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Dynamics of Distinction and Solidarity within Social Movements: Explaining Relations between Privileged and Underprivileged Groups in the U.S. Immigrant Rights Movement

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Abstract

Undocumented immigrant youths, known as the Dreamers, rose to exceptional prominence in the American immigrant rights movement in the 2000s and 2010s. The Dreamers had considerable success in presenting themselves as assimilated and hard-working patriots worthy of regularization. While this strategy worked well in the media and politics, it also created a distance between the Dreamers and less privileged groups of undocumented immigrants. In 2013, just when they were widely recognized as legitimate, the Dreamers made the remarkable move to change their strategy: rather than presenting themselves as model immigrants uniquely worthy of regularization, they began mobilizing for policies benefiting *all* undocumented migrants. By documenting and explaining this change in strategy, this paper addresses the broader question of what separates and binds privileged and underprivileged subgroups in social movements.

Keywords

political sociology, racial and ethnic minorities, labor and labor movements, collective behavior and social movements, community and urban sociology

Introduction

This paper analyzes the dynamics of distinction and solidarity in social movements. It does so by examining the relations between comparatively privileged undocumented youth activists, the so-called Dreamers, and less privileged groups constituting the immigrant rights movement (Lauby 2016; Patler and Gonzales 2015; Seif 2010; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014). The immigrant rights movement in the United States has long been made up of many different organizations, coalitions of various sorts, and campaigns addressing a range of issues (from workplace rights to refugee rights)

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(Nicholls and Uitermark 2016; Voss, Silva and, Bloemraad 2019; Zepeda-Millán 2017). The Dreamers emerged in the early to mid-2000s as a project of several large advocacy organizations. Advocacy organizations worked with Congressional allies to draft a bill to legalize the status of undocumented immigrant youths: Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act).

These efforts contributed to creating a new subgroup within the general immigrant rights movement: the Dreamers. Their campaign in 2010 ultimately failed but Dreamers and their supporters did successfully pressure the Obama administration to use its executive authority to provide undocumented youth relief from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). Within the general immigrant rights movement, Dreamers had constructed a specific narrative about themselves as being “good immigrants” and pursued policies that benefited their specific group. By stressing the attributes that made them distinctive from other undocumented immigrants, Dreamers were able to increase their status and legitimacy, attract funding, gain favorable media coverage, and enhance their access to elite politicians. While Dreamers profited from distinction, they also became differentiated from the broader immigrant rights movement. Non-Dreamer immigrant activists soon criticized the Dreamers because their strategy reinforced negative stereotypes of less privileged immigrants and undermined solidarity within the broader immigrant rights movement. These criticisms struck a chord since the Dreamers had social ties to less privileged family members and friends (Dreby 2015; Pallares 2014).

At the peak of their prominence, in 2013, many Dreamers pivoted away from the Dreamer narrative and began mobilizing for policies benefiting the broader population of undocumented immigrants (Nicholls, Uitermark, and van Haperen 2016). Feelings of solidarity drove many to extend support to some of the most stigmatized immigrants constituting the movement. Dreamers allied themselves with immigrant day laborers in a campaign to terminate federal enforcement programs like Secure Communities and, more broadly, end all deportations: the Not One More campaign. Thus, relations between the factions of the movement were characterized by the conflicting dynamics of distinction and solidarity.

The dynamics of distinction and solidarity are by no means unique to the Dreamers. We find similar relational dynamics in the LGBTQ, civil rights, and women’s movements (Armstrong 2002; Bloom and Martin 2013; Valocchi 1999; Warner 1999). Privileged members within these movements highlight attributes of their group that conform to established social norms. For instance, gays and lesbians with the U.S.-based Human Rights Coalition elevated middle-class monogamous couples, using their abilities to conform to dominant norms to enhance political legitimacy. Such a strategy works but it also makes normative conformity a condition of political legitimacy, weakens the legitimacy of those who do not conform, and generates cleavages between more and less privileged constituencies of a coalition. The dynamics of distinction and solidarity therefore appear in a wide variety of social and political movements consisting of more and less privileged groups (Ferree and Roth 1998).

This paper’s empirical focus is on the immigrant rights movement in the United States but its theoretical aim is to identify the forces responsible for pushing apart and pulling together different groups constituting social movements. The following section examines these dynamics as an interplay of distinction and solidarity. We then examine how the Dreamers emerged as a distinctive political group. Finally, we examine how the solidarity between Dreamers and other groups developed within the context of the Not One More campaign.

Distinction and Solidarity: Pushing apart and Pulling together a Social Movement

Distinction

Stigmatization is a process of ascribing labels and stereotypes to a group, separating the group from the established population, and denying it equal rights, resources, and legitimacy (Bourdieu

1984, 1991; Elias and Scotson 1994; Goffman 1963; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Mizrahi 2012; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Link and Phelan 2001). Stigmatized people are said to lack the cultural, economic, and moral attributes needed to be recognized as legitimate political subjects (Alexander 2006). Stigma is naturalized when it is ascribed to “objective” features of the outsider group such as physical attributes (color), dispositions (taste, accent), and legal status (Elias and Scotson 1994). For instance, the common slogan “What part of illegal don’t you understand?” (e.g., Downes 2007) employs the “objective” attribute of legal status to naturalize the outsider status of undocumented immigrants, thereby denying this group political legitimacy (Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Ngai 2004).

Outsiders pursue various strategies to shed stigma and achieve legitimacy (Goffman 1963; Lamont and Mizrahi 2012; Tyler and Slater 2018). One prominent strategy is identification with mainstream society (Alexander 2006; Goffman 1963; Nicholls 2013a). The strategy consists of hiding stigmatized attributes and calling attention to those that conform with the values and norms of the established culture (Alexander 2006). Undocumented immigrants, for instance, may seek to gain legitimacy as “de facto Americans” by emphasizing their cultural assimilation, embeddedness in the receiving community, and economic contribution (Bosniak 2007; Carens 2010; Motomura 2012; Nicholls 2013a).

Identification, Walter Nicholls (2013a) argues, provides a path to recognition for stigmatized groups, but some undocumented immigrants are more privileged than others because they are more culturally assimilated, more embedded, and more economically active. Those who possess these attributes are better able to shed their stigma, depict themselves as “de facto Americans” and achieve recognition as a legitimate political subject. The unequal distribution of identificatory attributes contributes to differentiating subgroups by degrees of “deservingness.”

Stigmatized activists bolster identification by emphasizing their distinction from the broader stigmatized group, brightening the line between the deserving and the undeserving (cf. Bourdieu 1984, 1991). Distinction enhances status by marking boundaries between groups and attributing moral values (good and deserving versus bad and undeserving) to those on either side of the line (Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnár 2002). “Social subjects,” Pierre Bourdieu (1984) explained, “distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed” (p. 6). Distinguishing oneself as good and deserving is, in other words, achieved by demonstrating distinction from the bad and undeserving. Consequently, elevating the status of privileged subgroups in “objective classifications” often comes at the cost of further marginalizing the less privileged who lack the attributes needed to conform.

Distinction enhances legitimacy and status while producing what Pierre Bourdieu (1991) calls a “profit of distinction” (p. 5). A subgroup that has successfully accumulated legitimacy and status can “convert” those qualities into other forms of capital, including money from foundations, media exposure, and access to the political elite. The profit of distinction further bolsters the subgroup’s positioning within the political field, further distancing it from the broader stigmatized population. By profiting from distinction, the privileged subgroup becomes, in Bourdieusian terms, the dominant faction of a dominated group (Bourdieu 1984).

Solidarity

Asserting distinction allows political subgroups to enhance legitimacy and status in a hostile political field. Nevertheless, there are reasons for privileged subgroups to assert solidarity with less privileged group members, even when expressions of solidarity risk undercutting their own status and legitimacy. By solidarity, we mean “the emotional cohesion between the members of these social movements and the mutual support they give each other in their battle for common goals” (Bayertz 1999:16). Such solidarity generally comprises a factual dimension (shared interests) and a normative dimension (mutual obligations to aid each other) (Bayertz 1999) but in our

case, and arguably in other social movements, there is a tension between these dimensions: privileged and underprivileged groups do not necessarily share the same interests, meaning that solidarity cannot be taken for granted. Under what conditions do privileged subgroups identify with, or as, a stigmatized group? We highlight three factors that explain for solidarity despite inequality: shared plight, social bonds, and instrumental incentives.

Privileged subgroups are not fully spared the denigration of their less privileged group members. While they may be able to cast themselves as exceptional on certain occasions, they will still face discrimination from dominant groups on other occasions (du Bois 1903). Research shows that as immigrants move up in the social hierarchy (and into a world dominated by established, white groups), they are continually reminded of their membership to stigmatized groups (Slootman 2014). To account for such experiences, Bourdieu developed the notion of a “cleft habitus” (*habitus clivé*), which refers to a disjunction between the primary habitus (i.e., the embodied dispositions and schemes of perception developed early in life) and the secondary habitus required in a new field (Bourdieu 2000:64; Friedman 2016). For upwardly mobile individuals, there is a persistent and agonizing tension between their primary and secondary dispositions, producing “a habitus divided against itself, and doomed to a kind of double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities” (Bourdieu, cited in Friedman 2016:312). Relatively privileged immigrants like the Dreamers have a cleft habitus: risen from the ranks and achieved recognition, but constantly reminded—by their memories and hurtful encounters with the dominant population—that they originate from underprivileged and stigmatized groups. This cleft habitus can induce feelings of solidarity for the larger group.

Privileged subgroups like the Dreamers have intimate relations with less privileged subgroups. Immigrant communities are diverse in terms of their legal status, cultural and economic capital, and degree of affiliation in the receiving community (Dreby 2015; Pallares 2014). While Dreamers may be able to say that they are exceptional students who live the American Dream, this is not necessarily the case for their parents, siblings, or friends (Gonzales 2011). Strong social bonds serve as reminders that privileged subgroups belong to the outsider groups from which they rose (Lauby 2016:383). Feelings of guilt that their success has come at the expense of their community can propel privileged subgroups to solidarity.

Privileged activists may also have instrumental reasons for aligning with underprivileged counterparts. Solidarity originates not just from shared experiences but from what Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner (1993:1325) refer to as “enforceable trust,” that is, the disciplined compliance with group expectations for the sake of anticipated rewards. Despite favorable positions, activists representing a privileged subgroup may still depend on a broader community for political support. Privileged actors risk their good standing in the activist community and the possibility of drawing on that community’s future support when they constantly emphasize their distinction vis-à-vis less privileged others (Vermeulen 2013; Vermeulen, Michon, and Tillie 2014; Nicholls and Uitermark 2015). Distinction can be detrimental to activist alliances, incentivizing efforts to identify and work with less privileged subgroups. Reaching “down” and “giving back” help demonstrate commitment to “the community” and bolster one’s reputation as a standup actor within the social movement.

In sum, we argue that stigmatized groups entering a hostile political field face the cross-pressures of *distinction* and *solidarity*. As activists enter the field, they face enormous hostility that encourages some to identify with dominant norms and mark their distance from the broader group. The strategy raises the status of the subgroup and transforms it from an object of scorn into a sanitized and sacralized subject. The symbolic capital derived from the strategy can be converted into other resources including funding, political capital, and media exposure. Combined, these “profits of distinction” solidify and institutionalize inequalities between more and less privileged subgroups. Despite the growing chasm between subgroups, solidarity remains. On one hand, dispositions, familial ties, and instrumental interests encourage the more privileged

to maintain their ties with their less privileged comrades. On the other hand, less privileged groups may hope to draw upon the status of the more privileged to bolster their own campaigns, despite certain hard feelings. Thus, distinction and solidarity are competing imperatives that create perennial dilemmas for activists. Privileged subgroups feel pressured or tempted to claim that stigmas do not apply to them, inadvertently yet inevitably confirming that they do apply to other groups. But, they also feel pressured or called upon to declare their solidarity with, and membership of, the outsider group, foregoing the possibilities of distinction in the public sphere. How these countervailing pressures play out in individual cases or for the movement cannot be specified in advance but have to be explained through empirical research.

Methods and Sources

The paper makes use of several different sources of data to assess distinction, profits of distinction, and solidarity. Though our data come from different sources, our aim is to use them to identify three very distinctive moments in social movements of stigmatized people.

We draw on 34 semi-structured interviews with California-based activists and advocates. We use the interviews to assess the strategy of distinction and the factors that precipitated a move toward solidarity. The state, and in particular the Los Angeles area, was a major hub of immigrant and Dreamer activism. The political opportunities and constraints of the Los Angeles context are marked by its distinct and rich history of immigrant rights activism (Bloemraad and Voss 2011; Milkman 2006; Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010). We focused on two types of activist networks: California Dream Network (mostly campus-based organizations) and community-based activist groups with constantly changing appellations (Dream Team Los Angeles, California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance, and so on). Interviews were also held with Los Angeles-based immigrant rights organizations that supported and allied with youth activists.¹ Finally, a number of interviews were performed with representatives of national advocacy organizations and coalitions.² Participation in interviews was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. We note that many of our respondents are engaged in political action, often from situations of marginalization, which makes them vulnerable to risks of harm (Crenshaw 1991; Weiss 1994). This is particularly true for respondents in precarious legal situations, who risk legal action or immigration enforcement should they be identified. We are careful not to identify such respondents and use pseudonyms. To ameliorate biases, we sought to triangulate findings with a variety of sources and methods (see below).

To assess the profits derived from distinction, we use three different indicators: media exposure, revenue from foundations, and political access. First, to assess media exposure, we developed a newspaper dataset based on the claims analysis method developed by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (1999). The database contains claims on immigration issues in the United States over the period of 2000 to 2014, collected through LexisNexis with the keywords “immigration reform” and “immigration protest.” Except for editorials and opinion pieces, all relevant articles on immigrant rights were included: 1,254 newspaper articles, from which 5,422 claims were extracted. The claims were coded for a number of aspects, including addressee, mode (protest, press release, etc.), scale (federal or local), and the number of people involved (only applicable in case of a protest). Second, to assess financial resources, we drew a non-random sample of 49 immigrant advocacy organizations from the newspaper database. This is a mix of prominent national organizations, important state and regional organizations, and smaller grassroots organizations. Financial information was derived from IRS 990 forms. These forms, acquired through Guide Start, provided information on the “grants and contributions” most of these organizations received from the early 2000s to 2014. Third, to assess political access, we examined access to the White House by creating a White House visitors’ database for 49 organizations over first 5 years of the Obama Administration (2009–2014). From among many other possible

indicators of political access and influence (Dahl 1961; Mills 1956), we think meetings at the White House indicate access to the highest levels of the federal government. An organization gaining access to the President enhances its influence in the policy process (Austen-Smith 1995; Sabato 1985). Political access was not limited to the executive branch though. Dreamers criss-crossed the legislative and executive branches in their efforts to pass the DREAM Act and then DACA (Nicholls 2013b). During their fight for the DREAM Act, Dreamers developed strategic alliances with important congressional allies including Dick Durbin and Charles Schumer in the Senate and Luis Gutierrez from the House of Representatives (Nicholls 2013b). Following the failure of the DREAM Act in 2010, Dreamers pivoted away from a legislative strategy and embraced a strategy to pressure the Obama administration to use its authority to extend relief to undocumented immigrant youth (what would become DACA). Though activists continued to engage congressional allies during this process, the primary target was the White House. Though Dreamers were certainly working to gain access to both branches of government we use White House visits as an indicator because such data are well-documented and more easily accessible than visits to congressional representatives and their staff are not (Nicholls et al. 2020).³ In sum, three different sources are used as indicators of the kinds of profits derived from distinction.

Solidarity is the last key concept we assess. In addition to the interviews discussed above, we study solidarity through social media data associated with the Not One More campaign. The campaign represents a high-profile effort of Dreamers and other immigrant activist groups and helped to pressure President Obama to introduce Deferred Action for Parents of Childhood Arrivals (DAPA), on November 17, 2014. We draw on Twitter data to examine Dreamers' relations with other groups as well as the ways Dreamers represented themselves on social media. Twitter and the hashtag #not1more were fundamental to the Not One More campaign, and instrumental to the Dreamers' rise to prominence (van Haperen et al. 2018). Twitter data introduce selection biases (Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark 2018, González-Bailón et al. 2014) and we are consequently careful not to conflate activity on social media with the immigrant rights movement more broadly. The data span two periods: between January 1, 2013 (when the hashtag was first used in the context of this campaign) and May 1, 2015, and between June 1, 2015, and June 1, 2016. The database includes 158,630 tweets, containing 267,116 relations between 42,237 unique users. Account names or bios with variations of the word "Dream" ($n = 815$ or 1.9 percent) are identified as Dreamers and others as non-Dreamers. We also examine how distinct Dreamers are in the campaign over time by examining how they present their claims and relate to others.

We use these different sources of data to assess through different conceptual moments in this movement. Interviews are used to assess distinction and solidarity; newspaper data, tax documents, and White House visitor data are used to assess the profits deriving from distinction; and social media data on the Not One More movement are used to assess solidarity within this particularly important campaign.

Findings

Distinction

As explained above, relatively privileged subgroups within social movements often highlight the attributes that signal conformity with established norms of the dominant population and mark distinction from less privileged groups. This subsection describes how some early Dreamers pursued this strategy and, consequently, generated divisions within the immigrant rights movement.

In the 2000s, pro-immigrant advocacy organization mounted a decade-long effort to pass the DREAM Act (Enriquez and Saguy 2016; Nicholls 2013b). These organizations recruited undocumented immigrant youth and trained them to be advocates for the DREAM Act. An important part of the training involved communicating why undocumented immigrant youth *deserved* legal

status. Nonprofit organizations maintained their own divisions of Dreamers, but they also sponsored a Dreamer-specific organization: United We Dream (UWD).

The communication strategy centered on elevating the attributes that demonstrated their affiliation with mainstream American values and distinction from sending countries. Campaigns to pass the DREAM Act employed a “poster child strategy” whereby “exceptional” undocumented youths—selected on the basis of their unique attributes (assimilation, school performance, and potential contribution to the country)—were presented to media and political elites (Enriquez and Saguy 2016; Nicholls 2013b). Fanny Lauby (2016:3) refers to the narrative of the “perfect Dreamer” which “relies on frames relative to achievement, innocence, meritocracy, individualism, and injustice, which together create the story of the ideal, high-achieving undocumented youth who is unfairly prevented from gaining access to college and pursuing his or her dreams.” Sofia, an early leader in the movement, largely agrees with this assessment: “We’ve always been intentional about choosing the best story, the most easily understood, the most emotionally convincing—the soccer coach for little league, the volunteer at the hospital” (Sofia, personal interview, April 1, 2011). Sofia goes on to explain, “It was very new and there was a lot of uncertainty. It was like ‘you better cover all your bases, show the top student and let them know that we’re not like they think’” (Lauby 2016).

Elevating attributes to demonstrate national affiliation and identification was coupled with distancing from attributes that made them foreign. America was their home and their parents’ countries were as foreign to them as any normal American. In one early press account, one Dreamer noted that, “All I’m hearing now is that I’m Colombian, but I’ve never really been there. I have no memories of the country where I was born and I do not speak articulate Spanish. They are taking me from my home in America” (Preston 2007). Two years later, a leading member of the newly formed UWD emphasized his identification with his new country by highlighting value differences with immigrant parents. He notes, “Maybe our parents feel like immigrants, but we feel like Americans because we have been raised here on American values” (Preston 2009).

Tensions arose as early as 2010. Advocates in national organizations believed that Congress would pass comprehensive immigration reform in spring that year. Many youths close to these advocacy organizations agreed with this assessment. Other youth activists, however, believed that comprehensive reform would not pass but that a standalone DREAM Act would. The dissident Dreamers did not only advocate for a new strategy, but they also embraced more subversive mobilizing frames that stressed their undocumented identity as a source of pride rather than shame. Slogans like “undocumented and unafraid” and “coming out of the shadows” were coupled with frames that stressed their identification with white middle-class Americans. There was awareness that the continued emphasis on distinction posed a risk with regard to the broader immigrant community. One Dreamer, Lisa, described the dilemmas posed by the strategy:

Interviewer: There was this idea that the old frames of “good immigrant” and ‘it’s not our fault’ were problematic. Was there also recognition that the “good immigrant,” that the poster child actually worked?

Dreamer: Yeah, yeah, so for us, we know that it works [laughs]—it works extremely well! We wanted to use it strategically, right? So kind of use it, but be careful to not demonize our parents or other immigrants. We definitely used it. We understood the importance of it. (Lisa, personal interview, March 15, 2011)

In the period following 2010, many activists also targeted state-level governments for laws that would specifically benefit this group, such as in-state tuition for undocumented youth. Facing little opportunity to revive the DREAM Act in 2011 and 2012, they shifted their efforts to pressure the Obama administration to use its executive authority to provide undocumented youths with temporary legal status. In short, a Dreamer-specific strategy was pursued primarily until and

shortly after the passage of DACA in 2012. Youths cultivated a public representation of the Dreamer and pursued goals that would most benefit this particular group.

The Profits of Distinction

Bourdieu (1984) noted that the status generated from distinction can be converted into other forms of capital. In the case at hand, newly gained status allowed the Dreamers to attract greater media exposure, financial capital, and access to political elites.

Looking at media exposure first, we note that Dreamers do not appear in the newspaper database until 2009 and only achieve prominence in 2012. UWD became the most prominent among *all* pro-immigrant advocacy organization (Table 1), accounting for 12.4 percent of all claims made during this period, surpassing longstanding pro-immigrant organizations like National Council of La Raza, America's Voice, and National Immigration Forum. Within the short period of its existence, UWD became the go-to immigrant rights organization for producers and reporters.

Equally important, UWD converted its growing prestige into financial capital. According to its Internal Revenue Service 2013 tax filings, the organization claimed \$5,188,991 in revenue. In our survey of 49 immigrant rights advocacy organizations, UWD stood as the eighth top funded immigrant advocacy organization in the United States, placing it ahead of insider organizations like America's Voice and outsider organizations like National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON). Increased funding enabled the young organization to employ 27 professionally trained workers, many of whom hail from the undocumented immigrant community. The organization has specialized teams of employees doing high-level communication, legal services, outreach, lobbying and organizing.

There is ample anecdotal evidence of the Dreamers' prominence within political circles. In May 2015, the Hillary Clinton campaign hired Lorella Praeli—Advocacy and Policy Director of UWD—to become its Director of Latino Outreach. The campaign announced that “We are thrilled to have Lorella Praeli, *a Dreamer*, join our team because of her courage and perspective in the fight for Latino families across the country” (Lilley 2015 emphasis added; cf. Attanasio 2015). More systematic evidence on visits to the White House suggests Dreamers also had strong access to the Obama administration. According to the White House Visitor dataset, there were 17 meetings between UWD employees and White House officials between 2009 and 2014. This does not account for several informal meetings held outside the White House (informal communication with Dreamer activists). Between 2009 and 2012, there were only three official meetings with White House officials, but this increased to five and nine meetings in 2013 and 2014. Of the 17 meetings, 11 were headed by UWD's Lorella Praeli. Most meetings were held with Julie Rodriguez, a key White House official on immigration policy and Latino outreach. Five of the meetings were directly with President Obama. In our survey of 49 advocacy organizations that visited the White House between 2009 and 2014, UWD ranks at 14, placing it above strong regional organizations like the Center for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) but well behind traditional leadership organizations like National Council of La Raza (115 visits).

Dreamers, therefore, profited from the strategy of distinction, which further distanced them from the broader social movement. They enhanced their presence in the media, acquired important financial resources, and gained access to the White House.

Solidarity

Many immigrant rights advocates began to criticize the Dreamer strategy for exacerbating differences between “good and deserving immigrants” and “bad and undeserving” ones. Dreamers

Table 1. Number of Claims by Pro-immigrant Advocacy Organizations in the *Newspaper Dataset*, 2000–2014.

Organization	N	%
United We Dream	47	12.4
National Council of La Raza	39	10.3
American Civil Liberties Union	32	8.4
National Immigration Forum	28	7.4
America's Voice	28	7.4
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles	18	4.7
New York Immigration Coalition	17	4.5
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights	17	4.5
Southern Poverty Law Center	11	2.9
National Immigration Law Center	11	2.9
Center for Community Change	11	2.9
Workplace Project	10	2.6
American Immigration Lawyers Association	9	2.4
Central American Solidarity Association de Maryland (CASA)	9	2.4
International Socialist Organization	9	2.4
National Capital Immigration Coalition	8	2.1
Center for American Progress	8	2.1
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund	8	2.1
Central American Resource Center of Los Angeles	7	1.8
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund	6	1.6
National Day Laborer Organizing Network	6	1.6
Workers Defense Project (Proyecto Defensa Laboral)	6	1.6
Texas Criminal Justice Coalition	5	1.3
Antelope Valley Raza Rights Coalition	5	1.3
League of United Latin American Citizens	5	1.3
Immigration Works USA	5	1.3
NAACP	5	1.3
New Jersey Immigration Policy Network	5	1.3
Canal Alliance	5	1.3
Total	380	100

Note. NAACP = National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

were increasingly portrayed as selfish and treacherous by various advocacy organizations and some elected political officials:

So, it was this nasty battle, that really wasn't Dreamers versus Dreamers. It was more like [advocacy] organizations painting this image that we didn't care about our parents, that we were selfish, that we were turning our backs on the immigrant rights movement. (Janet, personal interview, April 28, 2011)

During the occupations of offices of leading national politicians in 2010, another leading activist recalled how allies labeled the Dreamers as selfish:

Even during the July action [2010] in the D.C. offices, there were four or five students that did the sit-in at Senator Reid's office, and they even got a call from [Congressperson] Luis Gutiérrez accusing them of dividing the movement, and accusing them of being selfish. (Rhonda, personal interview, March 3, 2011)

Constant criticisms were particularly painful because of many Dreamers' cleft habitus (Friedman 2016): while they identify as successful and assimilated Americans, they also carry within them the experience and stigma of marginalized immigrant communities (Fiorito 2019, 2020). The criticisms sting because they appeal to solidarities and feelings of belonging that Dreamers must push to the background as they perform their role as assimilated Americans. Even when they achieved success, their family members and friends were still vulnerable. A survey among DACA recipients found that 49 percent of respondents worry "all of the time" or "most of the time" that friends and family members will be deported. Almost two-thirds of the respondents personally knows someone who has been deported, while 14 percent experienced the deportation of a parent or sibling (Gonzales and Terriquez 2013). These findings suggest that beneficiaries of distinction continue to suffer when others in their community remain vulnerable to deportation or other penalties. One activist remembers, "I think that was the big message: you're splitting up the movement; you're being selfish. What about your parents? Oh my God!" (Sam, personal interview, March 13, 2011). The denigration of Dreamers as selfish or elitist bore down emotionally on many who did not want to betray their community members (Fiorito 2020).

Dreamers also had instrumental concerns. They continued to depend on non-Dreamer allied organizations for important levels of legal, financial, and political support. They needed to maintain good relations and contribute to the campaigns of these allies in order to sustain general support. For instance, Los Angeles-based Dreamers in 2012 participated heavily in a coalition created by the NDLON against Secure Communities, a prominent federal immigration enforcement program. During a Dreamer meeting in October 2012 (several months after the passage of DACA), one youth leader was explicit about how their investment in this campaign should be used to counterbalance negative portrayals of Dreamers as selfish and privileged profiteers:

We know that we are part of communities and families and we will have to ask for their solidarity. We also know that we have been supporting our communities with anti-S-Com [Secure Communities] work and that we have put a lot of our time and energy into that. In response to these critiques, we should mention our involvement in these actions and should respond to the selfishness argument by claiming that we're doing anything that pushes the pro-immigrant agenda. (Observation, notes, October 16, 2012)

Thus, recriminations by other activists, strong ties to the undocumented family members and friends, and continued dependence on allies propelled many to question the strategy of distinction. Many began, as will be shown in the next section, to use the label "undocumented youth" instead of Dreamers, and began to invest more heavily in anti-deportation campaigns rather than Dream-specific campaigns.

Solidarity Work in the Not One More Campaign

Dreamers became heavily involved in anti-deportation campaigns following 2012. The NDLON's Not One More campaign was among the most prominent. For Dreamers, the campaign marked a departure from Dream-specific campaigns, capturing the slow process of moving away from distinction and toward solidarity.

NDLON was created in 2001 in Los Angeles. It was an effort to create a nationwide network of local immigrant advocacy organizations that had begun to organize day laborers and form work centers (Dziembowska 2010). Pablo Alvarado, NDLON's executive director, worked with other organizations to create a national organization dedicated to some of the most stigmatized undocumented immigrants in the country. Gustavo Torres from CASA Maryland, a founding member, remembers,

I was the first president of the board of directors of NDLOM with Pablo Alvarado and the other organizations. All of that energy was creating a great momentum right here locally but also at the national level with day laborers. (Gustavo Torres, CASA Maryland, personal interview, July 26, 2016)

NDLOM grew from 12 founding organizations in 2001 to 40 in 2015. NDLOM invested heavily in fighting against restrictive local anti-immigrant laws and would go on to become one of the most important organizations in the fight against federal enforcement and deportations (Dziembowska 2010).

NDLOM helped launch the Not One More campaign in early 2013 with UWD and other undocumented youth activists. NDLOM stressed that Obama's deportation policies would negatively affect his legacy if he failed to enact an executive order to stop deportations:

He is after all the 'Deporter in Chief' [. . .] But things don't have to stall. By leading the immigration reform debate through actions [an executive order] and not just words, the President can break the impasse and focus Congress' attention on getting something done this year. (Pablo Alvarado as cited in Matthews 2013)

The Not One More campaign had a steering group with representatives from various organizations and a paid NDLOM organizer as the director but its strategy was explicitly decentralized. No formal affiliation was required to become a member of the network, and organizations and activists connected through Twitter and Facebook. Instead of directing their distant allies, campaign leaders worked with one another on different kinds of actions (press conferences, hunger strikes, civil disobediences, etc.), developed very loose messaging frames, and diffused information about actions to members across the country. Because of the decentralized nature of the campaign, NDLOM's lead organizers called it an "open source" campaign (Franco et al. 2015).

Dreamers initially played a pivotal role in the Not One More campaign. Early on, their prominence allowed them to garner attention for the campaign online. On Twitter, they were clearly recognizable as Dreamers, self-identifying as such in bios. They provided critical mass and social media savviness to generate early momentum. Not only did they account for a large proportion of activity, their claims resonated and were often amplified by others (Figure 1).

After April 2014, however, their prominence begins to wane (Figure 2). At first, this was not the result of decreasing activity among Dreamers but of new groups plugging into a campaign in which the Dreamers had performed central roles. Their claims now became less prominent and were retweeted less often. An important reason is that their online self-representations as Dreamers shifted. Over the course of 2013, many began to remove Dream-references from their Twitter usernames and bios. While remaining active, many no longer explicitly sought to profit from a distinction as "Dreamer." Moreover, instead of strictly Dream-related topics, other claims began to become more salient. Dreamers themselves contributed to this topical shift (Figures 3 and 4).

At the start of the campaign, Dreamers and others had been well-aligned, often sharing claims and hashtags. Messages were strikingly similar in tone and content: despite being organized as an "open source" campaign, a variety of groups plugged in and stayed on message. After August 2013, Dreamers began posting Dream topics less intensively, but surprisingly, non-Dreamers continued adoption of Dream-claims. In our interpretation, other activists continued to seek profit from Dreamers' symbolic capital even as the salience of self-identified Dreamers diminished.

This realignment and diminishing salience of Dreamers on social media suggest that they actively sought to reaffirm solidarity with the broader immigrant rights movement. However, this does not mean that the Dreamers lost their broader status and legitimacy. Our data indicate that their legitimacy with the mainstream media has grown over the past four years. They have

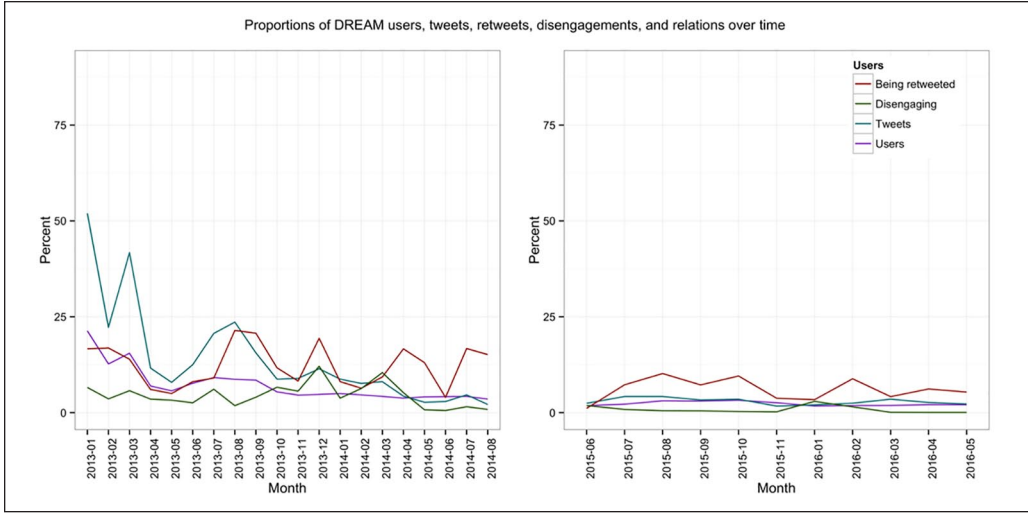


Figure 1. Distinction of Dreamers in the Not One More campaign, by type of activity. Relative prominence of DREAM users, tweets, retweets, and relations over time for 2013–2014 (top left) and for 2015–2016 (top right).

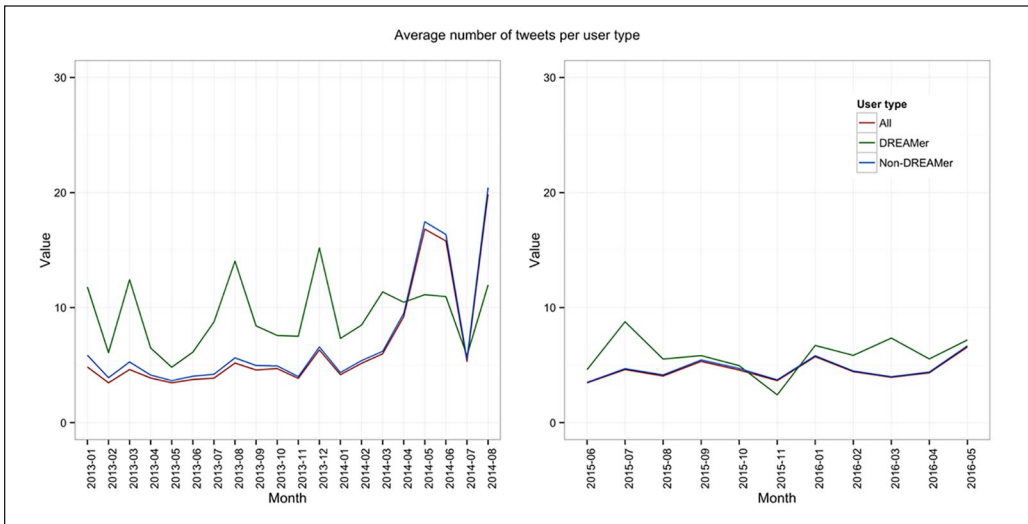


Figure 2. Distinction of Dreamers in the Not One More campaign, by type of user. Average number of tweets per user type for 2013–2014 (bottom left) and for 2015–2016 (bottom right).

become a principal voice of undocumented immigrants, with a high level of mobilization capacity and commitment to high-risk campaigns. The Dreamers remain a group of activists with exceptional resources that they now mobilize in campaigns organized with less privileged subgroups.

NDLON and the Dreamers thus spearheaded the Not One More campaign, steering the general immigrant rights movement toward more radical demands. In early 2014, the major national immigrant rights organizations (National Council of La Raza, Center for Community Change, and American’s Voice) all shifted their position, came out in support of executive action

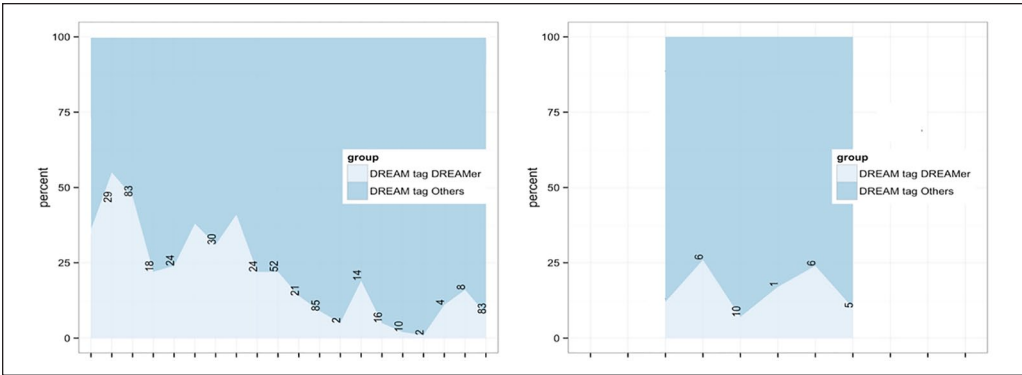


Figure 3. Salience of DREAM issues in the Not One More campaign. DREAM hashtags in use by DREAM users vs all other users in 2013–2014 (left) and for 2015–2016 (right).

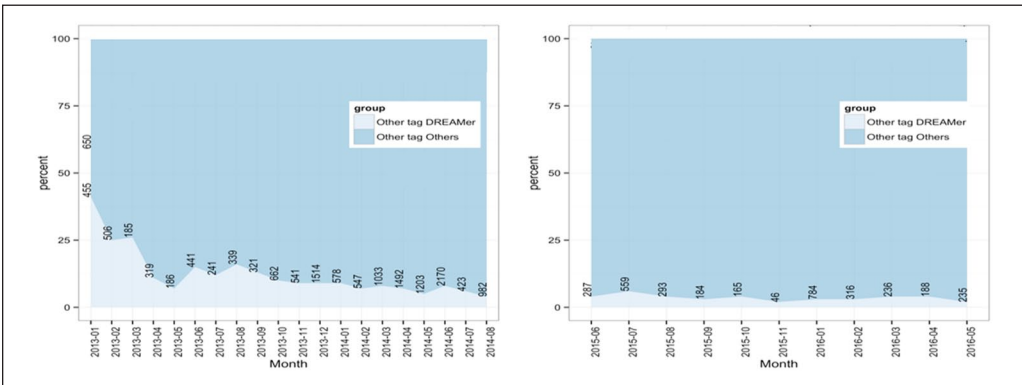


Figure 4. Salience of other issues in the Not One More campaign among DREAMers. Proportions of other hashtags in use by DREAM users vs all other users in 2013–2014 (left) and for 2015–2016 (right).

to provide relief for millions of undocumented immigrants, and employed the anti-deportation slogan to frame President Obama: “Deporter in Chief.” While these “late adopters” were important in turning the tide, the high level of activity by NDLO and the Dreamers in the earlier stages helped push along a campaign that most initially had believed to be too aggressive, unreasonable, and unlikely to succeed. The momentum created by the Not One More campaign ultimately pressured the Obama administration to pass an executive order on November 17, 2014. The executive order would have extended relief to an estimated four to five million undocumented immigrants and repealed the administration’s vaunted Secure Communities program. However, the lower courts struck down the executive order and the Supreme Court deadlocked in its ruling, leaving the lower courts’ ruling in place.

Thus, the Not One More campaign marks a pivot in Dreamer activism. The early strategy of identifying with the dominant population and asserting distinction from other immigrants exacerbated internal divides, precipitated recriminations by advocacy organizations, triggered feelings of guilt, and introduced concerns about losing the support of important allied organizations. By supporting the Not One More campaign, Dreamers contributed their status and energy to the campaign, helping to build momentum in campaign’s early stages. The greater their involvement, the more they dropped the Dreamer as an identifier. While distinction continued to play an

important role in sustaining the legitimacy and status of Dreamers among larger foundations, the media, and prominent political allies, solidarity started to win out over distinction among youth activists. Solidarity and distinction would therefore continue to play an important role in shaping the relational dynamics of this social movement.

Conclusion: The Dilemmas of Distinction

What explains for the push (distinction) and pull (solidarity) relations that characterize social movements of stigmatized people? This paper presents a two-pronged theory. First, stigmatized groups must overcome important barriers to be considered a legitimate political subject (Alexander 2006). One common strategy consists of highlighting attributes that conform to dominant norms and stressing distinction from the broader stigmatized population. Such a strategy elevates the status and legitimacy of the privileged subgroup and presents opportunities to convert the acquired status into other forms of capital (profits of distinction). The downside of this strategy is that it exacerbates cleavages between more and less privileged subgroups of a movement. Second, as cleavages grow within a social movement, relatively privileged subgroups often have difficulty fully distancing themselves from other, less privileged groups. Solidarity stems from continued embeddedness with the general stigmatized population, recriminations from allies, and dependency on these allies for ongoing campaigns. Thus, social movements of stigmatized people often generate relational dynamics of distinction and solidarity.

The early efforts to demonstrate Dreamers' distinction produced high levels of status and legitimacy. This allowed the Dreamers to capitalize on these gains to enhance their access to media, money, and political power. By late 2014, Dreamers had assumed a dominant role in media debates concerning immigration, captured important levels of foundation support, and enjoyed good connections to the country's most elite political figures. The pre-DACA strategy of creating a distinctive Dreamer voice therefore produced enormous profits, making Dreamers into the dominant faction of underprivileged undocumented immigrants. The post-DACA period marks a major strategic move in Dreamer campaigns. It marks an effort to re-authenticate Dreamers by contributing to campaigns that benefit all immigrants and moving away from frames and symbolic markers that mark their distinction as an exceptional group.

We believe that our case study of the positioning of the Dreamers within the immigrant rights movement exemplifies general patterns that can also be observed in other social movements of stigmatized people (Gamson 1995; Mische 2015; Stewart et al. 2017). All such movements are, to an extent, diverse in terms of composition and claims, with some activists and demands standing a much higher chance of achieving resonance than others. All such movements, and specifically their more privileged participants, face a dilemma (cf. Zamorano et al. 2010). On the one hand, they can strategically exploit their valued attributes and symbolic capital. This can result in significant gains, but the tradeoff is that it increases inequalities within the movement between those who are seen as well as heard and those who are ignored and underprivileged. Alternatively, privileged participants can decide to downplay their own privilege. This can prevent fissures within the movement by creating a united front, but the tradeoff is that symbolic capital remains underused. Activists will rarely face a binary choice between one or the other option. Instead, social movement participants have to perennially negotiate to find a balance between the pushes of distinction and the pulls of solidarity.

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1. These included the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, National Day Laborer Organizing Network, Mexican American Legal and Educational Defense Fund, Central American Resource Center, the UCLA Labor Center, National Immigration Law Center, among others.
2. Including Center for Community Change, National Immigration Forum, National Council of La Raza, Reform Immigration for America, and the Alliance for Citizenship.
3. Obama Administration, White House Visitor Webpage: <https://open.whitehouse.gov/dataset/White-House-Visitor-Records-Requests/p86s-ychb#column-menu2016>

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