immigrant community's establishment of themselves as a community capable of expressing their own messaging, running their own organizations, and developing their own strategies to achieve progress have allowed undocumented migrants to craft their own ideals beyond that of allies and older, more conservative immigrant groups.

The intersection of greater independence and community formation has helped to craft the direction of the 1.5-generation immigrant movement. While community formation has always been an important part of undocumented migrant activism, the expansion of these communities has become even more central to the movement in recent years.

Through a series of important moves, 1.5-generation immigrants have worked to be more inclusive of all, including those who would not or do not qualify for relief through the DREAM Act or DACA. Additionally, they are fighting for communities that do not attribute guilt to immigrants who entered the United States as adults, do not enforce narrow expectations for achievement, and do not romanticize assimilation as necessary for inclusion in a nation-state.

The Study of Community

This research was completed using participant observation within a coalition of activist and direct service organizations within Nevada dedicated to immigrant and immigration issues. For the purposes of maintaining confidentiality of research participants, this organization will be referred to as the Nevada Organizational Coalition for Immigration Reform (NOCIR). Unfortunately, in the course of my research, NOCIR was disbanded because the 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant, Nora, who scheduled meetings and largely maintained the organization, returned to her hometown in Southern California in order to be closer to family and to continue her schooling. The fact that this organization was disbanded demonstrates the lack of an organizing culture in Nevada, especially given that Nevada has the highest population of undocumented immigrants per capita, nearly eight percent of the population (Whitcomb 2014). Despite the disbanding of this organization, I maintained relationships with the organizations and individuals who were part of this coalition. In addition to participant observation, I utilized semi-structured interviews with many members of this organization both before and after it disbanded.

I also employed virtual methods, including participant-observation in online communities of 1.5-generation immigrants, particularly private Facebook groups that provide support, guidance, and community to 1.5-generation immigrants. The names of these Facebook groups have been changed to ensure confidentiality. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with community members and activists in the online communities. The online Facebook groups consisted of private groups that require approval from a moderator to gain access. While approval is usually given to anyone who requests it, there are rules that must be followed or members risk being banned from the groups. Overall, I was active in eight groups, each of which served a specific purpose, usually centered on a specific legal statute, such as DACA, Advance Parole, or obtaining licenses as undocumented immigrants. Despite providing separate groups for different aspects of undocumented experience, most often the discussions within the groups would cover a wide-ranges of experiences that crosscut the intended topics of each group. Occasionally, someone would refer a poster to another group that addressed their specific issues, but most often, questions were answered and stories were shared without regard for the specific nature of the group. While many people posted and remained active in more than one group, many others chose to concentrate their online activities to a single group.

To receive informed consent from the members of these groups, I first received approval from a moderator to do research in a specific online group. I then posted in the group with my intention to do research and explained that I would not use any quotes from anyone without explicit permission. When I found a post or a quote that I hoped to use during this research, I wrote to the participant asking for permission. If I did not

receive a response, I would then comment on their status that I had sent them a PM or “personal message,” as messages from individuals who are not Facebook friends get sent to a different mailbox, which often does not get checked. If I then failed to receive a response, I would not use the post or quote. If I did receive an affirmative response, then I would send them the appropriate IRB paperwork.

Through involvement with online and offline communities, I performed semi-structured or unstructured interviews with 11 research participants and extensively drew on quotes and posts from approximately dozen more. Additionally, while it is difficult to quantify, I read through and/or participated in thousands of posts and discussions with undocumented migrants and their allies that shaped the course of this research and the contents of this thesis. These research participants resided throughout the United States and all originated from Latin American countries. While it was originally my hope to better understand the ways that non-Latinxs are included in the communities of undocumented youth, I was unable to explore this question during this research due to a lack of non-Latinx research participants. This may have been due to their lack of involvement in the movement, my personal knowledge of Spanish, and/or other features that I am unable to comprehend or predict. It is a question worthy of future research.

Finally, I have worked to ensure that my research and this thesis are activist and collaborative in nature, placing the voices of my research participants at the forefront. It is also my aim that this research will help advance the goals of immigration reform and movement towards a world in which culturally constructed borders no longer divide us. I stood with activists in Nevada in their campaigns to stop deportations, to create a sanctuary church for immigrants facing deportation, and to call-out Nevada Attorney

General Adam Laxalt when he joined Nevada onto the lawsuit against DAPA and extended DACA, immigration actions which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. I was the webmaster and secretary for NOCIR while it was in existence, and I was an Immigration Rights Intern with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) during a portion of the research. I attempted to be an ally in whatever way possible, guided by the leadership of immigrants themselves.

Activism was an essential aspect of my research, both in my methodology and in the hopes that this research will provide a glimpse of the immigrant community, their struggle, and their humanity in a way that provides them a path forward in the country for which I am privileged enough to be a citizen. I largely based this activist and applied research on the methodologies and discussions contained within Charles Hales' book *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (2008). Additionally, Paul Farmer argues that erasure of suffering through research that claims to be "neutral," rather than activist in nature,

has a far more pernicious origin: hiding this suffering, or denying it's real origins, serves the interest of the powerful. The degree to which literate experts, from anthropologists to international health experts, choose to collude with such chicanery should be the focus of brisk and public debate (2003:17).

I, too, recognize the impossibility of neutrality. The immigration system is not neutral and to pretend as if its effects are would be a disservice to the very communities that I aim to understand.

I collaborated with my research participants, especially through their input into my research design and questions. Once my research and the first draft of this thesis were completed, I sent this thesis to research participants and requested feedback. I also re-

interviewed research participants to gain insight into parts of my thesis to be more fully developed and to get feedback about the accuracy and appropriateness of the thesis.

While I wrote the thesis, my research participants and collaborators gave me their words, their stories, their time, their activism, and their help in tracking down interviewees and research locations. They are the ones who have made this project possible. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for their help both in my project and in creating a better world for all of us.

Utilizing these varied methods, I have studied the ways that 1.5-generation undocumigrants employ community formation to create inclusive locations for themselves and other undocumented immigrants. By drawing on and interacting with both online and offline communities, 1.5-generation undocumigrants can reach more undocumented immigrants and create more inclusive communities. My initial research questions asked how these communities form online and in-person, and how such communities work together and individually. Another line of inquiry focused on how identities and political priorities are shifting within the movement since the 2010 failure of the DREAM Act and the 2012 introduction of DACA. I sought to better understand how changes within the community since 2010 serve to challenge exclusionary immigration laws and policies.

To further emphasize the voices of my research participants and to better understand these questions, I have chosen to maintain the language that they originally used when posting in the Facebook groups. For this community, Spanish was widely used to communicate within the groups. Thus, all quotes are presented in their original language with my own translation into English followed in brackets. This is to preserve

the words of the person quoted and to combat some of the challenges of translation. Additionally, there is an effort by many within the movement, as will be discussed in more detail, to counteract ideas that 1.5-generation undocumigrants are more “assimilated” and therefore, more deserving of legal status. One way in which they attempt to counteract the racist and xenophobic nature of assimilation narratives is by embracing their location within multiple cultures, which includes their ability to speak multiple languages. By quoting in the language(s) used by research participants, cultural aspects of the words are more appropriately conveyed.

This research was conducted over the course of eight months, beginning in July 2015 and continuing through February 2016. Additionally, my involvement with immigration activist movements beginning in 2008 have informed the questions that I asked, my research methods, and my understanding of the research that I undertook. In addition to my primary research period, I re-interviewed research participants during June of 2016 to get their input on the second draft of the thesis. Finally, my involvement with these groups and organizations has not ceased since the end of my fieldwork. I continue to be an ally in whatever way immigrants within the movement feel that I can best serve.

Overview of Chapters

The progress that 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants have made in the years since the 2010 failure of the DREAM Act has taken a variety of forms. These efforts have focused on bringing parents out of the shadows to be active members of the movement and including undocumented immigrants who would not have received relief under the

DREAM Act. These changes have largely been fostered through the creation of strong communities that build inclusivity and emphasize cultural citizenship over legal citizenship. This thesis will explore these shifts in the following chapters.

Chapter 2, “Undocumented-Led Wins and Moving Forward,” addresses the history of the 1.5-generation undocumented movement and the theoretical frameworks I have used to better understand immigrants’ experiences, including “il/legality,” “liminal legality,” and cultural citizenship. I maintain that only through a thorough understanding of this history can we better understand the goals and methods of today’s 1.5-generation immigrant community. Specifically, I argue that undocumigrants are seeking to move beyond the limited and compromised goals of the DREAM Act, which defined their community from 2001 through 2010, by embracing cultural citizenship rather than waiting for the unlikely possibility of legal citizenship.

In Chapter 3, “Post-DREAM Activism,” I explore the variety of ways that 1.5-generation immigrants, since the 2010 defeat of the DREAM Act, are pushing their activism in a different, and more inclusive, direction. By embracing liminality as a strength, rejecting “assimilation,” embracing cultural heritage, understanding the structural roadblocks that many undocumented immigrants face, and denouncing “illegality” itself, undocumigrants seek to reject the prior narratives of their movement in a bid for greater inclusivity. Furthermore, immigrants speak of idealism in their communities, moving from the pragmatism that is often associated with the DREAM Act. The chapter considers how undocumigrants form diverse and supportive communities that include all immigrants and that challenge the narratives of earlier activism.

Chapter 4, “Alternative Paths,” outlines how 1.5-generation immigrants are drawing on their immigrant identities and their cultural capital in the United States to fight for a world free of xenophobia and exclusionary immigration laws. I also focus on the ways that 1.5-generation undocumigrants are utilizing community to craft full lives outside of the law. Immigrants emphasize cultural citizenship over legal citizenship, while simultaneously declaring the immorality, and therefore illegitimacy, of immigration law. In particular, I consider the role of online communities in shaping these alternative paths. I argue that online groups serve as a place for the community to express disagreements, challenge norms within the community, and to collectively define themselves as a community that—although incredibly heterogeneous in nature—shares a common goal of providing inclusion within a country that has sought to exclude them. The online groups serve as a place where people who previously felt marginalized by the movement can become active participants in the development of the goals of future action.

Finally, the concluding chapter, “Cultural Citizenship as Resistance,” brings my analysis together to understand the importance of community as a form of resistance to oppression and as an important “counterpublic” (Asen 2000). Counterpublics explicitly challenge widely accepted norms among the public to create alternative paths for existence. For undocumigrants, their creation of a “counterpublic” challenges the idea that the government and formal structural systems can determine one’s right to inclusion. Additionally, undocumigrants directly resist domination through inclusive and idealist community building. These narratives and actions serve to create an alternative to larger cultural norms and therefore serve as a “counterpublic.” Ultimately, I argue that

undocumigrants resist the U.S. government's attempts to define them as non-citizens with no claim to national membership; instead, 1.5 undocumented immigrants recognize "cultural citizenship" as a legitimate form of belonging, and cast the nation as home to all, regardless of access to legal citizenship

CHAPTER 2: “Undocumented-Led Wins” and Moving Forward

On the night of November 20, 2014, I attended a watch party in Reno where President Obama was scheduled to make an immigration announcement related to his previously implemented administrative relief for immigrants brought to the United States as children. There was even more excitement than usual due to the presence of a prominent Nevada immigration activist who would be helping to present the announcement. It was an exciting night. Many believed that the legal inclusion they had been searching for might finally come to fruition. While everyone knew that some sort of immigration relief would be announced, questions remained about who would be excluded, and we all left the watch party more confused than when we first came. After the announcement that Obama would be implementing a program that would temporarily halt deportations for undocumented immigrants with U.S. citizen and Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) children, he also made it clear that “criminals” would not be eligible for the program. This word left many around the room murmuring to each other, and a woman sitting near me turned to me and asked, “Does my entry across the border make me a ‘criminal’?”

While everyone in the room was excited about the potential of expanded administrative relief after decades of stagnation on immigration reform, there was also a palpable sense that this would leave most people “in limbo,” (Gonzales 2015) that it did not provide the inclusion desired, and that many of their friends and family members would remain in the shadows. Reflecting this sense of frustration, a friend of mine, and an undocumented migrant who attended UCLA with me, Sofia, posted the following status on her Facebook later that night:

Tonight was a huge victory. It's an undocumented led win--almost 5 million people don't need to live with fear of deportation on a daily basis because of us. The civil disobedience, stopping ICE busses, shutting down detention centers, the hunger strikes, the organizing, strategizing, arts, and so much more.our undocumented community--youth, day laborers, mothers, families-- put in work and we earned this relief for our communities.

Also, many including my parents/family were left out. *And it further reveals the development of a caste system already in place. Now we have documented-DACAmented-parents of citizen children-undocumented* [emphasis added]. The most clear example of how arbitrarily unjust this system is: if a pregnant undocumented womyn has a baby today or tomorrow may determine whether their family stays together or is torn apart.

I'm fired up and ready to keep building, ready to get to the root causes of this injustice, which go beyond citizenship. Legal status does not and should not define our humanity. We need your help spreading the word about what this executive action is and is not (it is temporary work permits and safety from deportation, NOT any form of legal status, period). We gotta tell this story for ourselves bc the media is corporate owned and has been letting people tell lies for too long. And we need your help breaking down the borders in people's minds and hearts.

Blessed to be in this growing movement with you all, *la lucha sigue* [the fight continues]. Peace.

Sofia's Facebook status encapsulates the changes that have occurred in the mindsets of many 1.5-generation undocumigrants, as well as the struggle between the importance of negotiated and compromised progress and hopes for true liberations for all undocumented immigrants. Sofia identifies a "caste system" as a serious concern within the undocumented community. This caste system has become increasingly clear as a result of limited administrative relief programs and previous activism in support of the DREAM Act.

To fully appreciate Sofia's equal excitement and frustration in regards to President Obama's administrative relief programs, it is necessary to understand the history of activism among undocumigrants, the frustrations and lack of progress despite

frequent compromises, and the position of young undocumented immigrants as challengers to the status quo. This history began when 1.5-generation immigrants became established as a distinct political group, originally known as “DREAMers.” “DREAMers” were first identified as a group separate from the general undocumented immigrant community about fifteen years ago, but in that relatively short time, undocumigrants have changed in response to a shifting political climate, a better understanding of the nature of immigration laws in the United States, greater control over their own narratives, and a continued dedication to the creation of a more just, loving, and inclusive world. This history has shaped them and their ideologies and as such, is essential to understand if we are to fully comprehend the lives of 1.5-generation undocumigrants.

In this chapter, I discuss how the complex history of 1.5-generation immigrants continues to shape the ideologies of undocumigrants, their methods of community-creation, and their dedication to a world where all people have access to the rights that make us human. This history takes us from the introduction of the proto-DREAM Act in 2001—which marked the beginning of the construction of undocumigrants as a group with life paths and stories that are unique from both first- and second-generation immigrants—through 2016. As I describe, events in the past set the stage for the current emphasis on community formation and cultural citizenship.

The Cultivation of the “Model Immigrant” Argument

Undocumented immigrants who migrated as children first delineated themselves as a category separate from the general undocumented immigrant community in the early 2000s. This category was not created by young undocumented immigrants themselves, but rather by activist organizations, such as the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) and the Center for Community Change (CCC), who saw an opening for immigration reform that provided a path to citizenship for immigrants brought to the United States as children and who fit into culturally constructed norms of high achievement and representation of the “American Dream” (Nicholls 2013:13). It was assumed by these immigration groups that there would be widespread public support for a reform bill that provided a path to citizenship for immigrants who had entered the United States as children and were highly aligned with U.S. cultural expectations.

In response to this perceived opening, on April 25, 2001, United States Representative Luis Gutierrez introduced into Congress the Immigrant Children's Educational Advancement and Dropout Prevention Act of 2001. This was the first bill that directly sought to address the issue of immigrants brought to the country without legal documentation as children. This version of the bill would have provided students who (1) were brought to the United States prior to the age of 16 and were no older than 25, (2) graduated from an American high school, (3) had resided in the United States for five continuous years, (4) were enrolled in a higher education program, and (5) had “good moral character,” meaning that they lacked a criminal record, with a conditional residency. During this period of conditional residency, undocumigrants would be protected from deportation, would be eligible to work, and could apply for loans and

scholarships to cover the costs of their tuition. At the end of this period of conditional residency, they would be given the opportunity to apply for legal permanent residence if they graduated from a community college or four-year university (H.R. 1582 (107th) 2013).

Shortly after the introduction of Congressperson Gutierrez's bill, Dick Durbin, a Democratic Senator from Illinois, and Orrin Hatch, a Republican Senator from Utah, introduced the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act into Congress as a bipartisan immigration reform act with largely the same language as Representative Gutierrez's bill (Ruge and Iza 2005:272). Since 2001, the bill has changed slightly in later incarnations (age requirements shifted, military and community service were added as alternatives to higher education, etc.), but each time the proposed legislation failed to garner the necessary votes to pass. In the most recent attempt, in December of 2010, the bill was a legislative priority for President Obama and the Democratic Party and had a large presence in the mainstream, national media for the first time. Unfortunately, while the bill passed through the House easily and procured a majority of the votes in the Senate, it did not reach cloture, meaning that it didn't have the 60 votes necessary to overcome a filibuster, and it was defeated ("A Comparison of the DREAM Act..." 2012).

Although activism for and by 1.5-generation undocumigrants had existed prior to the introduction of the DREAM Act, the Act provided a tangible goal for undocumigrant activists to fight for. Therefore, it represented the concrete beginnings of a distinct and organized social movement and community. Additionally, while DREAMers themselves did not seek to separate themselves from other immigration activist movements, they

quickly reified and maintained this delineation both out of necessity and out of desire for shared experience. This occurred largely because activism is frequently fomented on college campuses where high achieving undocumented immigrants of similar ages are able to interact and collaborate together with relative ease. In an interview, Mecir, the president of the undocumented student organization at his California four-year public university, discussed how the growth of a 1.5-generation movement and community on his campus allowed him to develop both as an individual and as an undocumented immigrant:

Since I was in [the undocumented student organization at my campus], I'm more open. It was the first time I said that I am undocumented and I am proud of it. I think it's the biggest step I've taken because I'm proud of being undocumented. They have helped me.

The introduction of the DREAM Act and similar legislation provided a central axis around which to center advocacy and activism and allowed for the crystallization of community formation. Once this axis was created, it did not take long for immigrant youth to become one of the most vocal, organized, and effective branches of immigration activism in the United States. Within a decade, the existence and strength of DREAMer communities was clearly visible on college and high school campuses, in the mainstream media, and most importantly, in the lives of immigrants themselves. It was in this period of DREAM Activism that I personally first became involved in the movement as an ally and activist in 2008.

With the identification with the DREAM Act as the central axis of their communities, 1.5-generation immigrants began to refer to themselves as "DREAMers." In addition to merely identifying their communities with this nomenclature, the very idea

of hopeful “dreaming” became a major aspect of their individual and group identities. When asked about themselves, individuals within the movement would often talk about how they were “dreamers” who imagined a better future both for themselves and for the world. The line from John Lennon’s song *Imagine*, “You may call me a DREAMer, but I’m not the only one” appeared frequently in conversation and in protests. The idea of being hopeful for the future became an established part of their identity, and this hopefulness was spearheaded by a strong belief that the eventual passage of the DREAM Act would provide undocumented immigrants with formal inclusion into the country that they considered their home.

Even as numerous votes of the DREAM Act failed to bring the bill to fruition, this hope continued with the belief that the election of a Democratic president would ensure its eventual passage. When Barack Obama was elected President, bringing with him a Democratic majority in both the Senate and the House, activists began to believe that the time for the DREAM Act had finally come. In December of 2010, the DREAM Act received a majority vote in both the House and the Senate, but nonetheless failed to pass (“A Comparison of the DREAM Act...” 2012). It began to seem to many 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants that if a bill such as the DREAM Act could not pass in even the most favorable of circumstances, hopes for achieving legal status through the DREAM Act, as well as accomplishing comprehensive immigration reform for their families, was unlikely to happen soon.

DREAM Act Rhetoric

While DREAM Activism allowed for the creation and growth of 1.5-generation immigrant communities as a strong and effective branch of immigration activism in the United States, many within the movement began to see the limitations of centering their communities and goals around the DREAM Act. During this period of DREAM Activism, the movement emphasized their status as “model immigrants” who had earned the right to legal inclusion and ultimately citizenship due to their “assimilation” to U.S. culture, high academic achievement or the patriotism demonstrated by their military service, and their innocence in having not made the decision to come to the United States themselves. Most 1.5-generation immigrants did not truly believe the messaging that they were “model immigrants” more deserving of legal status, but they reinforced it with the hope that the passage of the DREAM Act would provide them with the inclusion necessary in order to fight for more comprehensive immigration reform that would include their parents and those who did not fit into the narrow expectations of the DREAM Act. Additionally, the messaging and strategies of their campaigns were still largely being controlled and maintained by national immigration organizations with little input from DREAMers themselves (Nicholls 2013:13).

The DREAM Act and the 1.5-generation immigrant movement was largely created by larger immigration activist movements who were most often comprised of citizen activists who could legally be hired to work within these organizations (Nicholls 2013:41). The members and leaders of the organizations who were formerly or currently undocumented often consisted of older first-generation immigrants who expressed profound fear of deportation and retaliation from immigration authorities; whereas, 1.5-

generation immigrants faced stigma for their undocumented status, rather than direct fear of deportation (Abrego 2011). According to Abrego (2011:344), 1.5-generation undocumigrants are less fearful of deportation because they “are not easy to discern from their documented peers,” which makes them less of a target for racial profiling from immigration authorities.

Nora, an undocumented immigrant who was a founding leader of the undocumented student group at her California public university expressed the ways that this control by older generations and citizens affected her ability to establish herself within the community:

There was still that stigma even while we were forming that undocumented student group. Cause, again, like I said we still had to be very cautious. And even our adviser, she probably did a lot of fear-mongering I would probably say and I don't know where it came from. Probably from this motherly instinct. I don't know. Where she kept saying 'No, No, No. Don't let anybody else know that this org exists. Keep it under wraps.' You know. And I think she kind of instilled a lot of that fear in us too which we eventually had to break away from.

The control that this older citizen activist ally maintained over the organization that Nora was involved with shows how little say 1.5-generation undocumigrant community had over political efforts on their behalf. Nonetheless, Nora also points to the fact that individuals such as her advisor, and the DREAM Act which allowed the issue of undocumented students to come to the forefront for campus administrators, allowed her community to form in the first place.

Eventually, through the organization that was created by the leadership of this advisor, Nora and her community members were able to “break away from” this fear that was instilled in them. Furthermore, in a way that mirrors Mecir's experience, Nora also

expresses the positive effects that this organization had on her life in allowing her to have a place where she could be honest about who she was and where she fit in:

But, it did change in that I definitely had a space to belong to. A lot of them were in the Liberal Arts College, and I was in the College of the Business and I didn't know any undocumented people in the College of Business. In fact, I was one of the very few people of color in the College of Business. I mean aside from a lot of whites and Asians. I never felt like I was a part of the College of Business. I forced myself to become part of their Accounting Society or whatever other business orgs, so I could network with people, but I never felt a part of that whole crowd. I wouldn't hang out with them or go to the bars with them. Cause that would present another issue of me not having an ID, so it was kind of like I was just there, but not really a part of it, which was a huge difference between them and the undocumented student group.

Despite expectations that she continue to hide her identity from the world, the undocumented student community that she joined provided her with a sense of belonging and a life direction, which would ultimately determine her future. Rather than entering a business or accounting field, as she intended with her degree, Nora entered activism first, working as an Outreach Director for the ACLU and serving as the Chair of the Nevada Organizational Coalition for Immigration Reform when I met her. Today, she is seeking a graduate degree in Higher Education Administration, hoping to provide the direction and belonging that she achieved to a new generation of college students.

For many years, activist organizations and general immigrant rights groups maintained control of activism around the DREAM Act, while 1.5-generation immigrants fought for control over the movement for themselves (Nicholls 2013:41-46). In many ways, it was this control exerted by larger immigrant movements over the activism of undocumented youth that created the rhetoric and messaging that was used. Despite this

control over the movement, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants worked towards creating communities and organizations for themselves, which allowed them to develop strong communities and served to reinforce the importance of this community formation for future generations of activists. For example, it was 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants who introduced the idea of “coming out” and of being “Undocumented and Unafraid” despite pressure from older generations like that which Nora faced. Nora also discussed the connection that the groups started by older ally activists allowed, despite the pressure from their advisor to remain in the shadows. This community formation spurred by older immigrants, activist organizations, and allies provided community and connection that she was unable to find elsewhere, despite the negative effects that they would have on their ability to present themselves to the world without fear.

During these early years of the 1.5-generation undocumigrant social justice movement, the immigration organizations who worked with undocumented student activists disseminated materials, messaging, and language ideologies to activists and other 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants. In *The DREAMers*, Nicholls discusses the tight control that these organizations maintained over the messaging of their organizations and 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants nationwide:

Professional communication experts working for national associations helped create compelling frames and stories that resonated with politicians, the public, and the media ... These communication experts possessed a unique set of resources that allowed them to exert a degree of control in shaping the message and representations of the DREAM campaign (2013:60).

After being trained by these professional communication experts, “Well-trained activists within the network visited localized campus groups and trained new recruits to employ

the generic discourse of the DREAM campaign in compelling ways” (Nicholls 2013:64). The frames, stories, and language choices fostered through this top-down messaging strategy consisted of three main arguments that immigration activists believed would resonate “well with the moral and humanitarian sentiments of the media, politicians, and the general public. They were, in this context, held up as the ‘poster children’ of the general immigrant rights movement” (Nicholls 2013:43).

First, arguments for the DREAM Act relied on rhetoric which argued that 1.5-generation immigrants were more deserving of a path to citizenship because they had been raised in the United States, and thus had “assimilated” in a way that is impossible for immigrants who had come to the United States as adults. While this was employed as a powerful argument in favor of the DREAM Act, and convinced many voters that the DREAM Act and DACA were and are worthwhile programs, the very idea of “assimilation” rests on racist and xenophobic ideologies which position U.S. culture as superior and implies that cultural homogeneity is necessary for the creation of a successful society. Additionally, discourse about “assimilation” depends on the assumption that cultures are bounded and distinct, an untenable argument when considering culture through an anthropological lens. Furthermore, the “assumption that assimilation is a one-way street is highly problematic and harmful to immigrant communities; it often strips them of their roots, while denying them full acceptance and inclusion in mainstream society” (Chávez et al. 2015:15). This denial of belonging through assumptions about assimilation became increasingly clear to undocumented immigrants as their communities developed.

Second, arguments for the DREAM Act sought to position those who are academically high achieving or who demonstrated “appropriate” levels of patriotism due to their military service as immigrants who had earned the right to legal status. Arguments for the legislation cast educated young people and those who served in the military as more likely to contribute to the nation, and thus more “deserving” of the opportunity to gain membership through legal means. While this argument sought to promote the DREAM Act, it also had the unfortunate effect of creating a division between those perceived as “deserving” and “undeserving” of legalization. It ignored the structural roadblocks and structural violence that undocumented immigrants face due to their lack of status, it positioned academic achievement as the only important form of achievement, and it privileged military power, a sentiment that many in the movement opposed.

Finally, in the period of DREAM Activism, undocumigrants and their allies emphasized that 1.5-generation undocumigrants had been *brought* to this country, rather than making the decision to come of their own volition. The argument rested on the idea that they could not have committed a crime if they were not aware of their actions, and they should not be punished for the crimes of their parents. Nicholls states that the

traditional messaging strategy ... aimed to cleanse 1.5-generation immigrants of the stigma of ‘illegality.’ The talking point ‘no fault of their own’ was used to stress the innocence of the undocumented, but it did so by attributing guilt to parents and others in the community (2013:127).

While this rhetoric asserted that undocumigrants had broken no laws, it reinforced the larger cultural narrative that undocumented parents of DREAMers were “criminals” who had knowingly, maliciously, and willfully broken the law. These arguments stood in

direct contrast to other arguments made by immigration activists that migration is not a choice, but rather caused by structural factors such as poverty, U.S. and Western imperialism and colonialism, war, crime, and environmental degradation.

Thus, the rhetoric of assimilation, high academic achievement, and innocence was frequently used to argue for the passage of the DREAM Act and successfully worked to convey the idea that 1.5-generation immigrants were more deserving of legal status and citizenship than other immigrants who did not fulfill these standards. Nonetheless, most 1.5-generation immigrants did not choose to use such language lightly. From my work with immigration activists during this time and my personal utilization of these arguments, most did not truly believe that they were more deserving of legal status and merely employed the rhetoric as a political tool, hoping that the passage of the DREAM Act would give them a greater ability to fight for inclusion for their undocumented family and friends.

Unfortunately, by situating their arguments within the arguments of their opponents, rather than challenging these xenophobic narratives, they unintentionally reinforced the very arguments that they sought to move past through the passage of the DREAM Act and other immigration reforms. Linguist George Lakoff argues in *Don't Think of an Elephant* that the mere process of repeating your opponent's argument, even if to rebut it, reinforces the original argument and gives it more legitimacy in the minds of those to whom you are addressing (2004). While 1.5-generation immigrants sought to rebut assimilation, culturally-constructed ideologies of high-achievement and patriotism, and the act of migrating without documentation as an "illegal" choice, even ceding these arguments for the purpose of declaring their deservedness of a path to citizenship

reinforced these very expectations of immigrants, positioning DREAMers as “model immigrants.”

Deferred Actions, Legal Liminality, and Caste Systems

With the continued failure of the DREAM Act, it became increasingly clear that this messaging was not working to achieve their political goals and was likely hurting inclusivity within the movement by reinforcing anti-immigrant rhetoric against those who did not fit into the culturally constructed expectations of the DREAM Act. Additionally, it seemed to be crafting a caste system in which undocumented immigrants with varying levels of claim to cultural citizenship and cultural capital were further delineated into separate groups with varying access to the rights and privileges of membership. As 1.5-generation undocumigrants began to establish their independence from larger immigration organizations, they were in a better position to challenge these arguments.

Despite the failure of the national DREAM Act to materialize, many local and state governments made efforts, successful in many areas and unsuccessful in others, to provide some basic rights to 1.5-generation immigrants. State DREAM Acts, which sought to provide a number of legal protections in states throughout the country, began to pass in the years since 2000. These bills allowed 1.5-generation immigrants to receive in-state tuition, take out public state-wide loans, and apply for state-sponsored scholarships and grants. Additionally, these bills often conveyed other rights, such as the ability to obtain a driver’s license and to receive certain forms of public assistance. To date, twelve states, including many with high numbers of undocumented immigrants, such as

California, New York, Texas, and New Mexico have passed their own versions of the DREAM Act (McHugh 2015).

In 2012, largely in response to the defeat of the 2010 DREAM Act, as well as continued obstruction from the legislative branch in passing any form of immigration reform or relief, President Obama introduced a program through an executive action that would not require the approval of Congress: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). While DACA does not grant any legal status to those eligible, it does temporarily protect 1.5-generation immigrants from deportation and provides them with permission to legally work in the United States. As long as the executive action remains in place, it can be renewed by recipients for two years at a time. Ultimately, DACA is a temporary measure that can be revoked at any time, but it does provide undocumented immigrants with important protections that allow them to live in the United States with far less fear and with relatively normal daily lives (“Considerations of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ...” 2016).

For example, Araceli discussed the major difference that the social security number she received from DACA made in her life. Prior to receiving DACA, Araceli states that:

When I was looking for jobs and when I wanted to go to college cause I always knew I wanted to go to college, but then I feel like that dream was immediately trumped because like I don't have a social security. I didn't even attach it to like a document itself. It was more I don't have a social security. That was the one thing; I don't have nine digits attached to my name. It wasn't necessarily that, the document or status, but not having a social security.

Since receiving her social security number through DACA (which provides her with a work permit), Araceli was able to move out of her fast food job to work for a public

relations firm doing work that is close to her heart: promoting the Affordable Care Act by providing information about how to sign-up to low-income and Latinx communities in Northern Nevada, and promoting a Zero Fatalities campaign which fights for road safety in Nevada. She will also be finishing her bachelor's degree and her honor's thesis looking at womxn in immigration detention centers in Fall of 2016.

On the other hand, Vanessa was unable to receive DACA because she left the country after finishing her bachelor's degree to study abroad and visit her home country in Mexico, thus violating DACA's requirement of continuous residency in the United States for five years. Despite having a bachelor's degree and training in coding, the career which she hopes to enter, Vanessa has been forced to work as dog walker to ensure her survival. In our interview, Vanessa expressed her need to fend for herself without access to DACA or other forms of relief from her undocumented status:

It was a while back. I would say, during my undergrad days, [the community] did help. After I graduated, everyone had to find a way, you could say, not necessarily to survive, but to find a way within the current system to be able to help themselves. For example, my friend who understands my situation because she is also out of status, undocumented. She lives in Houston and she ended up cleaning houses for a good number of years in order to help her family. In my situation, I ended up leaving the country because I thought it would be best for me and I didn't know when, or if, the DREAM Act would ever get passed. I lost months untouched with the student movement, but I had to fend for myself, so that took priority.

Therefore, the rights and protections provided by state Dream Acts and DACA were major accomplishments and fundamentally important gains for the 1.5-generation immigrant community and provided important benefits to many young immigrants, such as Araceli, and it created a deep sense of loss for those who were unable to benefit from it, as Vanessa experienced.

Still, even for those who had the privilege of receiving DACA, there was a lot of speculation and shared fears about their future with DACA. In a Facebook page dedicated to questions about DACA, Angelina expressed her fear that she would lose DACA, and with it her teaching job, if a Republican were to be elected president in November 2016:

Can I just say one thing...I am due to send my things in November to be renewed and by the time the new president gets sworn in, on January 20th my things won't be ready. I am just like...jumping out of my skin because if they are Republican I probably won't even see my paperwork come back to me by March. This sucks! I am a teacher, I have been a teacher for over 2 years and this is not fair. I work hard, I teach children to read, write, socialize with each other, and be good people. Now along comes these Republican morons who are about to destroy everything American is supposed to stand for, and everything I teach my kids every day: To be kind, good, and honest.

In response, Dulce expressed a similar sentiment, saying, “Oh, we will fight! There is power in numbers. I might not vote but I try to influence anybody that I know who is a citizen. If they take away DACA it will be bad.” There is a lot of fear among immigrants that DACA, and the lives that they have crafted through DACA, will be taken away from them if a Republican is elected president. This fear is especially prescient since Donald Trump, whose campaign has been built on promises of mass deportations, became the nominee for the Republican party.

Despite this fear, when Araceli was asked in an interview if she has thought about what she would do if DACA was overturned by a new president, she stated that:

It's funny because I was thinking about that today when the results came out for the caucus in Iowa [where Trump won the Republic caucus]. I was thinking about it today. Man, what were to happen? I honestly don't know. Maybe that's what happened with a lot of us, that like we wing it. *Even before the relief came like we all kinda made it work. So, it doesn't scare me because it wouldn't be anything I haven't dealt with before* [emphasis added]. I think its going to suck because it's going to hurt the community as a whole, not necessarily just me but just the community as a whole.

While she expresses a fear that the entire immigrant community will face negative consequences were DACA to be revoked, she also states that their community worked together to create lives for themselves before DACA, and their community has only grown stronger, so they would be able to “make it work.” This demonstrates the importance of community in establishing alternative paths to inclusion outside of legal status.

Despite the clear benefits to those eligible, DACA and other executive actions also reinforced the fears that the community was already having about the unintended consequences of their previous rhetoric in favor of the DREAM Act, consequences that resulted in their separation from the larger undocumented community and the reinforcement of xenophobic and anti-immigrant narratives. The delineation and separation between groups of immigrants became even more evident to 1.5-generation immigrants in November of 2014, a few months before the start of my fieldwork, when Deferred Action for Parents of American Citizens and Legal Permanent Residents (DAPA) and extended-DACA were announced by President Obama, as I detailed in the opening vignette to this chapter. DAPA provided similar protections as DACA (i.e. temporary work permits and protection from deportation) to parents of U.S. citizens and Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs). It is estimated that DAPA would reach four million undocumented immigrants in addition to the up to one million who are estimated to be eligible for DACA. Extended DACA removed the age cap so that individuals born prior to 1981 could apply and changed the date of entry required for 1.5-generation immigrants, so that individuals who arrived prior to 2010, rather than the previous date of

2007, were eligible to apply. These changes would have resulted in an estimated 300,000 more 1.5-generation immigrants becoming eligible for this relief. Additionally, extended-DACA expanded the renewal time from two-years to three-years, giving 1.5-generation immigrants more time in-between renewing their DACA application.

In June 2016, a tie in the Supreme Court ensured that a lower court decision determining that the programs represented a case of executive overreach would be upheld. Therefore, DAPA and extended-DACA will not go into effect (Liptak and Shears 2016). Despite never being implemented, DAPA and extended-DACA nonetheless revealed the development and further delineation of an immigration caste system with varying access to the rights and privileges of membership for those on separate rungs of caste system. Individuals were placed in different categories depending on how well they conformed to assimilationist ideologies or different immigration categories, as Sofia argued in her Facebook post presented at the beginning of this chapter.

Theoretical Frameworks

The history of activism among 1.5-generation undocumigrants brought their lives and activism to a place where they could reject the importance of legal citizenship, instead choosing to directly seek the inclusion that had always been the ultimate goal of their activism. While this history and its consequences are important to understanding the current trajectory of activism and community formation for young undocumented immigrants, their positions within the United States have also fundamentally crafted their lived experiences. Throughout the thesis, I draw on anthropological and other social

scientific scholarship that speak directly to the experiences of undocumigrants, namely work on 1) il/legality, 2) liminality, and 3) cultural citizenship.

First, casting undocumigrants as “illegal” dehumanizes them, and activists have responded by fighting for equal human rights. Next, the position of 1.5 generation as liminal, or in-between, statuses and generations as a result of their access to DACA and having been brought to the United States as children has given them insight into the possibility of belonging, as well as oppression and exclusion. Finally, their cultural citizenship has provided them cultural capital that allows them to accomplish their goals, as well as providing a path forward to other groups of undocumented immigrants who have not been granted such access to cultural capital. Together, these theoretical frameworks help to frame the lives of undocumigrants and how they are situated, and place themselves, within the immigration movement and the broader immigration system.

“Il/legality”

“Illegality” has permeated popular understandings of immigration in the United States. Many U.S. citizens rest their beliefs on the idea that law-breaking, regardless of the reasons for the transgression, is a moral infraction that breaks down the rule of law. These discussions largely serve to naturalize the concept of “legality” and “illegality,” failing to acknowledge the cultural construction of “il/legality.” In the face of these popular conceptions, a broad range of academic work has worked to problematize “il/legality,” to unpack the ways in which it is culturally constructed, and to deconstruct the dichotomy of “legality” and “illegality.”

De Genova introduced “il/legality” as a culturally-constructed concept, arguing that

Illegality is the product of immigration laws – not merely in the abstract sense that without the law, nothing could be construed to be outside the law; nor simply in the generic sense that immigration law constructs, differentiates, and ranks various categories of “aliens” – but in the more profound sense that the history of deliberate interventions that have revised and reformulated the law has entailed the active process of inclusion through illegalization (2002:439).

Thus, the status of “il/legality” works as actively and thoroughly to reinforce inclusion as it does to ensure exclusion. Cecilia Menjívar and Dan Kanstroom (2014) further discuss the numerous ways that “il/legality” is constructed and maintained for a variety of reasons. Primarily, they argue that “undocumented” and “illegal,” as well as “documented” and “legal” do not always map onto each other, and there are many instances when individuals with documentation are nonetheless constructed as “illegal,” i.e. “deportable.” For example, per Menjívar and Kanstroom (2014:9), the “current immigration regime ... deports tens of thousands of permanent legal residents (green card holders) every year.” For undocumented migrants with DACA, the fact that “un/documented” status fails to align itself with “il/legality” status further reveals the construction of “illegality.” While they are “undocumented” in terms of having no paperwork to reinforce their status as members of the United States, they are not deportable (albeit temporarily), thus making them marginally legal. The temporary and retractable aspects of their undeportability also serves to reinforce their “illegality,” leaving migrants in a zone of limbo as to their actual status of “il/legality.” Collectively, the ways in which immigration law maintains their status as excluded, despite ensuring that they are not deported, is representative of the “active process of inclusion through ‘illegalization’”

(De Genova 2002:439). The power and exclusivity of membership remains unthreatened by DACAmented immigrants because their deportability remains a possibility, and their exclusion from membership is still at the forefront of their lives.

Despite the continued exclusion of DACAmented immigrants from membership, their access to protection from deportation, the lack of labor exploitation provided them by their work permits, and their location within varying degrees of “il/legality” serves to provide a marginal form of inclusion that provides DACAmented immigrants with a higher status in the immigration caste system. Nonetheless, all undocumented immigrants remain in a location where they law can control and constrain their lives. The subordination and control of individuals throughout the country whether they be legal permanent resident, undocumented, documented, “legal,” “illegal,” of some combination of the above ensure the active process of “illegalization” in order to maintain inclusion and exclusion.

Furthermore, De Genova argues that immigration law comprises “more than legal codes, government policies, and bureaucratic apparatuses,” but is instead, “a myriad of practices, usually carried out by people who have no connection to the government,” which “produce knowledge that constitutes individuals as citizens, illegal aliens, legal residents, asylees, and so forth” (2002:426). Thus, “illegality” and “legality,” while maintained as legal institutions, have grown to inhabit a habitus (Bourdieu 1990) which has an overlapping, but oftentimes marginal, connection to the actual legal system. It is therefore through these mechanisms that we must acknowledge the cultural construction of “legality” and “illegality” and that such a construction serves to control the lives of more than solely those who are defined as “illegal” outsiders. Undocumigrants with

DACA, as well as other young undocumented immigrants without DACA, have a marginal position to both “legality” and “illegality” due to their ability to avoid deportation and their cultural capital. Additionally, the construction of “il/legality” works to further delineate an immigrant caste system of which undocumented immigrants are but one rung.

Liminal Legality

Cecilia Menjívar has furthered the work of de-naturalizing “legality” and “illegality” through the creation of the theoretical concept of “liminal legality” (2006). Legal liminality further exposes how “il/legality” is constructed, especially by showing how “legality” and “illegality” are not as dichotomous as they may be made to seem. In Menjívar’s theoretical work surrounding the concept of liminal legality, she examines the ways that U.S. immigration law specifically and immigration law in general creates a place in-between complete “legal non-existence,” as theorized by Susan Coutin, and full legal existence (2006:1007). It is in this grey area where immigrants become liminal beings. Menjívar developed this theoretical concept as a result of her work with Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants who were provided with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) (2006). With TPS, Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants were able to legally remain in the United States, but they were provided with no form of legal status.

In this instance of liminal legality, those with TPS were allowed to physically remain in the United States, but their exclusion remained ensured despite this fact through their continued status as undocumented immigrants with little to no access to the basic rights formally granted to insiders, as well as the constant threat that this temporary protection could be revoked. Thus, those who are in a liminal position are used as an

apparatus in which to help maintain the exclusion of unwanted migrants, even when we cannot formally declare that they are unwanted. Their status as excluded, despite potential access to refugee status, helps to ensure the importance of the rights and privileges that are conveyed by way of being included through legal status and citizenship.

1.5-generation immigrants also fall into this liminal status, as a result of their cultural citizenship, access to work permits, and protection from deportation, and thus they are also maintained as outsiders, but not fully. Their position helps to maintain the perceived legitimacy of the government in determining membership boundaries and in reinforcing certain expectations of assimilation. Additionally, while 1.5-generation undocumented migrants have been granted a number of rights as a result of DACA, they are in a liminal position, which prevents them from making long-term plans because of the knowledge that the limited inclusion they are granted through DACA will very likely come to an end in the future.

The fact that liminality forces us to question the distinction between “legality” and “illegality” can be a positive development in the move towards a more equitable immigration system because it directly leads people to question their understandings of who are, and who are not, members of the U.S. cultural landscape. Thus, it contributes to confusion and questioning of who is and is not a deserving beneficiary of U.S. citizenship privilege. While the habitus is being challenged, individuals throughout society have so internalized the habitus which determines the dichotomy and naturalization of “i/legality,” and thus they unconsciously work towards reproducing it even when it is challenged. This leads to a cognitive dissonance, which members of the U.S. populace

attempt to remedy through the maintenance of hegemonic discourses which position white U.S. citizens at the head of U.S. society and culture, but while allowing for delineation within the dichotomy of “il/legality.” This has led to the creation of a caste system with people of varying immigration and citizenship statuses falling into varying caste levels.

The position of “liminal legality” for undocumigrants has become even more delineated with the creation of DACA, extended-DACA, and DAPA. While extended-DACA and DAPA will not be implemented due to the June 2016 Supreme Court ruling, they nonetheless represent hypothesized rungs in the caste system, and their emergence provides immigrants with an inclusion which is denied those who would not be covered by these potential programs. Despite the important protections that DACA conveys and that extended-DACA and DAPA could have conveyed, they do not provide any form of legal status, and as the measures are executive actions as opposed to legislation, they can be revoked at any time, a circumstance that could happen with the election of a new president (Gonzales et al. 2014:1852-1854). The number of individuals eligible for these three programs, in addition to the many immigrants who receive TPS, represents a significant portion, and likely a majority, of the approximately twelve million undocumented immigrants in the United States (Ruiz-Casares et al. 2010:329). Undocumigrants are thoroughly aware of their fundamentally liminal position, and in many ways, have even come to embrace it.

Cultural Citizenship

Renato Rosaldo developed the concept of *cultural citizenship* while researching Latinx understandings of their exclusion from full citizenship through their delineation to second- and third-class citizenship statuses. Rosaldo defines cultural citizenship as “the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state’s democratic process” (Rosaldo 1994:75). While Rosaldo discusses the ways that Latinx populations with legal citizenship do not have full access to cultural citizenship due to their exclusion from full democratic participation, I argue that undocumented immigrants without access to legal citizenship can claim cultural citizenship; although, they may face varying levels of access to it due to the failure of the larger culture to accept racial or other differences.

While undocumigrants do not have access to full legal citizenship -- and in many ways, they lack access to full cultural citizenship -- they have found themselves at times on a higher rung of the citizenship caste system due to access to the privileges that come with having been raised in the United States. These privileges provide them with the cultural capital and necessary adherence to societal and cultural expectations, which underpins their claim to cultural citizenship. They have access to many of the ways in which people can participate in the “nation-state’s democratic process,” even if they are legally barred from voting. They protest, start petitions, lobby their elected officials, register others to vote, and fight for democratic change outside of the legal structure of voting, thus providing them with a form of cultural citizenship which is often denied their parents.

Abrego (2011) argues that first-generation undocumented immigrants face profound fear resulting from their lack of legal status; whereas, 1.5-generation immigrants face stigma rather than fear. For those around them, very few people would be able to determine the legal status of undocumented immigrants, or their lack thereof, without their confirmation. Thus, they are able to participate in many aspects of the democratic process without fear of deportation. Their parents, on the other hand, face profound fear and are thus excluded from nearly every form of democratic participation, such as protest and petition, which their children are able to take part in, outside of the legal voting process.

As Julie Dowling and Jonathan Inda argue, “refugees and the undocumented are expected to be docile. Their lives tend to be represented in popular and legal discourse as the inverted image of political” (2013:27). Young undocumented immigrants have the cultural capital through which to resist and challenge this image, while this ability is, in many ways, denied their parents. Abrego discusses the cultural citizenship of young undocumented immigrants when she states that

[b]ecause many arrived in the United States as young children, they are not easy to discern from their documented peers. 1.5-generation immigrants are legitimated in educational settings and are able to learn the language, absorb the customs, and make the culture their own in ways that are not available to those who migrate as adults (2011:344).

This legitimization gives them a stronger form of cultural citizenship than is available to their parents, thus providing them with a higher rung on the citizenship caste system.

Horacio Roque Ramirez also utilizes the concept of *cultural citizenship* to contend that citizenship is as much being a member of a culture as it being legally accepted because “culture [i]s a critical space for engaging the national discourse of

citizenship” (2005:164). To almost the same extent as natural born U.S. citizens, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have an extensive claim to cultural citizenship and on “civic performance as a marker of citizenship,” as they both have been raised in U.S. culture, and they have strived to make it a better place through activism, education, and contribution to the economy through their labor (Cisneros 2011:255). Despite their difference in legal status, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have cultural capital that has, in many ways, allowed them to live without compromising their belonging. Nonetheless, their liminal position ensures that there is still much more to be done to ensure that their belonging is fully accepted in U.S. culture and society.

However, it is their liminal position that has provided them with some form of cultural citizenship and therefore a higher status within the citizenship caste system compared to other undocumented immigrant populations. This cultural citizenship has allowed them to see their possibility as members of the U.S. populace and to understand some form of inclusion. Their marginal access to cultural citizenship, which is often completely denied other members of the undocumented community, has provided them with the ability to obtain education, to appear as members of the U.S. populace in a variety of ways, and to form inclusive communities. Nonetheless, accomplishing cultural citizenship has in many ways required the assimilation of immigrants to larger cultural, linguistic, and social norms in order to maintain their “right to be different ... with respect to the norms of the dominant national community.” Today, undocumigrants create communities which seek to ensure the right to be different through inclusivity for all undocumented immigrants.

Embracing “Il/legality,” Liminality, and Cultural Citizenship

so, here you are
 too foreign for home
 too foreign for here
 never enough for both
 - Ijeoma Umebinyuo, “diaspora blues”

The frustration with, as well as an appreciation of, “il/legality,” liminality, and cultural citizenship can be found in this poem which was widely shared within many of the private Facebook groups. In the poem, the author laments her liminal position between two cultures and her lack of full cultural citizenship in either. While this poem demonstrates the frustration of liminality and marginal cultural citizenship within multiple countries, undocumented migrants are beginning to understand the power that exists in this in-between position. The lack of full “illegality,” “legality,” documentation, belonging, or citizenship for undocumented migrants has demonstrated the oppression and control that results from immigration law, but it also demonstrated the various ways that they can resist this control to achieve cultural citizenship over legal citizenship. By embracing their connections to two (or more) cultures as a fundamental strength, undocumented migrants seek to use their difference and their community to craft belonging outside of legal structures.

By acknowledging their liminal status, undocumented migrants are working to move away from the rhetoric that emphasized their status as fully assimilated, as fully “American,” and as fully members of the United States populace in every way except for legal status. Instead, undocumented migrants have moved away from the notion of “assimilation” to embrace their place as both members of the U.S. populace and as immigrants who are

deeply connected to the land of their birth and of their ancestors. Therefore, undocumented migrants maintain both “liminality” and “cultural citizenship.” Undocumented migrants seek to determine that their access to cultural citizenship should not be determined by their ability to assimilate or to escape liminality. Rather, full cultural citizenship is accomplished through a celebration of liminality and difference from the larger culture.

Despite the ability of undocumented migrants to claim cultural citizenship, there are still fundamental ways in which undocumented migrants remain in part of an immigration caste system. Menjivar and Kanstroom argue in *Constructing Immigrant “Illegality”* (2013) that the delineation of immigrant status through TPS creates a caste system of immigrants in which undocumented children remain part of a “shadow population” (3). They cite the extremely influential 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler vs. Doe* which provided undocumented immigrant children with guaranteed legal access to a K-12 education. Menjivar and Kanstroom argue that immigration law has largely failed at keeping ‘unwanted’ immigrants out of the country and at keeping employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, resulting in “a substantial ‘shadow population’ within our borders” (2013:3). While the dichotomous categories of legality and illegality create a two-tiered caste system, liminal legal categories—such as DACA and “cultural citizenship”—underscore how people live their lives betwixt and between even these liminal categories. Taken together, such diverse statuses present an even more complex and multi-tiered caste system in the United States.

The activism and visibility of 1.5-generation immigrants has – at least in part - broken-down this dichotomy between “legality” and “illegality” in the minds of the general populace due to the ways in which they challenge popular images of “il/legality.”

Challenging such constructs has allowed undocumigrants to achieve a certain level of inclusion and membership into U.S. society; yet they continue to be denied legal status. While the political rhetoric employed in support of the DREAM Act had negative and unexpected effects in a number of ways, it was also extremely successful in questioning and breaking-down the divide between “legality” and “illegality.” However, rather than ensuring a more inclusive system, this dichotomy has instead been replaced with a more delineated immigrant caste system. With the failure of the DREAM Act and the creation of DACA, many 1.5-generation immigrants began to see all those in their communities who were excluded. Furthermore, they had not achieved the legal citizenship which many within the movement had previously believed to be the ultimate goal of their activism. Instead, political goals often undermined the more important goal of inclusion that undocumigrants sought to achieve.

While 1.5-generation immigrants have not given up on the eventual passage of the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform, or even the elimination of borders, they have sought others ways to live and thrive in the United States. They no longer focus on legal citizenship as the ultimate goal of their activism, a goal which has privileged immigration law, reinforced the dichotomy of “legality” and “illegality,” and failed to challenge narrow legal definitions of membership. Instead, undocumigrants have embraced their undeniable cultural citizenship and liminality. This emphasis on cultural citizenship or membership outside of legal frameworks allows undocumigrants to challenge an immigration caste system. The following chapters will discuss in further detail the varied and multiple ways that 1.5-generation undocumigrants are challenging and moving beyond earlier rhetoric to create a more inclusive community that recognizes

that the law will not lead to liberation, but that the creation of cultural citizenship through an emphasis on their community can.

CHAPTER 3: Post-DREAM Activism

In late 2015, Alejandra, a Facebook friend I met in a private Facebook group for 1.5-generation undocumigrants, posted the following status: “Don’t call me a ‘DREAMer.’ I ain’t tied to no law. I’m a 1.5 generation undocumented muxer [womxn] of color seeking for LIBERATION.” As someone who first became involved in undocumented activism at the height of the DREAM Act, it immediately struck me that Alejandra was distancing herself from the term. In fact, it was only the second time that I had seen someone so explicitly disavow the usage of the term “DREAMer.” The spelling of the term “muxer” also struck me, as it was the first time that I had ever seen the word “mujer,” Spanish for womxn, spelled in this way. While I had already witnessed activists and undocumigrants moving away from referring to themselves as “DREAMers” and the arguments used to support the DREAM Act, until this point, it had only been done through more inclusive arguments, rather than an explicit disavowal of the DREAM Act and the types of activism associated with the DREAM Act.

Alejandra is an activist, heavily involved in undocu-activism and decolonization movements, but her words, while seemingly radical in their explicitness, succinctly and clearly summarize the direction of the undocumented youth movement more broadly, including activists and those who are not directly involved in activism. “DREAMer” continues to be used by many people who have been involved in activism since the height of the DREAM Act as the central node of their organizing. Despite this continued usage by some, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants have faced criticism of their choice of names from a wide variety of segments within the national community of

undocumented immigrants. These criticisms have resulted in a complex understanding of their choice of names, the ways in which their rhetoric includes but also excludes many people, and the importance of ensuring greater inclusivity to reinforce their fight for inclusion within the United States.

These increasingly complex understandings and expressions of the diversity within the undocumented community, the resistance to cultural narratives around immigration, and the changing choice of names utilized by undocumented activists has roots in the frustration over the continued failure of the DREAM Act. When the DREAM Act failed to pass despite a majority of support in both legislative branches and the presence of a supportive president, DREAMers began to recognize both the limitations of their previous rhetoric, as well as the negative effects it was having on their ability to form strong communities. Furthermore, as executive actions began to divide the immigrant community into varying castes and levels of “deservedness” of legal inclusion in the United States, 1.5-generation immigrants began a process of actively changing their strategies and methods. Undocumented immigrants accomplished this change in their actions through a variety of moves. First, they distanced themselves from defining the community according to the boundaries of the DREAM Act or DACA. Second, they embraced their cultural heritage, challenged notions of “assimilation,” and accepted their fundamentally liminal position. Third, they worked to actively include their parents and other family members in the movement in a bid to remove the idea that they were inherently more “innocent” by virtue of having been brought to the United States rather than coming of their own volition. Finally, they actively worked to include individuals who had previously been excluded from the movement due to their lack of access to

activism, higher education, or the urban centers and college campuses where 1.5-generation undocumented communities most often develop.

What's in a Name?

Words have always been important to 1.5-generation immigrants. A strong belief that the terms “illegal” and “alien” are dehumanizing and misleading has permeated the activism of immigrants since well before the introduction of the DREAM Act. During the period of DREAM Activism, the Drop the “I” Word movement became particularly salient within immigrant movements, largely helped in its growth through the activism of 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants. Jose Antonio Vargas, a high-profile national leader in the 1.5-generation undocumented movement, began a campaign to monitor the use of the “I” word in media sources. In addition to Vargas’ work, 1.5-generation immigrants led campaigns to urge media sources to switch to the use of “undocumented” over “illegal” and “immigrant” over “alien,” with many high-profile successes. Since the “Drop the ‘I’ Word” campaign began, the Associated Press, USA Today, and the LA Times have all stopped using the term (“Drop the I-Word Campaign” 2013). In 2012, a group of 24 linguists, inspired by the Drop the I-Word campaign and likely by the 1.5-generation undocumented activists they encountered on their college campuses, put out a statement arguing that the term “illegal” is neither “neutral” nor “accurate” (Costantini 2012). For the most part, the movement has been successful in creating a cultural change and increasing the use of “undocumented,” but there is still a lot of work to do.

But more than crafting cultural shifts away from the term “illegal,” this movement demonstrated to 1.5-generation immigrants the powerful effects of words, especially the words that they and others use to refer to their community. The language used to describe themselves and other undocumented immigrants has the power to shape national conversations about immigration, to change values and beliefs about undocumented immigrants, and to set priorities and values within the movement. The development of the terms “DREAMers,” “DACAmented,” “undocumented youth” and the subsequent questioning of appropriate terminology demonstrates the careful analytical thought that goes into language as well as its power within the movement.

When the DREAM Act was first introduced, 1.5-generation immigrants utilized the term “DREAMer” to refer to themselves. This quickly became more than a simple nomenclature. The term “DREAMer” became internalized as an integral part of their identities. Undocumented immigrants, who were open about their status, would often list “DREAMer” as the first feature of their identity when asked about themselves. They would talk about their “dreams” and their ability to “dream” about the future when describing themselves, even when not directly referring to their immigration status. The idea of dreaming as a hopeful and positive trait became heavily internalized as a fundamental aspect of their identity, and it was utilized to describe the entire 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant community, regardless of their ability to benefit from the DREAM Act if it were to be passed. Until recent years, the use of this term remained largely unquestioned. When DACA was first introduced in 2012, so, too, was a new term: “DACAmented.” This term came out of a hope that DACA would provide them with some form of documentation even if it was not the citizenship which they sought.

Together, “DREAMer” and “DACAmended” have been the two terms most widely used to describe 1.5-generation immigrants, but they are employed in differential ways which demonstrate the evolution of the movement over the past fifteen years. While “DREAMer” was the preferred term prior to the implementation of DACA, DACAmended is used more often now; although, DREAMer is still used with some frequency. Together, the use of these terms reflects in the potential of the DREAM Act and DACA to provide them with formal inclusion in U.S. society. The choice to use names derived from the legislation and executive action that would provide them with the rights and privileges of citizenship and residency is an act of hope, and their movement away from them, as well as their diverse use of the terms, represents a distinct new path which the movement has taken. Additionally, as I will discuss, the term “undocumented immigrant youth” has also been challenged within the community. While these terms have been challenged, many within the community continue to employ them. As such, I will use the terms occasionally within this thesis with an understanding and acknowledgement of their limitations.

While there has certainly been criticism of the term DREAMer since the inception of the 1.5-generation immigrant movement, these criticisms have grown more frequent and more widespread in the years since the DREAM Act last failed to be signed into law in 2010 and since the introduction of DACA in 2012. Additionally, the various reasons that 1.5-generation immigrants have chosen to dispute and object to the use of the term have also multiplied. One of these objections was raised by a 1.5-generation undocumigrant and fourth year medical student who stated “I am not a DREAMer. I am a Doer. DREAMer signifies that my dreams are tied to a bill sitting on some

Congressman's desk." Clearly this individual felt it important to make it known that her identity was too large to be contained in one potential, but never realized, piece of legislation. This quote was posted on a public Facebook group, and its salience among the community was obvious. The status received 88 likes (including my own) in the six months following the post. In that same period, 62 other statuses were posted on this page, and only two of these received as many or more likes than this status, which shows how strongly this sentiment resonated with members of the group, even those who willingly and proudly continue to use the term "DREAMer" to describe themselves.

This sentiment is echoed in Alejandra's previously quoted Facebook post, which stated, "Don't call me a 'DREAMer.' I ain't tied to no law. I'm a 1.5 generation undocumented muxer [womxn] of color seeking for LIBERATION." Both of these statuses utilize the term "tied," indicating that the use of the term "DREAMer" limits their identities to only what fits within the narrow parameters of the DREAM Act, tying them to a bill which has repeatedly failed and has little hope of coming to fruition in the near future. Even though Alejandra and the medical student both fulfill the expectations of the DREAM Act (they would both qualify for a path to citizenship were the DREAM Act to pass today), they are maintaining that their identities cannot be contained solely within this narrative.

Additionally, many undocumigrants are beginning to identify how the DREAMer narrative separates them from other undocumented immigrants who would not qualify for the DREAM Act if it were to pass. By moving away from many of the arguments linked to the DREAM Act, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have brought in undocumented immigrants who were previously excluded from the movement because they did not fit

into the narrow criteria of the DREAM Act. Thus, when Alejandra and other undocumented migrants reject the term “DREAMer,” even if they have not given up hope for the eventual passage of the DREAM Act, they are taking the position that the parts of their identities which do fall within the limited parameters of the DREAM Act do not make them inherently better than their undocumented sistren who would not be eligible for the DREAM Act were it to pass. Undocumented migrants argue that they should not be controlled by a law with xenophobic and exclusionary underpinnings.

Even though many 1.5-generation immigrants challenge the term “DREAMer” based on ideological and moral grounds - as well as the strong belief that they are more than that which can be contained in a law - some 1.5-generation immigrants simply were not active or old enough during the period of DREAM Activism to have any real identification with the term. When asked during an interview if she used the term “DREAMer” to refer herself, Araceli said that she hadn’t thought about it much, but that it seemed to be before her time:

I came a little late to the whole movement itself because obviously, I’m a little younger than the DREAMer group that started it back in like I think it was 2000. I’m turning 27 in May, so I’m 26. So, when the movement started in 2000, I wasn’t part of that. I didn’t start to hear or know about what it was, until when it passed in Congress for the first time and then it was defeated in 2010. That was the first time I ever heard anything about it, so I never really identified with the term. That’s when I started to meet a few other activists who would invite me and participate, but like a lot of other DREAMers, I was always busy with work. Like I had two jobs and I had to go to school, so I never really made time or could make time for that. Because of that I don’t feel like I’ve ever identified with the term. I didn’t get to know the term until 2010, so that’s six years ago, and I didn’t really start getting involved as an activist for immigration until 2012. So, it took me a minute, so I think that’s why I never identified with the term itself.

Here it is clear that the use of the term “DREAMer” decreased over time following the height of DREAM Activism. This largely started to occur in 2010 when the failure of the DREAM Act led many people to lose faith in its eventual passage. This loss of faith also led many to reject identification with the term “DREAMer.” Most individuals who became involved in 2010 or later do not identify with the label at all.

When asked if she identified with the term DACAmented over the term DREAMer, Araceli stated

I use DACAmented, yes. And I totally agree with what you say about how a lot of DREAMers have moved away from [the term DREAMer] because I try to educate people on that too. A lot of people come to me and they're like ‘hey, can you help me with that DREAM Act thing?’ And I'm just like ‘It's not a DREAM Act. Before I say ‘yes,’ I need you to understand the difference, this is what the DREAM Act was, and this is DACA. This is what this is.’ So I feel like, I've always emphasized that every single time someone tells me. In that perspective too, I also kinda separate the term for myself. But, then also, it's something totally different than the relief we have now.

Araceli is arguing that she does not like the term “DREAMer” because she has interacted with quite a few people who confused the DREAM Act with DACA, often believing that DACA conveys legal status and thus the fight for legal recognition is complete. She feels that by continuing to refer to themselves as “DREAMers,” undocumented migrants might reinforce this confusion.

This is not an unjustified concern. In fact, it was relatively common for undocumented migrants to post in the Facebook groups asking how they could apply for the DREAM Act. While some of this is caused by confusion over the state Dream Acts, many other people would clarify that they were in fact asking about the federal DREAM Act. The following conversation illustrates this confusion and is just one example of how the difference between laws and executive orders cannot be easily understood. This

conversation took place in a Facebook group dedicated to questions and conversation about the Deferred Action programs:

Lupita: Hello does somebody know about a good lawyer in the city of montebello that could help me apply for dream act?

Sam: en cuanto salga el #DREAMact [As soon as the #DREAMact comes out]

Te recomiendo a uno [I can recommend one to you]

Lupita: Yo calificó con el que esta [That's what I said]

Sam: i'm sorry i'm just being silly.

el #DREAMact [the #DREAMact]

no ah salido [has not come out]

ahorita hay uno que se llama #DACA [right now, there is one that is called #DACA]

Here, the term “DREAMer” is challenged on both ideological and practical grounds.

“DREAMer” is not the only term that 1.5-generation immigrants challenge. One undocumented individual posted a status in a private Facebook group dedicated to 1.5-generation immigrants that simply asked: “Here’s a twist: DACAmended or unDACAmended?” The author of the question later explained to me that he wondered why people did not use “unDACAmended” because DACA does not technically provide documentation. Thus, even those with DACA remained undocumented. This status did not generate a lot of discussion, with only twelve responses, the majority of which were one word responses to the question. Out of the responses, ten people said DACAmended, and two said unDACAmended, showing a rather large consensus that people identify with the term DACAmended. Although this case showed that 1.5-generation immigrants liked the terminology that has been chosen to represent their community, the fact that these discussions are taking place reveals the importance of language and the terms used to identify oneself and one another.

I argue that a primary reason why undocumented migrants are more comfortable with “DACAmented” than “DREAMer” is because “DACAmented” is utilized less broadly. On the one hand, “DREAMer” was employed to describe all 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants as a community and was deeply internalized by many within this community as a significant, if not the foremost, aspect of identity. On the other hand, DACAmented specifically describes those who have been granted Deferred Action. “DACAmented” does not represent an important aspect of undocumented migrant identity, and it is not used to describe the community as a whole, but rather only individuals who self-identify as DACA recipients. Additionally, “DACAmented” represents a concrete aspect of undocumented migrants’ status and allows them to describe their position within the immigration system without supporting this system in a way that the term “DREAMer” did. Because it is utilized in a much more limited and particular manner, the community is less likely to criticize the term “DACAmented.” Such specific usage can describe liminal immigration status while not excluding those in their community who are not eligible for DACA or who were not included within the DREAM Act.

Another term that has faced limited, but growing, criticism is “undocumented immigrant youth.” When I began my research, and when I originally began writing this thesis, I utilized the term “undocumented immigrant youth” to refer to research participants. In recognition of this, I defined my target population for interviews and analysis as “undocumented immigrants between the ages of 18 and 30.” The limitations that this age range put on understanding the community quickly became clear. When I first began seeking out research participants and individuals to interview, I posted information about my research in a number of private Facebook groups in order to recruit

research participants and collaborators. In response, I received several messages from individuals asking if they could still be part of the project if they were over the age of 30.

One individual took particular offense stating:

“I came at 9
and now i’m past 30
1st Obama = outcasts me
2nd Aria Overli = outcasts me too):”

At the time, I recognized the criticism as legitimate, but the term “youth” itself was not challenged, and I defended my choice to interview individuals between the ages of 18 and 30. I acknowledged that the position of individuals who were brought to the United States as children, but who no longer identified as “youth,” deserved to be recognized. Even so, I chose to continue positioning my research around the concept of “undocumented immigrant youth.”

More recently, an article entitled “Confessions of a Low-Profile Dreamer” began to be shared among the various private and public Facebook groups of 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants. Despite utilizing the term “dreamer” in the title of his article, Choi repeatedly problematizes this terminology throughout the article. In one instance, he states, “I have a serious problem with the term DREAMer, Dreamer, dreamer, and other spelling variations thereof ... I know some people hold on to that identity, and more power to them for self-identification, but don’t take away my ability to identify myself.”

In addition to challenging the term DREAMer, Choi also problematizes the use of “immigrant youth,” stating:

First things first. As much as I am eternally young, y’all, I’m 27. Who am I kidding when I say that I’m an immigrant “youth?” Am I never going to be an “immigrant adult?” My mother had *two kids* when she was 27. If I make it past this October 24th (knocking on wood), I avoid the fate of the infamous 27 Club (2016).

Choi and others argue that, as undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, they have a unique liminal position within the immigrant population. One's status as 1.5-generation undocumigrants does not change once they reach thirty and are deemed "too old" for the DREAM Act and DACA. Despite aging out of the designation of youth, they have more in common with other undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children than they do with their parents who arrived in the United States as adults. Nonetheless, to continue to refer to them as "youth" keeps them in a perpetual state of childhood for the purposes of reinforcing their innocence. The continued use of the term "youth" reflects an argument of innocence for young undocumented immigrants, which the movement has since transcended. As such, my research has also problematized this usage.

Sunaina Marr Maira discusses Muslim immigrant teenagers in her ethnography *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*. In her discussion, she argues that the

category of youth is itself socially and politically constructed and, in traditional Western perceptions of adolescence, is viewed as a liminal stage when social identities and commitments are being formed. The construction of youth as a transitional category of citizenship underlies the preoccupation with youth in relation to the social order and civic personhood. Young people symbolize the unknown future or possible direction of the nation and become the site of projection of adult hopes and fears about their own society (2009:13).

While this can be problematic, as Maira discusses, in regards to teenagers, it takes on new meanings when applied to individuals who are five, ten, fifteen, and even twenty years older than the teenagers that Maira worked with in her research. Additionally, Boehm et al. (2011:2) synthesize work on youth to argue that the "categories of 'children,' 'youth,'

and ‘adult’ are unstable ones, constructed and understood differently in various historical and cultural contexts that are themselves always changing.”

To continue to utilize the term “youth” in regards to 1.5-generation undocumigrants serves to reinforce a notion of innocence, as well as their potential for “assimilation.” According to Maira, if youth “symbolize the unknown future,” “possible direction of a nation,” and the “liminal stage where social identities and commitments are being formed,” then youth remain liminal enough to be fully assimilated through their transition to adulthood. They are considered “youth” because they still have the potential to be molded into adult members who fulfill cultural expectations, and therefore, still have the potential for “assimilation” in a way that second-generation immigrations supposedly do not. Thus, the utilization of such rhetoric seeks to establish that 1.5-generation undocumigrants are deserving of legalization in a way that other groups are not. Therefore, by disavowing the usage of this term, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are distancing themselves from arguments that celebrate their supposed innocence and assimilation, or potential assimilation, to U.S. cultural ideals.

Nonetheless, despite the concerns raised by the use of the term “youth,” it is important to acknowledge that the life experiences of undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as minors presents a unique position for 1.5-generation immigrants. This position is inherently separate and distinct from the experiences of first-generation and second-generation immigrants, although they may be connected. This changes their life outcomes, lived experiences, and perspectives on the movement in unique ways that cannot be denied, and those experiences and perspectives do not fundamentally alter once they reach they age of 30. Additionally, while I chose to open

up my research to individuals over the age of 30, I did not end up interviewing anyone over the age of 35; although, I did interact with and use quotes from one individual in his 40s. Thus, it is clear that the community is still centered around the experiences of millennials, who many would consider “youth.”

By questioning the terminology associated with “DREAMer” and “youth,” as well as seeking language that does not determine or limit identity, but rather signals flexibility and liminality, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants challenge their location within a system of laws that narrowly defines them. This questioning of terminology also demonstrates a fundamental belief that liberation cannot come only from laws, but must rather come from the community.

Challenging the Narrative of Innocence

Through their movement away from the term “youth,” 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants also challenge the idea that they are more innocent of wrongdoing and law-breaking than their parents who came to the United States as adults. While arguing for the DREAM Act, Nevada Senator and the Senate Majority leader at the time, Harry Reid, argued that “we should vote for this legislation because the DREAM Act recognizes that children should not be penalized for the actions of their parents” (Chávez et al. 2015:37). This was an argument that was repeated frequently by friendly legislators, allies, immigration activist organizations, and 1.5-generation immigrants themselves, but it was also one of the earliest challenged arguments.

Nicholls addresses the early challenges to this rhetoric and the ways that this shifted, quoting a 1.5-generation immigrant who was involved with his research:

A key talking point created in the past was that we were brought here by ‘no fault of our own.’ This was created by policymakers and advocates, but most DREAMers disagreed with that statement. Now what we do is intentionally let people know that we don’t agree with that statement. We no longer say ‘through no fault of our own.’ We now say we were brought here by our parents who are courageous and responsible and who would not let their children die and starve in another country (2013:127).

Over time, this messaging further permeated the communities of undocumented immigrants who felt that the control over their language exhibited by legislators, allies, and older generations of immigration activists had negative effects. In one example, an artist who frequently created artwork that was, and continues to be, widely shared and distributed by members of the undocumented immigrant movement, Julio Salgado, created the work seen in Figure 3.1. In this artwork, Salgado questions the rhetoric that posits his innocence at the expense of his parents, and instead celebrates the sacrifices that they made to ensure that their children lived full lives within their new home. Despite this progress, this new messaging was only the beginning on this strategy, and undocumented immigrants sought to further wash the stigma of “illegality” from their parents by actively including them in their activism.

Including Parents

As part of their efforts to move away from this rhetoric and to challenge the immigrant caste

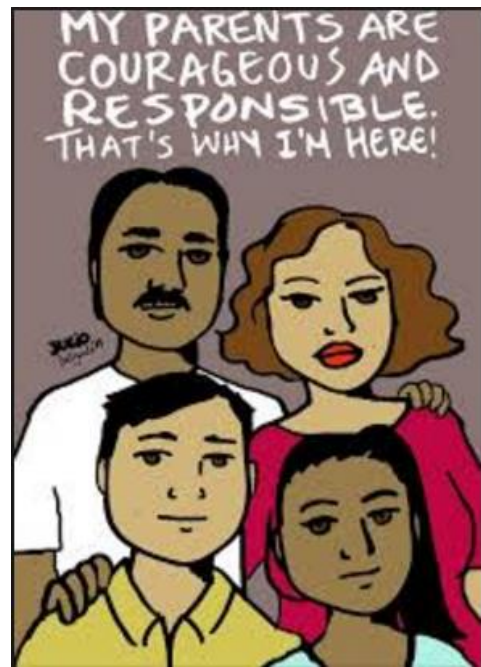


Figure 3.1 Image by Julio Salgado

system, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have sought to be more inclusive of their parents, family members, and other undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as adults. This has involved directly challenging the fear that many first-generation immigrants face, but that is less prescient in the lives of 1.5-generation undocumigrants (Abrego 2011). As such, many 1.5-generation immigrants are seeking to bring their parents out of the shadows and make them active members of the immigrant movement to reinforce inclusivity. These attempts move beyond previous attempts to wash the stigma of “illegality” from their parents through a celebration of their parents’ sacrifice. Here, the movement seeks to both build immigrant power by bringing in individuals who had previously been too afraid to participate and to more thoroughly wash the stigma of “illegality” off parents who were previously used as a juxtaposition to reinforce the innocence of 1.5-generation undocumigrants. Additionally, the active process of bringing parents into activism creates inclusivity which helps to break down division within immigrant communities.

Just prior to beginning my research, an organization was started by mothers of undocumigrants called “DREAMers’ MOMS.” This organization sought to bring mothers into the movement by bringing them out of the shadows to fight for themselves and their children. On their Facebook page, the description of the group reads:

Las mujeres y madres que conforman esta mesa directiva nacional limpian casas y otras ocupaciones tan normales como cualquiera. No somos profesionales, no fuimos activistas antes y siempre estamos aprendiendo! Lo que nos llevo al reconocimiento nacional, principalmente fue la manera en que tomamos accion y la entrega de amor que dimos a la causa. Es un inmenso sacrificio, pero se puede!!!!!!

[Women and mothers that make up our national board of directors, clean houses and have other normal occupations like everyone else. We are not

professionals, we were not activists before this and we are always learning! We received national recognition due to the way that we took action and the love that we gave to the cause. It is an immense sacrifice, but we can do it!!!!!!]

....

Este movimiento fue fundado en agosto del 2012 cuando madres de dreamers activistas vieron la necesidad de reforzar las voces de lucha que mantenían nuestros hijos para ver su sueño hecho realidad. Su nombre deriva de lo que pudimos sentir con nuestro corazón la lucha que llevaban las madres por ver a sus hijos con sus sueños realizados. Felices por una Acción Diferida que sacaran a nuestros hijos de las sombras y poder trabajar y manejar. De allí, de innumerables historias de amor entre una madre y su hijo que escuchábamos en las clínicas, derivó el nombre 'DREAMers' Moms'.

[This movement was founded in August of 2012 when mothers of dreamer activists saw the need to strengthen the voices that fight to see that our children's dreams became a reality. Our name derives from what we could feel with our hearts, the fight for mothers to see their children's dreams realized. We are happy for Deferred Action that brings our children out of the shadows and allows them to work and drive. From there, with innumerable stories of love between a mother and her child that we heard in the clinics, we got the name 'DREAMers' Moms.]

As mentioned in their description, they announce that they were not activists prior to starting or being involved in this groups, stating that they were mothers and house-cleaners, or other types of workers, a typical experience for first-generation undocumented immigrants. What spurred them to action and "national recognition" was their investment in their children, the DREAMers, a term that is still utilized by this group.

In our interview, Araceli discussed attempts to bring parents, and particularly mothers, into the movement to counteract the rhetoric that was previously utilized:

I feel like [the movement is] still trying [to correct this rhetoric], but I feel like a lot of damage is already done. But, I can see why it would have been

seen as a necessary evil because a lot of people out there are very conservative. I feel like it was more of a way like how can we get them to see us different. But, I also feel like, now, it's definitely, at least the group itself, the initial group of activists that started that can see the damage that's done. That's why they're trying to fight against it. I feel like that's where DAPA came in. It was them trying to take back that. No, it was not their fault.

Araceli specifically discusses the role of bringing parents into activism and the creation of DAPA as two tools that were utilized to counteract previous rhetoric that was "seen as a necessary evil."

She continues to talk about how mothers are being brought into the movement and how that helps parents to overcome their own fear:

One thing that I've noticed and I feel like this is very recent. They are pushing a lot of parents to become part of the movement. And I feel like that's very recent. You will see a lot of activists who bring their parents on to volunteer, bring their parents on to be part of the movement, to be part of protests. We have the I don't know what they call them, Undocumoms or something like that's one way. I feel like that's one way. And not the parents cause the parents had more fear in them because they come from all these countries where democracy is just not a thing.

Here, Araceli specifically addresses the role of fear in keeping many parents and first-generation parents away from immigration activism. She argues that coming from countries where democracy is not as established and stable as in the United States has left their parents with a fear of participation.

Undocumented youth have a unique position of utilizing their cultural capital in the United States to bring parents out of the shadows and show them that fear holds them and their communities back from fully taking advantage of their power. She continues:

So, now the kids that are more into the movement, more involved just in general, in advocacy in general, they are starting to pull in their parents. I think it's working too because the more people who are involved, the more faces that are out there, the more stories that are out there. And those numbers turn into faces it does help because what parents don't feel a little more proud, a little bit more willing to participate when they see their kids ... They are going to want to partake and I think that's just the nature of it. I mean, it's a good start and I feel like that happens with a lot of other groups. When they see someone like you who is stepping up. The fear kinda starts to disseminate.

According to Araceli, helping parents become active agents in immigration activism not only builds group power through bringing in more stories and faces, but also builds the parents on an individual level, helping them to find ways to "disseminate" their fear.

Throughout her interview, Araceli emphasized that she did not become involved with the movement until after she received DACA in 2013. She never considered herself part of the initial group of DREAMers and has not been involved in much activism directly related to the DREAM Act. Her socialization has been part of post-DREAM activism that emphasizes the equal innocence of children and parents becomes clear when she discusses her views on her own parents' innocence:

I have never have seen it like that personally probably because I came very late to the movement, but I've never personally have seen it like that. You will probably understand this from an anthropological perspective. There are many reasons why people migrate. I know my parent's story and I understand why they did it. So, I never saw it that I'm blaming them. They used that as a tool most certainly, but I feel like that really hurt them and now they're just trying to repair the damage. I never personally use that because I saw. Why would I blame my mom? I knew what they went through when we were over there. Even if we wanted to go back, it was just not possible. My brother was used as a fucking drug mule when he came over here and he was lost in the desert for like two days and he was only 17 years old. I saw what was happening in my country and even though it took me a while to get used to being here, I knew what my parent's had done was for the betterment of the whole family.

As 1.5-generation undocumigrants continue to challenge the narrative of their innocence through a rejection of the term “youth” and by bringing their parents out of the shadows, they seek to establish a more inclusive immigration movement, one that allows them to create the community they need in order to seek true liberation.

Assimilation ≠ Liberation

Arguments for the DREAM Act also described 1.5-generation immigrants as more deserving of a path to legal status and citizenship because they have been raised and enculturated into the United States and thus were “assimilated” in a way that is impossible for immigrants who came to the United States as adults. The findings section of Representative Gutierrez’s bill, which served as the precursor to the DREAM Act, stated that,

Young children who have resided in the United States for a substantial period of their lives often are acculturated as American, including learning to speak English. Often, they consider themselves Americans and have little or no knowledge or ties to the country in which they are born (Chávez et al. 2015:34).

As with the other arguments in favor of the DREAM Act, this was repeated by both allies and undocumented immigrants themselves. While this was employed as a powerful argument in favor of the DREAM Act, and convinced many voters that the DREAM Act - and later DACA - were worthwhile programs, the very idea of assimilation rests on racist and xenophobic ideologies which position U.S. culture as superior and cultural homogeneity as necessary for the creation of successful society, ideas which immigrants have worked hard in other arenas to dispel. In recent years, 1.5-generation

undocumigrants have actively resisted assimilationist narratives. Ultimately, this argument further serves to separate and delineate 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants into varying caste levels based on their levels of assimilation and seeks to separate 1.5-generation undocumigrants from the culture of their birth and from their families and communities. Thus, rejection of this ideology is necessary to create their inclusive communities and resist injustice.

Joe Feagin and José Cobas argue that assimilation is based on a white “racial frame, which has become white ‘common sense’” and “includes important racial stereotypes, understandings, images, and inclinations to act” (2008:39). They further argue that a “hegemonic situation occurs [because of this frame] when people of color consent in various ways to this white racial framing and common sense” (2008:39). DREAMers have provided such consent for this racial frame through their emphasis on their full enculturation in the United States. For these reasons, notions of “assimilation” serve to maintain the hegemonic position of whiteness and the “white racial frame.” The narrative of “assimilation” also works to maintain control and subjugation over those who are racialized and othered within certain discourses about national belonging.

In our interview, Ricardo discussed how pressure to assimilate made him ashamed of his racial and immigrant identity:

For the longest time, ever since I came to the United States, I’ve always felt like being brown, being a person of color was bad. I wanted to kind of drift away from my community. I felt ashamed of who I was. I really I felt this way from kindergarten through high school. I wanted to assimilate to what society wanted me to be. I wanted to be a white person pretty much. I was ashamed of my background, of my roots.

Ricardo says that the existence of the “white racial frame” made him feel ashamed of himself until involvement in immigrant communities provided him with a source of pride in his heritage and immigrant identity. While 1.5-generation undocumigrants have long been aware of the ways that racism is often expressed as pressure to “assimilate,” the belief that carefully crafted rhetoric would lead to realistic progress led many to continue utilizing the rhetoric of “assimilation.”

As 1.5-generation undocumigrants have taken control of their own narratives, allowed for more voices, and realized the limits of previous pragmatism, they have chosen to instead embrace their liminal status and cultural heritage, and to recognize the importance of immigrants to U.S. culture. Ricardo continued, describing how his involvement in the movement allowed him to embrace himself as a person of color and as undocumented immigrant:

It wasn't until I was introduced to activism that I became aware of who I truly was. The people who are in the same situation as I am. Activism really did change my life and it really made me open up my eyes to my own identity. To be part of this community that I felt for the longest time I would be in the shadows and no one really understood. I'm more open about my situation thanks to activism.

The following two images (Figures 3.2 and 3.3) shared within the Facebook groups of 1.5-generation undocumigrants, also succinctly demonstrate this rejection of the narrative of assimilation:



Figure 3.2



Figure 3.3

Through Ricardo's ability to feel proud of himself and his background, as well as the community's greater vocalization of the fact that assimilation is not a goal to be sought, undocumented migrants find ways to celebrate their cultural connections and their liminal position between multiple cultures.

Many within the movement have also begun to incorporate aspects of the decolonization movement into their immigrant communities and their activism to establish that assimilation, the "white racial frame," and the lack of access to basic rights due to their legal status is inseparable from the forced assimilation, genocides, and slavery that resulted from Spanish and Portuguese colonization of Latin America, and U.S. exploitation of the region in the years following colonization. Furthermore, undocumented migrants often argue that the hegemonic position afforded white individuals in the United States was guided and supported by this colonization. By maintaining their multiple language identities, finding connection with their multiple cultures through their families and Advance Parole (AP), and through alignment with decolonization principles, 1.5-generation undocumented migrants have chosen to reject the "white racial frame" and to

embrace cultural heterogeneity and their liminal position between multiple countries as strengths, rather than weaknesses, of the immigrant experience.

Liminality: Maintaining Connections to Multiple Cultures

Peter Nyers utilized the concept of “abject cosmopolitanism” (2003) to argue that the idea of cosmopolitanism has been reserved for wealthy Westerners and denied many others in the world, regardless of how much they have traveled as immigrants and laborers. The “abject” status conveyed to them by their lack of privilege seemingly cancels out their ability to be cosmopolitan subjects. He concludes that these dualisms are “riddled with unequal power relations;” therefore, we need to see all people as having the potential for cosmopolitanism, regardless of the abjectivity of their position (2013:419). The transnationality of undocumented immigrant youth, and therefore, their cosmopolitanism, is apparent in the fact that they are members of U.S. society, but they are also connected to other locations, which situates their citizenship, and parts of their identity, elsewhere. While they are denied cosmopolitan status because of their undocumented status, undocumigrants are seeking ways to regain it through rejecting “assimilation” and embracing their connections to multiple countries.

Alejandra resisted “assimilation” and colonization, and asserted a form of “abject cosmopolitanism,” when she referred to herself as “a 1.5 generation undocumented muxer of color.” “Muxer,” spelled with a “x” is a derivation of the Spanish word “Mujer,” meaning woman. The “x” is inserted in place of the “j” to indigenize the term. The Spanish language does not have the sound typically made in indigenous Mexican and Central American languages, so it was frequently represented by the Spanish “j” sound in

spoken word and with the “x” in the written word. The most famous example of this replacement is in the word “Mexico.” Additionally, “muxer” is utilized in a manner similar to the way that “womyn” is utilized in place of “woman” in the English language, so as to separate the word from the patriarchal origins of the language. In fact, many decolonization-based feminist movements have begun using “womxn” in order to decolonize the English language in addition to rejecting the patriarchal origin of the word (Wu 2016). Tijerina-Revilla explains the origins of “muxer” in Mexican activism, stating that the “term *muxeres* originates from grassroots activists who were engaged in the struggle for indigenous people’s autonomy in Chiapas [in Mexico].” It served to reinforce “the intersection of gender, ethnicity, culture, feminist identity, and activist struggle” (2009:49).

In this instance, “muxer” is being utilized by Alejandra to resist the colonization of Mexico and Central America, including Guatemala where Alejandra originates, while still maintaining her Spanish language identity. Here, Alejandra expresses her Guatemalan indigenous roots, Spanish-language fluency, and her liminal position as a 1.5-generation immigrant. Her use of indigenous-influenced Spanish, English, as well as emphasizing her in-between generational status all serve to emphasize her position as between multiple cultures and identities, and thus emphasizes her liminal status. Alejandra and other 1.5-generation immigrants have used such terms to express that they are people of color, Spanish-speakers (and speakers of other languages), people of indigenous descent, and immigrants and ultimately, that none of these identities make them any less members of United States or deserving recipients of legal status.

Additionally, in the recent graduation cycle, many undocumented migrants used the private Facebook groups to showcase their graduation caps, which often served as a chance to celebrate the education that they could get in the United States and to show gratitude to their immigrant identities in helping to guide their achievement. In the following examples, numerous aspects of Latinx and immigrant culture are celebrated through utilization of Latin American flags, references to the sacrifices of their parents, utilization of popular Spanish slang, and the use of Spanish in general. Figure 3.4 shows two graduation caps, both of which say “product of immigrants,” one in Spanish and one in English. The English cap shows a heart inside of Mexico, with a line presumably drawn to the United States, demonstrating the connection of the owner of the cap to both countries.



Figure 3.4

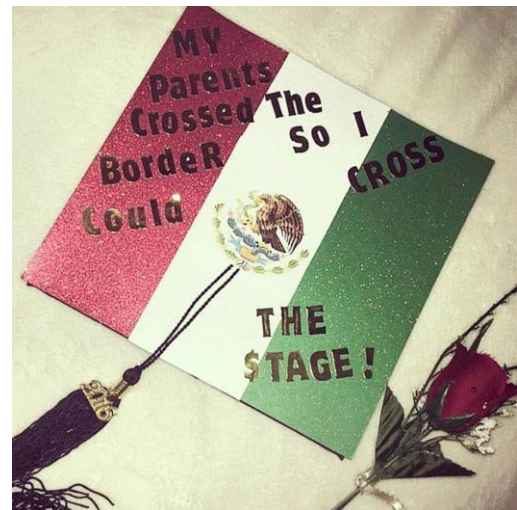


Figure 3.5

Ultimately, all three of these caps attribute their ability to graduate to their parent’s decision to migrate, demonstrating both their greater vocalization of the innocence of their parents, as well as their belief that their immigrant identities are a positive aspect of their existence, rather than a detriment.



Figure 3.6

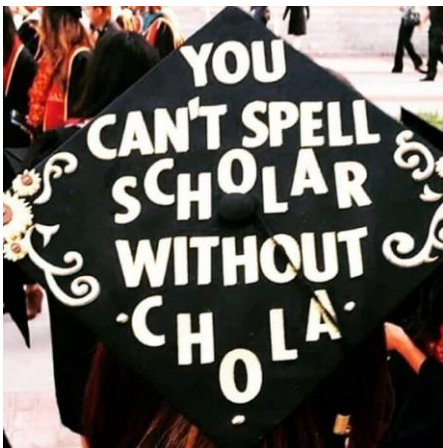


Figure 3.7



Figure 3.8

In Figures 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8, the Spanish slang terms “chingona” (essentially a badass or very cool womxn; has derogatory origins, but has been reclaimed by activists), “chola” (difficult to define a direct translation, but often refers to womxn who have Spanish and Indigenous blood; although, its colloquial usage may vary in definition based on the context), and chancla” (a flip flop used as a tool in corporal punishment) are all utilized to demonstrate affection for aspects of their Latin American cultures. In all of these examples, the individuals who created the caps are crediting their success to their immigrant or Latin American background.

In many ways, it is the 1.5-generation undocumigrant community that has allowed many of these immigrants to embrace their liminal identities as positive aspects of their immigrant experience. In our interview, Araceli talks about how she didn’t understand her immigrant identity until she became an activist within the undocumented immigrant movement:

I feel like one of the things that I kinda learned over the last few years was that I didn’t realize my immigrant identity. I feel like, I didn’t know the terms. I didn’t know what I fell into. Like how I was categorized because a lot of it was lived under the shadow. It was something about our life that we kind of ignored. I really didn’t ever pay

attention to the fact that I was undocumented until I was in high school. And this is something that happens to a lot of kids. You know when their friends start getting driver's licenses. It's probably the most common situation when kids start to realize their true situation here, until something like that where you have to deal with the government. And then you're like, Oh, but I'm different. So, I feel like that was probably one of the turning points, but even after that, I feel like it was more like when I was looking for jobs and when I wanted to go to college cause I always knew I wanted to go to college, but then I feel like that dream was immediately trumped because like I don't have a social security. I didn't even attach it to like a document or status. It was more I don't have a social security. That was the one thing; I don't have nine digits attached to my name. It wasn't necessarily that, the documented status, but not having the social security. Until I heard and learned about the DREAM Act, then I was like 'Oh, there's a name to it.' There's more than one person that's effected. There's a whole group fighting for it. It was more of a revelation to me. That was the first time that I ever listened to politics in my entire life and I was like, I turned on that TV and I was watching the decision happening in 2010. That's when I learned that I'm part of that. That affects me.

For Araceli and other immigrants, links to community taught them to embrace their liminal position between cultures, communities, and statuses. Through the community, Araceli realized that "there's more than one person effected. There's a whole group..." This allowed her to appreciate that her liminal position was not one to reject, but one that brought her closer to others like herself.

1.5-generation undocumigrants are liminal subjects who are proud of the parts of themselves that are connected to their families and to their countries of origin, as well as the aspects of identity that have come from having been raised in the United States. They may have "cultural citizenship" in ways that their parents lack, but that should not determine their inclusion, and it should not serve to erase their connections to their heritage, their families, their communities, their languages, and their ideologies.

Embracing Hybridity Through Advance Parole

For those with DACA, Advance Parole (AP) allows undocumented migrants to embrace their cultural heritage in ways that were previously unavailable to them. AP is a program that allows undocumented immigrants to leave and re-enter the country through legal pathways. This legal entry is required for many migrants before they can apply to adjust their status from undocumented to legal permanent resident or citizen. DACA recipients can utilize Advance Parole if they “demonstrate that their need for travel is for ‘humanitarian, education, or employment’ purposes” (“Travel for DACA Applicants ...” 2015).

While AP provides 1.5-generation undocumented migrants with the opportunity to travel outside the United States that previously would have been too dangerous to undertake, it also carries potential risks. As previously discussed, DACA does not convey any type of legal status, only temporary work permits and protection from deportation. As such, it is up to the discretion of the immigration officer who deals with their re-entry as to whether to allow the individual back into the United States (“Travel for DACA Applicants ...” 2015). While most individuals face few problems, there are instances of individuals being unable to return to the United States despite having all their paperwork in order. Additionally, many airport and immigration officials are unfamiliar with AP, which often causes problems for folks attempting to return to the United States.

This is such a concern for 1.5-generation undocumented migrants that the members of some Facebook groups would often post in the group to celebrate their safe return. Rita posted a photo (Figure 3.9) of her passport stamp along with the caption “I made it back, tnks God!!!!!!” Other people, such as Maggie, would seek advice before hand in order to

ensure that they did everything right during their re-entry so as to avoid any problems. Maggie posted in a Facebook group dedicated to questions about Advance Parole: “Could anyone that entered California from TJ [Tijuana] by car share their experience? This might be the way my family and I come back in. They are all US citizens so not sure what to expect and how long I'll hold them up.” Posts



Figure 3.9

celebrating safe returns and asking advice prior to travel made up much of the posts in the group.

Despite the risks, many people still chose to utilize AP because it provides them the opportunity to connect with their families and nations of origin in a way that was previously unavailable to them. In one post, Yael, discusses her decision to use AP in order to visit Mexico despite the fear that she felt in regards to her return:

I left with Advanced Parole 5-13-16 to Mexico City, i was very exited and despite some negativity i took the descicion that Advanced Parole was right for me .I applied under educational purposes and was very blessed to be approved, i had the opportunity to see my family after many years as well .Today i was granted admission in to the U.S with A.P, i arrived to the LAX Airport and went into the visitor line ,i waited for my turn and biometrics were taken, my legs where a little shaky and my palms were sweatting but i took a deep breath and got a hold of my self and then the officer walked me over to a large office where he handed my documents to another officer i was told to sit and wait to be called and so i did, one hour and a half later i was called to a desk and they gave me back all my paper work and said to go to the front desk to check out and to go get my luggage. It was one of the best experiences and i am glad i was courageous.

Although many appreciate the opportunity to visit family and nations that had previously been unavailable to them, many also describe returning to a culture that is in many ways

not their own, at least not completely. One individual posted in the group dedicated to AP about the “reverse cultural shock” that she faced when utilizing AP, ending her post with the following words:

Thus, the final question I ask myself is no longer whether I will ever have that complete sense of home again, that sense of knowing I belong in one place above all others without doubt. I now ask myself how I can feel at home where I am at this very moment, in this place, with these experiences; each moment finding my way back home.

This quote in many ways represents the liminality that undocumented migrants face.

An individual then posted on the status that they instead felt that they could return and live in Mexico permanently, but they would likely still miss the United States:

Everytime I return to the USA from visiting Mexico. I feel like part of me remains in Mexico. Even though I was 3 months old when we entered the US, I can see myself living in Mexico. Idk [I don't know] there's something of me, that wants to live there. Citizenship needs to hurry though, just in case I miss USA very much, I'll return.

AP thus helps many to connect back to their cultures and their families in ways which were previously denied them, but it also helps to lay bare their liminality. Rather than attempting to reject liminality, undocumented migrants have chosen to utilize AP and other methods to celebrate their place as in-between cultures, places, nations, and generations, in a way that allows them to take advantage of various aspects from each of the multiple locations in their lives. Additionally, this recognition of their multiple connections helps to reinforce their strongly held belief that despite their liminality, they still maintain cultural citizenship in the United States, in that difference from the larger culture should not diminish their standing as equal members of the society.

Vanessa expressed a similar sentiment of not feeling fully accepted either in the United States or in Mexico, but later came to accept and appreciate her liminal identity

and location. She shares this sentiment in discussing the reactions she received when she decided to return to Mexico after receiving her undergraduate degree:

Even in Mexico, when I working in Mexico, I still felt out of place there because there is that other complex dynamic because you are not accepted one hundred percent because people will still see you as an outsider even in your own quote unquote country. That was an interesting dynamic ... I traveled back to Mexico where I spent two years with my extended family ... through that experience I was able to more connected with my family in Mexico who I had lost touch with. That's when I came to terms with the fact that sure I'm Mexican, but I'm also American at the same time. I grasped that once in Mexico that I am both. I embrace both cultural attributes.

Vanessa had a strong connection to the country of her birth, Mexico, as well as the country of her upbringing, the United States, but she ended up leaving both at some point in her life due to the sense of not being accepted in either. Her location between both countries creates a liminality that allows her to feel connected, but also separate, from both of her cultures, a feeling of being “here-not here” (Boehm 2012:127). This in-between position threatens the full membership that undocumented migrants seek, but also helps them to embrace their liminality in a way that strengthens their connections and membership within more than one nation.

Challenging the Narrative of Academic

Achievement

During the period of DREAM Activism, the image of young immigrants in graduation caps and gowns became the symbol of the



Figure 3.10

movement. Images of a graduate in full graduation gear being arrested at a protest, the immigration road sign photo shopped with graduates (Figure 3.10), and graduates holding up signs saying “Now What?” became currency in the movement. These images were widely shared and held up prominently to say that this country was excluding and deporting its best and brightest, the very people who would make our country great. This argument rested on the fact that many undocumigrants thrive academically in the United States. While this rhetoric has shifted significantly, it is not as rejected as the rhetoric of innocence or assimilation. Instead, it has become more nuanced. Today, activists continue to acknowledge that many 1.5-generation immigrants are highly accomplished in the realm of academics, but that this is not the only area where immigrants contribute to society.

Undocumigrants remain proud of their ability to go to college and graduate school, achieve top grades, and be active members of school organizations. This pride is earned because numerous road blocks to academic achievement exist for the undocumented: most undocumented immigrants are low-income, many must pay out-of-state tuition in states that they have spent most of their lives in, and they do not have access to most scholarships and loans that are available to citizens. Despite these roadblocks, many 1.5-generation immigrants go above and beyond the achievements of their U.S. citizen classmates, and that is undoubtedly something to be proud of. While acknowledging this academic achievement as deserving of recognition, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have also sought to ensure that this does not come to be seen as the only benefit that immigrants bring to the United States and that makes them deserving as full members of this society.



Figure 3.11

As I was writing this section, I received an email from United We Dream, the largest organization for 1.5-generation undocument migrants in the United States, announcing their new logo. They stated in the email that they felt that their old one failed to convey the diversity of the organization. The old logo (Figure 3.11) shows a hand holding up a diploma. In the email, they stated that “Our multi-ethnic community, multi-issue agenda, and commitment to fight for dignity and justice for all, wasn’t reflected in the look of our logo.” While they never specifically address the diploma as being the issue with the design, it is clear through their continued statements that the logo did not reflect the diversity of their organization



United We Dream[®]

Figure 3.12

nor their desire to serve *all* immigrants; the diploma represented a small sub-section of their membership and limited their diverse ideas about what constituted achievement. The new logo (Figure 3.12) does not have any reference to academic achievement, representing this profound shift in the direction of the movement.

This movement away from academic achievement as a determiner of deservedness is intertwined with a move away from assimilationist frames. In one post within a private Facebook group, an undocument migrant, while showing pride for her accomplishments, strived to make it clear that these accomplishments were not an indictment of her mother or her mother’s culture. She posted the following words accompanied by a picture of her and her mother at her graduation:

Madre at 17 you somehow summoned the courage to leave our country in pursuit of a different life. You traveled 1,671 miles away from Nicaragua with me in arms. A teenage who crossed El Rio Bravo trading her life, to give me life.

I grew up with you telling me ‘gorda cuando yo me muera, no tendre nada que dejarte pero tu educación’ (when I die, I dont have anything to leave you but this education) ... and it wounds me at times *because I know this euro ethnic-centric capitalist/patriarchal Western-centric world has made you feel that this is true. That somehow this degree, this education validates my existence ... but ... as I look at this photo it couldn’t be further from the truth see to the untrained eye it’s a graduation photo these bodies have lived through wars. Where you showed me the greatest lesson of all how to rise from the ashes* [emphasis added] ♥ ESO ES EL LEGADO QUE ME DEJAS MAMI TU RESISTENCIA [That is the legacy that you left me, Mami. Your resistance].

In this post, she ties the concept of academic achievement to “euro ethnic-centric ... Western-centric” values and argues that her mother has achieved just as much by fighting for her life and the life of her daughter and in resisting injustice.

While academic achievement remains an important achievement in the lives of 1.5-generation undocumigrants, they have recently begun to contextualize it, putting an emphasis on the roadblocks that undocumigrants face, the other paths for achievement outside of academia, and the socially constructed nature of achievement in the United States. Over time, the movement and community has become more open and accepting of individuals outside of academia. Through this inclusivity, they are able to craft a community that can more effectively fight for inclusivity within the wider society.

Change Begins at Home

Renato Rosaldo, in his article about cultural citizenship among Latinxs in San Jose, states that

in an America that is increasingly diverse racially and ethnically, the manner by which groups claim cultural citizenship may very well affect a renegotiation of the basic social contract of America. So-called new citizens – people of color, recent immigrants, women, gays, and lesbians – are not only ‘imagining’ America; they are creating it anew (1994:78).

Through access to cultural citizenship, as well as attempts to further gain access to membership through community formation, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are renegotiating the “basic social contract of America.” They are creating the world that they hope to see within their communities and thus creating society anew.

As the community seeks more inclusivity and activists aim for more diversity in their ranks, undocumigrants hope to not only to bring in outside voices, but to actively work towards a more inclusive world in direct resistance to the exclusion that they have faced in the United States. Through this resistance, undocumigrants are working to create an ideal world within their communities that they have been unable to actualize through legislative reforms. By including their parents, denouncing the innocence narrative, rejecting “assimilation,” and providing greater inclusion to those who are not academically high-achieving, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are creating alternative paths to acceptance.

Community ultimately serves as a foundation to create a world in which immigration status does not determine the trajectory of their lives. This orientation comes from the belief, held by many activist movements in the past, that cultural change begins at home and that it begins with the decisions that each of us makes about how to live our

lives. It is only through a focus on ourselves and our own actions that true change can be accomplished on a wider scale. The following chapter addresses the various alternate paths that undocumented migrants seek through a shift in language and messaging. Through inclusive community formation, undocumented migrants are finding alternate ways to claim membership and inclusion in the United States outside of legal structures that continue to exclude them.

CHAPTER 4: Alternative Paths

“Citizenship is NOT the ultimate goal. Liberation is.” - Alejandro

“Ain’t no revolution happening at polls. We go there to limit the damage of white supremacy, not end it.” – The Kinfold Kollektive (this post was shared by a 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant on Facebook)

“I’m fired up and ready to keep building, ready to get to the root causes of this injustice, which go beyond citizenship. Legal status does not and should not define our humanity.”
– Sofia

These assertions reveal a disengagement with the notion that belonging and full membership can only be achieved through legal channels. While these quotes do not deny the importance of the legal system in maintaining social hierarchies and perpetuating oppression, there is also a broader understanding of where activists need to be concentrating their efforts. Additionally, there is recognition that previous goals of solely targeting the government to ensure change were perhaps misguided. The current elections have come to represent a growing distrust of the United States’ government and its leaders for wide swaths of the U.S. public. In an article encouraging primary voters in California to select any candidate besides Donald Trump, the *Los Angeles Times* stated “the frustration and distrust are clearly not confined to one side of the ideological spectrum. At some fundamental level, a broad swath of Americans believe that government has failed them” (Times Editorial Board 2016). The growing efforts among undocumented migrants to concentrate on community formation as a primary form of resistance is widely influenced by a growing national distrust in the ability of the government and the law to create lasting and meaningful change.

This belief in the failure of the government is even more pressing for millions of undocumented immigrants who have spent their lives waiting for immigration reform. Barack Obama ran for president on the promise of immigration reform, and once elected, promised to make it his second priority after health care reform. When it became increasingly clear that President Obama's attempts to pass comprehensive immigration reform would be unsuccessful, he set his sights on passing the DREAM Act. Throughout the period of his presidency in which he attempted to pass comprehensive immigration reform, as well as piecemeal immigration reform such as the DREAM Act, President Obama continued and escalated a campaign of "enforcement-first." This enforcement-first campaign sought to convince Republican legislators that if they were to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and for potential immigrants, that there would also be enforcement of immigration laws and that undocumented immigration would not be tolerated. While this was an appalling sacrifice to make, many activists were willing to allow record-numbers of deportations to continue with the promise that immigration reform would be implemented, and as a result, the lives of undocumented immigrants throughout the country would improve.

In 2010, the DREAM Act failed yet again in Congress and the more immigration-friendly Democratic Party lost its majority in the Senate. It became increasingly clear that if the DREAM Act could not pass in even the most favorable of circumstances, and with the wave of anti-immigration Tea Party officials entering Congress, any form of immigration reform was unlikely to come to fruition. The Obama administration began to distance themselves from immigration reform in order to concentrate on other issues, but they nonetheless maintained their record numbers of deportations. According to Fusion,

When it comes to getting tough on immigration, Republican candidates talk the talk, but Obama walks the walk. President Obama has deported more people than any U.S. president before him, and almost more than every other president combined from the 20th century (Rogers 2016).

Despite declining levels of undocumented immigration to the United States, the Obama administration has overseen the deportation of 2.5 million immigrants as of January 2016, up 23% from the Bush administration (Rogers 2016). In 2016 alone, there have been two massive waves of deportations ordered by President Obama. The first, in January, occurred when ICE began a deportation raid focused on individuals from Central America, leading the director of policy for the National Immigrant Justice Center to state “This is the only time I remember enforcement raids on families of women and children who are fleeing some of the most violent places on the planet” (Rogers 2016). These massive levels of deportations have led many to deem Obama the “deporter-in-chief” (Epstein 2014).

Out of frustration with the lack of progress on passing immigration reform and the DREAM Act, coupled with the record numbers of deportations that have occurred during the Obama presidency, the 1.5-generation undocumigrant movement has created inclusive communities to counteract exclusion from citizenship. Through the creation of strong communities, undocumigrants seek to craft a counterpublic. In “Seeking the ‘Counter,’ in Counterpublics,” Robert Asen (2000:431) argues that

as conceptual models of the public sphere have moved toward multiplicity, ‘counterpublic’ has emerged as a critical term to signify that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants.

One way that undocumented migrants have created such a “counterpublic” is by rejecting government solutions and embracing community as a primary source of liberation.

Additionally, undocumented migrants’ cultural citizenship has given them access to a greater understanding of what is possible outside of legal citizenship. While undocumented migrants are denied full legal citizenship, many within the community have successfully claimed cultural citizenship and have shown that they do, without question, belong. Furthermore, undocumented youth, their parents, undocumented migrants without access to higher education, and other undocumented immigrants lack legal status and legal citizenship. Nonetheless, they have varying levels of access to membership and cultural citizenship due to other intersecting factors, such as cultural capital, education, ability to work, income, race, ethnicity, language, or a variety of other factors. This intersectionality underscores the various ways that inclusion can be granted or withheld within society regardless of legal citizenship, which further underscores the power of cultural citizenship. Still, communities have become a location through which to cultivate cultural citizenship for all undocumented immigrants. This cultural citizenship is achieved through the pooling of resources and knowledge to create and share cultural capital for a broad swath of undocumented immigrants who cannot as easily accomplish cultural citizenship without access to these resources. Additionally, it is accomplished through a change in larger cultural norms in regards to assimilation, achievement, and the value of people. Consequently, undocumented migrants are wielding cultural capital as a powerful tool through which to gain membership in the United States outside of legal citizenship.

“I’m with my Community”

Alejandra and others expressed the desire to move away from government-centered solutions when they stated that they were not “tied to no law.” Alejandra furthered this sentiment when she posted the following status on her Facebook page: “To my undocumented family: Did ya’ll know that the law changing and papers will not give us liberation?” While there remains much heterogeneity in the community in terms of how to best balance the desire to reject legal structures with the pragmatic importance of government institutions in the daily lives of immigrants, many leaders within the movement have nonetheless sought to build community broadly. Such efforts ensure that immigrants can live strong and successful lives through cultural citizenship, even if immigration reform never materializes.

The debates over the extent to which they would abandon government solutions became very clear in an article that was heavily shared among the 1.5-generation undocumented groups and among individual 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants in February 2016. The article, “The Futility of the DREAMer Endorsement,” argued that the trend of high-profile 1.5-generation undocumented presidential endorsements would do little if anything to change our political system. It is important to note that while the author chooses to utilize the term “DREAMer” in his article, Joel Sati states that

I call these endorsements “DREAMer endorsements” ... because they feed into the “Perfect Dreamer” stereotype that I am shocked the movement has not erased. Among the millions of undocumented immigrants stand a perfect few immigrants worthy of sympathy and status by virtue of their arrivals as youth, perfect GPAs, unaccented speech, and unwavering belief in the American dream. The trope of the Perfect Dreamer reaches *reductio* when, within the select few, even fewer undocumented immigrants are acknowledged to have the political wherewithal and cachet to *endorse* a presidential candidate (Sati 2016).

Sati, an undocumented PhD student at UC Berkeley, therefore does not utilize the term “DREAMer” to refer to the entirety of the undocumented immigrant community, but rather those who continue to put forth the image of the young undocumented immigrant as the “Perfect Dreamer.” He goes on to argue that when certain 1.5-generation immigrants give their endorsements, it is because they fulfill culturally constructed expectations of DREAMers as superior, and thus reinforce the previous arguments that their voices mattered more than others in the community. Therefore, Sati argues that endorsements serve to reinforce dangerous and outdated representations of undocumented youth that do more harm to the community than the endorsements of immigration-friendly candidates do to push forward progress. Sati continues:

The goal of immigration advocacy in this campaign and beyond is to hold candidates—and the system – accountable while still being a political force. Speaking from an organizer’s perspective, aligning ourselves with political establishment figures who have shown reluctance to make even piecemeal policy moves undermines the movement’s goals (2016).

Thus, while Sati does not completely reject reforming the current system to create a system that better serves the immigrant population, he does reject doing it through “silver tongued politicians” (Sati 2016) who have made promises in the past, but have ultimately failed to deliver.

This article was widely shared within the 1.5-generation immigrant groups and Facebook pages because it captured sentiments which had already been expressed in the past, albeit less explicitly. Nonetheless, while this article disavows the endorsements of several high-profile 1.5-generation undocumigrants, it does not fully address how the

community is choosing to fight for their ideal vision of the world outside of political endorsements and without expecting legal citizenship.

To return to the image discussed in the introductory chapter (Figure 4.1), the

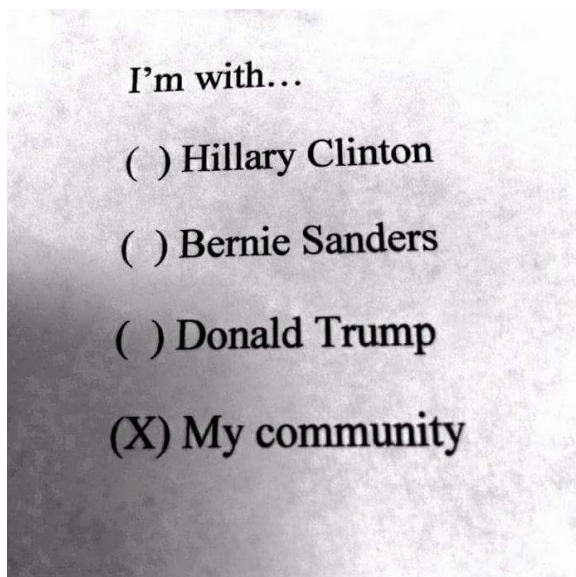


Figure 4.1

refusal to endorse presidential candidates reveals the strong belief that community can provide solutions that politicians cannot. This parallels many of the arguments made by Sati in his article. It is interesting to note that even when given the option between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton (candidates who have both been endorsed by several

undocumigrants) and Donald Trump (an individual who is widely detested and mocked by the immigrant community) that the graphic still chose to disavow support of all candidates in favor of their community. Ultimately, this demonstrates the strong connection that undocumigrants have developed over the years with their community. Undocumigrants express that it is only through community that they can accomplish real change.

The Internet as a Pathway to Inclusivity

The online Facebook groups are one way that undocumigrants build community and seek alternative paths to membership and inclusion. Primarily, the online groups provide a

space where individuals who did not previously have access to a community of individuals like themselves can feel included. This space allows these undocumigrants to express themselves, understand their situation, and seek advice for living with their undocumented status. Many 1.5-generation undocumigrants were previously excluded from the movement by the rhetoric of the DREAM Act, because they did not have access to urban centers or college campuses where undocumented communities are formed, or because they were too busy with work or school to utilize these communities. Therefore, the online groups provide this group of undocumigrants with a platform in which to contribute to and benefit from the 1.5-generation undocumigrant community.

In addition to merely providing a location for these individuals to be included, the online groups also allow previously excluded individuals to have a voice in the formation of their community and in the strategies, methods and language that are used. Finally, the online groups allow previously excluded undocumigrants to play an active role in this community's growth. Thus, the online Facebook groups provide a level of inclusivity that was not and could not be accomplished prior to their use. This inclusivity is essential to the community's goal of disavowing the importance of citizenship in determining one's humanity and access to human rights. Therefore, it represents the creation of an alternative path to membership.

For example, when I asked Ricardo about the role in online communities in his life, he said:

I think the online community has helped a lot when it comes to immigration issues and feeling welcome by the community. If it wasn't for the community involvement and the outreach from students all over, Southern California, Washington area, you know, many students would not be able to out themselves

or even be involved in any way. Social media has allowed our community to expand and reach more people and for the issue to be talked about more.

As Ricardo discusses, the online groups allow people who previously did not have access to the networks of undocumigrants to become part of the conversation and community. This provides a space to those who live in rural areas, who did not attend college, and who were not able to become involved in activist movements to have conversations with other undocumigrants about the values and direction of their communities.

In her article exploring the online communities of diasporic Eritrean immigrants, anthropologist Victoria Bernal states that

What is powerful about the access opened up by cyberspace and by public spheres is the ways they allow diverse actors to call into question the terms of knowledge production, relations of authority, and the politics of representation and the ways they give rise to alternative knowledges and counterpublics (2005:672).

In a similar manner, the online communities of 1.5-generation immigrants serve as a place for the community to express disagreements, challenge norms within the community, and to communally craft themselves as a singular community who, although incredibly heterogeneous in nature, share a common goal of providing inclusion within a country which has continually sought to ensure their exclusion. Through this community formation, 1.5-generation immigrants create a counterpublic that challenges wider ideologies about what it means to be a member of the United States, as well as indirectly challenging the idea that homogeneity is a necessary requisite for membership in a country, a social movement, or a community.

The theoretical frame of “communities of practice” provides important insight into the formation of undocumigrant communities. Mary Bucholtz defines a community of practice “as a group of people oriented to the same practice, though not necessarily in

the same way, the community of practice model treats difference and conflict, not uniformity and consensus, as the ordinary state of affairs” (1999:210). The online Facebook groups provide an alternate location where undocumented migrants who had previously felt excluded from the movement can join with long-time activists and those who fulfilled the “perfect dreamer” stereotype (Sati 2016) to communally and inclusively craft their communities. Within these private Facebook groups, undocumented migrants seek inclusive community formation and a change in national laws and values in regards to immigration, but conflicting language ideologies between long-time activists and newly included undocumented migrants are often made clear and work to index their identities in a variety of complex ways. The discussions that result from these conflicts and differences often create a space in which values are challenged and crafted communally. During the years of DREAM Activism, many of these voices were excluded from these discussions, which left out many important viewpoints.

While the Facebook groups are private, in an effort to ensure their inclusivity, there is relatively little gate-keeping of potential members. Nearly every request to join is accepted, and members are rarely removed from the group unless it is clear that they are there to harass undocumented immigrants or to spread xenophobic or racist messages. While long-time activists within the movement have made great strides to move away from rhetoric which excluded many undocumented migrants from the community, there are still some roadblocks which exist that have prevented full inclusion. Nonetheless, the online groups provide a place where discussions can occur that previously never would have taken place. Allowing for discussion from a wide range of undocumented migrants is the only way that these roadblocks will eventually be overcome and is the primary reason why

undocumented migrants have made so much progress in achieving more inclusive communities thus far.

Responses to a rule posted by a moderator in several of the groups reveals the way that the online groups provide a platform through which previously excluded community members can provide input into their vision of the community. A primary moderator for several of the private Facebook groups, Victor, posted in each of the groups that he moderated:

NOTE, NEW RULE: Anyone who uses the term "illegal" to refer to themselves or another will receive a warning. If you break this rule again, then we may remove you from the group.
We can't expect opposition to refrain from using the term to refer to us, unless we remove such usage from our own vocabulary.

While most people agreed with this rule, many others felt that the rule was unfair. One individual stated: "No one tells me what I should or should not call myself. And I sure as hell prefer illegal to dreamer. I am a proud illegal. Ban me."

In response to this and similar criticism, Victor repeated in several comments that he "could understand if someone is oblivious to what this movement has been working to achieve for the past several years. However, I also find it hard to believe considering we have done a lot to make a push for such terms to not be used to refer to us." Although I am not familiar with the extent to which this rule was enforced, the rule remains posted, and I have not since seen the term "illegal" employed within the group. It is important to mention that such rules are not outside of the norms for private Facebook groups. In my experience, most private Facebook groups have relatively strict rules regulating language behavior within them, and the groups discussed here are no exception.

In this example, we see the ways in which conflict within the group comes from differences in social background. While the community has come together with the goal of creating a world in which people who are undocumented or “illegal” do not face constant discrimination, the ways in which they disagree about the path through which to accomplish this shared goal shows the various ways that they index and craft their identity in agentic ways that are influenced by structural factors. Through the lens of communities of practice, their position simultaneously as individuals and members of this group become clear. The ways in which the group attempts to coalesce the community around shared ideals (regardless of the universality of these ideals), demonstrate the attempt to create cohesion within the community. Additionally, the ability of individuals to express disagreement with community norms demonstrates the ways that new voices are being allowed to help form the norms and values of the community.

While in this instance, established group members ensured that the community followed the language expectations of activists, the responses to Victor’s post reveal the ways that the introduction of these groups as a place for inclusivity allows for a more multi-directional discussion than the previous top-down unidirectional messaging of the movement. First, the post provided a place for 1.5-generation immigrants who had previously felt excluded from the movement to express their opinions of the decision made by the movement’s activist leaders that the term “illegal” constituted an unacceptable slur. While these opinions were overwhelmed by those who agreed with the rule and counter-arguments were largely ignored, the online communities have provided a space to discuss their perspectives in a way that did not previously exist, thus

demonstrating their location within the movement in a way that previous discourse had more thoroughly erased.

Secondly, the individual who posted their disagreement to the rule brought up an argument over language that had previously resulted in the language of largely non-activists being filtered-up to activists. This language change that came from people who had felt excluded from the movement fundamentally shifted the direction and messaging of the movement as a whole. In his response to the posted rule, the poster stated “I sure as hell prefer illegal to dreamer.” As was previously discussed, many undocumented immigrants who would be ineligible for the DREAM Act felt excluded by the usage of the term “DREAMer.” In this instance, the criticism of the many 1.5-generation immigrants who would not be eligible for the DREAM Act if it were to pass was heard and implemented due to increased efforts to bring in a wider array of voices. While this criticism is not the primary aspect of the complaint leveled by the poster when he stated that he “sure as hell prefer[s] illegal to dreamer,” he was invoking this past argument in order to demonstrate the ways in which activists control and disseminate language within the movement can be harmful to the inclusion that the group seeks to achieve.

Both Victor’s post and the chosen response to it demonstrate the dialogue that these online Facebook groups have allowed to occur between individuals who would consider themselves to be activists and those who have been unable to be as active due to a variety of circumstances. While activists still hold the majority of power to erase the language which they do not wish to see within their community, the voices of dissent are able to be heard in a way that would never have been possible in earlier years. Due to this inclusion, we are beginning to see change towards greater inclusion of a diversity of

voices within the undocumigrant communities. The “difference and conflict” that is an inherent aspect of this community of practice allows this community to communally define themselves outside of the gaze of those who would seek to use their difference against them. Additionally, conflict within the online communities allows for greater inclusion and understanding in the future through the inclusion of dialogue and voices that had previously been entirely erased.

In another example of an interaction between a long-established activist within the movement and an individual who likely would have not had access to the community during the days of DREAM Activism, we see attempts to ensure understanding and inclusion. An undocumigrant posted the following status in one of the Facebook groups:

So this happen to me today: Today I had no encounter a bad scenario, where a woman was having a hard time communicating at the store with the cashier, she spoke Spanish so, since i was behind her I helped her out with what she need it. Then out of nowhere we came across an angry lady she screamed at both of us to go back to our Country Whatever that means... I looked at her and the real me wanted to come out and give her a piece of my mind & maybe even a slap for how rude she was, but they i looked at her and said Thank You, She said what did you say i REPLY I SAID THANK YOU, because of people like you like me push harder to become somebody in this country, because of people like you, people like me work 3 jobs to take care of their own without government help, as she paid i told her you are welcome!! she screamed why? I said you see that government link card you are paying with, since i pay my taxes and I work here legally some of my money goes to you! she looked at me and never reply back. I don't do much of a talk for politics and i am not get into that, but I am not here on a free ride, i work hard for what i have. I don't have to tell people about my life but for some of that are just like that woman...”

In response, Angelica, an active and nationally well-known 1.5-generation undocumigrant activist, responded:

Good for you for speaking up. I'm a little concerned thought with how our community demonizes those on public assistance. We have been told

(Reagan) to believe that they are bad, obviously this lady was horrible and deserves your comments but there are many people on public assistance who in reality need it. U.S. Saying “we’re not a drain” is implying that they are, which isn’t necessarily the case. And she probably thinks her family came the “right way” lol aka stealing land.

Although Angelica’s language choices serve to ensure that the original poster does not feel attacked by her words and to ensure that a conversation occurs rather than an argument, they also serve to ensure that individuals are made aware when they have stepped outside of the bounds of appropriate language and messaging as defined by activists within the community. The original poster responded that she obviously agreed that not all individuals on welfare are lazy, but she simply meant that this particular individual had no right to make negative judgments about others who paid their fair share. While it was obvious that these two individuals likely had similar opinions on the matter, Angelica identified a clear linguistic difference between them and used this difference to urge the original poster to use more “appropriate” (i.e. not disparaging of those who receive welfare) language in the future.

Angelica fails to address the unequal power differential created by her status as a highly-educated and nationally recognized activist who has appeared side-by-side with President Obama on numerous occasions during important policy speeches and is currently a high-ranking official in Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. By instead establishing herself as an everyday member of the community on the same level as the original poster, she hopes that the authority of her statement will come from the movement’s declared belief in the importance of the voices of every undocumented immigrant within the movement, rather than from her status as an authority figure. This

position is likely much more influential and effective than the authoritative stance that Victor took as a moderator for the group.

Through the language choices everyone involved in the exchange employs, they both clearly index their position within the community of practice as activist and as individuals who were likely excluded during earlier phases of the undocumented movement. The original poster stated that she doesn't "do much of a talk for politics and i am not get into that," arguing that she does not feel comfortable in the realm of politics but that this particular instance transcended politics and required her to speak up. Angelica, whose status as an activist is well-known among most 1.5-generation undocumented activists, directly situates politics in her answer with her reference to Reagan and the language he used to describe individuals on welfare.

While this example of the disagreement over how to refer to individuals on welfare does not consist of a strict rule with clearly stated punishments for transgressions in the same way as the previous example, it nonetheless demonstrates the ways in which this community of practice expresses similar values and ideologies in distinct ways that result from their differential social backgrounds, access to education, and involvement in activism. The online spaces allow for interaction between these two different individuals in a way that was previously unavailable to the community, and Angelica's linguistic choices seek to ensure that the inclusion sought by the community is not threatened by her attempts to correct the language use of individuals who had previously been largely excluded from the 1.5-generation undocumented immigrant movement.

Productive Community Formation

These two case studies demonstrate two ways in which conflicts between long-time activists and newly included community members were mediated within the community of practice of the Facebook groups of undocumigrants. Individuals within the group brought their personal backgrounds, which consisted of differential access to education, activist spaces, and linguistic ideologies that were all crafted and formed by structural factors, into the community. Structural roadblocks leave many 1.5-generation undocumigrants without access to the spaces where the linguistic ideologies of activists are crafted.

While there have been greater attempts to understand these differences in backgrounds by activists within the movement, frustration and erasure still occurs. In the example with the individual who experienced racism while attempting to help a fellow shopper communicate, Angelica attempted to correct her language choices with kindness that showed an understanding of this differential access. Victor, on the other hand, while never being rude or disrespectful in his posts, largely ignored the primary complaints that group members put forth in regards to his rule.

It is very much the goal of activists within these groups to ensure that the voices of individuals without access to higher education and activist spaces are heard, but also to ensure that their linguistic and other activist ideologies are filtered down to non-activists in the process. While this may be their intention, the fact that these discussions are allowed to happen in the first place allow some linguistic ideologies to be filtered up from non-activists, as with the community's movement away from usage of the term "DREAMer." The private Facebook groups allow a continually forming community of

diverse and heterogeneous 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants to utilize their disagreements and conflicts in a constructive and productive manner. Thus, they are able to use discussion and disagreement to communally craft the values and direction of their community without the gaze of outsiders who may utilize the disagreements and lack of cohesive messaging of the group in order to reinforce xenophobic and often racist ideologies. In order for this endeavor to be wholly successful though, activists must continue the path they are already on in recognizing their privilege, the power differentials that exists between them and non-activists, and the importance of embracing heterogeneity in their shared goals of creating a more inclusive and less xenophobic United States for all immigrants and for all human beings.

Using Community to Plan for the Future

Choosing community has become central to dealing with the various ways that undocumented immigrants are excluded from everyday life in the United States. In many serious and complex ways, lack of legal status severely limits the ability of undocumented immigrants to lead complete and full lives. This is often deliberate on the part of our legal system with the intent of forcing bare life onto undocumented immigrants with the hope that they will self-deport or to warn their friends and families that the journey is not worth the risk. By denying undocumented immigrants access to higher education (and attempting to prevent them from having access to public K-12 education), quality jobs, housing, healthcare, the right to vote, and a living wage or

minimum wage our immigration system seeks to maintain its hegemonic control over who is allowed to be members of the United States.

In addition to these constraints, the constant threat of deportation forces most undocumented immigrants to live in a constant state of fear, with the hope on behalf of the government that this too will encourage self-deportation and discourage future immigration. Together these mechanisms aim to create a situation in which undocumigrants are forced to live “bare lives” in which they remain alive, but are “nonetheless stripped of all the encumbrances of social location.” (De Genova 2010:37). While these constraints are real and work effectively to ensure that most undocumented immigrants live in poverty and in the shadows with few opportunities for advancement or growth, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are finding ways to challenge the control asserted by the U.S. immigration system. Instead, undocumigrants claim cultural citizenship for all immigrants through community formation.

One way that this resistance is taking place is by overtly declaring the immorality of the law, thus serving to establish that their status as human beings is not and cannot be determined by whether or not they are here “legally.” This is part of the move away from the rhetoric that established their innocence, but in addition to merely declaring the innocence of all undocumented migrants, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are

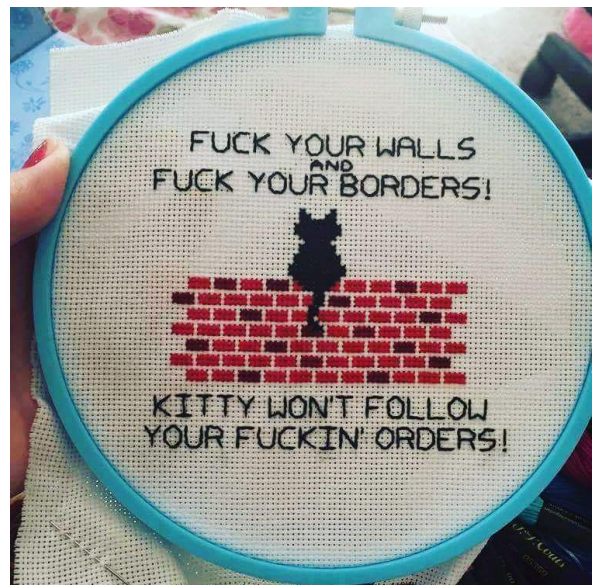


Figure 4.2



ICE-FREE NYC @ICEFREENYC

@DHSgov Reminder: Migrant power has not changed and we will continue to defy your illegitimate borders #FUCKICE #ICEFREENYC

11:50 AM - 24 May 2016

Figure 4.3

seeking to declare the law itself, and therefore, “illegality,” as irrelevant. The following cross-stitch (Figure 4.2) was shared among the 1.5-generation undocumigrant Facebook groups. It humorously declares disregard for an immoral immigration legal system which seeks to maintain hegemonic caste systems among immigrants and citizens. The cross-stitch says “Fuck your walls and fuck your borders! Kitty won’t follow your fuckin’ orders!” This is a reference both to the climbing ability of cats, as well as the unnatural and culturally constructed nature of borders, which exist only in human societies.

Additionally, this narrative seeks to disavow “innocence” as something that can be determined by xenophobic and racist immigration laws, and thus establishes that the narrative of innocence only reinforces the cultural construction of “il/legality.” The tweet (Figure 4.3) posted by ICE-FREE NYC (ICE is the acronym for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the federal government agency responsible for most deportation campaigns), encapsulates much of these attempts by 1.5-generation undocumigrants, as well as broader immigration movements, to reject the association of legality with morality, particularly in our immigration system. The rejection of the government as a

source of “il/legality” serves to reinforce the importance of communities as a source of inclusion and morality, rather than a government which has continually sought to exploit and exclude immigrant populations.

While undocumented immigrants can declare the illegitimate nature of the law, it does little to actually subvert the power and control that the government and its legal systems maintains over individuals living in the United States. Therefore, 1.5-generation undocumigrants utilize their communities, online and offline, in order to lessen the power of the government in controlling and constraining the lives of undocumented immigrants. A post in the group dedicated to questions about Deferred Action reveals one way in which this was accomplished. This was posted during a deportation push that DHS was carrying out against Central Americans in December 2015 and January 2016. The post reads:

Jose: All of us in this forum need to report any ICE activity you see in your community. Post any information you have. It is our responsibility to help! Keeping an eye for everyone please!
Thanks

Claudette responded “QUE DIOS NOS PROTEJA” [May God protect us]. This response shows both a fear of the deportations raids as well as a belief that there is an authority higher than the government who is looking out for what is



Figure 4.4

right and helping to protect the undocumented immigrant community. Juan then responded by sharing a graphic created by United We Dream (Figure 4.4) describing what to do if confronted by immigration authorities. The graphic also emphasizes that the community must work together to fight deportations. By spreading infographics such as this, the community works to ensure that the law can maintain as little control over the lives of immigrants as possible. By coordinating information, undocumented immigrants can work to evade deportation. A third and fourth poster responded to say that “A friend posted they were at the Northgate on Bristol and McFadden in Santa Ana” and “There were today morning in Miami florida.” Finally, someone posted a phone number for a “national network hotline for UWD for deportation assistance,” saying that “You can also report if you see you any checkpoints or raids in your area.”

The online message boards also serve as a place to provide emotional support for immigrants dealing with the negative consequences of interaction with the legal system, in addition to providing information on how to evade deportation. In one post, Karla posted,

Guys I am freaking out, my dad just sent me a picture and a message saying that ICE is in front of his job taking people, which is literally no joke like across the street, and a very narrow street across his workplace. My dad is almost crying because he is watching our people being taken away, they were in their jobs, working, doing nothing wrong. I told him not to look and to be as calm as possible in order to not get attention to himself and work as usual.
My dad is so scared, this is not fair.

Lucy responded to saying “What city and state?” so that others in the area could be warned about the raid and find their way to safety. Karla replied “chino California.” Later

that day, after her father was able to avoid being picked-up by immigration officials,

Karla posted the following status in the group:

Hello friends, as many of you know earlier today my dad witnessed an immigration raid. A young lady reached out to me and asked me what was my family plan and I told her I would make a list, I am sharing this with you in hopes that you find it useful and think about the steps to take if you or one of your loved ones get detained. Better to be prepared for the worse than unprepared ... I know this is pretty standard, but sometimes we do not think about these things. Be prepared, and talk to your family about it. Today was very scary, and although we were prepared...it does not compare to the fear we felt. So please educate yourself and your loved ones and friends about the steps to take and make a comprehensive plan for the worst. Stay strong my friends, these are scary times.

Along with the post, Karla shared a list of recommendations similar to the recommendations made in the United We Dream graphic.

Through the community, undocumented immigrants are able, at least in part, to evade immigration raids by informing others of areas to avoid and by providing emotional support to individuals who fear that their families may be in danger. For DACA recipients, this shows even more powerfully the unity and community that exists. As DACA recipients do not face the same threat of deportation, these actions are largely employed for their loved ones. This is demonstrated in one of the responses to Karla's post, which asked, "Why should DACA recipients be afraid of getting detained?" To this, Karla replied, "...Yes, this plan is for your loved ones, I think I mentioned that in the post. I shared this because my dad went through an immigration raid today. We must worry about our undocumented family and friends also not only ourselves."

Through community formation that has happened both online and offline, through official organizations such as United We Dream, and through the informal communities of undocumented immigrants dedicated to ensuring each other's safety, immigrants have

successfully worked to ensure that they have a certain degree of protection from some aspects of government control. These connections provide a social location which fear of deportation seeks to fully remove, and thus is a form of overt resistance to injustice.

In addition to directly resisting attempts at deportation and forced bare life, undocumigrants are finding ways to access the trappings of a full life that an unjust immigration system attempts to deny them. Through DACA, 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants are seeking to create long-term solutions for themselves and their families, despite the fact that DACA is a short-term program. In this sense, 1.5-generation immigrants are utilizing the freedom that DACA has provided them to build up their resumes, purchase homes and cars, and otherwise seize the “encumbrances of social location” (De Genova 2010:37) that the government has attempted to deny them. The social locations that they take with or without government approval are long-term (in contrast to the short-term nature of DACA) and have positive effects on their family and friends who do not have access to DACA.

This directly relates to the ways that 1.5-generation undocumigrants have chosen to embrace liminality. While the nature of DACA leaves many people living in limbo, with no idea what their future may hold, many are instead choosing to embrace this as an opportunity to create long-term solutions for themselves. This is reflected in Araceli’s response when I asked if she had plans if DACA were to be revoked: “Even before the relief came like we all kinda made it work. So, it doesn’t scare me because it wouldn’t be anything I haven’t dealt with before.” Araceli realizes that while DACA provides important benefits which have concrete effects on her life, she is still undocumented, and thus must use all resources at her disposal, including DACA, to “make it work.” If and

when DACA no longer exists, this same mindset will continue, just without the protections offered by the executive action.

This is seen in an advertisement for a webinar that was offered by United We Dream (Figure 4.5). This webinar

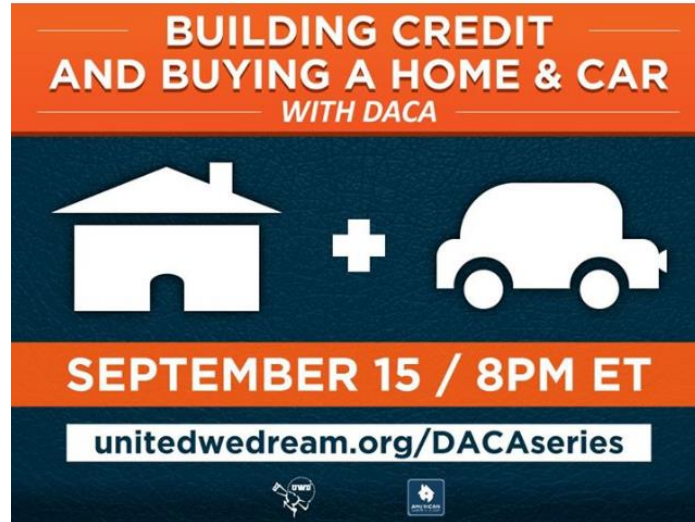


Figure 4.5

provided info on how to purchase a home and a car with DACA, both of which are long-term investments that would likely expand beyond the length of DACA. When DACA

recipients were able to successfully make these kind of life decisions, they would often post them in the group. In Figure 4.6, a DACA recipient celebrates her recent home purchase.

This post received 620 likes (at the time I took the screen clipping), more than I had ever seen for any post in the

Forgot to post, but finally bought our house !! Si se puede ! 😊 closed on 04/07/16



Me gusta Comentar

lván [redacted] y 619 personas más

Figure 4.6

group, showing that even the act of home ownership can serve as a powerful a form of resistance against attempts to force bare life on undocumented immigrants.

This shift in the movement allows the lessening of the constraints of undocumented status in everyday life. Vanessa discussed her ability to live a fuller life through her small everyday decisions once she recognized that her legal status did not define her:

Vanessa: When the second DACA was about to roll out, I was very hurt to know that again I would not fall into this cohort. There were days when I just could not brush it off. In a way, it did provide some healing. I had to tell my employer, who contacted me as a freelancer. I couldn't hold it in any longer. When I finally revealed to him about my situation, he was very shocked because I was bawling, you know, I was in so much pain because, at least, at the time, I believed that there was no hope. Now, I see that you just have to live it day by day and build your professional development skills. Do what you can to move forward and meet your goals.

Aria: Is that why you are interested in coding because it gives you the opportunity to be a freelancer and develop your career outside of the legal system?

Vanessa; ABSOLUTELY, that's one of the reasons why I am pursuing coding. Being able to develop websites and mobile apps. *I feel like someone wouldn't be in control of me. I would be free to pursue this and be qualified based on my skill sets, not because of my status* [emphasis added]. I would be free to obtain clients remotely or on-site. I like that flexibility. I am also fascinated by the whole the civic engagement movement and open data ... I recently registered for a hack-a-thon, so that will be my first ever hack-a-thon and I'm very looking forward to it. *It kinda allows me to allow myself back into society* [emphasis added]. It took me a while to understand that throughout these few months since I moved to New York, I was still thinking in the mindset that I'm an outsider. Now, I realize in order to live as normal a life as I can live, I have to give myself that opportunity to go to salsa lessons or if something interests me, to do it. *Not to feel that something might happen or I might be at risk. I think where I'm at right now is just being myself 100 percent and not constraining myself anymore* [emphasis added].

In this instance, Vanessa has not allowed her legal status to define her and to allow herself back into society to improve both her daily existence as well as her ability to break into the long-term career of coding. Through a community that has provided access to different opportunities, such as coding, and other ways of living, surviving, and thriving outside of legal status, Vanessa has been able to find hope that for many years she had given up on.

Liberation, Inclusion, and Assimilation

While “liberation” is frequently identified as a goal of activism among 1.5 generation undocumented immigrants, what exactly this entails is less often explicitly articulated. In part, liberation is understood as the right to difference, acceptance of various paths to success, and freedom from culturally constructed borders. Yet, despite these ideas of liberation, some aspects of the concept are aspirational and therefore not easily defined or delineated. For many of those who participated in my research, to define “liberation” is to foreclose its possibilities. Instead, liberation is something to work toward and to continually articulate and re-articulate through disagreement, discussion, critique, and re-evaluation of priorities. Undeniably, many of the perspectives of undocumigrants that I have described throughout this thesis will be challenged and will change in coming years. Such shifts are an inevitable consequence of a movement created out of critique of societal norms, but it through these changes that a path toward liberation might actually be forged.

During the process of crafting a vision of liberation, undocumented migrants have disagreed about what it means to be included in the movement or to “belong” more generally within communities. While undocumented migrants have disavowed many of the expectations of society, as well as the idea that they must “assimilate,” they still choose to embrace the ability to purchase homes and cars, values that are also celebrated as part of a collective “American Dream.” Additionally, while they embrace inclusion, they also celebrate their ability to be different from the wider population. Paradoxically, immigrants may articulate differences while simultaneously prioritizing the value of inclusion. While such values may seem contradictory, they also demonstrate the diverse character of liberation as a goal. The values of liberation, inclusion, and challenges to the constricting elements of “assimilation” demonstrate that liberation can take divergent and unexpected forms. Indeed, the alternative paths created by the undocumented migrant movement provide a greater range of possibility for attaining different aspects of liberation.

Living Full Lives Despite Legal Exclusion

Candidates and elected officials have long been making promises to the immigrant community about their intentions to pass reform and create a path to citizenship. Many of these promises were sincere, but they failed to catalyze any real change. In the wake of these failed promises, the “deportation regime” (De Genova and Peutz 2010) continued to grow and more undocumented migrants and their families face increased policing and deportation. With the expectation that legislative reform would not be achieved in a timely manner and the growing threat of deportation, 1.5-generation undocumented migrants took

it upon themselves to resist injustice by declaring the law immoral and therefore illegitimate and by forming the networks and communities necessary in order to defend themselves against deportation and forced poverty. Through community-formation, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have sought alternative paths to acceptance and inclusion outside of the government which has continually sought to reinforce their exclusion. Through claims to cultural citizenship in providing access to membership, rights, and a ladder for economic and personal growth, undocumigrants focus on cultural citizenship over claims to legal citizenship.

CONCLUSION: Cultural Citizenship as Resistance

“The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity.”

– Judith Butler (2004:31)

Georgio Agamben argues that “bare life” is the state of being human but without the features of society or culture that typically make us fully human (Agamben 1997).

Nicholas De Genova has used the concept to describe undocumented immigrants facing fear of deportation, stating that bare life “may be understood to be *what remains* when human existence, while yet alive, is nonetheless stripped of all the encumbrances of social location” (2010:37). U.S. immigration policies strip undocumented immigrants of “social location” through denial of work, social services, and legal protection.

Additionally, immigration law seeks to ensure that undocumented immigrants exist in a position of statelessness, with the constant threat of deportation looming over their daily life. Together, these governmental actions seek to reinforce the importance of membership by ensuring fear of deportation, lack of access to a social safety net, and inability to obtain decent wages and working conditions for undocumented immigrants.

Immigration law seeks not only to ensure this oppression, but to also ensure the erasure of undocumented immigrants from the lives of those with citizenship by forcing undocumented immigrants to remain in the shadows. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler differentiates between the “unreal” and the “oppressed,” arguing that

to be oppressed means that you already exist as a subject of some kind, you are there as the visible and oppressed other for the master subject as a possible or potential subject. But to be unreal is something else again. For to be oppressed one must first become intelligible (2004:218).

When immigration laws seek to make the lives of undocumented immigrants bare, they seek to accomplish this through ensuring their status as unreal, as unintelligible to those with the privilege of citizenship. More fundamentally though, these attempts at bare life ensure that undocumented immigrants are made unreal to each other through ensuring the fear of deportation, reinforcing and rewarding narratives which divide immigrants and create caste systems, and through the withholding of human rights to individuals not deemed worthy of inclusion. This results in the breakdown of communities that could provide support and inclusion to undocumented immigrants and ensures that undocumented immigrants remain exploitable and deportable.

One way to improve the lives of undocumented immigrants would be through legislative reforms that provide a path to citizenship. While this is undeniably an important step for undocumented immigrants, it also raises important concerns. First, these legislative reforms have failed to come to fruition in recent decades. And while immigrants continue to wait for legislative promises that repeatedly fail to materialize, deportations and the build-up of an increasingly effective deportation regime continue (De Genova and Peutz 2010). Even under presidential administrations that would seem supportive of immigration reform, the “deportation regime” and other attempts to control the lives of undocumented immigrants have grown immensely.

The Nation recently published an article detailing how the enforcement-first approach to undocumented immigration has increased exponentially under President Obama:

Instead of reversing that architecture and disavowing that plan, President Obama turbocharged it ... Before the end of his first term in office, the

Obama administration had taken a small program developed in George W. Bush's last days that aimed to turn local police into "force multipliers" and expanded it by about 3,600 percent. The Secure Communities program that DHS Secretary Jeh Charles Johnson described as causing "hostility to enforcement of immigration laws" existed in only 14 counties under Bush, but by the end of 2009 it spread to 88 counties. By 2013, it was active in all 3,181 US jurisdictions (Franco and Garcia 2016).

Thus, despite President Obama's promises to the immigrant community, deportations – and the "deportation regime" underpinning those deportations – grew immensely. This growth has continued despite a lack of progress on immigration reform.

In addition to stalled immigration reform and increased enforcement, undocumented immigrants must also grapple with the fact that their situation as undocumented works to reinforce the importance of legal inclusion. Nicholls grappled with this very concern:

These struggles for rights [by DREAMers] are therefore not a harbinger of postnational citizenship. They are constrained by rules of the game that continue to center on the nation-state ... the existing rules of the game continue to favor those discourses that resonate with national norms and values over these more radical alternatives ... The greatest challenge for rights activists in the coming years is to develop ways to push for maximum equality in national contexts that are necessarily exclusionary and unequal (2013:181).

According to Nicholls, as well as many of my research participants, an emphasis on the government and changes to immigration law as a source of progress serves to legitimize differential access to human rights, culturally constructed borders, and xenophobia. This differential access is maintained by immigration law to guarantee access to a shadow population to prop up the lives of those who have been deemed important enough to be provided with full inclusion. While this serves to overcome injustice for a portion of the

undocumented population, it also serves to guarantee that those who do not fulfill xenophobic and ethno-centric expectations are excluded as full members.

For many years, 1.5-generation undocumigrants worked to bring about political change as a pragmatic compromise to ensure real improvement in the lives of immigrants through legislative change. It was not emancipation or liberation from the structural violence perpetrated by systems which seek to maintain the privileges of a small minority, but it was concrete improvements in the lives of actual people. As they fought for the DREAM Act, the immigrant community believed that their hard work would finally pay off and would result in concrete changes. However, with each passing year since President Obama's election, these hopes have been further dashed, with little expectation that even piecemeal immigration reforms will be successful. Even worse, deportations have only increased.

Thus, 1.5-generation undocumigrants have learned from their years of activism. Moving forward, they are fighting for a world where legal status does not determine one's humanity. While hope for the passage of the DREAM Act and other forms of legislative reforms continues, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are choosing not to sacrifice their community and values while they await these changes. Therefore, the focus of their activism has shifted to inclusive community formation. As I have argued, this community serves as a "counterpublic" that directly challenges the norms of the larger mainstream public and creates an alternative possible reality to legal citizenship. Communities work to establish cultural citizenship for all immigrants, with the hope that the inclusivity cultivated in their communities will filter into the larger society. While undocumented immigrants continue to face oppression and a broken immigration system,

they are also saying that they exist and will continue to do so. Through these alternative paths, undocumigrants can make themselves real to both each other and to the larger society, as well as to craft lives that are rich and full.

Through this study of the ways that 1.5-generation undocumented immigrants have cultivated a notion of cultural citizenship for all, I hope to have contributed to literature on the nuances and gradations of citizenship. While Rosaldo (1994) discusses different classes of citizenship available to legal citizens in the United States and focuses on exclusion—arguing that one’s access to democratic participation that guarantees full citizenship is often denied according to hierarchies of language or race—I have posited the need to consider cultural citizenship as membership that is accessible to those without legal citizenship. Undocumigrants, through their activism and organizing, demonstrate that different forms of “citizenship” outside of legal frameworks can be attained and should be cultivated.

Additionally, through my research I have engaged with the work of Aihwa Ong, and in particular her discussion of “graduated citizenship” (2006:78-79) in which legal citizens are provided with differential access to rights, especially in regards to labor. My understanding of cultural citizenship detailed throughout the thesis points to additional gradations of citizenship, those in which undocumented status may be maintained and serve as a form of state control, but also forms of belonging through which undocumented immigrants can claim the right to democratic participation in ways that many legal citizens do not. Throughout the thesis, I have aimed to further explicate and delineate the ways in which citizenship is both given and taken. Thus, my research both

builds on and extends the work done by Rosaldo, Ong, and others about the complicated, overlapping, and multifaceted nature of citizenship itself.

Through their work to claim cultural citizenship, 1.5-generation undocumented migrants resist attempts to be made bare and unreal and create the strong communities necessary for achieving liberation. Butler states that “recognition begins with the insight that one is lost in the other, appropriated in and by an alterity that is and is not oneself. Recognition is motivated by the desire to find oneself reflected there, where the reflection is not a final expropriation” (2004:241). Through community formation, the undocumented community can exist by finding their lack of legal status reflected in each other. For undocumented migrants, their difference from the wider society makes them stronger. Through their communities, undocumented migrants can seek recognition from each other, which builds the foundation on which they can seek recognition from the wider society. While this does not erase the injustice that they face, it does provide them with the “encumbrances of social location” and the intelligibility needed to ensure that they have a bargaining location through which to accomplish true liberation, rather than mere tolerance.

The liminality forced upon 1.5-generation undocumented migrants serves as another location through which our immigration system attempts to erase immigrants and separate them both from undocumented immigrants and from the citizen population. By embracing their liminality, 1.5-generation undocumented migrants resist their erasure from both populations. Through cultivating their cultural citizenship, undocumented migrants can become active members of the U.S. citizen population, even without legal citizenship. They can also maintain their relationships to the undocumented community by working to share their cultural citizenship through strong communities. By being involved in a community

of millions of other undocumented immigrants, they are not isolated or separated as their liminality would seek to ensure, but rather their liminality provides a location for them to draw on many different aspects of humanity.

Therefore, while communities may be formed primarily to feel less alone and less isolated, they also serve as a form of resistance. Dorinne K. Kondo argues for the need to see varied forms of resistance as parts of a larger whole, stating that

a more complicated view of agency and selfhood of those who resist would see people caught in contradictions, constructing new arrangements of meaning and power as they craft their lives, but never ‘authentically resisting’ power to obtain some emancipatory utopia (1990:225).

By crafting alternative paths to inclusion through community formation, 1.5-generation undocumigrants are overtly and covertly resisting exclusion. Through community, undocumigrants create new and alternative paths to full membership: cultural citizenship for all undocumented immigrants. They are “tied to no law.” Instead, they are tied to each other, and together, they are stronger.

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