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2020

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Citation for published version (APA):

Fiorito, T. R. (2020). *Struggling with success: Emotion, experience, and subjectivity in the undocumented youth movement in Los Angeles*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

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STRUGGLING
WITH SUCCESS

EMOTION, EXPERIENCE,
AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE
UNDOCUMENTED YOUTH MOVEMENT
20112020 IN LOS ANGELES

TARA FIORITO

Struggling with Success

**Emotion, Experience, and Subjectivity in the
Undocumented Youth Movement in Los Angeles**

Tara Rose Fiorito

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Cover design and photography: Ellen Wittkamp

Cover model: Pamela Varela

Printing and Layout: Jubels

Funded by: Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR),
University of Amsterdam

Struggling with Success

Emotion, Experience, and Subjectivity in the Undocumented Youth Movement in Los Angeles

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex

ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op dinsdag 23 juni 2020, te 10.00 uur

door
Tara Rose Fiorito
Geboren te Amsterdam

Promotor:	Prof. dr. W.G.J. Duyvendak	Universiteit van Amsterdam
Copromotoren:	Dr. J.L. Uitermark	Universiteit van Amsterdam
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Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragwetenschappen

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action.

Paulo Freire¹

With the words of my heart, I will break down your walls!

Adrian Gonzales²

This dissertation is based on the following articles:

Chapter 1

Fiorito, T.R. & Nicholls, W.J. (2016). Silencing to Give Voice: Backstage Preparations in the Undocumented Youth Movement in Los Angeles. *Qualitative Sociology*, 39(3), 287-308.

The central data collection and analysis was conducted by the PhD candidate. The paper was written by the PhD candidate and Walter Nicholls.

Chapter 2

Eisema, D.J., Fiorito, T.R. & Montero-Sieburth, M. (2014). Beating the Odds: The Undocumented Youth Movement of Latinos as a Vehicle for Upward Social Mobility. *New Diversities*, 16(1), 23-39.

The data collection and analysis was conducted by the PhD candidate and Dirk Eisema. The paper was written by the PhD candidate, Dirk Eisema, and Martha Montero-Sieburth.

Chapter 3

Fiorito, T.R. (2019). Beyond the Dreamers: Collective Identity and Subjectivity in the Undocumented Youth Movement. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 24(3), 345-363.

Chapter 4

Fiorito, T.R. (2019). Learning to be Legal: Ambivalent Narratives of Joy and Guilt in the Transition to Legality. *Citizenship Studies* (under review).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the people who participated in this ethnographic study. Thank you all for trusting me with your life stories, for befriending me and allowing me to become a real member of the movement, and for inspiring me with your endless energy, motivation, and efforts in creating a more just and beautiful society. I am much indebted to you, and you will always have a home with me, whether that it is in Amsterdam, Los Angeles, or wherever else life takes me. *Muchas gracias por todo* Adrian, Alejandra, Alma, Alondra, Arturo, Betsy, Betty, Blu, Bridgette, Bupendra, Carlos, Chris, Citlalli, Crissel, Daniel, Dianey, Diego, Enrique, Erick, Erika, Fabiola, Frank, Gerson, Graciela, Hairo, Hertz, Isaac, Jairi, Jason, Javi, Johnathan, Jesús, John, Jon, Jorge, Jose, Juan, Julio, Kevin, Lizeth, Loyda, Luis, Mariella, Martha, Mitzie, Myisha, Nancy, Neidi, Norma, Pancho, Patty, Phal, Pedro Joel, Preeti, Ravnill, Rocio, Samyrha, Sofia, Sophia, Tony, Viviana, Will, and Zuriel.

A special thanks to Carlos for introducing and connecting me to new people within the movement when I returned to Los Angeles in 2018. Thank you, Carlos, for all the effort you made, for the many detailed emails you sent, and for trusting me enough to use your good name to connect me with these people. I am honored to know you, my friend, and I am sure you will excel in whatever you do.

A special thanks also to Mariella, Samyrha, and Lydia for welcoming me into their home, for feeding me delicious Mexican food, and for becoming my friends and comrades. Thank you, Mariella, for all the *Curandera* work you do and for sharing much of your wisdom with me.

And a very special thanks to Dr. Walter Nicholls, who now works at the University of California, Irvine, but who noticed me when he was teaching an urban sociology class at the University of Amsterdam and recognized in me an eager and empathic sociologist willing to move to Los Angeles to ethnographically study the undocumented youth movement. Thank you, Walter, for being my teacher and mentor, for encouraging me, and for connecting me to the movement, thereby changing the course of my life and career. Thank you for all our collaborations and chats and for the many ways in which you have inspired, shaped, and contributed to my work and development as a social scientist.

I would also like to thank my supervisors at the University of Amsterdam for their intellectual guidance and support. I thank Dr. Justus Uitermark for taking over the

supervision when Walter returned to the US. Thank you, Justus, for your sharp and inspiring feedback, for helping me find my own voice, and for keeping me on track. I thank Professor Dr. Jan Willem Duyvendak for always offering rigorous academic commentary and for advising me while simultaneously stressing that I was free to do things differently. And I thank Dr. Marguerite van den Berg for encouraging and supporting me in the final lap of my PhD journey. Thank you, Marguerite, for your excellent theoretical and ethnographic insights, for your assistance with restructuring my work, and for ensuring that we scheduled a meeting every three weeks. I am not sure that I would have been able to finish my PhD in 2019 were it not for your professional and personal guidance and support.

Thanks also goes to the steering members of the program group Political Sociology: Power, Place and Difference and to the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) from the University of Amsterdam for funding my PhD. And I thank the Institute for Ethnic and Migration Studies (IMES) and Dr. Floris Vermeulen from the University of Amsterdam for funding *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles*, the documentary film that I codirected with Dirk Eisema during six months of ethnographic research in 2011 and 2012 (see appendix).

I would like to thank all the colleagues and friends that I worked with and learned from at the University of Amsterdam. Thank you all for the many ways, be it professional or personal, in which you have contributed to my academic development. Thank you for enriching my mind with your knowledge and skills and for touching my heart and my spirit.

To those I met during my Research Master Social Sciences: thank you Laura Vonk, Gerlieke Bak Veltkamp, Else Vogel, Stine Grinna, Francesco Colona, and Sjoerd Warmerdam. We were an inspired and inspiring group of ambitious young scholars. I am so pleased I met you, and I look forward to reconnecting and working with you in the future. A special thanks to my dear friend Maja Hertoghs for always inspiring and encouraging me. And to my close friend Sanne Hoekstra, who befriended me during my Bachelor of Sociology. Thank you Sanne, your friendship, love, and wisdom mean the world to me.

To those I met during my time as a junior lecturer in the sociology department: thank you Carolien Bouw, Katja Rusinovic, Bart van Heerikhuizen, Robbie Voss, Rogier van Reekum, Sabine de Graaf, Ruth Stoffels, Yannick Coenders, Iris Hagemans, Paul Mepschen, Henry Kalter, Sjoukje Botman, Chip Huisman, Thijs Bol, Muriël Kiesel, and the many students who surprised and inspired me with their refreshing and insightful questions and commentaries. A special thanks to Carolien Bouw for all the emotional and mental support you gave me throughout the years. Thank you, Carolien, for believing in me in my most desperate moments.

To those I met during my time as a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR): thank you Josien Arts, Fatiha El-Hajjari, Charlotte Albers, Davide Gnes, Fenneke Wekker, Judith Zijlstra, Tito Bachmayer, Minke Hajer, Anastasiya Halauniova, Diliara Valeeva, Robby Davidson, Myra Bosman, Bert de Graaff, Jesse Hofman, Thijs van Dooremalen, Sander van Haperen, Jeske de Vries, and Alix Nieuwenhuis. A special thanks to Josien Arts for consistently being engaged and supportive, and for always providing me with intelligent, critical, and useful answers. Thank you, Josien, for being a much-appreciated colleague and friend. And a special thanks to Fatiha El-Hajjari for sharing intense moments of joy, sadness, desperation, and laughter. Thank you, Fatiha, for becoming my much-needed friend and ally within the university.

To all the lecturers and teachers that have somehow influenced my thinking and academic development: thank you Gerben Moerman, Christian Bröer, Nico Wilterdink, Olav Velthuis, Annemarie Mol, Annelies Moors, Ewald Engelen, Jarret Zigon, Olga Sezneva, Barak Kalir, Flip Lindo, Jan Rath, Döske van der Wilk, Iris van Huis, Sylvia Holla, and Thomas Franssen.

A special word of thanks goes to my friend, and incredibly talented photographer, Ellen Wittkamp for designing and creating the beautiful and original cover of this dissertation. And a special thanks to my friend Nele Ysebaert for reading and commenting on my work, and for believing in me and encouraging me to continue as *de vakvrouw* she saw in me.

I would like to thank my family for their endless support, encouragement, love, and inspiration. I thank my dad, Ito Fiorito, for his curiosity, enthusiasm, and zest for life. Thank you, Pap, I will always cherish our time in Los Angeles together and will never forget how you made me love that city or how endearingly you introduced yourself to my research group. I thank my brother, Chris Gordon, for always being there when I needed his help. Thank you, Chris, for the countless times you helped me move while I was doing my PhD. And I thank my sister, Gioia Fiorito, for her truly original, remarkable, and excellent brain. Thank you, Gioia, for always challenging me and making me see the other side of the issue, for inspiring me with your broad and eclectic source of knowledge and wisdom, and for making me laugh and giggle when I become far too serious for my own good.

And a very special thanks to my mom, Lynda Bartlett, for the times that she read and commented on my work and for her amazing brain, her curious and tireless spirit, and her kind and loving heart. Thank you, Mom, for our endless conversations on profound and worldly topics, for working with me in Los Angeles, and for instilling in me a desire to truly understand society and see the humanity in all. Thank you for loving and supporting me through the hardest of times and for your countless meals,

sandwiches, cups of coffee and tea, and for your many candles. You more than tried. I would have never made it without you.

Finally, I thank my great love, friend, and partner in life, Dirk Eisema, whom I met during my first year of Sociology at the UvA and with whom I conducted the first six months of ethnographic research in Los Angeles in 2011–2012, co-authored a paper (see chapter two), and made the documentary film *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles* (see appendix). Thank you, Dirk, for your critical and engaged mind, your adventurous and kind spirit, and your loving and emphatic heart. Thank you for our endless sociological adventures and discussions, for our many collaborations, for always reading and critically commenting on my work, for your love, guidance, and support, and for giving me our Sofia Luna. Your contributions and support are indescribable. Can't wait for our next adventure! Dank je, mijn lieveling.

INTRODUCTION

Being undocumented is a constant struggle. Undocumented means afraid, undocumented means being less than others, being inferior, not being able to do something. Because when your counselor is telling you “You can’t do this,” and society is telling you this, and you see yourself in the media represented as something bad, you just feel really alone. But now, we have changed this label of being undocumented to an empowering term: undocumented and unafraid. That word used to be a degrading word, we could never say openly we are undocumented. So, to then say, “We are undocumented and unafraid,” it was intentionally to empower ourselves, because ten years ago we would not be saying that at all. (Manuela, undocumented youth activist, personal interview, 2012)

As Manuela³ expresses clearly, there is great fear and stigma attached to being undocumented in the United States. Undocumented immigrants continuously face the risk, or have to deal with the reality, of having their lives and families uprooted by detention, deportation, and family separation (Menjívar 2011; Menjívar and Abrego 2012). Anti-immigrant sentiments and policies mushroomed during the 1990s, resulting in the tightening of border security with Operation Gatekeeper in 1993, the restricting of welfare with the Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, and the expanding and expediting of deportations with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 (Tichenor 2002). Additionally, public and political discourse derogatorily depicted undocumented immigrants as “illegal aliens,” “occupiers,” and “criminals.” The undocumented youths that participated in the ethnographic study detailed in this dissertation all grew up in that era of hostility and hate. As a result, they were taught by their parents to fear the authorities and to not divulge information about their legal status to friends, teachers, and others outside their primary family unit (Abrego 2011; Garcia 2014; Gonzales 2011, 2015; Negrón-Gonzales 2013). As Julio, one of my undocumented youth informants, notes, “We really kept it between our family, it was a secret topic, you can’t really go around telling people.” Consequently, the pressing issues of undocumented youths also remained hidden from the public view and, therefore, did not raise public concern (Kamal and Killian 2015).

However, beginning in the late 2000s, the position and visibility of undocumented youths within the public sphere started to gradually change. Whereas in the early 2000s, undocumented youth did not exist as a public and political subject, toward the end of the decade, many undocumented youths were “coming out of the shadows,” presenting themselves as “undocumented and unafraid,” and demanding to be recognized as rights-bearing human beings (Nicholls 2013a). As they had been taught to feel ashamed and remain quiet about their undocumented status, their sudden appearance on the political stage is quite remarkable.

The political efforts of the first wave of politically active undocumented youths initially focused on pushing for the passage of the federal Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, first introduced in 2001. Within the hostile political climate of the late 1990s and early 2000s, professional immigrant rights organizations fighting for Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation decided to promote undocumented youths as the poster children of the immigrant rights movement because they appealed more to the general public than their undocumented parents did. Immigrant rights organizations, such as the National Immigration Law Center (NILC), collaborated with congressional allies to draft the DREAM Act, a bill that would give undocumented youths a pathway to citizenship. These organizations recruited and trained undocumented youths to become political activists and show themselves as the bill’s human face, thereby creating an institutional framework for undocumented youths to come together to strategize and train for actions and campaigns in organizations at local, state, and national levels. This served as the basis for the organizational structure of the undocumented youth movement when, after the DREAM Act failed to pass Congress in 2010, undocumented youths decided to become an autonomous undocumented youth-led movement that functioned independently from its institutional elders.

By that time, the undocumented youth movement had gained a strong political voice and had become a powerful political force to be reckoned with. Because of their mobilizing efforts for the DREAM Act and a framing strategy that rested on undocumented youths presenting themselves as “real Americans” fighting for their rightful place in the American Dream, undocumented youths became publicly known as the Dreamers. Nowadays, the Dreamers are well-known public figures in US politics and media. The position of the Dreamers is regularly discussed in institutionalized politics and mainstream media, for example, at Congressional meetings, in newspapers articles, on the cover of *Time* magazine, and even at the Oscars awards ceremony. Dreamers are recognized as legitimate political subjects both inside and outside the United States.

The political efforts of the undocumented youth movement have also resulted in concrete political gains at local, state, and federal levels. In California, for example, undocumented youths can benefit from Assembly Bill 540 (AB540) and the California Dream Act (AB130 and AB131), signed into law in 2001 and 2011, respectively. These state laws allow undocumented youths to pay in-state tuition fees and apply for financial aid for college or university. Moreover, in response to the undocumented youth-led administrative relief campaign, President Obama was pressured into using his executive power to pass the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. DACA grants temporary protection against detention and deportation to undocumented persons who entered the country illegally when they were minors and allows them to work, travel, study, and drive legally for a renewable period of two years. When President Trump and US Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in 2017 that they would rescind DACA as of March 5, 2018, their plan spurred such moral outrage that it was actually blocked by state and federal courts. In addition, on June 4, 2019, the House of Representatives passed the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, by a vote of 237 to 187. While the bill is likely to not pass the Senate or to be vetoed by President Trump if it does pass the Senate, the fact that every Democrat and seven Republicans in the House voted for the bill shows that Dreamers are regarded as having a sympathetic case.

At the time of this writing (mid-2019), undocumented youth activists are not only fighting for their own rights but also mobilizing for all 11 million undocumented immigrants by developing campaigns and engaging in high-risk (civil disobedience) actions aimed at stopping the detention, deportation, and family separation of undocumented immigrants in the United States. These types of activist efforts have increased since President Trump took office in 2016, as the Trump administration disproportionately targets (undocumented) immigrants, Muslims, and people of color (Giroux 2017). His actions, rhetoric, and (proposed) policy shifts have been described as cruel, inhumane, violent, white supremacist, nativist, racist, and illegal. In response to the Trump administration's aim to end DACA, undocumented youths have actively organized and advocated for a clean Dream Act, that is, a Dream Act that does not harm other undocumented immigrants. Many undocumented youth activists do not want DACA or the Dream Act to be used as a bargaining chip in exchange for the construction of a border wall, tighter border control measures, more internal immigration enforcement, or higher detention and deportation numbers. Therefore, undocumented youth activists are using their liminal legal status, their valorized social status, and their political voice and position to challenge contemporary migration policies and fight for the rights of different marginalized groups (Heredia 2016; Sirriyeh 2018). As the movement, and its participants, has matured and gained social

standing, it has purposefully become a more diverse, inclusive, counter-hegemonic, and radical movement, actively fighting against capitalism, patriarchy, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia, thereby intentionally lifting up the voices of workers, women, immigrants, people of color, and queer and trans people (LGBTQIA+⁴). Many undocumented youth-led immigrant rights organizations now seek to center “intersectionality” and solidarity in their organizing efforts, recognizing and underscoring that the “criminalization of immigrants varies based on identity,”⁵ that is, differences in gender, race, class, religion, nationality, sexuality, and so on. The movement has thus taken up ideas from black feminist theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), stressing that undocumented immigrants’ experience of marginalization is complicated by the cumulative, intersecting effects of multiple forms of discrimination.

Entering and returning to the field

When I first entered the field by becoming an active member and volunteer of the undocumented youth-led organization Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA) in 2011, I was amazed by the commitment, energy, professionalism, and earnestness with which undocumented youths structured and undertook their organizing activities. Their weekly Monday meetings were always highly structured, methodical, and businesslike: they had agendas, alternating facilitators who led the meetings using flip charts, notetakers who distributed the notes to the collective, and set structures in which committee leaders would report back on the activities their committees had undertaken in the previous week. These “report backs” would particularly focus on whether the committees had delivered on the tasks and activities they had promised to undertake at the previous meeting. At the end of the meetings, the committees’ new tasks and appointments would be restated and the upcoming events and the importance of attending those events would be reiterated, which would be followed by making a list of who could commit to attending the formal and informal events, actions, press conferences, and rallies of the upcoming week.

While I was impressed by their professionalism, I was also astounded by their ability to effortlessly switch from a businesslike demeanor to a more emotional, intimate, and therapeutic mode of interacting. The names and contents of their committees also reflected this amalgamation, consisting of the Legal Committee, the Community Outreach and Education Committee, the Art and Culture Committee, the Development Committee, and the Self-care and Healing Committee. Within the meetings, they would always reserve time and space for a personal “check-in

question” and an elaborate “self-care and healing exercise,” ranging from a physical or playful group-building exercise or icebreaker to a collective meditation session or a trust-building or self-awareness exercise. In addition to these exercises within the weekly meetings, the Self-care and Healing Committee organized events, retreats, healing circles, and workshops aimed at sharing and healing the pain and difficulties of the “undocumented experience” and fostering a collective mood by creating a collective emotional, bodily, and cognitive experience and focus. DTLA thus seemed to be well versed in combining the practical with the emotional, the organizational with the therapeutic, and the formal with the informal.

A third thing that struck me at my very first DTLA meeting was that undocumented youths were organizing an upcoming civil disobedience action in which they would deliberately get themselves arrested by staging a sit-in at the office of the chief prosecutor for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), located in downtown Los Angeles. I was astonished and highly impressed that these undocumented youths were able to overcome their ingrained fear of visibility and authorities and risk possible detention and deportation to accomplish their political goals. I decided that I wanted, or better yet, I needed to participate to truly understand this process of profound liberation. So, I signed up to participate, and ten days later, I found myself at one of the many preparatory meetings leading up to the civil disobedience action. The following excerpt from my field notes describes that first preparatory meeting.

After the protest action at Southwestern Law School, I rush over to the UCLA Labor Center for the admin relief meeting. As I arrive in the small conference room, I meet and greet (hug) about 14 people. Norma welcomes everyone and informs us about the purpose of the meeting.

Norma: “We are planning this Los Angeles civil disobedience action as part of a national campaign aimed at urging Obama to grant DREAM eligible youth administrative relief, to stop the deportation of Dreamers, and give us work permits.”

Norma explains that the campaign consists of several civil disobedience actions throughout the US, all in states where Obama needs the Latino vote, and that the actions entail undocumented youths getting arrested. She hands out different information sheets: 1. The timeline of the national campaign. 2. An overview of all the different roles/functions in the action. She asks us all to introduce ourselves and express how we feel about doing this civil disobedience.

The atmosphere seems more tense and excited than at the weekly meetings. A very focused, solemn, and nervous energy quickly follows a more giggly and talkative one, and vice versa. Some people say they are nervous about it, others stress that they are excited. Veronica, a more experienced activist, says that she has previous experience with doing civil disobedience actions.

Veronica: "Nobody needs to be fearful, because there will be a lot of support. It will not be a solo act. It will be a strategic and threatening act, a sacred act."

Uriel responds: "Thank you for saying that, Veronica. I needed to hear that."

Anthony and Juanita say that they have also been arrested in a previous civil disobedience action and that it is not scary, but very powerful.

Anthony: "We are all running these risks together."

Juanita: "It is beautiful and liberating."

Norma adds: "People that are willing to risk being arrested need to have an educated conversation about it. We need to train ourselves to become civil disobedience participants."

We continue to the other information sheet with all the roles and read the roles out loud, one by one. We decide that at a minimum, we need the following: four civil disobedience participants who do the actual sit-in, one caretaker, one police liaison, one media liaison, one attorney, one legal observer, several peacekeepers, and several chant leaders.

Norma asks if anyone knows what role he or she would like to have. Nobody responds. Then Fernando says he wants to be a civil disobedience participant. Everyone claps and cheers for this newfound hero and several people stand up to hug him or pat him on the back.

Norma continues: "So we'll get together next week and discuss the next steps, the filling out of the roles and the training of the functions. Are people excited?"

Together, we all applaud and say, "Yeah!" loudly. We clean up the meeting room together. We say goodbye to everyone, and there is a lot of hugging and cheering.

What I found most intriguing about these and other initial (participant) observations was how the undocumented youth movement aids undocumented youths in overcoming fear and engaging in risky public, political actions. I was particularly interested by the ways in which the participants use emotion-management techniques in the backstage spaces of the movement to both train and discipline themselves and each other to acquire professional activist dispositions and deliver coherent and disciplined frontstage performances, as well as to liberate themselves from the fear and stigma of being undocumented. From the field notes excerpt above, it is clear that undocumented youths do not simply start off as being liberated and willing to engage in action; instead, they need to learn how to engage in these types of high-risk actions. Or as Norma states, “We need to train ourselves to become civil disobedience participants.”

The excerpt also shows that this training clearly has an emotional component, as the preparatory meeting repeatedly involves establishing affective control by harnessing positive emotions and overcoming negative emotions. Experienced Dreamers such as Veronica, Anthony, and Juanita provide the less experienced ones with common ways of how they should feel about and experience these public protests prior to engaging in them. The potential participants are told that they need not feel fearful (negative emotions), because it will be emotionally rewarding; it will be a sacred, powerful, beautiful, liberating act (positive emotions). And they need not feel alone (negative emotions), because this is “not a solo-act”; there will be a lot of support, and “we are all running these risks together” (solidarity, unity, i.e., positive emotions). The descriptions of the atmosphere (from tense to excited, from focused to cheerful) and the interactions (hugging, cheering, applauding) also show that these youths are trained not only in a practical sense, such as by receiving the timeline or learning about the different roles and functions, but they are also trained in an emotional sense, as the collective mood follows the emotional build-up of the meeting and the attendees are taught how to emotionally experience the action.

The personal liberation and affective transformation that undocumented youth go through by participating in the movement is so remarkable precisely because, as Manuela’s quote at the start of this introduction shows, being undocumented translates into feelings and experiences of fear, shame, inferiority, confinement, and loneliness. However, Manuela also mentions how the movement intentionally transformed “this label of being undocumented to an empowering term: undocumented and unafraid.” The undocumented youth movement has been extremely successful at this collective personal transformation of turning shame into pride and loneliness into solidarity. Moreover, it has also been successful at gaining a political voice, being recognized as a legitimate political subject, and instigating real political reform. Only four months after

I had returned from the field, on June 15, 2012, DREAM eligible youths were granted DACA, the program that temporarily gives undocumented youths citizenship rights for a renewable period of two years. For me, it was truly astounding that President Obama had given them exactly what they had mobilized for in their administrative relief campaign, which the civil disobedience action we had participated in was a part of.

Thus, because I had witnessed firsthand the agency, political power, and personal transformation of undocumented youth activists participating in the undocumented youth movement in Los Angeles, I wanted to make sense of their political power and transformative and emancipatory capacity (or agency), and my focus came to lie on the conditions and consequences of their political success. As many participants had shared with me how the fear and shame of being undocumented had negatively impacted their (daily) lives and sense of self, and how participation in the movement had mediated some of these harmful effects, I wondered how the subjectivities of undocumented youths are constituted by power and practice both inside and outside the movement. I sought to understand how stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youths manage to come out of the shadows of “illegality” as undocumented and unafraid to gain a political voice and instigate political reform. Since I had seen the movement use emotion-management techniques to create group cohesion and encourage political mobilization, I also aimed to study the role of emotion work in establishing that collective personal transformation and emancipation. Additionally, it seemed that participation in the movement enhanced undocumented youths’ chances for upward social mobility but that changes in socioeconomic status were often accompanied with new challenges, tensions, and responsibilities. Consequently, I questioned how the undocumented youth movement both enables and limits upward social mobility for undocumented youths.

After conducting six months of intensive ethnographic fieldwork in 2011/2012, I wrote the first two chapters of my dissertation as peer-reviewed articles dealing with the topics mentioned above (see chapters one and two). While I was writing the third chapter, President Trump announced, on September 5, 2017, that he would rescind DACA by March 5, 2018. I expected my undocumented Facebook friends to blast the internet with pro-DACA, pro-Dreamer statements, but many were either highly critical of the Dreamer narrative or remained relatively quiet on the topic of DACA. Consequently, I decided to return to the field to see how the success of DACA and the threat of ending the policy had affected undocumented youths and the movement. I returned to Los Angeles for six weeks in February/March 2018 with the following questions: What happened to the movement after DACA was installed? How has the success of the undocumented youth movement affected the movement as a whole and the personal lives and subjectivities of undocumented youths? How did the

possible rescinding of DACA affect the subjectivities of undocumented youths and the undocumented youth movement as a whole? The final two chapters of my dissertation (chapters three and four) build upon the questions asked and data collected in each round of fieldwork. The order of the four chapters follows the chronological order in which they were written.

Upon reuniting with the undocumented youths I had befriended in 2011/2012, I found that many of them had been able to build middle-class careers and lifestyles, either through the legal possibilities afforded to them by DACA or because they had gained citizenship status through their marriage with a US citizen. While there definitely were people who were thrown back into insecurity, anxiety, and panic because of the possible ending of DACA, many remained spirited and combative in the struggle for undocumented immigrants and immigrant rights. What struck me most upon my return to the field was the ambivalence with which they experienced and described their political success. While they felt joyful about the benefits, lifestyle, and social mobility their legal status had made possible, they also experienced feelings of what I call survivor guilt for receiving privileges that their undocumented parents, friends, and community members did not receive.

Furthermore, they felt guilty about mobilizing in 2011/2012 mainly for their own cause and position as Dreamers. The Dreamer narrative frames undocumented youths as “deserving immigrants” by emphasizing that they are well-assimilated, all-American youths with “good moral character” (no criminal record) who are “the best and the brightest of their generation” and are not to blame for their undocumented status, because they crossed the border “not by fault of their own.” Six years later, in 2018, they felt that this Dreamer narrative was divisive because it differentiates between supposedly “deserving” undocumented immigrants (assimilated youths) and supposedly “undeserving” undocumented immigrants (undocumented adults or those with criminal records). Consequently, they no longer mobilized around the narrative or collective identity of the Dreamer, but instead advocated for all 11 million undocumented immigrants – fighting against the criminalization, detention, and deportation of all immigrants.

Research questions

My main research questions for this dissertation are the following:

1. How can the political success of the undocumented youth movement be understood?
 - a. How do stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youths manage to

- come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid, and work to gain political voice and instigate political reform?
- b. How are undocumented youths' subjectivities constituted by power and practice both inside and outside the movement?
 - c. How does emotion work help establish the collective personal transformation and emancipation of undocumented youths and reshape their subjectivities?
2. How can the consequences of this success be understood?
 - a. How does the undocumented youth movement enable upward social mobility for undocumented youths?
 - b. How does the undocumented youth movement limit upward social mobility for undocumented youths?

Doing and feeling ethnography

This dissertation is based upon knowledge, experience, and data gained through longitudinal ethnographic research (2011–2018) on the undocumented youth movement in the wider Los Angeles area. It is always difficult to describe the exact data that was yielded by an ethnography because an ethnographer never really shuts off from acquiring data; all conversations, observations, Facebook or Instagram postings, newspaper articles, neighborhood excursions, and so on, add to the insider knowledge and expertise of the ethnographer.

Through my participation in DTLA in 2011 and 2012, I became acquainted with activists from different Dream Teams in the region. I established a personal connection with about 60 to 100 undocumented youth activists and participated in events, actions, and fundraisers organized by Orange Country Dream Team (OCDT), San Fernando Valley Dream Team (SDVDT), and San Gabriel Valley Dream Team (SGVDT). The majority of the research participants have a Mexican or Latino background, come from working-class families, and live in poor, urban neighborhoods in the wider Los Angeles area. In the first six months of ethnographic fieldwork, I spent almost every day with them and became a part of both their activist and their personal lives.

The empirical data from my 2011/2012 fieldwork includes ten in-depth life-history interviews of more than four hours each, many informal conversations, and many digital and hardcopy documents, such as press releases, talking points, information sheets, Facebook or blog posts, and videos distributed by the movement both internally (within the movement) and externally (to media and political agents outside the movement). Data was also gathered through participant observations at 82 different

events. These events include weekly Dream Team meetings; (social) media and talking-points trainings; protests, rallies, and press conferences; high school presentations, panel discussions, and fundraisers; retreats, candlelight vigils, and therapeutic events; and informal events, such as dances, parties, birthdays, weddings, and Christmas and New Year's celebrations. The empirical data from my 2017/2018 fieldwork consists of a thorough discourse analysis of written and audiovisual postings of undocumented youths on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, and other websites as well as many informal conversations, participant observations at five different events, and twenty-six in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Positionality and ethics

One has to build up trust, confidence and friendship so that one sees and hears something of the inner life of a social group. One cannot do so with everyone. Not everyone would let one in. The white, middle-class, middle-aged male sociologist would have difficulty in finding acceptance in any number of worlds. (Rock 2001: 24)

To gain and honor my research participants' trust, confidence, friendship, and respect, and to establish meaningful, durable, mutually beneficial (reciprocal), and non-exploitative relationships, I intentionally sought ways in which I could "give back" to the community I slowly became a part of. I actively participated in the movement as a fellow activist and civil disobedience participant. I opened my home for meetings, retreats, and parties. I engaged in Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal's inspired "Theater of the Oppressed" (popular education) performances at protests. Before leaving the field, I presented my research findings in order to review my findings with the participants (respondent validation) and to verify that they still agreed with the consent they had previously given. And, for meaningful research valorization beyond academic audiences, I codirected the documentary film *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles* (see appendix) and screened it, in conjunction with open discussions and Q&A sessions, in community spaces in both the US and the Netherlands.

Because I was the only documented, white, European (Dutch/English/Italian) woman in a predominantly undocumented, brown, American-Latino environment, it was even more important for us to establish rapport, build trust, and openly discuss issues of power, privilege, and positionality. While there were many power differentials to overcome for us to establish an intimate and trustworthy relationship, there were also similarities, such as age, academic background, and political standing, that

worked in our favor. In 2011, many of us were in our twenties, were or were about to be graduates in the social sciences, and were committed to activist work. In my attempt to adequately and respectfully deal with ethical issues, I would often openly ask, while sometimes stammering uncomfortably, how they felt about me researching and representing them and if I needed to take anything into consideration in that regard.

Author: And am I allowed, I mean do you think it's okay for me to write about or, um represent, the undocumented experience, while I have never been undocumented myself? I mean, um, for me, um, as a white researcher, what do you think I should take into account as a white researcher writing about the undocumented youth movement or Latinx community? What do you feel about that?

Uriel: But I think you are allowed, Tara. I think you are part of our community. And the reason why I say this is that never have we had a researcher that has checked in with us years later. I have been part of other interviews and they are not even my Facebook friends. You really connected with us on a personal level. You were out there risking with us. I think we hold a bond and I think you're different. I am serious. I think with that, I think it's okay. 'Cause you are asking us for our opinions, you are asking us, you always check in with us, you don't just form your thoughts and just carry along. I think it's okay. Really. (personal interview, 2018)

My reflections regarding power, privilege, and positionality and my personal engagement in trying to ensure that my relationships are reciprocal and non-exploitative build upon important ethnographic, feminist, and decolonizing considerations, ethics, methodologies, and epistemologies (Harding 1993; Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Mohanty 2003; Fassin 2013; Essed 2013; Ahmed 2017). These traditions, which can also be categorized under the heading of engaged scholarship (Boyer 1996; Schultz and Kajner 2013), stress that academic work should (1) be meaningful and relevant for the people who participate in social scientific research projects, (2) center the life worlds, experiences, and expertise of the communities academics work with by conducting research with, rather than on, people and by engaging in democratic and decolonial knowledge-production practices, (3) communicate and resonate creatively with civic cultures beyond the walls of the academy, and (4) contribute to social transformation aimed at equality.

My commitment to these principles also triggered interesting questions and dilemmas, such as, should one deliberately honor and recognize the expertise and

contribution of the research participants by explicitly mentioning their real names or it is better to protect the research participants and anonymize their names through the use of pseudonyms? Because I discuss intimate, personal, and therapeutic information and experiences, I decided to use pseudonyms rather than real names. Furthermore, I regularly checked in with participants to confirm whether they still gave their consent and felt comfortable with my findings, especially when I discussed sensitive information, wrote critically about certain dynamics within the movement, or used materials such as photographs (see chapter 2) or the documentary (see appendix).

In reflecting on these issues of representation and positionality, I think it is important to go beyond self-stereotyping or merely reflecting on how the researcher's position is shaped by one or two demographic characteristics. Rather, it is necessary to think about how people's multiple characteristics are entwined and continuously shift dependent on context (Reyes 2018). Hence, ethnographers need to explore how their visible and invisible characteristics can be strategically revealed and employed within different situations and contexts as different tools of the ethnographic toolkit. “[O]ur bodies, racial/ethnic identities, gender, sexuality, appearance, backgrounds, education, citizenship, and social networks, among others, all matter and are used to gain access and understand the field” (p. 6). There were many ways in which I was able to use my body and privilege to gain access, trust, respect, and understanding within the field.

There were times that I felt my having documentation and being able to participate in whiteness stood in the way of getting access, such as the time when a radical undocumented artist, who always posts satirical commentaries about white people – or “gringos” – on Facebook, did not respond to my messages and emails. But there were other moments that I felt the privileges related to my gender, class, and race worked in my favor. For example, because the authorities did not consider me to be part of a risky target group, I could take more risks in certain actions or areas. From my fieldwork journal:

During my third weekly DTLA meeting, undocumented youth activist Gabriel informs the group about his friend who wants to research undocumented students and attend the weekly meetings. Gabriel asks what the guidelines about these things are. Nadia answers, “There are no guidelines written down yet, but we do feel that we do not want or need another researcher just using our precious time and personal experiences to get their PhD off our backs. We feel that it should only be possible when it is participatory research, like with Tara.”

I feel extremely self-conscious and make a promise to myself to show complete commitment to the “cause” and not betray their trust in any way. But Nadia’s remark stuck with me nonetheless.

It stuck with me when I agreed to do the scouting work for the upcoming civil disobedience event and found myself, sick with tension, mapping the entire layout of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services located on the ground floor of the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles.

It stuck with me when I performed a tableau vivant at a protest against racial profiling, using my white body to dramaturgically portray an LA hipster unapologetically drinking wine from a wineglass in public, while the homeless person of color next to me gets arrested for drinking beer from a brown paper bag.

And it stuck with me when I, as instructed, was the first to march into the immigration court building in downtown Los Angeles with other (undocumented) activists chanting “undocumented and unafraid” and telling the approaching security guard, “You’re not allowed to touch me,” as I continued marching and we collectively overtook the entire marble lobby.

By sharing this excerpt from my journal, I do not in any way want to engage in “cowboy ethnography” (Conteras 2013; Hoang 2013) or present myself as the “courageous immersive” (Small 2015) by portraying the field as extremely dangerous and myself as heroic. The undocumented youths that allowed me into their lives are the ones who run the risks by engaging in these types of actions. They can get detained, deported, and blacklisted. I, on the other hand, have the privilege of a Dutch passport and a six-month independent researcher visa and a three-month ESTA visa.

The ethnographer needs to be very conscious about the ways in which she wants to “rhetorically represent” herself and her research participants. Ethnographies of poor minorities often risk “accusations of stereotyping, misrepresentation, sensationalism, and even cashing in on the problems of the poor” (Small 2015: 352). If she chooses the role of the “sympathetic observer” and is committed to eliciting sympathy, she “will focus the gaze on those aspects of the people, institutions, or places likely to evoke pity, sorrow, or anger” (p. 354). If she chooses the role of “courageous immersive,” then she runs the risk of misrepresenting the field as exotically dangerous. These two rhetorical representations thus both fall short. A better alternative to seeking to arouse sympathy is seeking to evoke empathy by trying to understand people in all

their complexity: “If the reader cannot see himself in the teenager out of school, or the undocumented worker, or the single mother of three, then an ethnographic text has failed as an empathetic project, even if it elicits easy sympathy” (Ibid.). A better alternative to the sensationalism of the courageous immersive is to portray people in their everyday lives.

My aim in sharing the above journal excerpt is threefold. First, I want to show how an ethnographer needs to actively work at building trust and rapport by really participating, showing loyalty and commitment, and giving back. Second, I want to show how an ethnographer can use her own body and feelings to grasp some of the experiences that the people she studies might go through. Third, through narrating my own experience and feelings of needing to overcome my fear of defying authorities, I want to show how undocumented youth activists need to go through a process in which they learn – are socialized into – how to overcome fear and become activists who engage in high-risk actions.

The ethnographer thus also uses her own body and feelings to gain a more profound understanding of the life worlds of the people she works with. Because I was a participatory activist myself, I was able to experience within my own body how participating in a civil disobedience action is a profoundly liberating and emotionally rewarding experience. While my own experiences will never completely reflect another’s, especially such a profound experience as the fear and stigma of being undocumented and the liberation of becoming undocumented and unafraid, our emotions, cognitions, and bodies can, and did on several occasions, synchronize into a collective experience. The following excerpt from my field notes of the civil disobedience action reflects this synchronization and experience of collective effervescence (Collins 2004; Durkheim 1912/1965).

I am standing on the right side of the building. I feel the tension rising. People are trying to see what is happening. We are told that they will be taken away any moment now. Some people start to cry softly. We can see the police officers inside the building, and we see glimpses of Alejandro and Norma. The whole crowd starts to roar. Cheering, yelling, whistling, chanting. I see more and more people crying. I feel emotionally touched myself. Norma’s mother is crying, the girls I have been chanting with all day are crying. I feel tears well up. Then we see Alejandro, cuffed and escorted by the police. He is smiling. He comes out of the left side door, walks through the cheering crowd on the sidewalk, and steps into the police car. We all cheer as loud as we can. I am completely emotionally high. They are the heroes, and we cheer as loud as we can. Then, on the right side of the building, where I’m standing, Norma comes out, cuffed

and escorted. Again, we cheer as loud as we can. She sees me, she smiles. She sees her mother, she smiles. She steps into the car, she is still smiling. Everyone is really crying now. Nadia comes out of the left door and Fernando and Pancho come out on my side. They are all wearing the “I am undocumented” T-shirt and the graduation cap.

Ethnography is the method par excellence to try to understand the subjectivities, or the inner lives and emotional experiences, of undocumented youths, because ethnography is all about understanding, capturing, and representing embodied and lived experience (Willis and Trondman 2000). By becoming intimately involved in their life worlds, or by “deep hanging out” (Bryman 2012), I aim to see their world and experiences through their eyes, to grasp the finer sensitivities, subtleties, and meanings they give to their everyday lives. Within the tradition of Alfred Schutz’s phenomenological sociology (1932/1972), Max Weber’s interpretative sociology and method of *verstehen* (1922/1972), and Clifford Geertz’s symbolic anthropology and use of thick descriptions (1973), I aim to understand, describe, and interpret how structures, discourses, power, and institutions are experienced and given meaning by acting, interpreting, and experiencing human beings.

Literature and theory

Because I present elaborate literature reviews and theoretical frameworks in the different chapters of this dissertation, it is not particularly necessary to repeat them all here. It suffices to mention the most important bodies of literature that I use, reconcile, and contribute to. These include literature on undocumented immigrant youth and their mobilizations in the United States (Abrego 2006, 2011, 2016; Gonzalez 2011; 2015; Nicholls 2013a; Negrón-Gonzales 2013; Portes and Rivas 2011), literature on the role of emotions and collective identities in social movements (Benford and Snow 2000; Flesher Fominaya 2010b; Jasper 2011; Melucci 1995; Polletta and Jasper 2001), and literature on qualitative perspectives on social mobility (Bertaux and Tompson 1997; Friedman 2014, 2015; Lawler 1999; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989).

In addition to these general remarks about the use of different bodies of literature, I will now present some of the core aspects of my theoretical framework and perspective on the shaping of subjectivities and the role of emotions in such processes. This will be followed by an overview of the terms and definitions used in this dissertation and an overview of each chapter.

Shaping subjectivities: A sociological approach to interior life and emotions

To understand how undocumented youths are able to overcome the fear and stigma of being undocumented, come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid and engage in high-risk (civil disobedience) actions, it is necessary to understand how they go through a collective process of personal transformation in which shame is transformed into pride and their shared subjectivities – or interior and emotional lives – are reconstituted by the internalization of practices of empowerment.

In this dissertation, I conceptualize subjectivity as the shared inner life and emotional experience of the political subject, and as “actors’ thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and, especially, their senses of self and self-world relations” (Holland and Leander 2004: 127). Subjectivities are shaped by structures and practices of power that become internalized and embodied in our sense of self and in our thoughts, feelings, and sensibilities. Subjects are constructed, and subjectivities are produced by cultural and social formations in which subjects are qualitatively positioned as, for example, racialized, classed, gendered, or criminalized subjects. They are formed through the embodiment of discursive regimes of power/knowledge that categorize and interpellate people as “disabled,” “criminal,” “illegal,” or other negative renderings. Social structures thus get stuck in the body. Structure becomes “*em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu 1990: 69/70). However, while subjectivities are formed by structures of power, they also function as the foundation of resistance and agency. Human agents are not passive dupes, but rather reflexive, knowledgeable, and purposeful agents who can both reproduce as well as change social structures (Giddens 1991). People appropriate and innovate meaning and discourses, and act in and on the world, even when they are acted upon. As such, I think of agency as “individuals’ capacity to be reflexive about their situation – their discursive consciousness – and to act upon it to make a difference” (Ghorashi and Ponzoni 2015: 164).

As I will elaborate on in chapter three, prior to their involvement in the undocumented youth movement, the subjectivities of undocumented youths are primarily shaped by the embodiment of the legal and discursive practices of authoritative power structures. Additionally, the unique and personal subjectivities of individual undocumented youths are shaped by individuals’ lived experiences related to the intersections of class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, personal experiences, and so forth (Crenshaw 1991). However, because of their shared experiences of being undocumented and participating in the movement, there are also similarities in their subjectivities related to the embodiment of these shared

experiences. Therefore, I subscribe to a “critical phenomenology of ‘illegality,’” one that examines illegality as a juridical status, as a sociopolitical condition, and, finally, as a mode of being-in-the-world (Gonzales and Chavez 2012: 256).

Although the concepts of identity and subjectivity are often used interchangeably, in this dissertation I purposefully distinguish between the shared subjectivities of undocumented youths participating in the movement and their collective identity as Dreamers. While their shared subjectivity is derived from embodied and affective experiences of negative positioning and treatment via their legal status and its stigma as well as from internally generated empowerment, their collective identity as Dreamers revolves around the politically strategic and essentialist construction of Dreamers as assimilated students who excel in school and were brought to the United States as innocent children.

This dissertation thus focuses on how shared experiences related to undocumented legal status and participation in the undocumented youth movement shape participants’ subjectivities in similar ways. However, I also want to stress that participants’ interior emotional lives and sense of self are also shaped by other shared lived experiences related to intersections of illegality, race, class, gender, and sexuality. Many of the undocumented youths who participated in this study come from working-class Latino families and live in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods characterized by poverty, under-resourced schools, and gang violence. (Undocumented) Latino immigrants in the United States suffer from racism and discrimination. They are stereotypically constructed, dehumanized, and treated as a moral threat to the nation (Chavez 2008), and they are disproportionately targeted, racially profiled, and criminalized (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013). Even though I consider race to be a harmful fiction, I want to underscore that it is very real in its consequences. I therefore follow Gloria Wekker (2016) in her use of Ruth Frankenberg’s definition of race as “a socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time. Race, like gender, is ‘real’ in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals’ sense of self and life chances” (Frankenberg 1993 in Wekker 2016: 23). Though I could write more on how experiences of exclusion and (non-)belonging are structured by race, class, and gender, my focus here is on the role of participants’ shared undocumented status and participation in the movement.

Emotion work: Turning shame into pride

In considering how the undocumented youth movement aids its participants in undergoing a process of personal and collective transformation, I build upon a

culturalist tradition within social movement research. Whereas the classic social movement literature focuses on structures and processes of resource mobilization and political opportunities in society to understand the dynamics of social movements (McAdam 1982; McAdam, McCarthy and Mayer 1996), the more culturalist traditions focus instead on framing processes, collective identities, identity politics, and emotions (Benford and Snow 2000; Flesher Fominaya 2010; Jasper 2011; Melucci 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1992).

Social movements, such as the gay movement, the black liberation movement, and the disability rights movement, have successfully aided their participants in going through a process of emancipation in which shame, stigma, and victimhood are transformed into pride and the locus of blame is shifted from the victim to external structures (Duyvendak 1991, 1995, 2006; Duyvendak, Sunier, Sahorso and Steijlen 2000; Duyvendak and Nederland 2007). Social movement scholars, such as McAdam, argued that for collective action to be possible, people must go through a process of cognitive liberation in which they “define their situation as unjust and subject to change through group action” (1982: 51). This focus on the cognitive aspects of liberation was then criticized for its structural bias and for ignoring the emotional dimension (Goodwin and Jasper 1999). Other social movement scholars argued that the process of turning shame into pride was predominantly an emotional process of liberation and transformation (Britt and Heise 2000; Jasper 2011; Taylor 1996).

Identity politics, in particular, has often been lauded for its ability to accomplish affective transformation⁶ – turning shame into pride and loneliness into solidarity – through affect-control processes (Britt and Heise 2000) and emotional repair work of one’s self-image (Taylor 1996). Shame over a stigma, the negative emotion that arises from seeing oneself through the unfavorable viewpoint of the other, “results in sequestration, undermines empathic unity and a sense of alliance with similar others, and prevents bonding through a shared relation to an oppressor” (Britt and Heise 2000: 261). Pride, on the other hand, often involves public display, such as the act of coming out in public. Consequently, to transform shame into pride, social movements must offer an alternative ideological account that changes “the frame from one of innate deviance to one of oppression” (p. 257) and puts the blame on external forces outside the individual rather than on the individual herself. By offering undocumented youth certain ideologies and alternative politicized discourses about an unjust immigration system, a xenophobic public discourse, and the power and resilience of immigrants, the movement is able to transform their fear and internalization of stigma about being undocumented into feelings of anger and pride. This subsequently helps them in presenting themselves as undocumented and unafraid in the public sphere. Anger can propel them to come out of the shadows and step into the public sphere

to engage in collective action and demand to be recognized as rights-bearing human beings. Moreover, powerful displays of pride and coming out can be emotionally contagious. “For the isolated or closeted homosexual, ‘just seeing a group of openly gay people together at a pride rally, for example, is often an overwhelmingly good feeling’ (Hartinger 1992, 50)” (Britt and Heise: 252). For movements to accomplish effective emotional transformation, they need to combine an inward focus on healing, solidarity, synchronization, and emotional repair with an external focus of going into the public sphere and engaging in collective action, thereby overcoming the Janus dilemma by both reaching in and reaching out (Jasper 2011).

Hence, the undocumented youth movement uses pedagogies of feeling and techniques of emotion work – or emotion management – (Arts and van den Berg 2018; Hochschild 1983) that is, the deliberate and conscious effort to shape, induce, or inhabit feelings so as to render them appropriate to the situation or cause, to teach youth activists how they should feel about their undocumented status and involvement in the movement. Emotionally intensive rituals, such as sharing circles and other therapeutic exercises, are deliberately used within the movement to create intersubjective emotional convergence, heal some of the pain, trauma, and stigma of being undocumented, and teach undocumented youths how they should feel about certain matters. These techniques aid activists in learning the feeling rules (Hochschild 1979) of the movement and in aligning their personal emotional experiences with each other and the emotional culture of the movement (Gould 2009; Jasper 2011). The process of intersubjective convergence is therefore not only about creating strong emotional relationships but also about steering participants to recognize and feel their shared traumas, feelings, stories, and experiences in similar ways. As the subjective worlds of activists converge, they begin to see and feel the experiences of their fellow activists in ways that resonate with their own.

As the movement matured and progressed, it became so successful at working on participants’ emotions that it resulted in people feeling ambivalent (rather than merely joyful) about their transition out of undocumented status into (liminal) legality. Because the movement had made them deeply identify with “the undocumented identity and experience,” many individual activists who gained legal status experienced survivor guilt about their newly acquired privileges in relation to those who remained undocumented.

Terms and definitions

Undocumented

Throughout this dissertation, I consistently use the term undocumented, though one could argue that this term does not accurately describe the situation. Many of my participants are not completely undocumented: they are registered – or documented – in schools and community colleges, in AB540 or DACA programs, and in public and social media, such as television programs, newspaper and magazine articles, and Facebook and Instagram.

Technically, the term undocumented refers to people not having a social security number or legal documentation. However, many undocumented immigrants pay to use other people's documents and social security numbers to work⁷. They are therefore not completely undocumented, but they do not have or use the right legal documents. Within the literature on undocumented immigrants, one regularly comes across many different terms, such as “undocumented,” “unauthorized,” “irregular,” “illegal,” or “unlawful” to describe immigrants who are not recognized as legitimate “legal” immigrants. The main reason I use the term undocumented is that the people I worked with use this term themselves. I personally never use the term “illegal,” neither in written text nor in spoken word, because I do not want to contribute to the stigmatization and pain the term creates, nor do I want to simply adhere to the arbitrary and uneven categorization of immigrants through the legal and immigration systems.

Undocumented youth movement and immigrant rights movement

The same goes for my continuous reference to the undocumented youth movement. I have labeled this movement as such because the people I organized with called it the undocumented youth movement. However, at a later stage in the research and in the second round of fieldwork – in 2017/2018 – many people who used to be part of the undocumented youth movement had become adults (in their twenties or thirties) and no longer identified with being youths. They had therefore transitioned into the larger immigrant rights movement. This is reflected in chapter four, which I wrote after my second period of fieldwork. In it, I discuss participants' ambivalence about transitioning to legality and, like them, I now refer to the immigrant rights movement, referring to the undocumented youth movement mainly in the past tense.

Youth, young adults, Dreamers, and the 1.5 generation

I use different terms to describe the people who were part of this study, including youth/youths, young adults, Dreamers, and the 1.5 generation. One can definitely be critical

of the term youth and youths, as it is a social construct in which the meaning and age delineation depends on the context and culture in which the term is embedded (Furlong 2013). While in some societies, youths stop being youths at the age of thirteen, sixteen, or eighteen, in the US, many participants of the undocumented youth movement are or were in their mid to late twenties. Again, I use the terms youths and young adults because my informants use this term themselves and because this is very common within the body of social-scientific literature that discusses these groups.

I use the term Dreamers in several ways. Therefore, when I use the term, I specify which way I am using it. Dreamer(s) may be used to refer to any of the following: (1) those who are eligible to qualify for the DREAM Act; (2) the political group that has mobilized and advocated for the Dream Act; (3) the way in which the general public and media talk about the approximately 800,000 undocumented youths who qualify for the Dream Act and DACA; (4) the narrative or master frame that emphasizes the virtues and innocence of undocumented youths; or (5) the politically constructed collective identity of the undocumented youth participating in the movement during the first fieldwork period.

In chapters two and four, I also use the term 1.5 generation to refer to those immigrants who were born abroad but migrated as children and were raised in the United States. They are described as the 1.5 generation because they are in-between the first generation of immigrants who migrated to the United States as adults and the second generation of native-born citizens with foreign parentage. I use this term in those two chapters because they explicitly build upon, contend with, and contribute to the US immigration literature that uses and works with the term 1.5 generation.

Latino and Latinx

In chapters two and four, I use the terms Latino and Latinx, respectively, as I build upon the literature on Latino/Latinx immigrants in the United States. I focus on Latino/Latinx undocumented youth for several reasons. First, most of the people who participated in my study self-identify as Latino/Latinx and are from Latin American descent. Second, of the nearly five million undocumented youths under the age of thirty in the United States, the majority (78%) are from Latin America. Third, Latino/Latinx immigrants face particular issues of discrimination, ethnic profiling, criminalization, and stigmatization (Chavez 2008; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Gomberg-Muñoz 2015).

The term Latino is used as the pan-ethnic identifier of people of Latin American descent living in the United States. The term Latinx is currently increasingly being used as the gender-neutral alternative to Latino/Latina by scholars, activists, and journalists who intentionally seek to move beyond gender binaries and be more

inclusive of all Latin American descendants. Many of my informants now use the term Latinx themselves. I only use the term Latinx in chapter four, because it was the only article that was written after the term had become in vogue.

Chapters

Before presenting an overview of the four chapters, I want to note that there is some overlap in the chapters regarding methods, data, case, and setting, as they were written as separate peer-reviewed articles. Therefore, certain details in the different chapters, notably descriptions of the data and specificities about the undocumented youth movement and the Dreamers, can be repetitive.

Chapter one

Chapter one, “Silencing to Give Voice,” explores how a diverse group of undocumented youths, varying in age, sex, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and political and discursive affiliations, becomes a unified political force to be reckoned with. The chapter uses Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective to show that the success of the Dreamers as a unified political force depends on the intensive backstage work done by leaders and activists within the movement to create disciplined and coherent frontstage performances and collective identities that resonate with the wider public.

These backstage techniques and strategies are important to examine because frontstage unity is not natural or automatic. As most campaigns are made up of heterogeneous individuals, organizations, and groups, frontstage coherence is something that needs to be worked on. This chapter – co-authored with Walter Nicholls – discusses how this essential backstage work consists of (1) training activists to become disciplined frontstage performers, (2) converging activists’ feelings through emotionally intensive disciplinary techniques, and (3) managing differences and conflicts in the free spaces of the movement. The chapter contributes to the literature on collective identity within social movement research by providing insight into the emotion work that facilitates the construction of collective identities. Moreover, it contributes to and widens our understanding of the concept of free spaces by arguing that allowing critical and radical thoughts and feelings to run freely in the backstage spaces of a movement does not necessarily cause the disruption of a coherent public representation, but can actually aid it instead.

Chapter two

Chapter two, “Beating the Odds,” shows how the political and civic engagement of

marginalized and stigmatized undocumented Latino youth enables them to have social mobility prospects. Co-authored with Dirk Eisema and Martha Montero-Sieburth, this chapter contributes to the literature on social mobility by proposing a qualitative approach that considers the subjective and symbolic meaning people give to their lives and their social mobility. The chapter delineates four elements of social mobility by which undocumented youths distinguish themselves from their undocumented parents. Through their political and civic engagement in the undocumented youth movement, undocumented youth (1) overcome their fear of migration authorities and feel empowered by embracing the undocumented identity, (2) enhance their collective status by transforming highly stigmatized youths into legitimate political subjects, (3) acquire professional activist dispositions, and (4) gain access to a large and open network that offers job, internship, and funding opportunities.

The chapter builds on literature that stresses the importance of education in enhancing the social mobility prospects of undocumented Latino youth from poor and segregated, working-class neighborhoods. Through schooling, undocumented youths learn about worldly matters beyond their working-class communities and start to feel capable and motivated about pursuing a particular career and educational trajectory. Educational spaces, such as AB540 or Latino support groups, at high schools, community colleges, or university campuses, also provide opportunities for undocumented youths to get to know each other and to come together in a collective that advocates against their precarious situation. By continuing with political activism through the undocumented youth movement after community college or university, undocumented Latino youth build on the foundations of their higher education trajectories to become empowered and self-confident professional and politicized activists, which in turn enhances their collective action towards beating the odds and climbing the social mobility ladder.

Chapter three

Chapter three, “Beyond the Dreamers,” explores what the concepts of collective identity and subjectivity contribute in the case of the undocumented youth movement. It shows that although the collective identity of the Dreamers has been used to organize undocumented youths from different backgrounds and regions into a recognizable collective actor successfully engaged in political action, nowadays the Dreamer identity is a matter of contention among undocumented youth. By comparing the construction and deconstruction of the Dreamer identity with the constitution of the shared subjectivities of undocumented youths participating in the movement, the chapter shows that it is their shared subjectivities, derived from shared affective and embodied experiences of both marginalization and empowerment, that constitute

their strong sense of belonging and political agency, and not only the collective identity of Dreamers as created by political entrepreneurs.

The shared subjectivities of undocumented youths are constituted by (1) the embodiment of legal power and the experience of everyday life as an undocumented immigrant, that is, a life in the shadows, the constant threat of detention and deportation, and not having access to basic amenities, (2) the embodiment of stigmatizing discourses that derogatorily position, categorize, and label undocumented immigrants as “illegal aliens” and “criminals” and that become internalized into experiences of shame and inferiority, and (3) the embodiment of experiences of emancipation and politicization through the alternative and politicized narratives, cultural resources, emotionally intensive rituals, and techniques of healing offered by the movement. The chapter argues for a stronger engagement with the concept of subjectivity in social movement research, as the concept of subjectivity offers a greater understanding of the profound effects of embodied and affective experiences of negative discursive positioning and trauma, as well as emancipation and healing. By looking through the lens of subjectivity, social movement scholars could become more attuned to the ways in which political power shapes the interior lives of stigmatized and marginalized groups. But more importantly, it would allow them to understand the profound effects that social movements can have in offering support, narratives, cultural resources, and healing techniques that work to intrinsically empower activists to sustain their energy, commitment, and motivation for engaging in contentious politics and instigating political and cultural reform.

Chapter four

Chapter four, “Learning to be Legal,” analyzes the ambivalent narratives of politicized 1.5-generation Latinx transitioning from an undocumented status to (liminal) legality and from a working-class to a middle-class position. It explores how this shift in legal status and social position profoundly affects people’s positionalities, subjectivities, and relationships, as the transition translates into new opportunities, privileges, and feelings of joy and relief, as well as new feelings of survivor guilt, isolation, estrangement, ontological fragmentation, and obligation to give back to their families and undocumented community. The chapter argues that these shared ambivalent experiences are related to (1) their durably embodied undocumented subjectivities, (2) their mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of legal rights, (3) the immigrant narrative, and (4) politicization, pressure, and social control within the immigrant rights movement.

In this chapter, I build upon the body of literature on survivor guilt and reconcile it with the literature on the emotional experience of social (class) mobility and with

studies showing how “illegality” affects all members of mixed-status (Latinx) families. By showing that even after undocumented individuals transition to legality and climb the social mobility ladder, they still cannot escape from the devastating effects of being undocumented, this chapter contributes to the scholarship on the profound effects of legal violence caused by immigration policies, effects that go beyond the simple dichotomy between documented and undocumented legal status.

CHAPTER 1

Silencing to Give Voice: Backstage Preparations in the Undocumented Youth Movement in Los Angeles⁸

I walk over to the South Steps of City Hall in downtown Los Angeles. There are about twenty-five undocumented students standing on the steps in front of City Hall. They are dressed in different bright colored caps and gowns and they are holding signs stating: “We are not criminals, we are Dreamers,” “Undocumented and Unafraid,” “Education, not deportation,” and “We are the future of America.” There are ten people standing in front of the steps looking at the Dreamers performing the mock graduation ceremony. A couple of them are taking photographs and there are several film crews from the media present.

Dreamer and group leader Ernesto is holding the megaphone and introduces Dreamer Uriel, who is wearing a purple cap and gown. Uriel takes the megaphone and gives his testimony: “Hi, my name is Uriel and I’m undocumented and unafraid. I came to the US at the age of one and a half and the only country I remember is the United States. I am a student of urban studies and sociology at Loyola Marymount University and I want to be a real contribution to society, both socially and economically.”

*Ernesto repeatedly leads a chant: “What do we want?”
The groups chants loudly: “Dream Act.”*

Ernesto: “When do we want it?”

Group: “NOW!”

This ethnographic vignette describes a public performance of a group of undocumented students – or Dreamers – in Los Angeles. It serves to illustrate the coherence and homogeneity found in the public performances of the undocumented youth movement in the United States. The public performances that the author witnessed during six months of ethnographic research all followed the same script, highlighting that undocumented students are deserving, well-adjusted, and contributing American youths.

In the early 2000s, such a public performance would not have been possible. Undocumented youths in the United States did not exist as a public and political subject. There was great stigma associated with their undocumented status and parents stressed the importance of hiding their status from friends, teachers, and others outside their closest networks (Gonzales 2011). By contrast, in the late 2000s, undocumented youths exploded onto the public stage with powerful arguments for why they deserved to be recognized as rights-bearing human beings. The initial struggle centered on pushing for the passage of the federal Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, but activists also embarked on state-level campaigns and, more recently, on campaigns to stop the aggressive deportation policies of the Obama administration. Their success was largely linked to a representational strategy that hinged on constructing a compelling and sympathetic public persona (Nicholls 2013a, 2013b). By crafting a resonant mobilizing frame and producing strong public performances, the youths were able to create a powerful political voice as the Dreamers.

Social movement scholars have long suggested that a strong public voice depends on producing unified and resonant frames, narratives, stories, and performances (Benford 2002; Benford and Snow 2000; Polletta 2006; Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986). While the scholarly focus on frontstage activity has provided important insights into the potential success of social movements, what happens backstage has occupied a marginal space within the existing body of literature. James Scott (1990) once argued that most scholars scrutinize frontstage acts of protest while paying scant attention to the “hidden transcripts” unfolding backstage. Only recently, increasing attention has been given to the processes and practices that occur in the backstage spaces of social movements (Haug 2015: 196). This chapter shows how backstage processes help shape unified frontstage performances and collective identities.

These backstage techniques and strategies are important to examine because frontstage unity is not natural. As most campaigns are made up of heterogeneous

individuals, organizations, and groups, frontstage coherence is something that needs to be worked upon. Even when people have a common grievance, different ethnic, sexual, religious, class, gender, political, and geographical backgrounds give them different insights into the meanings of these grievances and the best ways to communicate them in the public sphere. Many social movements fail to gain public recognition precisely because of these internal differences and a lack of coordination and unity (Benford and Snow 2000; Flesher Fominaya 2010a; Snow et al. 1986).

By drawing on the dramaturgical perspective as presented in Erving Goffman's classic sociological work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and using the undocumented youth movement as our case study, we aim to show how these cohesive and disciplined frontstage performances are dependent on the intensive backstage work done by leaders and activists within the movement. We show that this essential backstage work consists of (1) training activists to become disciplined frontstage performers, (2) converging the feelings of activists through emotionally-intensive disciplinary techniques, and (3) managing differences and conflicts in the "free spaces" within the movement (Evans and Boyte 1986). We aim to contribute to the literature on collective identity (Melucci 1995; Polletta and Jasper 2001) by providing insight into the emotionally intensive work that facilitates the construction of collective identities. Moreover, we seek to contribute to and widen our understanding of the concept of free spaces (Evans and Boyte 1986; Polletta 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001) by arguing that allowing critical and radical thoughts and feelings to run freely in the backstage spaces of the movement does not necessarily cause the disruption of a coherent public representation, but can actually aid it instead.

The dramaturgical perspective: A frontstage/backstage approach

For Goffman (1959), social interaction is viewed as a type of theatrical performance, hence the term *dramaturgical*. Interaction is governed by people's efforts to manage the impressions they give off to others. Individual or team performers aim to control the information they give to the audience during an interaction in order for the audience to accept the definition of the situation as presented by the performer(s). To ensure that the given performance is regarded as convincing, or "real," dramaturgical control needs to be achieved. This requires an alignment of the setting and the corresponding personal front. The actual front consists of an "assemblage of expressive sign-equipment" (p. 14) such as language, dialect, clothing, facial expressions, gestures, narrative, and so forth; but it also consists of more relatively fixed personal characteristics, such as sex, body type, and skin color. An actor's appearance, which communicates something

about her social status, needs to be consistent with her manner, which communicates something about her role. As fronts carry with them stereotypical expectations, they often become institutionalized and are transformed into collective representations. For example, if someone wants to give a performance of a doctor, or of a middle-class woman, this carries with it certain behavioral and expressive expectations. “This constitutes one way in which a performance is, in a sense, ‘socialized’, molded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented” (pp. 22-23).

Often people cooperate and coordinate their individual acts to perform collectively in teams. These teams need to be in agreement on the impression they want to convey to others. “One overall objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters. This will involve the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others” (p. 87). Hence, performers or teams need to accentuate, or dramatically highlight, those facts or activities that confirm the image the performers want to convey, while concealing, or silencing, those facts that undermine the desired impression. As there is often a discrepancy between people’s appearance, or public performance, and their actual feelings, impulses, thoughts, and activities – or in Goffman’s term’s “between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves” (p. 36) – our public performances need to be worked upon. While the frontstage is the place where the performance takes place, the backstage is the place where the performance is prepared, constructed, and perfected.

It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impressions are openly constructed. (...) Here the team can run through its performance, checking for offending expressions when no one is present to be affronted by them; here poor members of the team, who are expressively inept can be schooled or dropped from the performance. Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character. (pp. 69-70)

Goffman thus argued that frontstage team performances need to be disciplined, homogeneous, and expressively coherent for the audience to be convinced by the performance. As certain facts and matters can discredit the impression the performance is trying to foster and maintain, information control is essential. To ensure that destructive information, such as “dark secrets” (p. 87), does not go beyond the confines of the back region, choosing loyal team members and controlling the access to the back region is vital. The backstage thus needs to be bounded by barriers

to audience perception.

For social movements in general and for marginalized and stigmatized groups in particular, resonant, disciplined, and unified public representations depend upon backstage techniques of impression management. Activists who enter the front stage and say, display, or emote qualities that do not align with the desired definition of the situation, can produce an impression that fails to resonate with the public (at best) or an impression that reinforces the public's preexisting prejudices (at worst). This can render the claims of activists into a disorderly "noise" of deviants and not the legitimate "voice" of a wronged group (Dikeç 2004). In this way, ensuring discipline, cohesion, and unity is of central importance in producing a powerful public voice. The backstage is therefore a strategic space where the messy and often contentious process of constructing frontstage unity can be undertaken outside the public eye. Mobilizations that blur the boundaries between front and back regions (e.g. Occupy Wall Street) can reveal messy internal discord, which results in negative representations of themselves and their cause (Juris 2012; Uitermark and Nicholls 2012).

We now identify three basic backstage processes that facilitate effective public performances.

Training to perform

Activists employ a variety of backstage techniques to discipline and train themselves and other activists (Benford 2002; Foucault 1978, 1980; Jasper 1997, 1998). Important backstage techniques of impression management that Goffman (1959) discusses include selecting team members for frontstage performances that are disciplined, loyal, and circumspect. To heighten the likelihood of dramaturgical circumspection and discipline, team members are prepared for frontstage performances by rehearsing the whole routine and setting a complete agenda for the performance beforehand. Other techniques include roleplaying exercises, in which team members play the role of the audience, and purposefully engineer embarrassing definitional disruptions in the back region to learn how to deal with them if they would occur in the front region.

Goffman also provides insight into the role social movement leaders play in preparing movement members for frontstage performances. Activist leaders oftentimes have the role of director or training specialist when it comes to team performances. The director is the one who has "the special duty of bringing back into line any member of the team whose performance becomes unsuitable" (p. 61). And the training specialist is the one who has "the complicated task of teaching the performer how to build up a desirable impression while at the same time taking the part of the future audience and illustrating by punishments the consequences of improprieties" (p. 100). For the purpose of creating consistent and coherent frontstage performers,

movement leaders thus train and discipline themselves and their fellow activists through such backstage techniques as roleplaying games, media- and messaging trainings, civil disobedience trainings, and rehearsing and distributing chant lists and talking points.

Backstage emotion work

Disciplinary techniques undertaken in the backstage also include collective storytelling-, or sharing sessions, and other therapeutic exercises. The emotional content of these disciplinary techniques is essential because emotions play a decisive role in overcoming differences, fostering a sense of groupness, and aligning the subjective worlds of particular activists with their prescribed public roles. Disciplining the words and messages of movement adherents certainly matters for the sake of crafting frontstage representations, but the power of words is magnified when placed within an emotionally compelling storyline (Fine 1996; Hajer 2005; Polletta 1998, 2006; Polletta, Chen, Gharrity Gardner, and Motes 2011). Stories that tap into collective sentiments illustrate how the system produces unfair perils in the “real” lives of people and suggest prescriptions to right existing wrongs. Teaching movement participants how to tell an emotionally resonating story is thus an important backstage technique used within social movements.

Benford (2002) claims that narratives and myths about “good” and “bad” public performances are used as a tool for “intramovement social control” (p. 55). Stories are purposefully distributed through the movement to ensure both “narrative” and “affective” control. “While most movement adherents routinely engage in various activities directed toward controlling the story that is told about the movement, the narratives themselves function as internal social control mechanisms, channeling and constraining individual as well as collective sentiments, emotions, and action” (p. 53). However, Benford does not particularly focus on the role of emotionally intensive *rituals*, such as sharing sessions or therapeutic exercises undertaken in the backstage to help align the feelings of activists and create a sense of team spirit. Goffman (1959: 120) does mention the importance of emotionally intensive rituals such as group therapy for building team spirit and backstage solidarity and loyalty. Nevertheless, he does not provide any theoretical insight or clear empirical examples of how these techniques might function.

The backstage emotional work described here is not simply about disciplining the untamed words and emotions of activists. It is about harnessing, intensifying, and channeling raw emotions to produce actors who assume their public roles with cohesion and affective power. We suggest that backstage emotionally intensive disciplinary techniques, when effectively employed, perform two essential roles.

First, movement leaders use emotionally-intensive techniques like collective storytelling, therapeutic exercises, and protest trainings to assist new recruits in *internalizing* public frames, stories, and performances. These activities encourage activists to not only learn the dominant frames, stories, and performances of their struggle, but also to use these public roles to give meaning to their own complicated emotional worlds. By remaking the subjective experiences and dispositions of activists, the gap between the personal and public is narrowed, enabling activists to play their public roles with greater coherence and affective power.

Second, emotionally intensive disciplinary techniques also help align the subjective worlds of activists making up a mobilization. *Intersubjective convergence* creates strong emotional bonds and feelings of commonality between previously unconnected people. The emotional rituals and exercises are aimed at fostering a collective mood and affective solidarity by creating a mutual cognitive, emotional, and bodily focus and experience (Collins 2001, 2004; Jasper 1998; Juris 2008). Backstage emotional work makes it possible for activists with very different backgrounds and experiences to feel and think as a group. Through these interactions, participants model their interventions on the basis of preexisting discursive, emotional, and performative repertoires, and they adjust their interventions by learning from others in these sessions. These techniques aid activists in learning the “feeling rules” (Hochschild 1979) of the movement and aligning their own subjective emotional experiences with each other and the emotional culture of the movement (Gould 2009; Jasper 2011). The process of *intersubjective convergence* is therefore not simply a process of creating strong emotional ties (e.g. bonding). It is also about *steering* participants to recognize and feel their various traumas, feelings, stories, and experiences in similar ways. As the subjective worlds of activists converge, they begin to see and feel the experiences of their fellow activists in ways that resonate with their own. “Affective control depends in part on implicitly teaching people how they should feel in a given situation of a certain type – when to evoke and when to suppress particular feelings” (Benford 2002: 65).

Emotionally intensive disciplinary techniques thus transform the previously diverse subjective experiences of activists into a shared experience. They are therefore essential for social movements challenged by their own heterogeneity of social backgrounds and available discourses. One could thus argue that these emotionally intensive techniques aimed at creating intersubjective convergence is a type of strategic “identity work” that helps create backstage solidarity and facilitates the construction of a collective identity (Melucci 1995). Following Polletta and Jasper, (2001: 285) we define “collective identity as the individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution.”

Collective identity is not a thing. Rather, it is a dynamic process of social and political construction, which always involves “active negotiation and interactive work among individuals, groups, or parts of the movement” (Melucci 1995: 52). Because this process involves the construction of a singular/homogenous (political) identity out of many different heterogenous parts, intensive emotional work – mostly performed in the backstage – is needed to create unity from diversity (Flesher Fominaya 2010a; Hochschild 1979; Polletta and Jasper 2001). This certainly does not pave over important differences among activists, but it can create enough group cohesion to produce a unified and coherent frontstage performance. The success of such a performance over time transforms what were once scattered and diverse individuals into a durable political subject with a relatively coherent and unified voice.

Managing differences and conflicts through free spaces

If identities play a critical role in mobilizing and sustaining participation, they also help explain people’s exodus from a movement. One of the chief causes of movement decline is that collective identity stops lining up with the movement. We stop believing that the movement “represents” us (...), sustaining participants’ commitment over time requires ritualized reassertions of collective identity and efforts to manage, without suppressing, difference. (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 292)

Within social movements, producing a unified frontstage performance can create conflicts, because activists differ in their thoughts and feelings on how to make rights claims in the public sphere. Often, activists are connected to different activist circuits (e.g. religious groups, labor rights, LGBTQ, anarchists) with their own norms, ideologies, identities, and discursive repertoires. Critiques of the framing perspective include the notion that frame analysis does not adequately deal with issues of conflict and process, as it fails to problematize the role of discourse within framing processes. Steinberg (1998, 1999) argues that discourses are always internally unstable and dynamic, because they are continuously contested and negotiated, dialogically and relationally formed, and situationally sensitive. Activists are part of different discursive fields from which they construct and select “action-specific discursive *repertoires*” (1999: 750, emphasis in original). While Steinberg focuses on the “multivocality” of discourse and on the dynamic processes that allow for the construction of different discursive repertoires within social movements, this “talk and back talk in contentious politics” (p. 772) or “pull and tug of hegemony and counter-hegemony” (1998: 858) does not mean that social movements do not have to deal with discursive hegemony.

Nevertheless, as “discursive domination is always prey to its own contradictions and thus is never complete” (1999: 747), movements that want to create disciplined and coherent frontstage representations need to reserve or create backstage spaces that allow for this dialogue, critique, and back talk.

Movement leaders can employ a range of different techniques in the backstage to manage difference and defuse and channel inevitable conflicts. Backstage spaces “can be purposefully set up as a time and place for voicing differences in opinion” (Goffman 1959: 4). While the back region can function as a space in which activists are disciplined and shaped into loyal and circumspect performers, it can also function as a space in which different discursive repertoires are discussed and negotiated. These backstage spaces can then be regarded as “free spaces” (Evans and Boyde 1986). Free spaces are “small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization” (Polletta 1999: 1).

These free spaces are encouraged and created by leaders to enable activists to express their “other” identities and vent their frustrations. Team meetings, parties, discussions, seminars, artistic spaces, among other forums (Lichterman 1999) can be fostered where individual members of the movement are allowed the freedom to perform the full scope of their alterity outside the public view. These free spaces in the backstage allow for critical reflection and open dialogue. Activists can celebrate difference and explore radical thoughts and feelings without jeopardizing carefully constructed frontstage representations. Rather than individuals feeling forced to live with their differences and alterity in repressed silence, these backstage spaces allow activists to celebrate and embrace the full complexity of their selves. Such free spaces can certainly facilitate the development of counterhegemonic ideas and oppositional identities, as suggested by Polletta and Jasper (2001: 288). We however argue that the deliberate construction of free spaces within a movement often facilitates the construction of disciplined and loyal performers who can strategically adopt a conformist or assimilationist – rather than a counterhegemonic – strategy for their frontstage representations. The success of a movement can thus hinge upon “playing down their differences before the media and the country while celebrating it in private” (Tarrow 1994: 10).

The possible resistance of members of the movement to the disciplinary and silencing techniques is thus countered by and incorporated into the movement itself through the use of these free spaces. In these free spaces, critical thoughts and frustration are allowed to flow freely and those aspects of their identities that are silenced in the front regions of the movement are celebrated openly, thus assuring that

participants of the movement feel that they can be themselves within the movement and that they do not have to rebel against the movement's leadership. We therefore suggest that backstage recognition of alterity aids group solidarity and reduces conflicts, because it allows activists to celebrate the complexity of their identities and manage the tensions that arise from suppressing and concealing parts of their identity that are not deemed suitable for the frontstage. The use of free spaces in this way can result in a robust backstage life that is juxtaposed to their more restrained and disciplined frontstage worlds, with activists learning how to aptly switch roles between them.

Case and context: The undocumented youth movement

Having outlined the theoretical perspective on the different backstage techniques used to construct disciplined frontstage performances, we now turn to the case of the undocumented youth – or Dream – movement to empirically illustrate the previously discussed backstage techniques. The master frame (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 1986) or hegemonic discourse (Steinberg 1998, 1999) used within the frontstage performances of the undocumented youths presented in the introduction of this chapter, was born out of efforts made by professional immigrations rights organizations to push for comprehensive immigration reform in the US (Nicholls 2013a). It was crafted in the early 2000's in Washington DC as part of a larger representational strategy for comprehensive immigration reform, as undocumented youths appealed more to the general public than other undocumented migrants. As a response to strong anti-immigrant sentiments and a hostile institutional context, undocumented youth became the “poster children” of the larger immigrants' rights movement. By representing undocumented youths as “the best and the brightest of their generation,” as “deserving and assimilated Americans” that were not responsible for their current legal status because they came to the US “not by fault of their own,” they hoped to find support amongst conservative American politicians and voters (Ibid.).

The representational strategy of the Dream movement thus stressed these three principal “virtues” and functioned as a counter-frame that tried to negate the stigmatizing effects of how anti-immigrant groups frame undocumented migrants. The process of constructing a positive public image involved selecting words, signs, and acts that reverberated with public virtues *and* silenced those attributes associated with polluting stigmas, such as foreignness (i.e. national identities such as Mexican), gangs, and inner-city youths.

Professional immigrant rights organizations spent years of resources, time, and energy to train undocumented youths in acquiring activists' skills and internalizing the master frame to be presented on the frontstage. They created an institutional framework for undocumented youths to meet each other in local activists' spaces such as the UCLA Downtown Labor Center in Los Angeles and other organizations on college and university campuses, state settings such as those organized by the California Dream Network, and nation-wide spaces such as those organized by the national organization United We Dream.

In 2010, however, the Dreamers decided to become an autonomous movement, organized and headed by the undocumented youths themselves. They had discussed and negotiated the different options, strategies, and discursive repertoires available to them and decided to incorporate other mobilizing tactics and change certain elements of the master frame as taught by the immigrant rights activists. These changes consisted of organizing civil disobedience actions to accomplish political goals, incorporating certain discursive repertoires taken from the discursive field of the queer movement, and stressing that "their parents were courageous" for bringing them to the US.

While these changes were experienced as quite substantial by the Dreamers themselves and by the professional immigrant rights activists that had trained them, the rest of the master frame or hegemonic discourse remained strongly intact. They continued using the political strategy of representing themselves as deserving American youths fighting for their American Dream. Dreamers that were once taught by the immigrant rights activists now became the leaders of the newly founded Dreamer organizations and, as such, took over the role of their activist teachers. This entailed training and disciplining new recruits in the activist' skills and Dreamer discourses they themselves had once acquired and appropriated. Moreover, Dreamers are still strongly connected to the professional immigrant rights organizations and to the local, state and national Dream organizations mentioned before and hence meet each other within these spaces on a regular basis.

These state and national Dream organizations and backstage spaces are important, because frontstage presentations of Dreamers in other states like Arizona or New York State also reflect on the public image of the Dreamers in California. Goffman would label the relationship between Dreamers nation-wide a bond between colleagues. "Colleagues may be defined as persons who present the same routine to the same kind of audience but who do not participate together, as team-mates do, at the same time and place before the same particular audience. Colleagues, as it is said, share a 'community of fate'" (1959: 102). Because they "are so closely identified in the eyes of other people that to some degree the good reputation of one practitioner

depends on the good conduct of the others” (p. 106). Hence, much time and energy is spent within the backstage spaces of local and national Dream organizations on creating coherent and disciplined frontstage performances.

Research design and methods: Political ethnography

Much of the empirical data presented in this chapter stems from six months of intensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the first author from September 2011 till March 2012. The sample consists of a core group of about sixty Dreamers, the majority of which have a Mexican or Latino background and live in the wider Los Angeles area. Most of the fieldwork was conducted at one of the most important local Dream organizations in the country; Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA). DTLA is a volunteer organization that is run by undocumented students. It is located in the UCLA Downtown Labor Center, which hosts many other immigrant rights organizations. DTLA was founded in 2009 as an activist space for Dreamers who had finished college and wanted to continue their organizing work beyond the campuses where they had once met each other. However, after DTLA was established, it ceased to be only for graduated students as it also attracts many undocumented youths who do not yet attend college and are still quite new to the whole movement. Through the strong connections with DTLA, participant observations were also conducted with other Dreamer organizations in California, such as California Dream Network, Orange Country Dream Team (OCDT), San Fernando Valley Dream Team (SFVDT), and San Gabriel Valley Dream Team (SGVDT). Los Angeles is a very suitable locale to study the movement, because the city – and wider region – has many Latino migrants, a long history of immigrant rights mobilizing, and a very active and well-developed undocumented youth movement.

Access to DTLA was provided by Walter Nicholls (the co-author), who had already been studying the movement prior to the ethnographic involvement of the first author. The co-author had gained access to DTLA through a personal connection with an immigrant rights activist with strong ties to DTLA. It took quite a lot of time, effort, and energy for the first author to build rapport and gain the trust of the Dreamers she worked with. As she is a privileged, documented, white, middle-class, European woman, there were quite a lot of power differentials to overcome. This meant that she had to prove herself to be more than merely another researcher trying “to get her PhD off their backs.” This was stated by Dream leader Nadia during a DTLA meeting in which the group was discussing the importance of selecting which researchers should be allowed or denied access to the movement. The statement was not at all directed to the author, but it nevertheless made her even more aware of her role and responsibilities

as an ethnographic researcher studying the undocumented youth movement. Gaining their trust entailed becoming an active member of the organization; chanting, protesting, fundraising, peacekeeping,⁹ lobbying, and engaging in civil disobedience actions with them. It meant that, during those six months, she spent nearly every waking hour with them and celebrated Christmas, New Year's Eve, weddings, and birthdays with them.

The intensive ethnographic study, consisting of participant observations, in-depth life-history interviews, informal conversations, and unobtrusive observations, took place both in frontstage and backstage settings, which made it possible for the researcher to experience the backstage techniques used within the movement, as well as witness the disciplined and tight frontstage performances resulting from the backstage preparatory work. Through the ethnographic method of "deep hanging out" (Bryman 2004) in both their personal and politically-active lives, she tried to see their worlds through their eyes and grasp their subtler sensibilities, and emotional realities. Nevertheless, sometimes this intensive involvement also proved to be quite complicated, because she had to keep enough analytical distance to accurately observe her research group and analyze and report her findings. When one becomes truly critical about one's role as an ethnographic researcher, one has to admit that the researcher can sometimes take on the role of what Goffman labeled the "informer" (1959: 90). The author tried to overcome this tension by being very sincere and open about the conducted research both during and after the research was conducted.

The ethnographic data consist of 82 events; twenty-two weekly Dream Team meetings; six preparatory meetings for specific campaign and actions; five training- and educational events, such as high school presentations and media workshops; fourteen protests, rallies, and press conferences organized by different social movement organizations within Los Angeles; thirteen promotional events, fundraisers, and panel discussions; nine retreats, candle-light vigils, and therapeutic healing events; and nineteen informal events such as parties, informal chats, musical events, dancing and drinking, birthdays, holidays, and wedding celebrations.

Moreover, the researchers analyzed Dreamer documents that either circulated digitally or were distributed face-to-face. These digital documents include postings on Facebook, blogs, the Huffington Post website, YouTube video's, and documents, posters, and invitations sent through emails. The hardcopy documents include flyers, posters, leaflets, chant-lists, talking-point sheets, and brochures. Every event, meeting, and action attended was documented in the thick descriptions that make up the field notes and observation reports. While much of the data used in this chapter draws on field observations and ten life-history interviews conducted by the ethnographic researcher, we also draw upon thirty-four semi-structured interviews with Dreamers

and strategic allies.

Auyero and Joseph (2007) argue that while ethnography has been usefully employed to discover the micro-foundations of many social phenomena, it has been used with less frequency to study politics. While we believe that quantitative methods have been extremely effective in detecting major forces in social movements, they have great difficulty accessing the backstage worlds of activists, which we believe to be a constituting element of social movements. Using political ethnography as a method thus has multiple advantages: understanding how larger political structures and actions play themselves out in local contexts, regarding how people negotiate their political actions in their everyday lives, and having access to the lived experiences of the political and the mundane details that can affect politics (Baiochhi and Connor 2008: 141).

Backstage training and the construction of the disciplined Dreamer

Dream leaders Maria, Claudia, Julio, and Ernesto join us in the main room and we start the training for the civil disobedience action. Ernesto informs us, the peacekeepers, on what to do when anti-immigrant activists come to the action. He explains that we have to act as de-escalators and say: "This is a peaceful protest. We are not here to argue or go into a discussion. Could you please calm down sir? If you do not lower your voice, sir, I will have to call the police." We continue with a role-playing game where the peacekeepers have to practice their function, while the rest of the group plays anti-immigrant activists. We are instructed that we also have to keep our allies and protesters under control and that they should not go into discussion and should remain peaceful at all times. We are there to maintain peace and order.

Then, we continue with the media messaging training. Maria hands out a sheet with talking points and different people read the talking points out loud, one-by-one. Maria explains that, when asked any questions by a journalist, we have to direct them to the media spokesperson. If the spokesperson is not available, we should not divert from the talking-points we just received. I practice the script: "We are asking Obama to stop the deportations of Dreamers and to give administrative relief to all DREAM eligible youths, giving them a work permit and protection against deportation. If Obama does not want to lose the Latino vote, he should give an executive order and grant all DREAM eligible youth administrative relief." Maria explains that we will go in groups of two

and interview each other as if we are journalists. I am with Prajit. He seems to be a professional and knows how to repeat the talking points. Even when I try to throw difficult questions at him, he stands his ground. I say, "You have done this before," and he confesses that he has done several messaging and media trainings before. While practicing, Maria walks past all the groups to see how we are doing and to offer assistance. After the training, we are told that the location of the action has changed and that we will meet at 9 am at Pershing Square on Wednesday. We should all wear our "I am undocumented" T-shirts for the action. The flyer is ready and will be distributed for us to post on Facebook and Twitter. There will be one final training on Tuesday evening. When Maria is finished, everyone claps and laughs. I say goodbye and hug everyone before I leave DTLA at the Downtown Labor Center. (excerpt from fieldwork journal, 2011)

This extended excerpt of a peacekeeper training, in which the author served both as a researcher and an activist/peacekeeper, describes one of the many intensive preparatory meetings leading up to a civil disobedience action. The particular action described above was part of a broader campaign to pressure the Obama administration to grant undocumented youth relief from deportations. The campaign eventually succeeded in pushing the Obama administration to enact Deferred Action for Children Arrivals (DACA) in 2012. This particular protest action involved five undocumented youths marching into the office of the Chief Prosecutor of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and demanding administrative relief. They placed themselves on the floor and were granted an appointment with the Chief Prosecutor. They were then arrested and released four hours later. While five youths were arrested, many youths and allies assumed supporting roles as chanters, peacekeepers, legal supporters, and media contacts.

The backstage preparation for this action consisted of many meetings that involved the development and rehearsal of a well-honed script. Rehearsing the whole routine beforehand and engaging in role-playing sessions in which some of the team-members play the role of the audience (i.e. anti-immigrant activists and journalists) are important backstage techniques Dreamers use to ensure that they will be able to deliver a convincing and coherent frontstage performance. The script was created collaboratively by Dream leaders, immigrant rights activists, and lawyers around the country. It provided participating activists with clear roles and lines (talking points, chants, etc.) to ensure message consistency. The talking points were selected to address the goals of the particular campaign (administrative relief) and offer participants a coherent and consistent argument for why undocumented youths deserved some

form of legal status. The role of DTLA leaders Maria and Ernesto is important here. As they are more experienced Dreamers and DTLA leaders, they function as training specialists who take on the role of the future audience and teach their teammates how to build up the desired impression and construct a good frontstage performance.

While much of the framing work was geared to the media, they also developed lines to mediate interactions with adversarial bystanders and the police. Great effort was given to the broader public's impressions of the protest acts. For the leading Dreamers, there was a need to convey an image of themselves as well-behaved and orderly youths. They could not lose the moral high ground by engaging in conduct that could be used against them by political or media adversaries. Protestors were prepared to respond to hostile bystanders with the following line: "This is a peaceful protest. We are not here to argue or go into a discussion. Could you please calm down sir?" This line was designed to reinforce the general message that undocumented youth were civil and well-mannered individuals while their adversaries were uncivil and disruptive.

In a previous preparatory meeting, the leading Dreamers also spent much time discussing attire. The participants discussed whether they were going to wear business-like clothing, activist T-shirts with the slogan "I am undocumented," or the traditional cap and gown (a costume that symbolizes their role as American students). The participants carefully evaluated the symbolic value associated with each costume and whether such symbols would correctly align with and amplify the core message of the action. The participants began the conversation in a lighthearted and excited matter, with many of the activists talking at the same time. A younger, less experienced Dreamer interceded and stated, "We could dress up as homeless people." Another more experienced DTLA leader responded, "Come on guys, be serious." Immediately, the mood changed and the individuals became quiet and focused. The younger Dreamer responded seriously and said, "Aren't we dressing in a corporate style?" To which the more experienced Dreamer responded, "Yes, and of course the cap and gown" (fieldwork journal, 2011). As such, this Dream leader functioned as the director of the performance, trying to discipline his teammates backstage to ensure that they would not show this disruptive appearance and manner on the frontstage. It is important to note that the organizers spent much time and effort in ensuring consistency in attire, appearance, manner, and conduct. The selection of the "cap and gown" also refers to the broader representational strategy of the Dream movement. With this prop, Dream activists aim to give off the impression of real American students during their frontstage performances. This attention to detail reflects the importance of producing impressions that align with and amplify the broader message of their struggle.

Dreamers thus employ a number of backstage disciplinary techniques to ensure the production of highly coherent and favorable frontstage representations. As illustrated by the peacekeepers training for the civil disobedience action mentioned above, many of these exercises focus on interactions with the media. The media is recognized as an essential tool to get their message “out there,” but it also presents many risks, especially for untrained activists. Leading Dreamers are well aware that reporters’ questions can derail activists into saying things that may be deemed controversial by the broader public. As a consequence, much energy is invested in media training prior to protest actions. Various training manuals developed over the years provide generic media training guidelines. Training manuals and backstage preparatory sessions help ensure that well-trained Dreamers are able to naturally articulate the central message and avoid going off script once they enter the public sphere.

However, not all Dreamers stick to the script. Some Dreamers, accidentally or purposefully, wear inappropriate clothes or say things that are considered too radical or strategically unwise by others in the movement. When possible, these Dreamers are corrected. Dream leaders believe this is necessary, because they feel that delivering coherent and convincing frontstage performances does not only depend on highlighting certain assimilationist “virtues,” but also on concealing, or silencing stigmatized attributes. For example, Dream Team Los Angeles hosts a yearly Open House event, which aims to inform the community, professional immigrant rights organization, politicians, and newcomers about their work. During this event, Robert was literally silenced by Dream leader Maria, who functioned here as the director of the frontstage team performance.

As I am the time-manager, I ask to be briefed on the set-up of the event. I receive a copy of the schedule and Maria and Ernesto explain the set-up. (...) Robert is in charge of explaining the DTLA timeline. I see Maria and Ernesto exchange a worried look as he starts talking. Robert speaks in a more free, young, and artistic way. Maria tells me to cut him short for time, as he might not stop talking and could say inappropriate things. (excerpt from fieldwork journal, 2011)

Other times, Dreamers have silenced those aspects of themselves that may draw the ire of the broader public. For example, youth activists in conservative regions may silence expressions of foreignness because these expressions detract from the broader message of national conformity. In an interview with activist Albert, he mentions the backstage deliberations that occurred on the issue of whether to celebrate or silence

particular representations of foreignness in the frontstage spaces of the movement.

That is something we all agree on. You can never have a Mexican flag waving at your rally. One time we said, “Hey, wouldn’t it be cool to have a rally showing our different flags, you know, flags from Mexico, Korea, Honduras, etc.” But then we said, “No, we have to be careful because we’re in Orange County [a conservative area of southern California] and people are going to take it the wrong way.” We thought it would be nice to celebrate the fact that we are from all over the world, but we didn’t want to risk it. (Albert, personal interview, 2012)

With the arrival and flourishing of new technologies, and with social movements such as the Dream movement extensively using digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for mobilizing purposes, Dreamers have extended their techniques of impression management to monitoring online platforms. These digital forums are often openly accessible to all types of audiences and can thus be regarded as digital front regions. Emails that are only accessible and distributed to DTLA members can then be regarded as a digital back region in which efforts are aimed at ensuring good frontstage performances. A good example of these virtual monitoring and silencing techniques is provided in an email from Dreamer Julio, who is very active for DTLA’s media committee and group page.

On Tue, Mar 13, 2012 at 11:59 pm, Julio wrote:

Ok, so if folks look at the DTLA group page, you can see what Eliza posted and the accusations she is making. Claudia, Maria and myself tried clearing things up, but she is dead set on blaming DTLA. At this point, it needs to be addressed seriously.

She hasn’t reposted anything and yeah, with the crap she was saying, there was no way I was going to leave those comments up there. Ernesto, if you have her number, give her a call, but at this point I don’t think she’s going to change her mind, but she is hella tripping. I’d say leave it alone and ignore her, but she’s too off her rocker to be left unchecked.

Maintaining the good public image of the Dreamer thus involves both the active training of Dreamers in the backstage, as well as the backstage silencing of attributes that may carry some degree of stigma in the public sphere (for example, foreign,

radical, inner city, gang, or deviant). As certain facts about undocumented life are highly stigmatized and do not correspond with the public image of the Dreamer, these facts are never disclosed in public performances.

Aligning the emotional worlds of the Dreamers

Producing a well-aligned and resonant public representation depends partly on overcoming subjective and interpretive dissonance between activists. Before the early 2000s, the Dreamers did not exist as a group or a movement. They were merely an administrative category of people with many different identifications and loyalties. Speaking with a common public voice therefore depended on them recognizing themselves as a group and feeling, thinking, and experiencing their exclusion in a common way; that is, it depended on them emotionally identifying with other Dreamers. Producing this level of collective identity requires a process of intersubjective convergence. Dreamers employ several emotionally intensive techniques backstage to stimulate this process.

Dream leaders use collective storytelling as a technique to internalize public frames, stories, and performances, but storytelling has also been crucial in emotionally stimulating the subjective convergence of activists. The importance of storytelling is expressed in the training manual used by the leadership team of DTLA. It states: “Stories draw on our emotions and show our values in action, helping us *feel* what matters, rather than just thinking about or telling others what matters. Because stories allow us to express our values not as abstract principles, but as lived experience, they have the power to move others” (Dream Team Los Angeles Training Manual 2011: 16, emphasis in original). The Dreamer story consists of a basic three-part narrative in which the youth is brought to the country at an early age, faces many challenges that result from situations as undocumented immigrants, and, in spite of these challenges, works hard to achieve the American dream. The moral of the story is that the immigration system is fundamentally broken and unjust because it denies hardworking, good Americans the right to stay and contribute to the country. While each individual has a very different experience depending on their background, they are encouraged to fit the particularities of their lives within this common narrative structure. This creates increased coherence in their public representations, but it also helps make them into a single group with a right to stay in the country.

Given the importance of storytelling, new recruits are provided with countless examples of how to construct and deliver their stories in the public sphere. They are provided with exemplary videos, informal coaches, and opportunities to receive

constructive feedback from more experienced Dreamers. DTLA also provides formal training sessions to new recruits during their annual Dream Summer Workshops. This training consists of a general introduction to the importance of storytelling, instructions on how to construct emotionally compelling stories, group analyses of stories by prominent figures (including Barack Obama), and small group exercises that permit new recruits to construct their own stories (“story of self”). In addition to training new recruits to tell their stories, the workshops also train them to evaluate and coach others in the story development process. By training individuals to become coaches, they learn how to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of other stories and apply those lessons to their own. While discussing the role of storytelling in the undocumented youth movement, Dream activist Manuela expresses the importance of evaluating and improving one’s story by comparing it to others.

I feel like I could take my story in different directions, and I am working on that. People have way better stories sometimes, and I feel like my story is not so impactful yet. I haven’t found that right way to say it. I think I’m getting there, but I’m not usually the one in a workshop who will say, “Ooh, let me share my story,” because I haven’t found that point to bring people home and be like, “Oh her story is good.” (Manuela, personal interview, 2012)

Such backstage training is collective and reflexive. It encourages Dreamers to constantly reconstruct their stories through interactions with one another and to maximize their impact in the public sphere.

In addition to collective storytelling, Dreamers stimulate subjective convergence by consciously creating backstage environments that elicit emotional expressions and interactions. Consequently, most meetings are purposefully made emotionally comforting. The meetings and gatherings always begin and end with the different participants greeting and hugging each other warmly. When important news is shared, everyone cheers in unison. And there is always food generously distributed around the meeting table. Constructing welcoming spaces make the environments in which Dreamers operate conducive for emotional expressions and interactions. While discussing a civil disobedience action with leader Nadia, she explicitly mentions the importance of personal interaction and emotional alignment in the backstage spaces of the movement.

I remember in the beginning when I joined DTLA, and especially for the disobedience actions, every single meeting was either at my house or somebody else’s house. I would refuse for us to meet in an office. I was like, “No

we have to meet somewhere else,” and I would always make food and so that’s why my house was the easiest. People would come and we would eat first and we would check in first, and then we would work. And that always feels right. It’s just, it goes beyond just working together, it is really building a family and understanding why. That is not just like a hippie concept of like, we are all one and peace and love, but no we are. And we have to be, because, we are right now separated from each other and more and more we are put against each other that we have to recognize the beauty within us. Because that is that one thing they cannot take away from us, it is our own spirits and our own hope. They can put me in jail and they did, but they can’t take away who I am. (Nadia, personal interview, 2012)

Nadia’s quote is interesting because she uses the analogy of the family to give meaning to the relationship between Dreamers. Her description is that of a warm and emotional relationship. This is an emotionally laden description that uses words like “love” and “beauty” to connect the undocumented struggle to issues of the heart and spirit. By sharing food, “checking in,” and encouraging emotional talk, Dream leaders consciously construct atmospheres that promote emotional expressions and interactions among activists. Emotions in such contexts become normal parts of structuring interactions, with newer activists having to learn how to share and emote according to the feeling rules of the group.

Dreamers also employ therapy-like sessions to harness emotional energies and stimulate convergence. The weekly meetings always start with an introduction-round and a personal “check-in question,” such as “Describe your last encounter with the police and how you felt about it?” and “What do you like to do in private?”. After this introduction round, the “Self-care and Healing Committee” introduces the opening group activity, which ranges from playing a physical game to facilitating collective meditation. Whenever a Dreamer tells their story, other Dreamers listen attentively and someone will always respond with the – group therapy – line: “thanks for sharing.” Several members explained that the “check-in questions” and “self-care and healing” activities have multiple purposes, ranging from sharing the “undocumented experience,” to knowing “where everyone is coming from,” and creating an “uplifting group experience.” The exercises are aimed at fostering a collective mood by creating a mutual cognitive, emotional, and bodily focus and experience. Learning how to share one’s most intimate experiences with others enables participants to open-up and begin to identify commonalities – or collective identity. “Healing circles” or “identity circles” are also used for these purposes. Martha specifically mentioned the intentional and emotional aspects of these techniques and how it links up with the

undocumented experience:

We also have our identity circle that we just created. So we, more intentionally, discuss our emotions, the emotional side of being undocumented. So whether that's depression, or being really confused about what you're gonna do once you graduate, or being confused about your major, it can be anything. (personal interview, 2012)

These intense emotional sessions allow youth activists to feel their experiences as undocumented youth together. These strong emotive exchanges permit a convergence in the subjective worlds of the activists. Such a process provides a common emotional and discursive template from which individuals have developed similar feelings and thoughts about their immigration status and ways to express their grievances in the public sphere. These exercises can thus be regarded as essential emotion work aimed at constructing a collective Dreamer identity.

Backstage work also involves establishing affective control by overcoming negative emotions that inhibit action (fear, doubt, isolation), while harnessing positive emotions that motivate action (hope, solidarity, urgency). During a training for a civil disobedience action, experienced Dreamers explained to newer recruits that it was completely normal to feel nervous, but that everything would turn out okay. Veronica (an experienced Dreamer) reassured newer activists that there is no need to be fearful. "It will not be a solo act. It will be a strategic and threatening act, a sacred act" (fieldwork journal, 2011). She sought to overcome fears and doubts by assuring activists that they were not isolated and that influential allies would provide them support. While seeking to mitigate inhibiting emotions with assurances of support, she goes on to harness motivating emotions by stressing the "sacred" nature of the protest act. These and other trainings are aimed at harnessing positive and motivating emotions prior to public protests. Such backstage emotional trainings help activists overcome their fears while also providing them a common way to feel and interpret high-risk acts of protest (sacred, powerful, solidarity building). The new recruits are in effect steered into how they *should feel* and experience public acts of protest prior to engaging in them. After these preparations, activists draw upon this training to shape their performances during actual protest events. Rather than breakdown in the face of police repression (response to negative emotions), their training permits them to direct their emotions in ways that generate powerful, sacred, and solidarity-inducing performances.

The backstage as a free space to explore difference and radicalism

The backstage is certainly a space to encourage and discipline activists to talk and feel in a common way, but it also serves as a free space where difference and radicalism can be expressed outside the stigmatizing gaze of a conservative public. This can help release stress that some Dreamers feel about the silencing pressures of their movement.

Within the Dream movement, there is a collective understanding of the politics behind their message and strategy. They realize that their political strategy entails maintaining a “good image” by filtering out stigmatized attributes of their identity (such as national origin, inner-city lives, Latino youth culture). However, this has resulted in many Dreamers ceasing to recognize themselves in the public image that they themselves have contributed to constructing. They assert that others are “real Dreamers” and that they struggle to live up to the standards of this politically constructed group. For example, Jorge observed that Chicana/o activists, who were born in the US, have the liberty to be more radical and embrace nationalistic Mexican identities. While he was born in Mexico, he does not want to act too Mexican. He stressed that he did not have the luxury to be nationalistic about Mexico because he is undocumented. He explains that if he shows his Mexican side too much, he would never be considered an American or a “real Dreamer.” Robert also mentions how the concept of “real Dreamer” can be experienced as constraining.

A Dreamer is defined as somebody who is undocumented, a student, you're in school, you're working for the Dream Act movement, a very pre-described identity (...). And also in academia, just talking about undocumented students in a very politically correct way. But, it's also a stereotype, you're just boxed-in into what that stereotype is defined as. (Robert, personal interview, 2012)

In this way, the process of constructing an ideal Dreamer can result in feelings of inadequacy, distance, and sometimes resentment among many youth activists. In response to these pressures, Dreamers have fostered free spaces where youth activists can fully explore their diversity, radicalism, and otherness. These spaces function as safety valves: they allow Dreamers to vent and celebrate those aspects of their identities that are filtered from the public arena. For example, backstage events provide spaces where youths can still explore their subaltern cultural identities. At one art event, an artist displayed his illustrations of a politically empowered “chola”¹⁰. While a space was made available to show and celebrate this work, many recognized that such an image could not be a part of the public representation of Dreamers

because it complicated their good public image.

Robert: Everybody knows that is what we do, that's what we are. I understand that's how we're going to present ourselves, because we can't be out there promoting ourselves as coming from South Central [Los Angeles] and that we're cholos or whatever.

Interviewer: So the poster child strategy is largely intact?

Robert: Well, we might deviate from group to group, but it's up to everybody's discretion about what you want to promote. But it's almost unspoken. You don't even need to think about it. Everybody knows you promote a positive image.

Interviewer: So what about the chola illustration you talked about earlier?

Robert: That was just more for us, within ourselves. (personal interview, 2012)

Similarly, social events are important sites where youth activists can explore their alterity and radicalness. At a Christmas party, Dreamers Marcus and Veronica were having a conversation about the centuries of oppression of people of color by white, mainstream America. They both agreed that they should continue their fight against the people in power and envision a world without borders. They were highly aware that this conversation veered from the public transcript and should not be expressed during public performances. Nevertheless, they felt free and happy to explore these ideas with fellow Dreamers in the backstage confines of this party.

Different discursive repertoires taken from the discursive fields of the immigrant rights movement, the labor movement, the feminist movement, the Chicano movement, and the queer movement, but also from academia and different religious and self-help/new age cultures, are thus discussed and negotiated within the free spaces of the Dream movement. It is in these free back spaces that alterity, radicalism, and “deviant” feelings and thoughts are openly shared and explored. These various backstage spaces function to vent frustrations and celebrate difference, rather than silence them.

[O]ne of the groups that I am part of, which is the Orange County Dream Team, we started within that group a healing circle. So pretty much it is just a small group of the members who get together and have time to just forget about

everything that we are doing: all the activist work, all the schooling, whatever we are doing at home. We just like let it go and this is the time we pretty much vent. You know, we say, "Ooh I hate this, I am so mad," and you know just let it all out. So what we started doing is, we get together and have open discussions. You know, private open discussions about anything. (Tony, personal interview, 2012)

These free spaces thus allow the movement to manage difference by celebrating, without suppressing, diversity. Because here participants of the movement can be themselves, these free spaces allow Dreamers to feel at home within the movement and thus the need to rebel against the movement's leadership is lessened. Allowing for difference, alterity, and radicalism within these free spaces thus helps the larger representational strategy of the Dream movement to remain intact within frontstage performances.

Conclusion

Dreamers have shown remarkable capabilities in articulating coherent representations of themselves and their cause in the public sphere. Their messages in specific campaigns are consistently clear and underline the broader themes and virtues of the Dreamer master frame. Their performances are synchronized in ways to produce maximum effect, both emotional and political. Their abilities to maintain this strong and cohesive presence on the public stage has contributed to their abilities to construct a political voice with legitimacy, resonance, and influence. We argue that this impressive degree of frontstage unity is by no means natural or automatic. Fifteen years ago, undocumented students did not exist as a political subject. While undocumented youths certainly have a common grievance, they also come from very different political and social backgrounds and they come into the movement with very different ways of interpreting and dealing with their legal status. Considering the heterogeneity characterizing the activists (or most movements for that matter), this level of frontstage cohesion, unity, and discipline is remarkable and puzzling.

This chapter shows *how* the processes and techniques undertaken in the backstage of the movement strongly contribute to the frontstage efficacy of the movement. While many social movement scholars tend to focus on the front regions of mobilizations (framing, performances, interaction rituals, storytelling, mobilization capacities, etc.), this chapter emphasizes how intensive backstage work enhances the potency of public protest.

The backstage techniques used to discipline the words and feelings of Dreamers help improve their public performances, but learning these public roles also provides activists from different backgrounds with common ways of seeing and feeling their problems. As individuals feel and identify as a cohesive group (intersubjective convergence) and develop a collective identity through emotionally intensive rituals and therapeutic exercises, their abilities to perform publicly in cohesive and disciplined ways improve.

In this chapter, we have highlighted the importance of free spaces in the back region of the movement for the sake of good and coherent frontstage representations and performances. As creating a disciplined and coherent frontstage performance depends on emphasizing certain attributes, while concealing others, many Dreamers could feel that they are not allowed to be themselves within the movement. As such, free spaces provide Dreamers a place where they can explore different discursive repertoires and express those aspects of themselves that are not regarded as particularly suitable for the public stage. This allows Dreamers to continue to feel good about themselves, in spite of the need to silence aspects of themselves deemed too controversial or stigmatized for the broader public. In these and other ways, rich and complex backstage worlds of the Dream movement enable activists to develop and perfect their frontstage performances.

In our writings, we would like to continue to explore how the political project of the Dreamer is connected to larger social, economic, political and historical structures. How are these backstage techniques of emotion management and the frontstage performance of the deserving Dreamer linked to a particular political subjectivity and to larger politico-economic processes of modern forms of governance?

We conclude by suggesting that the power of the performance and its ability to penetrate public discourse and gain support for the cause depends largely on a movement's work to develop a structured and workable back region. In spite of the many twists and turns of the Dream movement, its ability to retain a strong and resonant representation is a reflection of the intensive emotion work performed in the elaborate backstage of the movement. Considering the importance of backstage work, we encourage scholars to look under the hood of public protest and turn their analytical gaze to the backstage work needed to create strong and coherent frontstage performances.

CHAPTER 2

Beating the Odds:

The Undocumented Youth Movement as a Vehicle for Upward Social Mobility¹¹

Undocumented youth activists, commonly known as Dreamers, have become a powerful political entity in the United States. They have developed a strong voice within the public sphere through their mobilization against the deportation policies of the Obama administration and through their struggle to create a pathway to citizenship by mobilizing for the Dream Act. The federal Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is an immigration reform bill that provides undocumented youths the opportunity to gain citizenship status. The Migration Policy Institute (2010) estimates that roughly 825,000 of the 2.1 million DREAM eligible youths within the US will be able to obtain permanent legal status under the proposed bill. Yet even though the Dream Act was first introduced in the Senate in 2001 and has been reintroduced many times, it has not yet passed.

Much of the literature on this generational cohort, described as the 1.5 generation (Rumbaut 2012), focuses on the socioeconomic and educational disadvantages that undocumented Latino youths face (Abrego 2008; Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Arbona and Nora 2007; Chavez 1998; Perlmann 2011; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2009; Portes and Hao 2004; Portes and Rivas 2011; Solorzano, Villalplando, and Oseguera 2005). Research shows that they live in deprived neighborhoods with underfunded and overcrowded public schools and high numbers of students from poorly educated parents. Only between five and ten percent of the undocumented 1.5 generation continues with higher education by going to college or university after high school (Frum 2007; Gonzales 2007).

This literature also provides insights into why some undocumented youth in the United States are able to present themselves openly in the public sphere. Studies show that many undocumented Latino youth grew up with a sense of belonging, because they were raised and socialized in the receiving country rather than in the country of origin (Abrego 2011; Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Gonzales 2011; Rumbaut 2012). In contrast to their undocumented parents who migrated as adults, many of these youths came to the United States at an early age, participated in the educational system, and only realized they were undocumented during adolescence. More importantly, research demonstrates how access to higher education can provide opportunities for *some* of these highly marginalized and stigmatized undocumented Latino youth to transcend the subjective life worlds and educational and occupational prospects of their parents (Pérez 2010; Stanton-Salazar 2011). However, while scholars of the undocumented Latino 1.5 generation have shown how access to higher education can improve the prospects of undocumented youth, much research on the undocumented 1.5 generation has overlooked the importance of social movement organizing for upward social mobility.

Through our ethnographic research on undocumented Latino youth activists in Los Angeles, we describe how the political and civic engagement of highly marginalized groups can enhance their social mobility prospects. Specifically, we argue that the undocumented youth movement has enhanced the social mobility chances of undocumented Latino youth, thereby combining the literature on the Latino 1.5 generation with recent developments in the literature on social mobility.

Literature review

The undocumented Latino 1.5 generation

Much has been written on the undocumented Latino 1.5 generation in the United States and the difficulties these youths face. According to the literature, they are disadvantaged on multiple levels (Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Chavez 1998; Perlmann 2011; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, and Haller 2009; Portes and Rivas 2011). Undocumented parents and their children live in segregated neighborhoods, characterized by low socioeconomic status, poor quality public schools, and high crime, incarceration and unemployment rates. Both Abrego (2006; 2011) and Gonzales and Chavez (2012) note how undocumented status keeps individuals from being legally incorporated into the receiving country, since they are blocked from basic amenities such as obtaining a drivers' license, a bank account, medical insurance, and legal employment. Furthermore, they are unable to travel outside the United States and have to deal with

the constant possibility and fear of detention and deportation.

Undocumented Latino youth also face educational disadvantages. Not only are public schools in these deprived neighborhoods underfunded and overcrowded (Arbona and Nora 2007; Solórzano, Villalplando, and Oseguera 2005), but these youths are also raised by parents with low educational qualifications, which significantly contributes to them not having the embodied cultural capital to help them advance at school (Bourdieu 1986; Fernández-Kelly 2008; Willis 1977). Often, working-class Latino parents have limited knowledge of the English language or the functioning of the education system and therefore cannot assist their children in navigating the education system. Additionally, undocumented working-class Latino children may also behave in ways that their middle-class teachers consider inappropriate. The working-class habitus of the children can clash with the middle-class habitus of the teachers, which contributes to teachers undervaluing and misrecognizing the abilities and motivation of these youths.

Moreover, research shows that youth from ethnic minorities experience subtle negative prejudices, discrimination, and micro-aggressions that are very hard to counteract. Over time, these prejudices become cumulative, thereby leading to subsequent differences in the educational attainment of ethnic minorities and non-minorities (Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, Apfel, and Brzustoski 2009; Gandara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, and Callahan 2003; Montero-Sieburth 1996, 2000; Portes and Hao 2004). In US public and political discourse, Latino immigrants are stereotypically constructed, dehumanized, and treated as a moral threat to the nation (Chavez 2008). Latinos, especially Mexicans, often experience “a negative reception by the host society and government” (Portes and Hao 2004: 11927).

Despite these socioeconomic and educational disadvantages, some undocumented Latino youth nevertheless find ways to attain higher education. In the *Plyler versus Doe* case (1982), the Supreme Court ruled that under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, no state is to discriminate between documented and undocumented residents living under their jurisdiction. Therefore, all children in each state gain unrestricted access to free public education at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Frum 2007; Olivas 2005). As a result, many undocumented Latino children begin their educational trajectories side-by-side with the native-born, experiencing feelings of togetherness and inclusion with friends, classmates, and teachers, thinking they are part of the nation and have better opportunities than their parents. Scholars signal the importance of this sense of belonging that undocumented youths experience at the beginning of their lives (Abrego 2011; Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Gonzales 2011). Thus, while most undocumented parents continuously fear and avoid authorities, their children start their lives feeling included in relatively safe educational institutions.

Nevertheless, it is when such youths transition from high school to higher education that they find out that they are undocumented and become aware of what this means within mainstream society.

Undocumented Latino youths, who were previously unaware of the significance of their migration status, often find out that they are undocumented, or what it means to be undocumented, when they want to apply for financial aid for college, or when they want to obtain a drivers' license. This "awakening to a nightmare" (Gonzales and Chavez 2012), or moment of "shattered dreams" (Wong, Shadduck-Hernández, Inzunza, Monroe, Narro, and Valenzuela 2012), signifies a phase in life in which they learn what being undocumented really entails. They learn to deal with the insecurity of not being able to legally work, drive, or travel outside the US, and start to continuously fear detention and deportation (Gonzales 2011).

However, while in many ways the legal and political context in the United States is highly restrictive for undocumented Latino youth, it can also be enabling. Whereas states are not allowed to decide on migration issues, they are permitted to make their own choices on educational access. One of the enabling legislative opportunities that grants undocumented students in California access to higher education concerns California Assembly Bill 540 (AB540). This law allows undocumented youth who have gone to a Californian high school for at least three years before graduation to pay in-state tuition fees at community colleges and public universities. Since 2001, twelve states have signed similar laws, allowing undocumented students under certain requirements to pay in-state tuition fees (Abrego 2008). Moreover, for many undocumented youths, AB540 is much more than just a bureaucratic category that allows them financial access to higher education. Being an AB540 student has become a destigmatizing and empowering identity that provides undocumented 1.5-generation youth the legislative backing to continue with their educational trajectories. Because of AB540, undocumented youths are regarded as California residents and are encouraged to go to college or university. As such, this law grants them a socially acceptable identity and fuels their sense of belonging (Abrego 2008; Seif 2004).

In addition to the importance of this piece of state legislation, Pérez (2010) notes that community colleges facilitate undocumented youth to transition into higher education after high school and can thereby serve as a bridge into university, since their moderate tuition rates make them more accessible for youth from underprivileged positions. Undocumented Latino students who enroll in a community college often describe their experiences at community college as eye-opening, as they start to learn about the world beyond their deprived neighborhoods, poor quality schools, and working-class communities. Some undocumented students become passionate

about a particular subject or profession because of their experiences at community college, for example, because certain teachers stimulate and energize them through a particular topic or profession, or because they develop a sense of self-confidence for being good at something.

Researchers also note the importance of the relationships between undocumented Latino youth and relative outsiders to the community or neighborhood (Abrego 2006; Gonzales 2010; Stanton-Salazar 2011). Establishing trustworthy relations with college or university teachers and administrators does not only aid undocumented Latino students in getting access to important knowledge and resources, but it also helps them feel comfortable with and able to relate to adults who are relative outsiders to the community (Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Gonzales 2010). Stanton-Salazar (2011) calls these influential, non-family teachers and administrators “institutional agents.” Because they occupy key, high-status positions and provide institutional and social support, they can function as institutional brokers that make the transition into higher education possible and relatively smooth. These institutional agents often motivate undocumented Latino youth to pursue higher education by inciting self-confidence, thereby empowering them and broadening their horizon. As Stanton-Salazar points out: “When low-status youth do overcome the odds, it is usually through interventions that embed them in a network of institutional agents connected to services, organizations, and resources oriented toward their empowerment” (2011: 1097).

Such a process becomes a stepping-stone in the greater process of moving up on the social mobility ladder. It is a time when youth realize that they are worthwhile and capable of achieving things, or as Suarez-Orozco (1987) states, of “being somebody.” Needless to say, this sense of empowerment and gaining of self-confidence through education contributes to undocumented youths feeling like they have a place in society and that they are able to beat the odds.

While many researchers tend to focus on the mechanisms that help undocumented marginalized youth succeed in higher education, they are less focused on how activism expands upon the benefits of higher education. It is often through educational spaces that undocumented youth come together in a political collective that advocates against their precarious situation. By continuing with political activism after community college or university, stigmatized and marginalized undocumented Latino youth build upon the foundations of their higher education trajectories in developing themselves further as empowered, self-confident, professional, and politicized activists. In stressing the *subjective transformation and empowerment* of these youth through their participation in the undocumented youth movement, we seek to go beyond traditional conceptualizations of social mobility.

A qualitative approach to social mobility

Often, social mobility scholars use quantitative approaches to explain social mobility and predominantly conceptualize it as educational attainment and occupational prestige (Ganzeboom 2010; Miller 1998). However, in recent years, qualitative researchers have sought to move beyond this narrowly defined conceptualization of social mobility by exploring the subjective and symbolic definitions of social mobility that their respondents propose themselves (Bertaux and Thompson 1997; van den Berg 2011; Zhou, Lee, Agius Vallejo, Tafoya-Estrada, and Sao Xiong 2008). While we regard it relevant to measure social mobility through educational qualifications and occupational status, we argue that social mobility can be a subjective experience that deals with how persons give meaning to the world. The educational qualifications of politically active undocumented youth often far exceed those of their parents, and their political engagement strengthens the benefits of their educational trajectories.

By conceptualizing upward social mobility of undocumented Latino youth through a qualitative ethnographic study, we delineate four elements of social mobility by which undocumented youths distinguish themselves from their undocumented parents. Through their political and civic engagement in the undocumented youth movement, undocumented and educated youth (1) overcome their fear of migration authorities and feel empowered, (2) enhance their collective status by transforming highly stigmatized youth into successful and legitimate political subjects, (3) acquire a professional activist dispositions, and (4) gain access to a large and open network that offers them job, internships, and funding opportunities.

First, for many educated undocumented Latino youth that are active in the movement, the undocumented youth movement functions as an important safety net. If they are detained to be deported, they are assured by the collective that they can call upon the social, political, legal, and emotional support needed to help them get out of deportation proceedings. This aids them in overcoming their fear of migration authorities and supports them in coming out of the shadows as “undocumented and unafraid” (Wong et al. 2012). By presenting themselves as confident, educated, and eloquent political activists, and by sharing their stories with other important political actors, they further develop feelings of self-confidence. These educated and politicized youths feel empowered because they are recognized as worthy human beings by their fellow activists and by the broader public. Additionally, the interactions within the movement generate solidarity, collective effervescence, and emotional energy for the member activists, which add to feelings of empowerment and transformation (Collins 2001).

Second, because politically active and educated undocumented Latino youth are recognized as legitimate political subjects within the media and the larger

public sphere (Nicholls 2013a), undocumented youth have been able to redefine the image of a particular subgroup of undocumented immigrants, notably: educated, undocumented youths also known as Dreamers. Within the larger immigrant rights movement, these youths have been put forward as the poster children of the immigrant rights movement, because they resonate with the larger general public as “deserving,” assimilated, and contributing immigrants. While the media often depicts undocumented immigrant groups as “illegals,” “occupiers,” and “criminals” (Cohen et al. 2009; Portes and Hao 2004), Dreamers are considered powerful political actors. Through their organized and disciplined public performances, undocumented educated youth move from being marginalized and stigmatized immigrants to powerful political actors, thereby “turning shame into pride” (Jasper 2011). Through this process, the collective identity and status of undocumented youth is enhanced.

Third, by participating in the movement, individuals acquire the necessary skills and mentality of professional activists. Through the movement, they operate in a professional environment and learn from each other how to organize political campaigns and talk to the media. By organizing campaigns, writing media advisories, and participating in professional meetings, protest actions, and media trainings, undocumented Latino youth learn how to behave as professional political activists. By gaining this knowledge on how politics work and how to behave within these professional, political spaces, they acquire professional activist dispositions. In this process, they also receive important information and politicized analyses on immigration laws and history. By learning that their precarious situation came into existence through the powerplay of politics, they become irreversibly politicized.

Fourth, the movement also informs undocumented Latino youth about job, internships, and funding opportunities. Following the literature on social capital and networking processes, it is evident that politically active undocumented youth strongly benefit from the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973) and from the vast amount of social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Lin 2001) that is embedded within the movement. The participants are embedded within a very large and open network of immigrant rights, human rights and labor organizations, legal representatives, local politicians, and media organizations. Through these large networks, participants benefit from the flow of information, resources, and contacts that are embedded within these networks. Through these networks, undocumented Latino youth have access to job, internship, and funding opportunities that create higher chances of attaining better statuses and occupations. Moreover, on June 15, 2012, President Obama used his executive power to grant DREAM eligible youth temporary relief from deportation and temporary work permits. This Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has allowed undocumented, educated youths to make use of their educational

qualifications, political activist dispositions, and the job opportunities provided by the networks of the movement.

Methods

The empirical findings presented in this chapter stem from six months of intensive ethnographic research of the undocumented Latino youth movement in Los Angeles, during September 2011 to March 2012, helped by Walter Nicholls, who had been studying the Dreamers for several years (Nicholls 2013a). The first two authors spent time establishing rapport and gaining the trust of these youths by participating and volunteering their skills, time, and energy. By collaborating with the third researcher, a Latin American scholar seasoned in studying Latinos and Mexicans within the US educational system, the constituted a team that was able to further contextualize the research experiences and findings.

Los Angeles is an appropriate locality for studying undocumented youth, because Southern California has the largest number of undocumented youths. Moreover, the Dream movement is highly active and well developed in the city of Los Angeles. Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA) is one of the most influential and active Dream Teams in the country, functioning as a major hub of activity in regard to the undocumented student movement and the larger immigrant rights movement. The fieldwork centered on “deep hanging out” (Bryman 2004), mobilizing, conversing, celebrating, eating, and living with undocumented Latino youth who are members of prominent Californian Dream Teams, such as Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA), San Gabriel Valley Dream Team (SGVDT), San Fernando Valley Dream Team (SFVDT), and Orange County Dream Team (OCDT). As the Dream movement is a national movement with Dream Teams across the country, Dreamers in Los Angeles are strongly connected to Dream organizations at the federal and state level, such as, United We Dream (UWD) and the California Dream Network.

Engagement in the activities of close to 150 Dreamers within the wider Los Angeles area and following a core group of 60 Dreamers made up our ethnographic study. Most of the Dreamers were born in Mexico, or in other Latin or Central American countries, and are between the ages of eighteen and thirty. In the six months of ethnographic fieldwork, the first two researchers conducted participant observations of 82 different events, ranging from formal meetings, protests, and press conferences to informal meetings such as Christmas, weddings, and birthday celebrations. They also conducted ten life-history interviews with Dreamers, with a focus on life trajectories in terms of border crossings, childhood experiences, and educational involvement in the

movement – linking their personal lives to the movement.

In addition, the research team filmed and photographed many Dreamer events and collected the movement's documents that were distributed or circulated digitally. The analysis of fieldwork reports, notes, interview transcripts, photographs, and documents was supported by using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis program.

Although this is an ethnographic case study of Dreamers in Los Angeles, the similarities, collaborations, and exchanges between the different Dream Teams that make up the structure of the national movement suggest that the findings within the LA context may be representative of those experienced by Dreamers in other states and cities across the United States. While the researchers participated in particular actions in Los Angeles, Dreamers in other parts of the country were also doing similar actions with the same political agenda, framing strategies, and organizational structure.

Beating the odds through higher education

Schooling is not only critical in providing undocumented youth with a sense of belonging, but it also allows some undocumented Latino students to establish important relationships with institutional agents at high school or community college. A case in point is provided by Nadia, Raj, Grace, and Jorge, who all started with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, but were then noticed by a teacher who recognized their talent and placed them in the so-called Advancement Placement (AP) classes. Such extra attention by a teacher boosted their self-esteem and taught them that they could achieve something in life by doing well in school. For these students, this was the start of a successful educational career. They started obtaining good grades and started believing that they were capable of fulfilling the meritocratic American Dream.

My teacher placed me in the gifted classes. So I was labeled a gifted student, right. Me knowing that I was smart, that I could do a lot of things that just pumped me up and made me very excited about my education, always seeing myself with a brighter future. (Grace, personal interview, 2012)

Many Dreamers did not even know that it was possible for undocumented youth to go to college. In poor, working-class neighborhoods, some community members and parents may view education as a luxury, as people are more focused on trying to get a job to make ends meet than on ensuring that they get into college. Alejandro:

I grew up in a neighborhood where it was the same mentality. People were

just scared to get detained and deported. They didn't worry about having to go to school, because like, no, I don't need to go to school, I need to go to work. (personal interview, 2012)

For these adolescents, having an outsider as a role model is important in encouraging them into higher education. Ernesto sheds light on this:

And honestly, it wasn't until three years after high school of doing the street vendor thing and just like doing side things here and there, that I met somebody. His name was David. He just brought this completely different energy and like environment of like that supportive, male role model. And it wasn't till 2005 that his daughter just graduated from high school and was going into college. And then he asked me, "Hey, why don't you apply?" and I was like, "Ooh I don't know, like, I don't have papers," blablabla, excuse, excuse, excuse. And then it came to the point of, "Why don't you just try?" And the next thing I knew I was a student at East LA college. (personal interview, 2012)

Although being encouraged by an institutional agent is an important factor in determining whether undocumented youth transition into higher education, getting access to higher education through AB540 is essential. Raj: "If it wasn't for the AB540, I don't think I would have been able to make it through my undergraduate." Through AB540 and funding opportunities for AB540 students, undocumented youth are able to go to community college, which often motivates them to transfer to university and continue on their path of upward social mobility. Nadia: "Community college was where I became like the crazy nerd, like, getting the good grades." As such, community colleges serve as an eye-opener to the larger world beyond the poor, working-class world that most undocumented students know.

I started taking classes and I started to get exposed to things that I didn't even know. I remember taking a psychology class, which I didn't really know what it was, but I was like, I'll take this psychology. And taking philosophy, which I didn't know what it was (laughs). It just opened my mind to a lot of things, right. College really changed my mind, my life, I guess. (Jorge, personal interview, 2012)

College gives them the feeling and self-esteem that they can also become part of this larger world. Julio states: "That [enrolling in college] moment in history marks

where I left the neighborhood that I knew of, as just inner city, dysfunctional schools, bad neighborhoods, into wealth. This is what the world looks like, I want to see more of it. Yeah.” At community college, Ernesto realized that he was a good writer and started writing for the college newspaper. Ernesto: “That was my first time in any kind of environment where I was like having a really good time. I was like really proud of myself, like, wow, I got something published in the school newspaper.” Additionally, undocumented youth often become members of campus-based immigrant rights organizations, which teaches them the power of social movement organizing.

There was a group on campus that was about to be formed that advocates for undocumented students. So I joined that club and that’s when I started learning a lot more about AB540, the federal Dream Act, the California Dream Act. So I started learning about all that stuff. I started learning more about politics and how it works. I started understanding politics and politicians. I started understanding the importance of me sharing my experience, my stories. So I started doing a lot of different interviews. I started speaking in public a lot. (Alejandro, personal interview, 2012)

Beating the odds through the undocumented youth movement

Empowerment and overcoming fear

Through political activism, undocumented youths learn how to defend themselves against anti-immigrant sentiments and how their story can be used as a tool for lobbying and pulling resources. This process of publicly coming out as undocumented and collectively calling attention to their precarious situation is an important step towards overcoming the fear and stigma that comes with being undocumented. Being able to come to this point is derived from the growing self-confidence and motivation that comes through their educational success. At this stage, their educational capital and self-confidence are extended by their active involvement in the undocumented student movement, which is then leveraged into individual empowerment and the embracing of a collective undocumented identity.

The big moment for me was at UCLA IDEAS and becoming undocumented and unafraid. Really embracing what it means to be undocumented. When you can stand up and say, I’m undocumented and this is my story, and this being a powerful tool. I embraced it and I became like a full-on organizer. (Nadia, personal interview, 2012)

Clearly, Nadia made the transition from *just* being an undocumented student to becoming an undocumented student *and* a political activist, who is not only okay with her undocumented status, but fully embraces it. This is similar to what many other undocumented students experience when they join the undocumented youth movement. The campus-based undocumented students movement serves as a springboard for becoming a political activist beyond the campus walls. After they graduate, undocumented youths continue their organizing and advocacy work for undocumented youth by joining a Dream Team. Dream Teams, such as DTLA, provide a platform through which they can continue their path of upward social mobility.

The importance of individual feelings of empowerment that are generated by the collective actions of the movement cannot be overstated. Many Dreamers see it as the key aspect of their active involvement in the movement. Esperanza echoes this clearly: “So that’s another thing, again that empowerment, right. I’ve been able to be okay, be more than okay, be proud of being undocumented.” These now self-confident and educated youths come together to create a space in which they can empower each other through the collective of the movement. The connections and resources within the movement’s networks make it possible for Dreamers to overcome the fears that their parents endure daily. While their parents often stay in the shadows, these undocumented youths are publicly presenting themselves as undocumented, showing their faces and names in actions and interviews recorded by the media.

This process of overcoming fear of the authorities is especially enlightening in terms of the movement’s organization of civil disobedience actions to raise awareness for their precarious situation of legal limbo. During the fieldwork, DTLA undertook a civil disobedience action for the administrative relief campaign. In this action, five Dreamers got themselves arrested by staging a sit-in in the office of the chief prosecutor of Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). Norma, Alejandro, and Nadia were the DTLA members who were arrested in this action. The fact that these youths dare to face their worst fears head-on by performing such an action shows that they feel safe, self-confident, and empowered enough to place themselves at such risk (see figure 1 below). Alejandro explains that, despite the fact that he was facing possible deportation by being arrested, he felt really powerful during the civil disobedience action because he could feel the energy and support of the movement behind him.

So, eight floors beneath us we could hear the crowd downstairs cheering and chanting and it was just a very beautiful moment. And then, as we walked outside the offices, and everyone was just there. As soon as I saw everybody, I just started smiling because it was just so beautiful, like, wow, this is amazing. I just could not stop smiling. I just had to smile, because it was just all the

energy that was in the air. It was just beautiful. It gave me a boost of energy and it gave me a confirmation that what I was doing was the right thing to do. (Alejandro, personal interview, 2012: see figure 1)



Figure 1: Alejandro could not stop smiling while getting arrested. Source: Tara Fiorito and Dirk Eisema

Some DTLA members call these civil disobedience actions “sacred acts.” They function as key moments in the transformative process from being fearful and “closeted” to becoming fully empowered and liberated from their fear of the authorities. In other words, it is the complete “embracing of the undocumented identity” that causes them to feel stronger than ever. Norma explains how she felt after she participated in this action:

I was building for it, I knew it was going to happen and so when it finally did, I felt liberated. At a personal level, I felt really liberated. I was worried about my mom, mostly because she was really sad and worried, but she was also very proud. So, I was very happy to be in there [ICE office], very proud. (personal interview, 2012)

Collective status enhancement and destigmatization

The individual process of empowerment and overcoming fear that Dreamers go through leads to an enhancement of the status of the collective. Because the

individuals present themselves as powerful and capable personas in the public sphere, the collective identity and status of the Dreamer is enhanced. The persona of the Dreamer becomes synonymous with educated, powerful, assertive, and capable human beings. They are no longer considered “un-worthy illegals,” but rather a powerful and legitimate political group. Through their public performances in the media and at protests and rallies, they are publicly asked about their opinions on political issues. Not only are they asked to give their opinions on migration issues, but they are also asked to voice their opinions on more general political issues. Their voice and political position as a legitimate political group becomes valuable for the general public. During one of the DTLA meetings, the group was asked whether DTLA could send two representatives to attend a press-conference in which the local union, the L.A. County Fed, would publicly announce their support for President Obama and comprehensive immigration reform. Two Dreamers went to the press-conference and presented their personal stories (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Two Dreamers (on the left) are asked to share their personal story and to take a political position.

Source: Tara Fiorito and Dirk Eisema

The Dreamers have become such a powerful political group that they have many contacts among significant Los Angeles politicians. Even the mayor of Los Angeles came and visited DTLA at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center for the celebration of the passing of the California Dream Act. During this celebration, DTLA was presented with the Community Leaders Award, granted by the California Immigrant Policy Center (see figure 3).

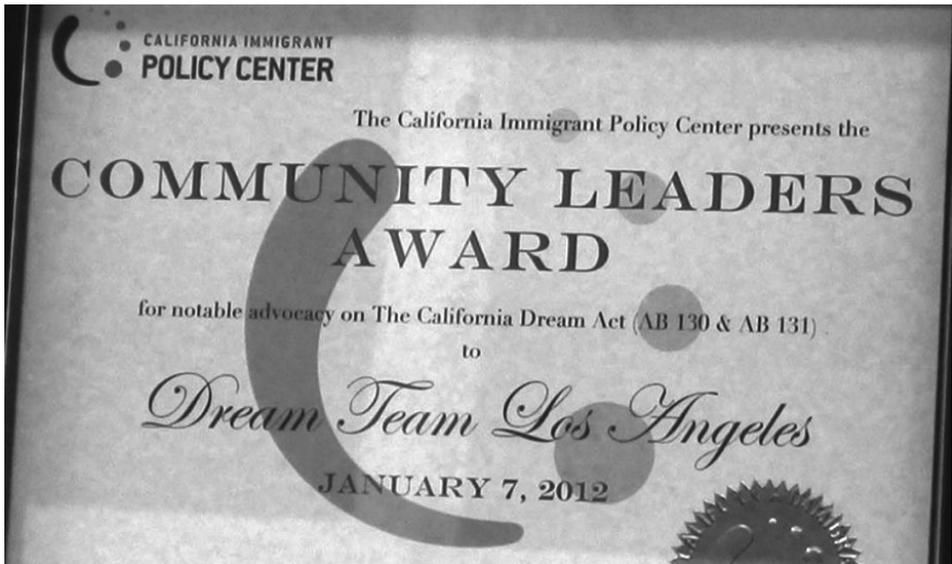


Figure 3: Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA) receives the Community Leaders Award for their notable advocacy on the California Dream Act. Source: Tara Fiorito and Dirk Eisema

As a result of the national administrative relief campaign described earlier, a small group of Dreamers from all over the nation, including DTLA member Nadia, was invited to come to the White House to discuss the demands of the campaign with Cecilia Muñoz (Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council). Moreover, Dreamers have become such a powerful political collective that they are even on the cover of *Time* magazine¹².

Acquiring professional activist dispositions

That's when I became the media person. So that's when I developed my first press release and that's when I started calling media up and started developing those relationships. (Nadia, personal interview, 2012)

By participating in the movement, individuals learn the skills and mentality to acquire professional activist dispositions. Through the Dream movement, undocumented students learn how to behave and perform like political activists and start to speak professional social movement jargon. Words such as “educating,” “messaging,” “framing,” and doing “outreach, and advocacy work” have become a normal part of their vocabulary.

I was advocacy chair, before I was co-chair, so I think at that first march, that first rally, the student of color conference, I just really liked that feeling of being able to share my story in front of such a huge crowd. And so I kinda just kept going with that. I was involved with the external vice-president's office and so that also exposed me to a lot of different issues, like educational accessibility and budget cuts everywhere. So, I think that showed me what a movement was. From there it just grew. I mean you go to retreats, you go to like meetings, you just kinda get into it, that's the only way to really learn about it is to immerse yourself in it and I did just that. (Esperanza, personal interview, 2012)

Dreamers operate in a highly professional environment. Because DTLA is located at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center, their weekly meetings are held in a professional office space with all the necessary facilities. This professional atmosphere and DTLA's connections to the university and professional activist organizations, connects undocumented youth to the world outside their deprived neighborhoods. Dream Teams function as highly professional organizations. At Dream Team Los Angeles, weekly Monday meetings are very important to keep track of ongoing business. Every week, they discuss what is happening the upcoming week, who is doing what, which protests are on the agenda, what DTLA's stance is on upcoming political issues, and how the national campaigns are going. DTLA's activities are organized in different committees: the Legal Committee, the Community Education and Outreach Committee, the Development Committee, the Media Committee, the Policy Committee, the Self-care and Healing Committee, and the Arts Committee.

These committees all have their say through committee chairs. These chairs "report back" to DTLA during the weekly meetings, so the other DTLA members know what is going on and how their activities are proceeding. Through their active involvement in the movement, undocumented students learn about legal issues, immigration policies, and how politics work in general. Maria: "So we had to do so much educating of ourselves, from like these three branches, how does the executive branch work? Who has the power? Do all this legal research on it."

Through this process of becoming more aware of the policies and legal issues surrounding their political causes and campaigns, undocumented youth become irreversibly politicized. Through this politicization process, undocumented students become aware that their problematic position is not given by nature, but is created through restrictive immigration laws, policies, and the tightening of border control. This political awareness is important, because it encourages undocumented youth to fully immerse themselves in the world of political organizing. This process of politicization shifts the blame of "illegality" to political structures outside of them and

enables them to feel confident and secure in speaking to politicians.

Job, internship, and funding opportunities

The way that I got into Good Jobs LA was via an internship during this summer. The UCLA Labor Center and United We Dream were able to collaborate and put the Summer Internship together, which hosted about 104 individuals across the country. I was one of the fortunate ones who was admitted into the program. We were placed with Good Jobs LA and we were doing a youth project. The project went really well and they ended up calling us back and told us that they wanted us to work on their campaign and since then I've been working with them. (Julio, personal interview, 2012)

As Julio's quote illustrates, the movement also informs undocumented students about job, internships, and funding opportunities. Having professional activist dispositions helps them gain entry into jobs and internships within social justice organizations. As Ernesto states: "We are creating roads into other paths, like working with unions, working with nonprofits. Like creating and building those resources and expanding those support networks that we work so hard to build up." Through these large networks, individual participants can benefit from the flow of information, resources, and contacts that are embedded within these networks. Through these networks, undocumented youth within the movement have access to resources and opportunities that create higher chances of attaining better statuses and occupations. The internships themselves are also important ways of acquiring professional activist dispositions. The website of the UCLA Downtown Labor Center details what the internship entails.

Dream summer is a ten-week, full-time internship program that places undocumented student leaders with social justice, labor and queer/LGBTQ organizations. This internship experience provides leadership development and training for undocumented leaders and strengthens multigenerational social-justice movements. Each participant will receive a \$5,000 award to support her or his educational goals. (website UCLA Labor Center, 2012)¹³

Jorge, Nadia, Esperanza, Maria, Julio, and Ernesto all participated in this Dream Summer internship. Through these experiences, they were able to get new positions at other activist organizations. In many ways, the UCLA Downtown Labor Center helps DTLA members build their résumé by offering jobs or internships. During the fieldwork,

Nadia and Esperanza were interns there and Jorge worked as a paid staff member. Since Dreamers have recently been granted temporary work permits, they are now able to really use the skills, internships, and job opportunities they acquired through the networks of the movement. They can now legally use both their educational qualifications, as well as the résumé building work they did within the movement in professional jobs within professional activists' organizations.

So I currently work at the UCLA Labor Center. In October I was able to start to work there as a staff person, because I knew the project director and the director of the Labor Center. They had been supporters of the Dream Act and the Dream movement, so I had known them and done work with them before and they were able to offer me, or like accept me as an intern at the UCLA Labor Center and now I work there, I am regular staff. I run, or I coordinate, the Dream Resource Center project, which is a project that focuses on issues affecting undocumented students. (Jorge, personal interview, 2012)

The Dream movement itself also creates many career building possibilities that offer undocumented students active in the movement opportunities to expand their skills and knowledge within a professional environment. Esperanza:

I'm a board member for United We Dream. I was recently elected, which is really a big privilege. I gave a speech in Congress and I was elected into that position end of last year. And so I'm going to be focusing more on the organizational aspect of organizing. You know, being a board member of UWD, which has become such a huge organization in such a small period of time. I think it is a very unique role that I have never taken on before. I'm excited to learn and continue growing as a person and as an activist. (personal interview, 2012)

Actively participating in the movement thus offers undocumented youth the possibility of upward social mobility. As their dispositions and life possibilities have changed so much, doing the same jobs their parents do is no longer an option. Ernesto reflects on this: "If they want me to become a supermarket manager, if they think that is being a success, well that's their problem." Often, their parents do not really understand what their lives as professional activists entail. Nadia: "My mom does not understand what I do, so she just tells people I'm a secretary."

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown how the undocumented Latino youth movement functions as a vehicle for upward social mobility for the educated and undocumented members of the movement. We have argued that the political engagement of these undocumented youths builds upon and amplifies the benefits of their successful educational trajectories. By conceptualizing upward social mobility of undocumented youth through a qualitative ethnographic study, we delineate four elements of social mobility by which undocumented youths distinguish themselves from their undocumented parents. Through their participation in this movement, they move up on the social mobility ladder through four specific elements of social mobility generated by the collective actions of the movement. Through the movement, undocumented youths (1) become empowered and overcome their fear of migration authorities, (2) achieve and enhance their collective status by transforming highly stigmatized youth into successful and legitimate political subjects, (3) acquire professional activist dispositions, and (4) gain access to a large and open network of job, internships, and funding opportunities.

Through the movement, the subjective experiences of these youths differ significantly from those of their parents. This is a major practical, mental, and symbolic step on the ladder of social mobility. Moreover, the social advancements within the lives of these youths can also be considered upward social mobility in the classic sense of occupational or educational social mobility. The described processes, in which stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youth become empowered, self-confident, professional, and politicized activists, give these youths the know-how and mentality to transfer these acquired skills and dispositions into other domains of social life. Due to the acquisition of embodied cultural capital, undocumented migrants can leverage their educational capital in the social movement, which allows them to transfer these skills into occupational spheres and other social movement settings, thus allowing for upward social mobility.

The insights presented in this study can be used for future research to study whether other social movements also function as vehicles for upward social mobility for highly stigmatized groups. Moreover, while the researchers suggest that these findings may be generalizable to Dreamers in other US cities and states, the question to what extent similarities or differences may exist between Dreamers – especially contrasting Los Angeles and California to more repressive states and cities – is worth exploring. Although ethnographies usually do not make grand sweeping statements about other localities and groups, the researchers see clear connections between Dreamers in California and Dreamers in Arizona. When Dreamers in Arizona are

threatened by more repressive immigration laws, Dreamers from across the US protest and mobilize. Additionally, this research could compare these findings on the experiences of social mobility with other segments of this highly stigmatized group, such as their undocumented parents or with undocumented youths who are not part of this movement.

Moreover, whether Dreamers will be able to transfer their political skills and successes to their communities, which they are bent on doing, remains to be seen. What also remains to be seen is what will happen to these empowered youths and their parents and communities in the future. Nevertheless, this study speaks to their current ability to beat the odds.

CHAPTER 3

Beyond the Dreamers:

Collective Identity and Subjectivity in the Undocumented Youth Movement¹⁴

Over the last two decades, undocumented youth activists who mobilized for the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act have used their highly effective, yet contested, collective identity as Dreamers to gain a voice and instigate political reform in the United States. This identity has organized undocumented youth, from different backgrounds and regions, to form a recognizable “we” and to engage in political action. However, while the concept of collective identity can help scholars understand how identifying with and being identified as a constructed collective actor aids the generation, maintenance, and success of social movements and collective action (Flesher Fominaya 2010b; Hunt and Benford 2007; Jasper and McGarry 2015; Polletta and Jasper 2001), it does not necessarily help scholars understand the profound effects of discrimination, stigmatization, privilege, and empowerment.

In this chapter, I argue that the concept of subjectivity should be brought into the current conceptual repertoire and body of literature of social movement theory, because it offers a sensibility to, and a subtle understanding of, the profound workings of power that collective identity does not. As “no subject is its own point of departure” (Butler 1995: 9), using the concept of subjectivity stresses that the interior lives and affective states of political subjects are discursively and historically formed, constructed and mediated by particular political, social, economic, and cultural practices and conditions, and dependent on context. As yet, the shared subjectivities of activists with similar experiences of stigmatization, trauma, and empowerment have not received sufficient attention in social movement theory.

Building on longitudinal ethnographic research in Los Angeles (2011-2018), I explore what the two concepts contribute in the case of the undocumented youth movement. The empirical section on the construction and deconstruction of the collective identity of the Dreamer shows that the concept of collective identity sheds light on the processes through which political entrepreneurs and movement leaders construct a collective identity in service of a political purpose. However, this section also shows that the Dreamer identity nowadays no longer unites, but rather divides, the movement. It has become a matter of contention among undocumented youth activists, because of the politics of deservingness attached to the Dreamers. Consequently, the concept of collective identity is limited in its ability to help us understand what undocumented youth activists have in common in relation to their shared embodied experiences. The empirical section on subjectivity shows that their shared subjectivity is shaped by the embodied experience of (1) legal power, (2) stigmatizing discourse, and (3) empowerment practices. This subjectivity is characterized both by the trauma of being undocumented and by the politicization, healing, and emancipation derived from participating in the movement.

By comparing the construction and deconstruction of the Dreamer identity with the constitution of the shared subjectivity of undocumented youth partaking in the movement, I show that it is their shared subjectivities, derived from shared affective and embodied experiences of marginalization and empowerment, that constitute their strong sense of belonging and political agency, rather than only the collective identity of the Dreamers as created by political entrepreneurs and leaders of the movement.

Collective identity and subjectivity in theory

Collective identity

The use of the concept of collective identity is widespread in social movement research and identity politics (Flesher Fominaya 2010b; Jasper and McGarry 2015; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Some social movement scholars even claim that collective identity “captures the animating spirit of the latter quarter of the twentieth century” (Hunt and Benford 2007: 433).

The concept gained traction in the mid-1980s as a central concept in new social movement theory. This was partly in response to the structural bias in the political process and resource mobilization theories that had become “hegemonic” (McDonald 2002). Its importance grew with the rise of identity politics and as part of a culturalist critique of the rationalistic, macro-level, purpose-oriented, and structuralist

explanations found in the classic social movement literature (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Critics argued that cultural and symbolic interpretations needed to be added to the theoretical repertoire of understanding what makes people organize, protest, and commit to activist groups and projects.

Melucci's processual and constructivist approach to collective identity (1995) has been highly influential. He argues that collective actors should not be regarded as unified and homogenous, for collective identity is a social construct (and not a static thing) that is actively created in a dynamic process. In this "laborious process" (p. 50), nobody is completely in control, as the identity of the collectivity is constantly reshaped through ongoing discussion, conflict, negotiation, and renegotiation between forces both inside and outside the collectivity. Many contemporary social movement scholars (Jasper and McGarry 2015) also emphasize that collective identity is an act of imagination, a cultural construction actively created and recreated in a dynamic process of negotiations and in service of a political and/or cultural-symbolic strategy. Collective identity is considered to be a necessary fiction that engages in "operational essentialism" (Jasper and McGarry 2015: 2) by emphasizing certain defining characteristics of the collectivity at the risk of presenting identities as fixed and homogenous.

As such, the concept has received criticism for its inherent risk of essentialism and reification, with many social movement theorists emphasizing that collective identities are in fact multiple: multidimensional, multiscalar, and multilayered (Gamson 1991; Rupp and Taylor 1999; Saunders 2008; Snow 2001). Collective identities can exist on the *organizational* level (differentiating between particular groups, networks, or organizations in, for example, the women's movement), they can exist on the *movement* level, (we are all sisters or feminists in an international women's movement), and they can exist on the *solidary* level (referring to people's social location, including gender, class, ethnicity; for example, we are all women and not men). Saunders (2008) argues that collective identity (in the singular) is only possible at the group level, whereas on the movement level one can only talk of collective identities (in the plural).

Holland, Fox, and Daro (2008) suggest a decentered, dialogical, and place-based approach to collective identity. Drawing on ethnographic cases of First Nations activism in Canada, the global justice movement network, and women's activism in Nepal, they stress that collective identity develops dialogically in practice both inside and outside movements, at multiple sites and places, including "alter-versions" (p. 106) or external identifications developed by bystanders such as media and politicians.

Empirically, the concept of collective identity is used in a variety of ways in recent studies of social movements to help explain the sense of belonging and commitment

of activists and the proliferation of collective action. The concept has been central in explaining the success of the antiglobalization movement in Scotland (Barr and Drury 2009), the white power movement in the US (Futrell and Siml 2002), and the peace and justice movement (Benford 2002). Flesher Fominaya (2015) argues that a collective identity can paradoxically be based on the refusal to define a collective identity. In the context of the Indignados/anti-austerity protests in Spain, the paradox of the strong anti-identitarian collective identity is that the defining feature of the collective identity concerns a collective refusal to self-identify with a common characteristic.

Building on these empirical studies of and theoretical reflections on collective identity, I define collective identity as a shared politically constructed and culturally imagined sense of belonging and identification with a collective “we,” often defined in opposition to others by drawing boundaries between an “us” and “them,” and a corresponding shared sense of agency. It develops dialogically in practice both inside and outside movements and can alter in relation to different scales, sites, places, and internal and external practices.

Subjectivity

While social movement scholars do consider the role of political power in shaping and defining the field of political opportunities within which movements operate and collective identities are (re)constructed, they do not sufficiently consider how acts of social positioning and experiences of stigmatization become embodied and internalized in the political subject. This is where the concept of subjectivity comes in.

Like collective identity, the centrality of subjectivity came up in the 1960s and 1970s across the social sciences and humanities. It arose in response to a critique of humanist conceptualizations of the subject as autonomous, rational, free, and unique. Poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial theorists emphasized that a subject, and its interior life, is always relational, constructed, and mediated through power, culture, and discourse (Benhabib, Butler, Cornell, and Fraser 1995; Foucault 1997; Nandy 1983; Spivak 1988). They argued that the ideal of universal man is in fact the product of gendered (male), racialized (white), and colonized (western) discourses. Taylor (1989) shows that the very notion of the individual’s self and a corresponding focus on its interior life, whether imagined as rational, free and unique, or discursively formed, is central to modernity.

Feminist, postcolonial, and phenomenological theories also emphasized the centrality of human experience, embodiment, and affect in their accounts of subjectivity. “Subjectivity, in this account, is the *experience* of the lived multiplicity of positionings,” or the “*experience* of subjectification” (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos, and Walkerdine 2008: 6, italics added). The affective and bodily turn

further highlighted a concern for the nonconscious and the noncognitive, seeking to go beyond discourse. The body is the place where social structures settle and, hence, subjectivity is always embodied subjectivity.

The concept of subjectivity, as I employ it here, refers to the interior life and affective state of the political subject. Using the term emphasizes that power structures are internalized and embodied in our sense of self and in our thoughts, feelings and sensibilities. Subjectivity has been conceptualized as “the shared inner life of the subject, to the way subjects feel, respond, experience” (Luhmann 2006: 345) and is often defined as the “actors’ thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and, especially, their senses of self and self-world relations” (Holland and Leander 2004: 127). This “ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects” (Ortner 2005: 31) is shaped, organized, and provoked by particular cultural and social formations in which subjects are qualitatively positioned as, for example, racialized, classed, gendered, or criminalized subjects. Subjectivities are formed through the embodiment of discursive regimes of power/knowledge that categorize people as “disabled,” “criminal,” “illegal,” or other negative renderings. They are produced through the internalization of repeated practices and processes of social positioning within everyday discourse, spatial arrangements, media (television, newspapers, films, internet) and scientific and governmental categories. As interactional or discursive acts of positioning always happen in particular historic times and places, subjectivities are also always situational.

However, while subjectivities are formed by structures of power, they also function as the foundation of resistance and agency. They are:

a necessary part of understanding how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon. Agency is not some natural or originary will; it takes shape as specific desires and intentions within a matrix of subjectivity – of (culturally constituted) feelings, thoughts, and meanings. (Ortner 2005: 34)

In many accounts of subjectivity, scholars felt a need to also look at the ways in which people resist, reject, and recast social structures as this contains possibilities for social, cultural, and political transformation and a politics of emancipation. Practice theory in particular, as proposed by sociologists such as Bourdieu and Giddens, sought to bring back the acting subject by stressing the reflexive and partially knowing nature of the subject. Human agents appropriate and innovate meaning and discourses and act in and on the world, even when they are acted upon.

Anthropologist Luhmann (2006) argues that the “complex subjectivity” of dominated groups is constituted by the negotiation between competing emotional

codes/regimes; “often, these contradictory codes will be the code for correct emotional response to the dominant authority, and the code for correct emotional response to peers” (p. 356). She illustrates her argument with a study on the subjectivities of homeless women in Chicago. The subjectivity that these women share is characterized by the challenge of trying to negotiate two competing sets of emotional demands that are irreconcilable; the code of honor (or code of the street) and the code of middle-class respectability. “If subjectivity is the emotional experience of a political subject, then to articulate the psychological structure of the emotion only gives us more evidence to argue that power is inscribed upon our bodies and that moral judgment is a visceral act” (p. 359).

Other well-known works on the negotiation of competing emotional demands, the harsh reality of subjective experiences, and the internalization of subjugation include Nandy’s famous work (1983) on the loss and recovery of Indian selves under colonialism and Du Bois’s work (1903) on “double consciousness.” Du Bois describes the internal conflict blacks in America experience between seeing themselves through their own unique experience and seeing themselves through white racist stereotypes about blacks, between being both an American and a non-American and between a distinctive African consciousness that privileges the spiritual world and an American white consciousness that privileges the materialist, commercial world.

Empirically, there are countless studies of how subjectivities are shaped by practices of discursive positioning in the field of education, organized religion, peer groups, health care, and the media (Keddie 2003; Laliberte Rudman 2006; Staeheli and Hammett 2010; Strhan 2013). Work on the shaping of subjectivities within social movement research is, however, rare. One recent work on social movements that does explicitly regard subjectivities concerns Holland, Price, and Westermeyer’s (2018) discussion of the environmental, Tea Party, and Rastafarian movements. In their article, they consider processes of political becoming through the perspective of social practice theory, stressing the fact that people are both subjects of culture and structure, as well as users and creators of culture and structure. As such, they make a distinction between social identities, such as “terrorist” or “young White girl,” which they define as the “collectively imagined types of persons who presumably act certain ways and are associated with levels of (dis)respect and (dis) entitlement” (p. 265) and intimate or subjective identities, which they define as “dynamic, self-authored senses of self” (p. 266). According to Holland, Price, and Westermeyer:

These self-authored identities emerge gradually over time from orchestrations of personal experiences, emotional memories, learned discourses, treatment from others, media images, vague affects, and other bits of subjectivity.

Reacted to by others and by institutions, and, exposed to a range of cultural resources, persons may form intimate identities that are personalized versions of common social identities or perhaps ones from less familiar figured or cultural worlds. (2018: 266)

I argue that Holland, Price, and Westermeyer's focus on the shaping of subjective identities (or subjectivities) within social movements is both rare and much needed in social movement research. Through my ethnographic study of the undocumented youth movement in Los Angeles, I show what a focus on subjectivity adds to the current focus on collective identities in the field of social movement research. My understanding of subjectivity includes both the embodiment of practices of negative discursive positioning, as well as the embodiment of practices of empowerment and agency.

Setting, case, and methods

The argument draws on longitudinal ethnographic research on the undocumented youth movement in the wider Los Angeles area from 2011 to 2018. When I began my fieldwork in 2011, the movement – back then often referred to as the Dreamers' or Dream movement – was alive and well. Its coming of age story started a decade earlier.

In the early 2000s, as part of the push for comprehensive immigration reform legislation, mobilizations for the Dream Act were initially headed by professional immigrant rights organizations that gathered and trained DREAM eligible youths to present the bill's human face (Nicholls 2013a). They created an institutional framework to come together to strategize and train for their actions and campaigns in organizations on the local, state, and national level. This framework served as the basis for the organizational structure of the movement when undocumented youths decided, after the failure of the 2010 Dream Act in Congress, to become an autonomous movement that functioned independently from their institutional elders.

When I entered the field in 2011, I encountered an undocumented youth-led movement that benefitted from its institutionalized origins. Its organizational structure contained national organizations such as United We Dream, state organizations such as the California Dream Network, and local organizations such as campus groups and Dream Teams. I became a member of Dream Team Los Angeles (DTLA): a volunteer-run, undocumented youth-led organization, located in downtown L.A., with about 100 members of which approximately twenty-five were present at the weekly meetings. Many of DTLA's steering members were also part of United We Dream and the

California Dream Network. Through face-to-face conferences and online conference calls, DTLA planned and aligned their national campaigns to the activities of Dream Teams from other cities and regions across the nation. Moreover, while undocumented youth organizations, such as DTLA, organize many real-life meetings and actions, they also strategically use social media in their campaigns, always stressing the importance of strong social media presence and actively providing social media trainings. Consequently, almost everyone actively uses Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and websites to further the undocumented cause.

Through my participation in DTLA, I became acquainted with activists from different Dream Teams in the region. I established a personal connection with about 60 undocumented, predominantly Latino, youth activists and participated in events, actions, and fundraisers organized by Orange Country Dream Team (OCDT), San Fernando Valley Dream Team (SDVDT), and San Gabriel Valley Dream Team (SGVDT). In those six months, I spent almost every day with them, becoming a part of both their activist and personal lives. The empirical data yielded by this fieldwork consists of ten in-depth life-history interviews of more than four hours each, many informal conversations, digital and hardcopy documents, and participant observations at 82 different events. These events include: weekly Dream Team meetings; (social) media- and talking-points trainings; protests, rallies, and press conferences; high school presentations, panel discussions, and fundraisers; retreats, candle-light vigils, and therapeutic events; and informal events, such as dancing events, birthdays, and wedding celebrations.

Because I was a documented, white, European (Dutch/English/Italian) woman in a predominantly undocumented, brown, American-Latino environment, it was very important to establish rapport and openly discuss issues of power, privilege, and positionality. To gain and honor their trust and respect, and “give back” to the community I had become a part of, I actively participated in actions, engaged in Paulo Freire’s inspired “theater of the oppressed” (popular education) performances at protests, gave a presentation of my research findings and codirected the documentary film *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles*. While there were many power differentials to overcome for us to establish an intimate and trustworthy relationship, there were also similarities, such as age, academic background, and political standing, that worked in our favor. At that time, many of us were in our twenties, had or were about to graduate in the social sciences, and were committed to activist work.

One of the ways in which I was able to be fully immersed in and become part of the movement was by being a peacekeeper and chant-leader in a civil disobedience action at the Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) headquarters in downtown Los Angeles (October 11, 2011). In this civil disobedience action, which required

many preparatory meetings and trainings, we occupied the central lobby of the ICE headquarters, while five undocumented youths did a sit-in at the chief prosecutor's office on the sixth floor. This was followed by similar actions in other US cities and was part of a national campaign demanding President Obama use his executive power to grant DREAM eligible youth protection against detention and deportation. This administrative relief campaign was so successful that it led to one of my respondents, together with other DREAM eligible youths, to meet with Cecilia Muñoz, Obama's chief advisor on immigration. Eight months later, on June 15, 2012, the Obama administration established the new policy Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program that grants undocumented persons who entered the country "illegally" when they were minors temporary protection against detention and deportation and the possibility to work, travel, study, and drive legally for a renewable period of two years.

Back in Europe, I kept in touch and continued to follow the movement from a distance, noticing in social media postings a general move away from the focus on organizing for DREAM eligible youths towards a focus on either their personal lives or towards fighting for all undocumented immigrants, as illustrated by the #Not1More (deportation) campaign. However, it was when President Trump rescinded DACA on the September 5, 2017 that I was really puzzled by what I witnessed online. While I expected my undocumented Facebook friends to blast the internet with pro-DACA, pro-Dreamer statements and active mobilizing efforts, many were highly critical of the Dreamer narrative or remained relatively quiet on the topic of DACA. What followed as a result of this initial observation was a thorough discourse analysis of written and audiovisual postings of undocumented youths on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, blogs, and websites. From this, it became even more apparent that the movement had changed in several ways since my fieldwork and the installment of DACA. Not only had some people transitioned out of the movement, but the movement had also explicitly become more intersectional and inclusive and more critical of Dreamers.

Because of these changes, I decided that I needed to go back to conduct more fieldwork. I went back to Los Angeles for six weeks in February 2018 with the following questions: What happened to the movement when DACA was installed, and what happened when DACA was rescinded? Is there still a movement to speak of? How has DACA affected the collective identity of the Dreamers and the subjectivities of undocumented youth activists? Has the assimilationist concept of the "deserving" Dreamer been abandoned, and if so why? As one could argue that the conservative political climate in Trumpian America still required this type of strategic essentialism.

The empirical data from 2018 consists of twenty-six in-depth semi-structured interviews, many informal conversations and participant observations at five different

events, ranging from a public protest against the rescinding of DACA to a “Coming out of the Shadows” event in which undocumented students shared their stories. From the twenty-six interviews, sixteen were with undocumented youth activists that I knew from 2011, seven of which I had already interviewed in 2011 and 2012. The remaining ten interviews were with younger undocumented activists that were new to me. Activists from the older generation were now in their late twenties and early-to mid-thirties, while those from the younger generation were in their late teens and early twenties.

From my fieldwork in 2018, it became clear that the movement had both changed while remaining largely intact. After DACA, many of the older generation, now able to work legally, had either moved out of organizing all together and into “regular” jobs or had transitioned into paid positions in the undocumented youth, the larger immigrant rights, and/or other social movements, such as antigentrification, LGBTQ, or Black Lives Matter. Many had become critical of the Dreamer narrative they once identified with and mobilized for. They had come to realize that their undocumented parents and community had paid the price for DACA, as it came at the cost of more detention and deportation. Many Dream Teams had changed their name to Immigrant Justice Coalitions, focusing on mobilizing for all 11 million undocumented people in the US. Moreover, as the younger generations of undocumented youths grew up with DACA and had experienced less of a need to mobilize for their own rights, they were not as politicized and active in organizing as their older peers. Therefore, the undocumented youth movement was a lot smaller and less active than seven years earlier.

However, when DACA was rescinded by President Trump, the movement became re-energized and reactivated. A new generation of undocumented youths, headed and instructed by some of the older generation of undocumented youth, – or “original or OG Dreamers” as they like to call themselves – was using the same mobilization strategies and tested methods, organizing civil disobedience actions, “Coming out of the Shadows” events, and training youths to share their stories. Moreover, the organizational structure was still intact, with United We Dream and California Dream Network active on the national and state level and Dream Teams or Immigrant Youth Justice groups active on the local level.

The argument about collective identity and subjectivity that I will now empirically illustrate is based on six months of intensive ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2011-2012, a discourse analysis of digital documents posted by undocumented youths in 2017, and six weeks of ethnographic research conducted in 2018. I used different methods to record the material: (1) handwritten field notes, jotted down in my journal during events and interviews; (2) observational reports in which I elaborately described the events and interviews and incorporated my fieldnotes, written and

saved as digital files immediately after the events; and (3) audiovisual recordings of the events and interviews that were later digitally transcribed. I coded and analyzed the material using a qualitative data analysis program. The methods of ethnography and discourse analysis have allowed me to study the everyday microprocesses and discursive practices through which “individuals draw on different cultural resources and structures and recast and transform available and organized social positions to shape their subjectivities” (Holland and Leander 2005: 131). Ethnography can thus offer “a robust picture of social positioning and its importance in constructing and producing historically specific persons as complicated social, cultural, and psychological beings” (p. 137).

Collective identity and subjectivity in practice

(De)constructing Dreamers

The seed for the development of the collective identity of the Dreamers was planted during the construction of the Dreamer master frame (Nicholls 2013a). Professional immigrant rights organizations started mobilizing around undocumented youths and made them into the “poster children” of the immigrant rights movement, because they appealed more to the general public than their undocumented parents. Because of a hostile and stigmatizing political climate, they found it necessary to emphasize the “deservingness” of undocumented youth and cleanse them from polluting stigmas associated with undocumented immigrants. The Dreamer narrative thus rests on three central tropes that implicitly draw boundaries between “deserving” and “non-deserving” undocumented immigrants. First, Dreamers are not to blame for their “illegality” because they came to the country “not by fault of their own,” as they were too young to cross the border out of their own volition. Second, Dreamers contribute to society, excel in school, and are “the best and the brightest of their generation.” Third, Dreamers are “assimilated and patriotic Americans” that speak English perfectly and enjoy typical American things like playing or watching baseball and American football.

The success of this strategy depended on the training, disciplining, and identity work done in the backstage spaces of the movement (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016). Professional rights organizations, later followed by undocumented youth leaders, recruited and trained undocumented youths from campuses across the country to present themselves consistently, coherently, and exclusively as Dreamers in the public sphere. Individual undocumented youths thus participated in countless media and talking-points trainings, role-playing games, and strategy sessions, in which they repeatedly rehearsed and performed the exemplary story of the Dreamer. This

Dreamer narrative was strengthened by shared symbolic resources such as the cap and gown (a symbol of high school graduation) and protest signs stating slogans such as “we are not criminals, we are Dreamers” and “we are the future of America.” In the first decade of the movement’s existence, this image of the Dreamer as the overachieving and assimilated undocumented American youth was presented in every political arena that the Dreamers found themselves. But the real success of the Dreamer strategy depended on undocumented youths actually emotionally feeling and personally identifying as Dreamers (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016).

Almost all of the undocumented youth activists that I studied in 2011-2012 then presented and identified themselves as Dreamers. Oftentimes, in our personal conversations or interviews, they would reiterate elements of the Dreamer trope, stressing the importance of their education, hard work, lack of criminal convictions, and social mobility. The collective identity of the Dreamer was well established. At a rally and advocacy event aimed at convincing California Governor Jerry Brown to sign a bill (AB131) allowing undocumented youth to pay in-state tuition, most of the undocumented youths dressed in a colored cap and gown and identified themselves as Dreamers, stressing their educational accomplishments and rejecting their ties to other countries. This event was strategically called a Dream mock graduation event and entailed different Dreamers, such as Maria, sharing their personal story or “testimony.”

My name is Maria and I’m undocumented and unafraid. I am a psych major and I’m in my last year. I will be transferring next year. I came here when I was one year old. I don’t remember much about Mexico. I remember visiting USC for the first time and seeing the USC baseball team and really wanting to go there. I remember that I wanted to be like all the other kids at elementary school. My parents told me from the start that I was undocumented, but I didn’t really know what it meant. I want to go back to USC to realize my dream. (personal observation recorded in fieldwork journal, 2011)

The political success of their campaign and messaging strategies resulted in the Dreamer becoming a powerful symbolic force and political reality in US politics. Nowadays, the term Dreamer is often used in institutionalized politics and mainstream media; it is mentioned at Congressional meetings, in newspapers articles, and even at the Oscars awards ceremony. However, many undocumented youths now no longer identify as Dreamers. In the last five years, many have turned against the Dreamer narrative, as it is experienced as a normative, assimilationist, and exclusionary straitjacket. In one personal interview, an undocumented informant described it as: “a

very pre-described identity that once you identify as that, there all these checklists of things that you are or aren't." Moreover, many undocumented youths now argue that they do not want to "throw their own parents under the bus" by emphasizing their own "deservingness" at the costs of others. On a podcast on this topic, an undocumented youth reasoned as followed:

I don't identify with Dreamers and I never have, because I think for me growing up, I was always aware that I cannot move forward if I cannot take my grandmother with me. So, for me, I have never really liked that word. But I shall use it, if you are going to give me a scholarship, I sure will be a Dreamer, I sure will wear a cap and gown (laughs). So yeah, you know, capitalism, sometimes you gotta play.

On social media, undocumented youth negotiate the different terms that are available to them. On September 12, 2017, one undocumented youth posted on Facebook: "Undocumented American is a shittier label than Dreamer. It's like Dreamer on steroids, with a 4x4 truck, and American flags all over it." Furthermore, certain memes that explicitly reject the image of the Dreamer are circulating widely among undocumented youth that previously identified as Dreamers. An example of this is the meme below (figure 4).



Figure 4: Facebook posting shared by several undocumented youths on September 8, 2017

These negotiations are currently still happening within the movement. Many activists from the older generation no longer identify as Dreamers, while some younger activists, who grew up with DACA, do identify as Dreamers. In a personal interview in 2018, Pablo, an older undocumented youth activist, explains the development of the Dreamer identity.

I think a lot of the narrative has never been by and for immigrant young people. The narrative hasn't been controlled by immigrant youth. So it's divisive in the sense that Dreamer is tied to a piece of legislation and who qualifies for that. It's usually folks that are going to school, have an education, are young, are exemplary individuals in this country. You think of that 4.0 student, that star athlete, the valedictorian. And what about people who don't fit that narrative and who don't qualify for the federal Dream Act? So when that happens, you have the divide between who's worthy and who's not worthy, who's deserving and who's not deserving, who's a criminal and who's not a criminal. But now, immigrant young people are saying, "I am a Dreamer, I am not a Dreamer". And I think it is good, healthy debate to have in our communities and to think through. Because the narrative that we use also shapes policy. So, we need to be conscious of that.

While Pablo, in 2018, stresses that the Dreamer narrative was never controlled by immigrant youth, in 2011, he did actually identify as a Dreamer and explicitly mobilize for Dreamers. Moreover, he now works as the director of a large nonprofit organization with the term Dreamer in the title. However, among the older generation it has become so unpopular, or politically incorrect, to identify as a Dreamer that people like Pablo completely deny ever having felt themselves to be Dreamers.

Pablo's words serve as a good illustration of how collective identities are (re-/de-) constructed in dynamic processes of negotiation among different actors. The Dreamer narrative was once constructed by professional immigrant rights organizations. It was then used and embraced by undocumented youths who actually started identifying as Dreamers and, as such, *felt* a sense of belonging to a collectivity that differed from their undocumented parents, thereby transforming the narrative into a collective identity. Nevertheless, it was then purposefully deconstructed by some of those same undocumented youths because of its inherent divisiveness. In our interview in 2018, older undocumented youth activist Grace describes how her feelings towards her Dreamer identity changed.

Because I felt like they, the younger folks, were just replicating the same thing again. And I felt, actually grossed out (laughs). I felt sick to my stomach. It was the same ideology of like: we are students, we were brought here at no fault of our own and placing the blame on someone else. I was just really disgusted, because I felt like; have we not learned anything? At some point, I just felt I definitely don't identify as a Dreamer and that's a term that I did used to identify with. And at some point, I felt that I was, because I was a student, right, because I didn't have a criminal background, I distanced myself from the larger immigrant population, because I felt like I was different. And I don't feel that way at all. Sadly, it took me being detained to realize that. So yeah, I don't identify as a Dreamer. I'm against folks feeling like the good-bad immigrant. I don't long to be an American and I think at some point I did.

While in the past, she identified as a Dreamer, longed to be American, and felt different and distanced from the larger immigrant population because she was a student in higher education and had no criminal background, she is now “disgusted” by the “good-bad immigrant” differentiation and no longer identifies as a Dreamer.

However, as collective identities are shaped in a dialogical process by people both inside and outside the movement, the alter-version of the collective identity, or external identification of undocumented youths, still centers on the main tropes of the Dreamer narrative. Thus, although undocumented youths like Grace and Pablo are actively renegotiating and deconstructing the collective identity of the Dreamer, its construction and politicization was such a political success that undocumented or “DACamented”¹⁵ youths in the US are still publicly referred to as Dreamers. Moreover, at some places and sites, youths and organizations do identify as Dreamers, while at others they do not.

The development of the collective identity of the Dreamer thus shows how collective identities are shaped by continuous processes of renegotiation between many actors. When considering the Dreamers with a multiscalar, decentered, dialogical, and place-based approach, it becomes clear that the Dreamer identity no longer works as a sense of self intimately embraced by all movement participants, while sometimes it does still work on the organizational or solidary level.

We have two campus organizations in high schools and their club names are like North Davista Dreamers, Ramona Dreamers. And in college clubs too, 'cause I know Chavy Dreamers at the community college level. There are also centers called Dream Resource Center. Just like people that are critical of the term Dreamers, there are also people that are open to it. I think, even though

you can call yourself a Dreamer, and I'm speaking out of my personal opinion, it's important if you identify as a Dreamer, I'm okay with that as long as your messaging can be inclusive and it can educate others. Cause, as we learned in the past from 2011, 2012, it's like that narrative hurt other people, making it a reason to have people in detention centers. (Dani, personal interview, 2018)

While there are some organizations that still include the term Dreamer in their organizational name, there are also many organizations that have changed their name. For example, Orange Country Dream Team is now called Orange County Immigrant Youth United. One could even say that now different collective identities (in the plural) are emerging within the undocumented youth movement, between those who *do* and those who do not identify as Dreamers. Paradoxically, those who explicitly do not want to be defined as Dreamers are united in their refusal to define themselves collectively as overachieving, assimilated, undocumented youths, at the costs of others. They regard undocumented youths who do still identify as Dreamers as implicitly drawing boundaries between “us” (deserving) and “them” (undeserving) undocumented immigrants. As such, those within the movement who do not want to be identified as Dreamers implicitly draw boundaries between “us” undocumented youths who do show concern for the entire undocumented community and “them,” imagined as those that criminalize undocumented immigrants, whether they are politicians, anti-immigration activists, or undocumented youths that identify as Dreamers. Consequently, the Dreamer identity now works to divide undocumented youths, rather than unite them. Nevertheless, there are still embodied experiences that unite undocumented youths in their shared subjectivity.

The undocumented youth experience and subjectivity

This section on the shared experiences and subjectivity of undocumented youths shows *how* power becomes inscribed in the minds and bodies of undocumented youths, both through the legal and discursive practices of authoritative power structures, as well as through the emancipatory and empowering practices of the movement. First, the embodiment of legal power refers to the internalization of a life in the shadows and the constant threat of detention and deportation. The legal-administrative category and status of “illegality” becomes embodied in an existential anxiety through the *experience* of everyday life as an undocumented immigrant. Second, the embodiment of stigmatizing discourse refers to the internalization of discourses in which undocumented immigrants are derogatorily positioned, categorized, and labeled. Stigmatizing terms like “illegal aliens” and “criminals” become embodied in *experiences* of shame, inferiority, and anxiety. Finally, the

embodiment of empowerment refers to the internalization of *experiences* of emancipation and politicization through the alternative and politicized narratives, emotionally intensive rituals, and techniques and practices of healing offered by the movement. These cultural resources enable undocumented youth to reject, resist, recast, and partially overcome the external practices of social positioning and social-structural disadvantages they are confronted with.

The embodiment of legal power

Undocumented youths in the United States currently find themselves in an ambiguous, uncertain, and “in-between” position of “liminal legality” (Menjívar 2006). Through the rescinding of DACA by the Trump administration, undocumented youths once again find themselves in a position of legal uncertainty and “semi-illegality.” While some of them are now still able to enjoy the benefits of DACA until their permit expires, all of them face a possible return to “illegality” and a corresponding lack of citizenship rights.

Goodbye DACA. You changed my life. I was a young person who didn't see a future, who lived in constant fear and anxiety, who thought more than once that life wasn't worth living. All that was lifted from me when DACA was announced. These past four years have made me feel like a normal American, allowing me to achieve milestones that seem mundane to most (like getting a driver's license and getting a job and going to school and going on my first plane). Though this amazing program that has benefitted so many has been killed, DACAmented youth have tasted the privileges of semi-legal status and we'll fight even harder than we did half a decade ago for our place in the American Dream. Not just for "exceptional young people," but for all undocumented immigrants. To my DACAmented friends and allies: see you on the (nonviolent) battlefield. (Facebook post of Hector, September 5, 2017)

As this Facebook posting indicates, this uncertain legal position has profound effects on the subjectivities of undocumented youths. Everyday life as an undocumented immigrant is a life of existential anxiety. This becomes especially clear through the way that Hector contrasts his life before DACA with his life after DACA. For Hector, gaining some sort of citizenship rights, albeit temporary, meant that life became worth living and that his existential anxiety was “lifted.” Through his change in legal status, his subjective perspective on life changed and he was able to finally envision a worthwhile future. Interestingly, Hector’s posting also reflects some of the deliberations around the Dreamer identity and general changes in the undocumented youth movement.

On the one hand, by expressing that he felt “like a normal American” and uncritically referring to “our place in the American Dream,” he is implicitly referring to classic Dreamer tropes. On the other hand, by emphasizing that the fight is “not just for ‘exceptional young people,’ but for all undocumented immigrants,” his words also reflect the movement’s move towards inclusivity. All undocumented people are united in the existential anxiety and trauma they experience because of the constant threat of detention and deportation.

In my interview with Jessica in 2018, she also expresses the fear that the uncertainty around DACA creates. Jessica: “This back and forth like, DACA is being taken away but no, there are some renewals, it creates an anxiety and a lot of fear, like, is it gonna be gone, when is the deadline?” Other studies also clearly indicate that DACA positively affects the mental health of undocumented youths in the US (Venkataramani, Shah, O’Brien, Kawachi, and Tsai 2017).

I think when DACA was first introduced, I benefitted greatly, given that was during the time I was placed in deportation proceedings and I think, because of DACA, my case was granted prosecutorial discretion and administratively closed. I was also able to work. I was able to leave really toxic work environments, not being paid a fair wage and just being tied down. It definitely improved my self-esteem. I felt protected. I felt that I could say things now, because I had protection. Being able to apply for jobs, having a social security number, that opened so many doors. But I think that as soon as Donald Trump was running for office, I knew that that was something that was going to be placed at jeopardy. I’d be lying if I said that I wasn’t sad. I think I was really sad and really worried. That messes with you mentally. Immigration caused a lot of harm to my mental wellness, so I made a commitment to myself that I would not let it get that far. And, yeah, I was kinda mad at myself, because last year, it was just a rough year and I couldn’t help but feel down and depressed and have a lot of panic attacks. (Grace, personal interview, 2018)

In my personal conversations with undocumented youths in 2011, the topic of fear always came up. During a lunch meeting, undocumented youth Gloria mentioned that she was very happy that she did not know that she was undocumented until she turned 16. She was finally told by her parents when she wanted to apply for financial aid and needed a social security number. When asked if she preferred to have known earlier, she replied, “No, I’m glad I didn’t know, to be honest. I know a lot of people that grew up with that fear, and that confusion right, of being deported and separated from your family and just seeing immigration on the news all the time. Like to have to

look at that and think: okay that could happen to me, as a child or as a teenager, when you already have so many issues going on.”

Other undocumented parents opted for a different strategy and decided not only to inform their children, but also to prepare their children for possible confrontation with the immigration authorities. As such, they often instilled into their children a profound fear of the authorities. In my interview with undocumented youth Eduardo in 2011, he said about this: “My parents emphasized, like, this formal and informal fear of authorities, fear of immigration authority, fear of the system and like you shouldn’t say you’re undocumented, that you don’t have papers. If anybody asks, you just lie, make something up.”

Legal power shapes the subjectivities of undocumented immigrants both through the constant threat of detention and deportation, as well as through many everyday obstacles. Before DACA, the undocumented youths studied in 2011 to 2012 all mentioned the devastating and profound effects of not being able to partake in everyday activities “that seem mundane to most (like getting a driver’s license and getting a job and going to school and going on my first plane).” In our interview in 2012, Esperanza expressed how she is affected by her everyday life as an undocumented youth, especially because of the contrast with her documented peers.

But not travelling abroad was the biggest one definitely. For me, college was travelling abroad too, right. Just because that’s all in the movies and that’s usually one of the highlights of somebody’s college experience. I was just devastated when I found out that was one of the stipulations of being undocumented. And when I found out I couldn’t go back to Peru to see my grandmothers ever, that was really tough. And me not being able to drive. Just not being able to feel independent was the really tough one when I was turning eighteen and when everybody else is doing it and everybody else is just showing you how independent they are and you know you can’t.

Thus, the legal power of the citizenship regime becomes embodied and internalized in the thoughts and feelings of undocumented youth. Being undocumented translates into everyday experiences of disadvantage and into thoughts of worries and feelings of fear and despair. Hence, experiences of depression, fear, and everyday suffering are very common among undocumented immigrants. These concrete examples of how power structures become embodied and internalized in the interior lives and affective states of undocumented youth can only be captured by looking through the lens of subjectivity. They tend not to be captured by current conceptualizations of collective identity in social movement theory.

The embodiment of stigmatizing discourse

[H]earing people talking about the whole immigration issue, and you know using all these negative words “illegal aliens; they should go back, they are stupid.” And all that negative crazy talk. You know, not being able to defend ourselves, because if we say anything, they are gonna say “Why do you care? Are you illegal?” (Alejandro, personal interview, 2012)

As Alejandro’s quote illustrates, there is great stigma and shame attached to being undocumented. In the public debate and in everyday discourse, undocumented people are offensively positioned as criminals (“illegals”) and as unfamiliar, disturbing, and dehumanized “others” (“aliens”). Encountering these everyday forms of discrimination and stigmatization is often experienced by undocumented youths as humiliating, degrading, and painful. In my interview with Grace in 2012, she discusses her experience of being labeled “illegal” in an everyday encounter with someone she did not know:

I remember one of the girls was like, “Why don’t you have an ID?” I didn’t even know her, ‘cause she was like a friend of my friend. And I was like, “Oh well,” ‘cause you’re trying to think of something quick, “Oh well, I’m not from here.” And she was like, “What do you mean, are you an illegal?” It was like so degrading. You’re outside, trying to go out with your friends for a fun time and then for someone who doesn’t even know you to label you like that, it was horrible.

While undocumented youth actively try to counter these stigmatizing experiences, they are nevertheless affected by them emotionally and psychologically. In the CultureStrike video “Self-Caring While Undocumented,”¹⁶ made by a group of undocumented artists and media makers, the main protagonist in the video “tries various methods of relaxation as he grapples with stress and anxiety.” To relax, he tries taking a bath, cooking a meal, catching up on the latest events through social media, and watching a movie. When all these things fail to relax him, he decides to take a nap. The video portrays an image of him with his thumb in his mouth, sleeping. Behind him, on-screen texts come up: “DACA! BORDER. DREAM ACT. SECURITY. AGREEMENT.” Then, President Trump’s voice echoes in the background, shouting “When Mexico sends its people, they’re bringing drugs. They’re rapists.” The protagonist wakes up from his nightmare, looking scared and hurt. What these undocumented media makers are trying to show is that stigmatizing, criminalizing, and dehumanizing language actually becomes embodied in experiences of shame, inferiority, and anxiety.

There were always tensions that I felt and took personally, like, “You’re different from us, because you didn’t grow up here, you’re from a different country, you look different.” It was vocalized, it was already visual in terms of like how people interact with me. But I will say that because of how things have changed nationally, now people feel more comfortable in that identity, where it’s okay to hate on the other and to say that you are ruining the country. (Robert, personal interview, 2018)

The embodiment of empowerment

Another important lived experience that undocumented youth activists share in relation to their subjectivities concerns the cultural resources and techniques and practices of healing and emancipation that have purposefully been created by and for undocumented youths. These resources, techniques and practices have been applied within the movement as a source of empowerment. When I started studying the undocumented youth movement in 2011 and 2012, I noticed how “self-care and healing practices” were deliberately integrated within organizational spaces to offer undocumented youths the cultural resources and repertoires with which they can combat the stigma, discrimination and assaults on worthiness they encounter in every-day life (Lamont, Moraes Silva, Welburn, Guetzkow, Mizrachi, Herzog, and Reis 2016). To this day, these self-care and healing techniques continue to play a central and integral role in the tactics of the undocumented youth movement and in the shaping of undocumented youth’ subjectivities. In this way, their subjectivities are not just shaped by stigmatizing and traumatizing power working from the top-down, but also from emancipating and healing power working from the bottom-up.

The undocumented youth movement organizes many different emotionally intensive rituals to connect to each other, share stories, “cry and unwind together,” and heal and practice self-care. Many youth organizations have a “Self-care and Healing Committee” that organizes retreats and events, such as collectively going to a wellness/spa, hiking or practicing yoga. During the ethnographic fieldwork in 2011 and 2012, there were countless self-care activities and events organized for activists to relax, socialize, and check-in with each other. There was the “Learning to Relax/ Aprendamos a Relajarnos” event, in which youths gave each other massages and everybody ate healthy food; there was the “Sounds of ancient Mexico music night;” and there were many retreats to attend. Even the weekly organizational meetings started with a “self-care and healing exercise” in which grounding and checking-in with themselves and each other was central. People in the movement have described these events and exercises as “healing,” “therapy hour,” and “truly connecting with each other in a transformative way.” Emotionally intensive rituals, such as healing

or sharing circles and other therapy-like techniques, thus counter and heal some of the pain and trauma of being undocumented and create a sense of belonging among undocumented youths.

We had our first retreat and they called it the spider web. So we had a ball of yarn and whoever had the yard, had to share their story, share whatever they wanted to share and just let it out. And, oh my gosh, story after story was just craziness right, the things that these young, beautiful people had gone through, not just like being undocumented, but like crossing the border when you're like five, or being sexually abused or whatever it was. And so that was my first time in like just witnessing so many people crying and I was crying my eyes out. I remember I was next to Patty, we were on the floor, like lying down and we were bawling, like it was crazy. We were like sobbing, we needed to control ourselves because we didn't want to interrupt, but being able to see that it's okay, it's more than okay, it's beautiful, like that was life changing. I think that experience allowed me to see that and now I can encourage that in other spaces and tell people like, "Hey let's share stories, let's do that together, because that will create a beautiful space here in this world." I think that's just been really key and you know, connected to that is like being okay with depression, recognizing depression, mental health. That's only recently come to light, but even before articulating mental health, we were doing those retreats and we were crying with each other in a positive way. (Manuela, personal interview, 2012)

These types of emotionally intensive rituals not only serve to heal some of the traumas associated with being undocumented, but also serve to create intersubjective emotional convergence among the activists that participate (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016), thereby building the movement's stamina to move forward. As Claudia says in our interview in 2018, the movement actively aims to respond with power and not panic. Claudia: "I found my colleagues to be incredibly resilient. We always try to ground ourselves and talk about how we were feeling, like processing with each other. And I think as an organization, whenever there is bad news, we always have that mantra: how do we respond with power and not panic. And we continue to do that each time."

Another component of the movement's empowerment work is teaching youths to become "undocumented and unafraid." By offering practical and emotional support (such as, material and financial resources and trainings in skills development, storytelling, and engaging in civil disobedience actions), undocumented youth start

feeling stronger, safer, and bolder in publicly fighting for rights and recognition as undocumented immigrants.

So we are very committed to empowering undocumented youth by teaching them skills and information and resources that they can learn themselves and take back to their own families and communities and become their own advocates. Because that's the best way to keep this movement and fight moving forward. One way we do that is through our undocumented mentorship academy program. We host, periodically through the year, a program for about ten youth from different areas from the region we work with. Those ten youths come together for workshops and trainings that specifically focus on skills and resources. They receive a scholarship that they can apply towards their education or towards any financial need that they have. Today we are going to be focusing on sharing a presentation of a history of the immigrant youth movement and how it started here in the region and how it is moving forward and what changes it has been able to accomplish. And how they come into that story now as a new generation of undocumented youth. And also we gave workshops on how they can share their story in a way that it is not tokenized, but they feel empowered and not being portrayed as something that they do not want to be portrayed as in media or like a representative using their story. Like for them to own their story. (Alice, personal interview, 2018)

While these trainings work to empower, uplift, and strengthen the confidence of undocumented youths, many organizations also function as a support and resources network that enhances the sense of safety and security among undocumented youths and makes them more resilient.

I feel that our undocumented experience has dominated so much of our lives, it has been really difficult, but I feel like that it has also been rewarding in the sense that we were able to create a support group and because of that there have been so many positive changes for all of us. So like when they suddenly arrested Lizet, like we literally got the call at two in the morning, we were all there. We were all, from our personal money, willing to bail the person out. We were trying to find legal resources. There are so many scenarios I can think of where we have been able to support each other. I think that's also one of the reasons why the coalition has been so important. We have created a network of sharing information and resources. So we have unions, nonprofits, grassroots organizations, legal service providers. So when we do get a case,

we know lawyers. So somebody will take on the case, somebody will help with social media, somebody will fundraise money for the family. So everyone comes together and like supports the person. (Julio, personal interview, 2018)

For many undocumented youths, witnessing and engaging in civil disobedience actions is experienced as very empowering and uplifting, as it teaches them to be less afraid of authorities. In my interview with Muriel in 2018, she speaks about how transformative it is for undocumented teens to witness a civil disobedience action. Muriel: “We were there to support a civil disobedience that happened at one of the Senate buildings. So that was very empowering for our youths to witness. It was in the capital, where they have a lot of enforcement inside. So we had to prepare them and let them know, ‘If they do the warning, we’re gonna step out.’ So obviously calming down those nerves and letting them know what’s gonna happen.”

A final source of empowerment that the movement offers concerns alternative politicized narratives that reframe stigmatizing discourses and inspire and empower undocumented youths to engage in contemporary debates on the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. Many older undocumented youths point to the devastating effects of capitalism and US foreign policy in explaining and understanding their undocumented status. Nadia: “Yeah, I think what has helped me is being also really critical of US foreign policy and the way that it affects our home countries. So I think, now, we are also raising, like, this foreign policy framework that has created mass migration. Like NAFTA, but also recently, global warming has such a great impact on people’s ability to live in their homelands, given rising temperatures, lack of access to food, water etcetera, war, right.” Others stress the role of racism, ethnic profiling, and the relationship between the immigration system and the criminal justice system to help explain their marginalized and stigmatized position as undocumented immigrants. The following abstract from a blogpost written by undocumented youth activists illustrates the use of these types of narratives within the movement.

This country has long depended on our exploitation. It is time to stop persuading AmeriKKKa that we are good enough. We must DEMAND respect and dignity NOT prove that we deserve it. We will gain our freedom by building people power. We are our own saviors. We will gain our freedom by any means necessary. We know it has been difficult to get involved. The first step is to believe you deserve more. We come from a long lineage of resistance. Our families defied the empire! Our relatives crossed borders and overstayed visas because they, too, believed they deserved more.¹⁷

In sum, there are multiple (cultural) resources that the movement offers to empower undocumented youths in positive and durable ways. First, the movement provides emotionally intensive rituals, such as healing circles, self-care practices, and other therapy-like techniques that offer consolation and support to counter and heal some of the pain and trauma of being undocumented. Second, the movement helps undocumented youths in becoming undocumented and unafraid. By offering practical and emotional support, material and financial resources, trainings in skills development and storytelling, and the encouragement and know-how of how to engage in civil disobedience actions or come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid, the movement teaches undocumented activists to be less fearful of authorities and offers them counter experiences of confidence and strength, thereby building social resilience and transforming shame into pride. Third, the movement aids undocumented youth in processes of politicization, or political becoming. By offering undocumented activists alternative and empowering politicized discourses, on for example the relationship between capitalism, the immigration system, and the criminal justice system, the movement provides these youths with narratives that reframe and recast stigmatizing discourses, thus empowering and equipping them to engage in contemporary debates on these issues.

These different sources of empowerment (emotionally intensive rituals, becoming undocumented and unafraid, and alternative politicized discourses/frames) become embodied in the shared subjectivities of undocumented youth activists and provide them with the strength, courage, resilience, and support necessary for them to experience political agency as they fight for rights and recognition.

However, these sources of empowerment also mean that undocumented youth activists need to negotiate competing and contradictory emotional demands and codes. On the one hand, they have to deal with the emotional demand placed on them by dominant institutions, such as mainstream media, politicians, and conservative Americans. The code for the correct emotional response to the dominant authority tells them to emphasize their “deservingness” by focusing on how they have assimilated into mainstream American society. On the other hand, they have to deal with the emotional demand placed on them by the undocumented youth activists within the movement and the emotional demand placed on them by their parents. While the code for the correct emotional response to their peers tells them to be undocumented and unafraid, engage in civil disobedience actions, and behave like social justice warriors, their parents have taught them to remain in the shadows and not tell anyone about their undocumented status. Pedro says: “So that’s another thing about being part of civil disobediences. I know sometimes, even activists from other spaces were like encouraging me to get arrested. And I think that goes back to like

being woke, like pressuring you to do things that maybe you're not ready for.”

The emotional demand to continue the fight, placed on them by the movement, is thus in conflict with the emotional demand placed on them by their parents (hide yourself from and be afraid of authorities) and the emotional demand of mainstream society (present yourself and embrace the collective identity of the well-behaved and assimilated Dreamer). Navigating these contradictory emotional codes and demands also constitutes the shared complex subjectivity of undocumented youth activists.

Conclusion

Based on longitudinal ethnographic research (2011–2018) in Los Angeles, I have explored what the concept of collective identity and the concept of subjectivity contribute in the case of the undocumented youth movement. While the collective identity of the Dreamers has organized undocumented youths from different backgrounds and regions into a recognizable collective actor successfully engaged in political action and reform, the research material on the internal critique of the Dreamer identity shows that it no longer unites, but rather divides undocumented youths within the movement. I have shown that the shared subjectivities of undocumented youths, derived from embodied affective experiences of negative positioning and treatment via legal status and stigma and from internally generated empowerment, constitute the current bases for belonging and action, and not only the collective identity of Dreamers as created and reinforced by political entrepreneurs, outsiders and certain segments of the movement. In this chapter, I have thus argued for a stronger engagement with the concept of subjectivity in social movement research, as it offers a greater understanding of the profound effects of intersubjective (shared) and embodied experiences of negative positioning, stigmatization, and empowerment.

The lessons that other (social movement) scholars could learn from this case is that looking at the shared subjectivities of activists does not only allow us to become more attuned to how political power shapes the interior lives of stigmatized and marginalized groups, but more importantly, also points towards the profound effects of social movements in offering narratives, cultural resources, support, and techniques of healing that work to intrinsically empower activists to sustain their commitment to engage in contentious politics and to instigate political and cultural reform. If more social movement scholars would look through the lens of subjectivity, they would have a concept capable of analyzing how activists, partaking in the same movement, do not only engage in collective action because of a socially, culturally, and politically imagined and constructed collective identity, but also because of shared

embodied experiences of both marginalization and empowerment. Researchers that seek to study the mobilization and empowerment of marginalized groups would thus benefit greatly from studying both collective identity and intersubjective embodied experiences through the perspective of shared subjectivities. The latter is especially important, as it provides a greater understanding of how power works both from the top-down as well as from the bottom-up, causes suffering and trauma, and inspires healing.

I suggest further empirical research and theoretical reflection on whether these insights are generalizable to all social movements. While some might argue that a focus on shared subjectivities is less relevant for research on movements, such as the environmental or peace movement, in which participants do not necessarily share similar experiences of stigmatization and exclusion, I suggest that a focus on the shaping of shared (political) subjectivities through the study of the embodiment of shared affective experiences of empowerment and politicization provides useful insights for all social movement scholars

CHAPTER 4

Learning to be Legal: Ambivalent Narratives of Joy and Guilt in the Transition to Legality¹⁸

I'm very thankful that I became a permanent resident in 2015, after being undocumented for 24 years in this country. But, it is such a bittersweet feeling, because my sister is a citizen, my brother is DACAmented, and my parents are still undocumented. (Daniel, personal interview, 2018)

Much research on the undocumented Latinx¹⁹ 1.5 generation, those who were born abroad but were raised in the United States, focuses on the problems undocumented youths face in their transition from the relative security and incorporation at school during childhood to the uncertainty of “illegality” as they transition to adulthood (Abrego 2011; Gonzales 2011; 2015; Gonzales and Chavez 2013; Negrón-Gonzalez 2013). This turbulent transition to “illegality” has been described as “awakening to a nightmare,” a process that has a profound impact on identity formation, friendships, aspirations, and social and economic mobility (Gonzales 2011: 602). Undocumented legal status influences all spheres of life: work, health, relationships, subjectivities, family dynamics, domestic violence, vulnerability on the streets, and labor market position and wages (Abrego 2016; Enriquez 2015; Menjivar 2006; Menjivar and Abrego 2012). Studies have reported alarming accounts of the severe mental health problems caused by detention, deportation, and family separation (Torres, Santiago, Walts, and Richards 2018).

Research on the impact of the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) policy measure shows that DACA positively affects the mental health (Venkataramani, Shah,

O'Brien, Kwachi, and Tsai 2017; Patler and Laster Pirtle 2018), life trajectories, and opportunities (Gonzales, Ellis, Rendón-Garcia, and Brant 2018) of 1.5-generation DACA recipients. Though DACA is only temporary²⁰ and does not necessarily lead to citizenship,²¹ therefore keeping many DACAdmented people in uncertain “liminal legality” (Abrego and Lakhani 2015; Menjívar 2006;), it does protect against detention and deportation and offers certain citizenship rights, such as the right to legally work, drive, travel, and build credit, thereby opening potential avenues of economic and social mobility. While (liminal)²² legalization, through DACA, permanent residency, or citizenship status, and its corresponding process of upward social mobility can have many positive outcomes for the undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation, the transition is often *experienced* in thoroughly ambivalent ways. As Daniel’s opening quote indicates, it is a “bittersweet feeling” because the change in status translates into new opportunities and privileges as well as new feelings of guilt and isolation.

In this chapter, I explore the ambivalent narratives of politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs transitioning from an undocumented to a (liminal) legal status and from a working-class to a middle-class position. I show that this legal and social change can profoundly affect people’s positionalities, subjectivities, and relationships and can come at the cost of guilt, isolation, estrangement, ontological fragmentation, and the burdensome need to give back to the undocumented community (Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009; Agius Vallejo 2012). I also argue that the experiences of (liminally) legalized, politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs can be conceptualized as experiences of “survivor guilt” – that is, feelings of guilt for having been spared misfortune when others were not (Spurlock 1985) – and other social mobility issues. Finally, I show that these experiences are derived from their durably embodied undocumented subjectivities (De Genova 2002; Fiorito 2019; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Menjívar and Abrego 2012), their mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of legal rights within them (Menjívar 2006; Muñoz-Gomberg 2015; Sirriyeh 2018), the immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice (Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009), and politicization, pressure, and social control within the immigrant rights movement (Benford 2002; Fiorito 2019). In doing so, I build upon the body of literature on survivor guilt (O’Connor, Berry, Weiss, Schweitzer, and Sevier 2000; Piorkowski 1983; Spurlock 1985) and reconcile it with the literature on the emotional experience of social (class) mobility (Friedman 2014, 2015; Lawler 1999; Slooman 2018; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) and with studies showing how “illegality” affects all members of mixed-status (Latinx) families (Abrego 2016; Enriquez 2015; López 2015).

The undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation

Currently, there are nearly five million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 30 in the United States, the majority of whom (78%) are from Latin America (Patler and Laster Pirtle 2018). The term Latinx is used here as a gender-neutral (nonbinary), pan-ethnic identifier of people of Latin American descent living in the United States. The term undocumented 1.5 generation is often used in American immigration literature to describe those who were born abroad but migrated as children and were raised in the United States (Rumbaut 2012).

Many researchers of the 1.5 generation have argued that undocumented youths are more similar to second-generation immigrants than to first-generation immigrants, because of their joint experience of public schooling (Gonzales 2011, 2015; Gonzales and Chavez 2012). Due to the Supreme Court ruling in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, undocumented children can legally receive K–12 education within public school that are prohibited from collaborating with immigration authorities. Socialization and acculturation processes in public schools have a critical role in teaching US culture, and they work to create an assimilating experience for undocumented children (Ibid.). Through schooling, 1.5-generation children share feelings of belonging with native-born children. In addition, they think that they are part of the nation and that they have better opportunities than their parents. Therefore, the transition to adulthood and subsequent move from being protected, included, and de facto legal to being unprotected, excluded, and illegal in the final year of their secondary education is a turbulent process that completely transforms their sense of self and their friendships, aspirations, expectations, and chances for social and economic mobility (Ibid.).

Finding out what it practically, socially, and symbolically means to be undocumented and actually “learning to be illegal” entails processes that “prevent these youth from following normative pathways to adulthood” (Gonzales 2011: 605). The sudden possibility of detention and deportation and of not being able to follow desired career trajectories creates a paralyzing shock, followed by feelings of exclusion, frustration, anger, confusion, despair, and stigma (Ibid.; Abrego 2011). Consequently, as 1.5-generation youths become intimately acquainted with the stress, fear, and stigma that come with being undocumented, their experiences and senses of self are closer to those of first-generation, undocumented adults than to those of their second-generation, documented peers.

Being undocumented in a hostile environment shapes immigrants’ identities, perceptions of self, and emotional inner-life worlds and subjectivities. It affects their relation to others and their social standing and participation in the community. Legal

violence, that is, normalized physical, structural, and symbolic violence made possible through the law (Menjívar and Abrego 2012), permeates every aspect of undocumented immigrants' daily lives: housing, education, health care, family dynamics, labor market position, vulnerability on the streets, and everyday practices such as shopping, driving and walking in public. However, Latinx immigrants are disproportionately stigmatized and criminalized (Chavez 2008, Gomberg-Muñoz 2015). Within media and public and political discourse, Latinx immigrants are stereotypically constructed as a moral threat to the nation, and the increased militarization of the US-Mexico border and the expansion of interior enforcement programs have led to higher rates of detention, deportation, and family separation among Latinx immigrants. The fear, worry, and pain around family separation, detention, and deportation and the shame and stigma of "illegality" become internalized and embodied into the subjectivities of undocumented Latinx immigrants, causing emotional distress and mental health issues, such as trauma, anxiety, depression, loneliness, hopelessness, and chronic stress (Patler and Laster Pirtle 2018; Torres et al. 2018).

However, while many researchers have emphasized the problems undocumented 1.5-generation Latinxs face, others have stressed their agency, strength, resilience, and political power. Experiences of exclusion have catalyzed processes of politicization and community building and have spurred this generation's engagement in activism and political action and its development of an oppositional consciousness and political subjectivity capable of empowering its members and critically contesting normalized discourses of power (Eisema, Fiorito and Montero-Sieburth 2014; Fiorito 2019; Negrón-Gonzalez 2013). Indeed, as I will discuss later, many of the undocumented Latinx 1.5 generation have become part of an undocumented youth movement with a powerful political voice and a strong social position.

Many scholars have discussed how DACA decreases distress, negative emotions, and deportation worries (Ashar, Burciaga, Chacón, Coutin, Garza, and Lee 2016; Gonzales et al. 2018; Patler and Laster Pirtle 2018; Venkataramani et al. 2017); however, not much has been written on 1.5-generation Latinxs' emotional ambivalence regarding the transition to (liminal) legality, whether that is through DACA, permanent residency, or citizenship. What is known is that DACA positively affects the 1.5 generation's life trajectories and opportunities because it allows recipients to acquire legal jobs, higher wages, driver's licenses, bank accounts, credit cards, and health insurance. It also (temporarily) protects them against detention and deportation, thereby facilitating their taking "giant steps toward mainstream adult life" (Gonzales et al. 2018: 351). Though DACA recipients clearly identify the shortcomings of the program, namely, that it is temporary, can be revoked, does not allow for international travel, and does not include an easy pathway to citizenship or the possibility to

petition for other relatives (Ashar et al. 2016), they report feeling more self-confident and capable of self-directing their lives; they feel more included, peaceful, invested, safe, and belonging. “With their legitimized status, our respondents could let go of feelings of guilt and shame and recast their lives as deserving members of society” (Gonzales et al. 2018: 355).

Whereas Gonzales et al. stress that DACA allows recipients to let go of guilt, I argue that the transition to (liminal) legality and the corresponding upward social mobility bring new sources of guilt toward undocumented family and community members in addition to other social mobility issues. Consequently, I build on the existing literature that goes beyond approaching citizenship as an individual-centered concept, as I want to stress that “noncitizen status reaches beyond individuals to affect their family members both physically and emotionally” (López 2015: 113). All members of Latinx families in which at least one person is undocumented suffer from “multigenerational punishment,” (Enriquez 2015) as they all share in the risks and limitations associated with undocumented status. “Illegality” within mixed-status families shapes the families’ interactions and well-being and can create shared pressures, burdens, responsibilities, and tensions, such as a sense of fear, guilt, rivalry, resentment, frustration, worthlessness, helplessness, abandonment, and insecurity among family members (Abrego 2016).

Survivor guilt and other social mobility issues

The concept of survivor guilt is often used in relation to the survivors of large-scale atrocities such as the Holocaust and Hiroshima and the survivors of other human suffering, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It refers to feelings of guilt experienced by survivors for having been spared, while loved ones were not. Within medical-psychological studies, survivor guilt has been recognized as a symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and it consists of two main conceptualizations: (1) experiencing guilt because of surviving the death of another and (2) experiencing guilt because of privilege and advantage over others (O’Connor et al. 2000).

But the term survivor guilt has also been used in relation to social mobility in the case of urban, low-income, first-generation college students in the United States (Piorkowski 1983) and in the case of working-class Brits who have become middle class (Friedman 2014, 2015; Lawler 1999; Walkerdine 2003; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). As Walkerdine (2003) found in her study of British women who had moved from the working class into the middle class “a common theme for these women was the issue of what we might call a ‘survival guilt’ in which they felt that it was not acceptable for

them to have survived and prospered when their families ... had to live in poverty, illness, doing without” (p. 343). Upwardly mobile individuals can “retain a ‘secret guilt’ about abandoning the ties and culture of primary socialisation” (Friedman 2014: 361). This is also the case for first-generation Latinx college students (Covarrubias and Fryberg 2015) and high-achieving African Americans from poor families (Spurlock 1985). First-generation Latinx and black college students report experiences of guilt for escaping “psychological casualties,” such as jail, poverty, alcoholism, and premature adult death within their families (Piorkowski 1983).

Survivor guilt essentially refers to guilt at having survived when others who seem to be equally, if not more, deserving did not. ... there is often the feeling that the death of another has contributed to one’s survival – the grim quota asked by fate has been met by the other’s demise. One’s survival seems to be purchased at the cost of another’s. (Ibid.: 620)

Research on people’s experiences of social mobility shows that, in addition to experiencing survivor guilt, socially mobile individuals can also suffer isolation, estrangement, and ontological fragmentation (Friedman 2014, 2015; Lawler 1999; Sloatman 2018; Walkerdine 2003). Scholars argue that, despite current political and social scientific discourses that frame social mobility as something unequivocally progressive and positive, social mobility can negatively affect one’s emotional life and social relations.

Becoming “somebody” (Hey 2006) can require leaving the family home and separating from one’s cultural roots. When people climb the social mobility ladder and start developing styles, tastes, perceptions, and life worlds that differ from those of their family and community, they can feel a sociocultural distance from their roots, like they have lost emotional touch with their family. Moreover, they can experience isolation due to their family’s criticism. Working-class and co-ethnic family and community members may accuse upwardly mobile individuals of “pretentiousness” (Lawler 1999) or of “acting white” (Sloatman 2018; Spurlock 1985). Social mobility can thus come at the risk of judgement, gossip, and even contempt and ostracism from family and community members.

Upwardly mobile individuals can also experience isolation and loneliness because they navigate multiple fields by themselves. Their families cannot offer them the expertise necessary to navigate the education system, the labor market, or the housing market. Often, especially when they come from immigrant families, upwardly mobile individuals are additionally burdened, because they are the ones who support their families in navigating these systems (Agius Vallejo 2012; Suárez-Orozco

and Suárez-Orozco 1995). Furthermore, because they did not receive middle-class knowledge and cultural capital at home, they are less acquainted with the cultural codes and manners – what to wear, how to talk, and so on – appropriate for the (white) middle class. Because they are often not welcomed or regarded as bona fide members in white middle-class environments, they can experience pain and social exclusion and feel like an outsider in white middle-class culture, which can lead to feelings of shame about their class or ethnic background and a lack of self-confidence (Abrego and Lakhani 2015; Slooman 2018: 118). Hence, (previously undocumented) upwardly mobile ethnic-minority individuals often do not completely share their life world with their (undocumented) co-ethnic family or with the (documented) white middle class.

This inability to share their life world with either group creates existential or ontological fragmentation: a painfully fragmented or split self. The idea of a fundamentally divided and disrupted habitus, or “habitus clivé” (Bourdieu 1998), refers to an internal conflict between the primary habitus, developed during childhood, and the secondary habitus, developed to make it in the professional or educational field. They are caught in “social limbo, ‘double isolation,’ from both their origin and destination class” (Friedman 2014: 361).

These concepts are extremely pertinent for the transitioning Latinx 1.5 generation. By becoming “legal” and achieving social mobility, they do more than escape poverty, with all its accompanying ills. Their change in legal status also signifies an escape from extreme forms of legal violence – detention, deportation, and denial of good health care – that their parents and undocumented community members cannot escape.

Methods

This chapter draws on my long-term ethnographic research with the Latinx 1.5 generation in California, conducted in two different periods: six months in 2011–2012 and six weeks in 2018, that is, before and after the installment of the DACA program. This research included thirty-six in-depth interviews (of more than three hours each) with individuals from the Latinx 1.5 generation, 400 hours of participant observations in the undocumented youth movement, a discourse analysis of online postings, and many informal conversations.

My main argument stems from the twenty-six interviews I conducted in 2018. I also interviewed seven of these interviewees in 2011 and 2012. Of these (previously undocumented) twenty-six individuals, six now have citizenship, eight have permanent residency, and eleven have DACA; one individual did not apply for DACA despite being eligible. While there are huge differences regarding the rights, opportunities, and

sense of security of those with citizenship status and those in a liminal legal status, such as DACA (Abrego and Lakhani 2015), I found similarities in their experiences of transitioning from a fully undocumented status to a (liminal) legal status with more rights and privileges than their undocumented family and community members have. All participants came from working-class backgrounds and were raised in low-income, disadvantaged neighborhoods characterized by gang violence and under-resourced schools. Despite their strong educational qualifications, most were stuck in low-wage jobs in 2011 because of their undocumented status. However, in 2018, all of them were earning decent incomes through their middle-class jobs in the social, cultural, educational, and nonprofit sectors.

All digitally recorded interviews were personally transcribed verbatim and inductively coded and analyzed. By conducting open coding of the individual interviews, I first identified certain themes and then cross-compared my findings to look for common patterns. Through an iterative process of constant comparison, I arrived at the analytical concepts that best described common trends.

Findings

My main finding is that politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs who transition from undocumented to (liminal) legal status and from working-class to middle-class positions share experiences of survivor guilt and other social mobility issues, such as isolation, estrangement, ontological fragmentation, and the need to give back. I argue that these shared ambivalent experiences are related to (1) their durably embodied undocumented subjectivities, (2) their mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of legal rights within them, (3) the immigrant narrative, and (4) politicization, pressure, and social control within the immigrant rights movement.

Joy and guilt

Although all participants expressed how DACA, permanent residency, or citizenship brought joy, privileges, and opportunities for upward socioeconomic mobility, they also expressed how ambivalent they felt about the change in legal status and the socioeconomic privileges that came with it. Pedro, a thirty-year-old DACAmented man who arrived in Los Angeles with his mother when he was five, explains that he did not immediately apply for DACA, though it now gives him a sense of safety and the opportunity to legally work as a multimedia coordinator. He describes how he struggled with contradictory feelings:

I was very apprehensive about taking DACA. I didn't want to, because I felt that it wasn't fair for many people that were left out. But, on the other hand, because of DACA, I became happier, enjoying life a bit more, without feeling too guilty of like, yeah, I'm benefitting from this, but a lot of people are not. And so that was a struggle with me. (personal interview, 2018)

Martha, a twenty-eight-year-old DACA recipient who came from Chile at the age of four, also explained that she did not immediately apply for DACA, because she felt guilty: "One of the reasons why I didn't apply right away was because of the guilt of like, How am I able to get all these privileges, when my mom cannot?" When I spoke to Julio, Martha's close friend who was previously undocumented, about his current application for permanent residency and his new job as a project coordinator, he said, "It's a constant battle with me, knowing that, like, I carry that guilt. I think that is one of the things that has been the most difficult for me, because I want to feel safe and have privilege."

Isolation, estrangement, and ontological fragmentation

Many (previously undocumented) 1.5-generation Latinxs also mentioned other challenges connected to their change in legal status and socioeconomic position. Daniel, a thirty-one-year-old man who migrated from Mexico when he was four years old, stresses, "Everyone thinks that the transition is so easy, but it has a psychological toll on individuals. Having been undocumented for most of your life, it is your identity." Though his parents and siblings are still undocumented, he recently became a permanent resident and is now on a pathway to citizenship. In his narrative about the transition process, he emphasizes both the joy and challenges that this brings, particularly stressing the isolation he sometimes feels: "Becoming a permanent resident is great and I love it. But I face these experiences alone, and I navigate these systems alone, because my parents don't know what it is like to transition. There isn't that support system."

While Daniel says he has strong relationship with his parents, other participants say they experience isolation and estrangement because their higher education and social mobility, facilitated by their (liminal) legalization, created a sociocultural distance between them and their families. For example, Joel, a thirty-three-year-old DACAdocumented man who came to Los Angeles from Mexico at the age of seven, holds a degree in journalism and works as a communications consultant. He describes how he has very little contact or shared interests with his working-class family. When discussing this topic, he says, "I know that some folks are almost ashamed of where they are from."

Another example is provided by Nadia, a thirty-two-year-old DACAmented woman who migrated from Mexico to Los Angeles when she was two and who now works as a strategic advisor for an immigration policy organization. She explains that she has become socially and culturally estranged from her working-class mother because her mother wanted her to marry, have children, and work in a supermarket, while she wanted to pursue higher education and work as a social justice activist.

For my mom, I am unmarried, I don't have children, I live on my own, God knows what I do in my own apartment. I don't think it's intentional, it's just all she knows. I really think she does not understand. She lives here in East LA, but I see her rarely, because there isn't a lot of support. When I went back to do my Masters, she was like, "Why are you going back to school, haven't you been in school the whole time?" (personal interview, 2018)

Shifts in the legal status and socioeconomic position of 1.5-generation Latinxs thus affect their positionalities, subjectivities, and relationships and can give rise to related problems, such as isolation, estrangement, and ontological fragmentation. Many participants experience that they are no longer really part of their undocumented, working-class communities, nor are they really part of the documented (white) middle class. However, despite (liminal) legalization, many individuals who were undocumented for a long time cannot simply shed that experience after a change in legal status. The legal violence they have endured has created such trauma and suffering that it has been internalized and become part of their subjectivities, that is, their "thoughts, sentiments, and embodied sensibilities, and, especially, their senses of self and self-world relations" (Holland and Leander 2004: 127).

Undocumented subjectivities

I argue that previously undocumented 1.5-generation Latinxs' experiences of survivor guilt are related to their intimate, embodied understanding of the undocumented experience. The internalization of the trauma and suffering associated with "illegality" creates durably embodied undocumented subjectivities (Fiorito 2019). They intimately know what it is like to be undocumented, and they feel that they still belong to the undocumented community. Because the undocumented experience has shaped their lives, their sense of self, their friendships, their mental and physical health, and their wellbeing, 1.5-generation Latinxs are able to experience genuine empathy, sympathy, and solidarity for those who remain undocumented and are thus still directly impacted by the legal violence my participants know so well.

The “legal violence” (Menjívar and Abrego 2012), “deportability” (De Genova 2002), and “abjectivity” (Gonzales and Chavez 2012) that undocumented people experience daily creates an ever-present vulnerability and “hyper awareness to the law” (Menjívar 2011) that becomes embodied in a lasting “mode of being-in-the-world” (Gonzales and Chavez 2012: 256). “The condition of illegality not only constrains daily life but can leave an indelible imprint on identity” (Ibid.: 266).

Betty, a thirty-three-year-old senior policy maker who also came to the US as a child, describes how she still suffers from a “hyper awareness to the law” that is durably embodied in her subjectivity, despite gaining citizenship six years ago. “I am a US citizen now,” she says. “Not that I have forgotten, it always stays with you. I’m still very afraid of the cops and get very nervous. I don’t have a reason for it, but, like I’m constantly hyper alert, because I was always on hyper alert. It just stays with you.” Betty also describes how, after the legalization process, she felt completely lost:

I felt ashamed because I didn’t want to tell my friends and remind them that they are undocumented. Or to say that I’m in a different position. And, also it was a realization for me like: Who am I? What’s my identity? ... I think some people do not want to adjust their status because it has become such a defining part of them. Because if you’re not undocumented, then who are you? Because being undocumented is such a big part of your life. (personal interview, 2018)

The shift in legal status can thus result in a sense of ontological fragmentation (“Who am I?”). Participants may no longer be undocumented, but as Pedro describes, they are unable to let go of the trauma and suffering of legal violence:

They officially diagnosed me with anxiety. It was all that anxiety and stress I had with me for all those years. It took a toll on my body. Your body tenses up when you see the police. It’s like your body already knows what to do. It has learned how to do that and it goes there again and again and again.

Immigrants, like Betty and Pedro, who were undocumented for such a long time really know the extent of the trauma, anxiety, and stress that being undocumented causes. Therefore, they genuinely experience feelings of guilt for having escaped this legal violence, while their undocumented loved ones have not. These feelings of survivor guilt are also related to the fact that they are part of mixed-status families and are aware of the uneven distribution of legal rights among their family members.

Mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of rights

Whether undocumented immigrants can apply for DACA, TPS (Temporary Protective Status), permanent residency, or citizenship depends on different judicial-administrative criteria that many immigrants cannot meet and that can arbitrarily change. While undocumented immigrants who overstayed their visas can quite easily legalize through marriage to a citizen, those who entered the country unlawfully (“Entry Without Inspection”) must first leave the country before they can apply for citizenship. After they leave the US to apply at the consulate in their country of origin, they then face “el castigo” (the punishment), a ten-year bar from re-entry (Muñoz-Gomberg 2015).

This uneven penalization of and differentiation between undocumented immigrants causes feelings of injustice and guilt as “the fate of the most stigmatised undocumented populations was often also intimately connected with the lives and well-being of relatively more privileged DACAmented youth” (Sirriyeh 2018: 12). Many 1.5-generation Latinxs are part of mixed-status families. As “illegality” affects all members of such families, they all share in the risks, fears, burdens, and responsibilities associated with undocumented status, such as deportation, detention, family separation, and exploitability. Claudio, a 1.5-generation Latinx who was able to legalize through marriage to a citizen after being undocumented for twelve years, refers to the sense of injustice he feels about the uneven distribution of legal rights:

I was privileged enough to find love and marry someone that happens to be a US citizen. I also benefitted from the fact that I came here with a tourist visa and I didn't have to exit the country. I was lucky and privileged enough to do so. (personal interview, 2012)

By using words such as privilege and luck, Claudio stresses that his transition to citizenship is based on arbitrary and unfair judicial criteria that he disagrees with.

Immigrant narrative

Many 1.5-generation Latinxs who have transitioned out of undocumented status are part of mixed-status families and communities to whom they feel tremendous loyalty and gratitude. Interviewees often draw on the “immigrant narrative” of parental struggle and sacrifice (Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009) in retelling their success stories, stressing that “their parents worked hard, delayed their own gratification and placed their children’s needs above their own because they wanted to provide better opportunities for them” (p. 20). For example, Daniel says, “I was able to make it to UCLA because of my parents. I started my MBA program because of them. They have

given everything for me to have the opportunities that I have today.”

However, this emphasis on the imperative of not forgetting the struggle and sacrifice of their undocumented parents and communities is also actively stimulated by undocumented people who remind and pressure each other in this regard. Maria, a twenty-six-year-old woman who came with her working-class parents from Guatemala when she was two and is now transitioning to citizenship, provides a clear example: “Everyone wants to jump in the bandwagon to get scholarships, but what about our parents? Our parents don’t have health care. Our parents are slowly dying in their jobs. I’m here because of them.” Feelings of guilt, loyalty, obligation, and shared responsibility are thus stimulated by this immigrant narrative.

Politicization, pressure, and social control within the immigrant rights movement

The 1.5-generation Latinx participants in this study were active members of the undocumented youth movement, a social movement that successfully managed to attain important rights for undocumented youths, such as educational legislation and DACA. The political success of this movement centered on undocumented youths stressing their “deservingness” by emphasizing their virtues as young, educated, and assimilated Dreamers (Nicholls 2013a; Abrego 2016), referring to the American dream and their fight for the Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. They sought to distance themselves from the stigma of “illegality” by emphasizing that they were not to blame for their undocumented status because they came to the US “not by fault of their own.” However, they did not know that the DACA program would come at the cost of (or in exchange for) higher rates of detention and deportation and more immigration enforcement. While these youths received temporary protection against detention and deportation and the right to work legally, their parents did not receive these opportunities; instead, they were more actively targeted and penalized. Consequently, many people felt that the survival of DACAmented youth depended on the criminalization of others.

Moreover, as the movement and the individual activists matured and went through a process of politicization, many organizers shifted into the larger immigrant rights movement and became more reflective and critical about the divisiveness of their previous messaging strategy. Many felt that they had “thrown their parents under the bus” and had implicitly contributed to the criminalization of their parents by enhancing differentiations between the supposedly “deserving” and “undeserving” undocumented immigrant (Sirriyeh 2018; Fiorito 2019). Uriel, a thirty-year-old DACAmented urban planner, says, “We used to be very pro-Dream Act. We were using this idealist narrative of the perfect immigrant. Some of us,

through being politicized, now see it for what it is, and it's like, wait, hold on. Now, I hate that Dreamer term.”

By being part of the immigrant rights or undocumented youth movement, individual activists became acquainted with alternative discourses, such as the relationship between capitalism, the immigration system, and the criminal justice system. These alternative politicized discourses reframe the stigmatizing and criminalizing discourses on “illegal aliens” that circulate in the media and, instead, emphasize the innocence and courage of immigrant parents and the human suffering caused by the immigration system. As a result, activists go through profound processes of politicization that stay with them and that they cannot ignore (Fiorito 2019). “I can't disconnect, even if I wanted to,” Joel says. “We learned why our parents came, why our parents had to leave their home country, how the systems work and NAFTA and all these other economic and social factors of why people are forced to move.”

Furthermore, many immigrant right activists started calling out and shaming undocumented youth organizers for being divisive and selfish in their political strategy, thereby creating guilt and shame among the members. As Claudio describes, “Mainstream immigrant rights organizations saw undocumented students as being selfish. They called us selfish and said we were dividing the movement.” Thus, there are narratives within the movement that work to ensure that undocumented youth activists continue to fight for their undocumented community. Narratives, such as that of the “sell-out Dreamer,” work as a social control mechanism (Benford 2002) aimed at pressuring relatively more privileged Latinx immigrants to give back to the underprivileged undocumented community. Esperanza, a 28-year-old DACAmented Latinx immigrant rights activist who came to the US from Peru when she was two and is now in the process of applying for citizenship, describes the effects of these pressures within the movement:

I think that's part of the unhealthy culture we have in organizing. Like people who become citizens and feeling some shame or guilt about that, which is crazy, but I understand. I know somebody who got married for real, with their love, and has not submitted their application because they are afraid to lose their undocumented identity, like belonging to the undocumented community. And it pisses me off so much that we are doing that to each other. (personal interview, 2018)

Consequently, people who were once undocumented may experience survivor guilt because their peers, families, communities, or fellow activists actively tell them that they *should* feel guilty. They are pressured to not be “selfish” or forget their roots,

and they are expected and encouraged to fight for the rights of the undocumented community.

Changes in one's legal status and socioeconomic position can also trigger criticism, gossip, envy, and even hostility from those "who perceive themselves to have been left behind" (Spurlock 1985: 31). It can therefore create deep pressures and tensions, such as rivalry and resentment among families. It can also be accompanied by social control and peer pressure to share the responsibilities and burdens associated with the undocumented legal status and to give back to undocumented people through actions such as giving financial and social support (Agius Vallejo 2012).

Giving back

There are three main ways in which upwardly mobile 1.5-generation Latinxs actively give back to their friends, families, and communities. First, they offer substantial social, financial, and practical support and take on a lot of household responsibilities (Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009; Covarrubias and Fryberg 2015; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995). Many participants in this study give large parts of their monthly income to pay for their parents' rent and other expenses. Moreover, they often play the role of "cultural brokers," helping their foreign-born parents "with limited English-language abilities" navigate "what they perceive to be an intimidating, White, middle-class world" (Agius Vallejo and Lee 2009: 18). Maria elaborates:

It's like that constant guilt that we carry, because my parents can't take a day off. They can't just take that privilege that we have. Right now, I'm thinking how am I going to create more financial stability to support my parents? (personal interview, 2018)

Second, politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs often choose "careers in immigration law, social work, education, politics, and other socially oriented professions" (Gonzales et al. 2018: 355). Many interviewees work at nonprofits active within the field of immigration or other social justice causes. In my interview with Joel, who works for a nonprofit in the field of economic and environmental justice, he stresses that he could never work for a corporate company that just wants to make profit, "because they represent the evils of the world (laughs). The personal is political and the political is personal."

Third, they aim to give back by continuing their work as immigrant activists and making the immigrant rights movement more inclusive. After the undocumented youth movement gained DACA, their organizing strategies and messages became more inclusive, focusing on fighting against detention and deportation and mobilizing

for all 11 million undocumented people, including those with criminal convictions (Negrón-Gonzalez, Abrego and Coll 2016; Sirriyeh 2018). Thus, they are using their valorized social standing and (liminal) legal status to contest mainstream notions of deservingness and to fight against the US immigration system (Heredia 2016). Moreover, the movement has actively become more inclusive and intersectional, fighting for different marginalized groups and stressing that it is pro-black, pro-women, pro-queer, pro-trans, and pro-poor. Daniel, who now works as the director of an immigrant justice organization, is adamant: “Immigrant young people have a responsibility to be as inclusive and as intersectional as possible.”

Claudio also describes how he tries to deal with the social tensions he experiences regarding his legalization by actively giving back to his family and community and continuing his work for the advancement of immigrant rights:

Becoming documented has been a huge transition in my life, especially because I had found my identity within being undocumented. Just like facing the fact that many of my colleagues and friends are still undocumented and I am not. And just sharing with people that I have papers now, because I feel that it's still not fair. And I think, if I wasn't involved and connected to the movement, I would be reacting differently to my adjustment of status. At the same time, it is something that brings joy and relief to me, my parents, and my wife, for the fact that I am not risking deportation anymore and I'm able to work. Now that I am documented, I see my future as being able to help my parents, my family, my relatives and hopefully continue doing the immigrants' rights work that I'm doing. (personal interview, 2018)

Claudio's transition narrative of joy and guilt highlights the central arguments of this chapter. His transition to legality was challenging and caused feelings of guilt, isolation, and ontological fragmentation because the undocumented experience had become part of his subjectivity (or identity) and because he was politicized by the movement.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the ambivalent narratives of politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs transitioning from undocumented status to (liminal) legality and from the working class to the middle class, this chapter has shown that a shift in legal status and social position can profoundly affect people's positionalities, subjectivities, and

relationships. This transition translates into both new opportunities, privileges, and feelings of joy and relief as well as new feelings of survivor guilt, isolation, estrangement, and ontological fragmentation. It also results in feeling an obligation to give back to the undocumented community by giving substantial social and financial support, pursuing careers in social justice, and mobilizing for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, including black, queer, trans, poor, and convicted immigrants and other marginalized and stigmatized groups.

The chapter explored why politicized 1.5-generation Latinxs experience survivor guilt and other issues associated with social mobility and argues that their shared ambivalent experiences are related to (1) their durably embodied undocumented subjectivities, (2) their mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of legal rights within them, (3) the immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice, and (4) politicization, pressure, and social control within the immigrant rights movement.

The Latinx 1.5-generation can experience survivor guilt after transitioning because the trauma and suffering of the lived undocumented experience is durably embodied in their subjectivities. As they intimately know the lived experience of legal violence, they not only feel genuine empathy, sympathy, and solidarity for people who are still undocumented, but they also feel guilty for (partly) having escaped legal violence while their undocumented loved ones have not. They thus also feel ambivalent about transitioning, because they are part of mixed-status families and therefore cannot fully escape the risks and tensions associated with undocumented status. Moreover, they know that their legalization is connected to arbitrary criteria that unevenly penalize Latinx family and community members. Furthermore, many feel a responsibility to give back to their undocumented families, subscribing to the immigrant narrative that stresses that their success depended on the suffering and sacrifices of their immigrant parents. They therefore feel immense gratitude, loyalty, and obligation towards their families. However, external social pressures within the immigrant rights movement also actively guide them through profound processes of politicization, reminding them to not be selfish by only fighting for and enjoying their own legalization and urging them to be as inclusive as possible and to mobilize for all 11 million undocumented immigrants. Moreover, many study participants feel guilty about securing rights for the 1.5 generation because they know that those rights came at the cost of higher rates of detention and deportation and stricter immigration enforcement.

This chapter has emphasized how immigration policies profoundly affect people's positionalities, subjectivities, and relationships by showing that even after undocumented individuals transition to legality and climb the social mobility ladder, they still cannot escape from the devastating effects of those policies. Therefore,

these findings contribute to the scholarship on the profound effects of legal violence caused by immigration policies, effects that go beyond the simple dichotomy between documented and undocumented legal status.

CONCLUSION

And I think being so afraid for so long and so hidden from society, I just felt I needed a way to unleash my identity and be more known and more empowered, because I'm out and open about being undocumented. (Raj, undocumented youth activist, personal interview 2012)

Resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces. (Mohanty 1990: 185)

Approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States, of which nearly 5 million are children, youths, and adults under the age of thirty. Many of these children and youths are growing up in a hostile social-political environment in which undocumented immigrants are actively targeted, criminalized, detained, and deported, and derogatorily depicted as “illegal aliens,” “occupiers,” “wetbacks,” and “criminals” in public and political discourse. Undocumented immigrants often internalize and embody these experiences as feelings of pain, anxiety, stigma, and inferiority, and they often live in constant fear of detention, deportation, and family separation. Consequently, many undocumented youths are taught by their parents to fear and remain hidden from the authorities and to not disclose information about their undocumented status to their friends, teachers, or others outside their family. Given that many immigrant youths learn to feel ashamed and remain quiet about their undocumented status, it is quite remarkable that they started coming out of the shadows of “illegality” in the 2000s, stepping into the political arena as undocumented and unafraid and actively participating in a flourishing undocumented youth movement that has accomplished concrete political wins, such as Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) and state-level educational legislation facilitating their access to higher education.

For this dissertation, I conducted an ethnographic study of the undocumented youth movement in Los Angeles, focusing on the conditions and consequences of the movement's political success. I sought to answer the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. How can the political success of the undocumented youth movement be understood?
 - a. How do stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youths manage to come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid, and work to gain political voice and instigate political reform?
 - b. How are undocumented youths' subjectivities constituted by power and practice both inside and outside the movement?
 - c. How does emotion work help establish the collective personal transformation and emancipation of undocumented youths and reshape their subjectivities?

2. How can the consequences of this success be understood?
 - a. How does the undocumented youth movement enable upward social mobility for undocumented youths?
 - b. How does the undocumented youth movement limit upward social mobility for undocumented youths?

In this conclusion, I will provide an answer to these two main research questions by consecutively and systematically answering the sub-questions. I will then reflect on the theoretical and social contributions of my dissertation, considering possible avenues for future explorations in research and writing.

Becoming undocumented and unafraid

The strength of the Dreamer narrative, performance, and collective identity

For stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youth to come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid, and work to gain political voice and instigate political reform in a harsh political, legal, and social environment (sub-question 1a), they had to shed the stigma of “illegality” and create moral resonance by distancing themselves from the supposed cause of their deviance and emphasizing their normality. Undocumented youths felt able to proudly present themselves in public space because they mobilized around the narrative, performance, and collective identity of the Dreamers. They emphasized their “deservingness” by stressing virtuous attributes and silencing stigmatized attributes, claiming that (1) Dreamers are contributing students who are the future of America because they are “the best and the brightest of their generation” and they excel in school and in their communities, (2) Dreamers

are typical patriotic and assimilated American youths who completely identify as Americans because they came to the US at a very young age and hold no emotional or cultural ties to their countries of origin, and (3) Dreamers are not responsible or to blame for their current legal status because they came to the US “not by fault of their own.” The typical Dreamer story often consists of three parts: the youth was brought to the US at an early age; they faced many challenges due to being undocumented, and despite these challenges, they worked hard to achieve the American Dream and contribute to society. The moral of the story is that the immigration system is unjust because it does not allow hardworking real Americans citizenship rights.

The Dreamer narrative thus appealed to the national, cultural-symbolic norms and values of the citizenship regime by stressing the virtues of undocumented youths and silencing stigmatized attributes, such as foreignness, radicalism, inner city, gangs, and Mexican. Though the strength and national, cultural-symbolic weight of the Dreamer narrative were crucial for undocumented youth to come out of the shadows and become a unified political force, I have shown that the movement’s political success also depended on undocumented youths consistently and convincingly performing as Dreamers in the public sphere.

This dissertation also revealed that the strength, coherence, and homogeneity found in the frontstage performances of the Dreamers depended on the intensive identity and emotion work done by leaders and activists in the backstage spaces of the movement. This backstage work consisted of establishing a collective identity as Dreamers and creating unity from diversity. The first step was training activists to become disciplined frontstage performers. Undocumented youth underwent intensive professional training in which they repeatedly rehearsed the Dreamer script. The second step was converging activists’ feelings through emotion work. Activists learned to feel like a real group and to emotionally identify with other Dreamers through techniques, practices, and processes of creating intersubjective emotional convergence. Finally, the third step was managing differences and conflicts in the free spaces of the movement. Activists managed internal differences, radicalism, and conflicts by celebrating and venting their alterity and deviance in the free spaces of the movement. Whereas, frontstage, undocumented youths consistently presented themselves as a disciplined and united collective deserving of citizenship rights and a place in the American Dream, backstage, they were far more radical, critical, and diverse.

I therefore emphasized the importance of free spaces for the continued functioning of the movement, spaces that allow open dialogue, critical reflection, radical alterity, and the sharing or venting of frustrations. This dissertation thereby contributes to and widens our understanding of the concept of free spaces by arguing that allowing critical, oppositional, and radical thoughts and feelings to run freely in the backstage

spaces of the movement does not necessarily always cause a disruption of coherent and assimilationist frontstage representations but can sometimes aid them instead. Furthermore, these free spaces can also function as important “safe spaces” in which undocumented youths can come together and experience a sense of companionship and belonging. In these free spaces, which have also been conceptualized as “black spaces” (Lacy 2004) or “interspaces” (Ghorashi 2014), undocumented youths are protected against discrimination and the watchful eye of conservative Americans. They are free to discuss radical world views and oppositional identities that differ from the Dreamer narrative, and they can share intimate stories with each other in English, Spanish, or Spanglish.

Moreover, by operating in a highly professional and business-like (social justice) environment in which they learned how to organize campaigns and protest actions, participate in professional meetings, write media advisories, and talk to politicians and media representatives, undocumented youths were able to develop professional activist dispositions, which enhanced both their self-confidence and their public image. Thus, they transformed from highly stigmatized and marginalized individuals into a politically legitimate group with a socially valorized collective identity, which fueled their self-esteem, motivation, and ability to come out of the shadows and present themselves as undocumented and unafraid. It also furthered important processes of public destigmatization and collective status enhancement, which helped them gain a political voice and instigate political reform.

The strength of a network of resources, support, and encouragement

The political success of the undocumented youth movement – and its ability to help undocumented youth become politically active – is also connected to the resources, support, and encouragement embedded in the movement. These factors help youths feel more empowered, less afraid of the authorities, and more willing to engage in high-risk political actions. Because the movement provides undocumented youths access to a large network of immigrant rights organizations, legal specialists, and local politicians, they can feel assured that the movement provides the political, legal, and emotional backing needed to help them get out of deportation proceedings. This safety net against detention and deportation thus aids them in presenting themselves as undocumented in the public sphere and participating in high-risk protest actions. Moreover, the material and financial resources, political and media trainings, and encouragement and experience in engaging in civil disobedience actions also work to empower, uplift, and strengthen undocumented youths’ self-confidence and political know-how.

In conclusion, stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youth are able to come-out as undocumented and unafraid, gain political voice, and instigate political reform (sub-question 1a), because they rely on the strength (or social symbolic resonance) of the Dreamer narrative, the strength (or the training, identity work, and emotion work that go into the construction) of the Dreamer performance and collective identity, and the strength of the movement's network of resources, support, and encouragement.

Shaping the subjectivities of undocumented youth activists

In the following section, I answer sub-question 1b: How is the undocumented youth subjectivity—that is, their lived experiences, senses of self, and life chances—constituted by power and practice both inside and outside the movement? While the unique and personal subjectivities of individual undocumented youth activists are shaped by lived experiences related to race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, biography, and so on, there are nevertheless similarities in their subjectivities due to their shared experiences of being undocumented in the United States and being part of the undocumented youth movement. This dissertation has shown *how* power becomes inscribed in the subjectivities of undocumented youths, both through the legal and discursive practices of authoritative power structures (power and practice outside the movement) and through the emancipatory and empowering practices within the movement (power and practice inside the movement).

Legal power becomes embodied in the subjectivities of undocumented immigrants as a result of living a life in the shadows of “illegality” and having to deal with the constant threat of detention and deportation. The “legal violence” (Menjívar and Abrego 2012), “deportability” (De Genova 2002), and “abjectivity” (Gonzales and Chavez 2012) that undocumented people experience on a daily basis creates an ever-present vulnerability and “hyper awareness to the law” (Menjívar 2011) that becomes embodied in a lasting “mode of being-in-the-world” (Gonzales and Chavez 2012: 256). The legal-administrative category of “illegality” and the experience of everyday life as an undocumented immigrant can create existential anxiety and feelings of inability and inferiority. Being undocumented translates into everyday experiences of disadvantage and into constant worries and feelings of fear and despair. Not being able to legally work, drive, vote, travel, and receive health care, among other regular everyday activities, and always being on the lookout for the police or ICE (the immigration police) can make undocumented immigrants feel fearful, unworthy, and incapacitated. Hence, experiences of fear, depression, and everyday suffering are very

common among undocumented immigrants (Patler and Laster Pirtle 2018; Torres et al. 2018).

The subjectivities of undocumented immigrants are further shaped by the embodiment or internalization of stigmatizing and hateful discourses that dehumanize and derogatorily position and categorize undocumented immigrants as “illegals,” “criminals,” “aliens,” “rapists,” “murderers,” and the like. Being confronted with these hateful discourses causes lasting experiences of shame, inferiority, anxiety, pain, and trauma. These discourses can thereby impact how undocumented youths feel and think about (or look at) themselves.

While this dissertation has focused on the particular harmful effects of “illegality” in the shaping of undocumented youths’ subjectivities, their subjectivities are also shaped by their sociodemographic intersections, as was mentioned above (Crenshaw 1991; McCall 2005). Many of the undocumented youths who participated in this research project came from working-class Latino families and were raised in inner-city Los Angeles neighborhoods characterized by social-economic disadvantage and gang and police violence. Therefore, many participants also have shared and differentiated lived experiences of gendered racial discrimination and criminalization, social-economic and educational disadvantage, and racialized and classed sexism, homophobia, or transphobia (Chavez 2008; Feliciano and Rumbaut 2007; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Heidenreich 2006; Solórzano et al. 2005).

Though these negative experiences shape undocumented youths’ inner life worlds and their experiences of self and self-world relations in lasting, harmful ways, the undocumented youth movement purposefully offers alternative politicized narratives, cultural resources, and emotionally intensive rituals and healing techniques to reject, resist, recast, and partially overcome the social-structural disadvantage and external practices of social positioning and discrimination undocumented immigrants are confronted with. The movement offers undocumented youths the cultural resources to combat societal and political assaults on their worthiness (Lamont et al. 2016) and helps them with the emotional repair work of their self-image (Taylor 1996). The shared subjectivities of undocumented youths are therefore also shaped by the embodiment of experiences of emancipation, empowerment, and politicization gained through participation in the movement.

Utilizing emotion work to turn shame into pride

How does emotion work help establish the collective personal transformation and emancipation of undocumented youths and reshape their subjectivities? That is the

sub-question (1c) I will answer in the following section.

This dissertation discusses how the undocumented youth movement purposefully utilizes techniques and practices of emotion management to assist undocumented youths in undergoing a collective process of cognitive and emotional liberation through which they transform feelings of shame, inferiority, and loneliness into feelings of pride, confidence, and belonging. It thereby contributes to (1) the sociology of emotions, (2) the classic and contemporary social movement literature regarding the role of collective identities, (political) subjectivities, and emotions within social movements, and (3) the affective turn in subjectivity studies.

First, the movement provides undocumented youth with emotionally intensive rituals, such as healing circles, self-care practices, and other therapy-like techniques to offer consolation and support, to counter and heal some of the pain and trauma caused by their undocumented status, and to create intersubjective emotional convergence among the individual activists. Through such rituals, the bodies, emotions, and cognitions of undocumented youths become synchronized and participants have powerful experiences of collective effervescence and emotional energy (Collins 2004; Durkheim 1912/1965). Consequently, because these emotional techniques offer important immaterial gains, such as healing, belonging, identification, communality, friendship, and solidarity, many undocumented youths feel committed to the movement and want to participate. As they move from isolated and closeted individuals to a unified group committed to self-care and healing (emotional repair work), members' shared emotional experiences of healing and solidarity add to their feelings of empowerment and to their personal transformation and liberation.

Second, the movement offers practical and emotional support (such as material and financial resources and trainings in skills development, storytelling, and civil disobedience actions) to help undocumented youths overcome their fear of authorities and provide them with counter experiences of confidence and strength, thereby building social resilience and transforming shame into pride. For many undocumented youths, participating in or witnessing civil disobedience actions or publicly organized "coming out of the shadows events" is experienced as inherently empowering, liberating, and uplifting. High-risk political actions thus function as key moments in the process of transformation from being fearful and closeted to becoming fully empowered and liberated of the fear and stigma of being undocumented. Indeed, many undocumented youth activists have described their experiences of coming out or engaging in a civil disobedience action as a profoundly transformative process through which they feel liberated from the fear, shame, and stigma of their undocumented status and learn to fully "embrace the undocumented identity."

Third, the movement offers undocumented youths alternative and oppositional politicized discourses that reframe stigmatizing normalized discourses and equip youth activists to engage in contemporary debates and participate in oppositional political actions. These alternative, counter-hegemonic narratives, on issues such as the relationship between capitalism and the immigration system or the relationship between racism and the criminal justice system, are experienced as empowering, liberating, and emotionally satisfying because they shift the blame from internal to external factors, that is, from undocumented immigrants themselves to oppressive social, political, and economic structures. These oppositional discourses work as techniques of emotion management: they teach undocumented youths how to emotionally experience their current situation as oppression rather than as legitimate, and subsequently, how to rise up against it.

The movement thus provides particular feeling rules and cultural resources that instruct undocumented youth activists in how to go through a collective process of personal liberation and transformation to become and feel undocumented and unafraid. These techniques of cognitive and emotional empowerment offer participants the healing, strength, courage, and resilience necessary for them to access the political power and agency to fight for their rights and recognition. Through this emotion work, the movement transforms undocumented youths from highly stigmatized and marginalized youths to empowered legitimate political subjects, thereby reconstituting their inner, emotional life worlds or subjectivities.

This section has focused on answering research question 1 (How can the political success of the undocumented youth movement be understood?) by showing that the movement has been extremely successful in aiding undocumented youths in (1) going through an emotional and cognitive transformation and liberation process in which their subjectivities are reconstituted, their shame is turned into pride, and they are able to experience their political agency as undocumented and unafraid, (2) gaining a political voice by teaching them how to organize around a resonating mobilizing narrative and appealing collective identity, and (3) manifesting concrete political wins, such as the DACA policy, the California Dream Act, and the new Dream Act passed by congress in 2019.

Political success: The good, the bad, and the ugly

As I have shown, the undocumented youth movement functions as a vehicle for upward social mobility (research question 2a), in both a qualitative and a quantitative sense (Bertaux and Thompson 1997; van den Berg 2011). Qualitatively, that is, subjectively

and personally, undocumented youth in the movement experience themselves and their life chances as fundamentally different from those of their parents. Because the movement protects undocumented youth activists against detention and deportation, opens up their life worlds to politicized, oppositional discourses, and enhances their collective status by helping them transform from stigmatized immigrants to professional activists, they no longer feel as fearful and ashamed, but instead feel like confident, educated, and legitimate political subjects capable of making a real political difference. Quantitatively, that is, objectively and professionally (as in socioeconomic progress), the movement helps undocumented youth acquire professional activist dispositions and provides access to job, internship, and funding opportunities. Undocumented youths in the movement operate in a professional environment, find out about immigration laws and political procedures, and learn how to organize political campaigns, write media advisories, set up professional meetings, and talk to media and politicians. Through these processes, they start to embody the cultural capital of empowered professional and politicized activists who have the know-how and confidence to transfer the acquired skills and dispositions to the other domains of social and professional life that the movement provides access to.

Another consequence of the movement's political success concerns the DACA policy, which resulted from the movement's political campaigning efforts. DACA made it possible for undocumented youths to gain lawful employment and live more mainstream, middle-class adult lives. After DACA was established in 2012, many undocumented youth activists were able to put their professional and academic qualifications to use by working as professional organizers, policy makers, and media consultants in the nonprofit sector, working for organizations in the immigrant rights movement, the queer movement, the labor movement, the black liberation movement, and the environmental justice movement. DACA also indirectly offered a pathway to citizenship for some undocumented youth seeking to legalize through marriage to a US citizen. Because DACA, under the Obama administration, granted some of its recipients the option of advance parole for humanitarian or educational purposes, it allowed some youths to exit the US and then re-enter with a valid inspection – that is, enter the country legally. Thus, those who had previously entered the country illegally and therefore faced a ten-year ban from the country when applying for citizenship were now able to legalize without that ban. DACA and the undocumented youth movement thus made it possible for some youth activists to transition from an undocumented, working-class position to a (liminally) legal, middle-class position. In this way, the movement also functioned as a vehicle for upward social-economic mobility in a more quantitative sense.

However, the political success of the undocumented youth movement also had harmful unintended consequences, or perverse side effects, as DACA came at the cost of (or in exchange for a political bargain of) more border and internal immigration enforcement and higher rates of detention, deportation, and family separation. Whereas undocumented youths received temporary protection against detention and deportation and the right to legally work, drive, build credit, and receive health care, their undocumented parents and communities were more actively targeted and penalized. As a result, undocumented youth activists were called out and shamed within the larger immigrant rights movement for being divisive and selfish and for enhancing differentiations between supposedly “deserving” and “undeserving” undocumented immigrants through their use of the Dreamer narrative. Many undocumented youths thus felt guilty about “throwing their parents under the bus” and implicitly contributing to the criminalization of other undocumented immigrants.

This critiquing of the divineness of the Dreamer narrative led to the breakdown and deconstruction of the Dreamer collective identity. While in 2012, the Dreamer identity successfully organized undocumented youths into a recognizable “we” capable of collectively engaging in political action and instigating political reform, nowadays the Dreamer identity no longer unites but instead divides the movement. The Dreamer identity and narrative have become a matter of contention among undocumented youth activists because of the politics of deservingness attached to that identity and narrative. Many undocumented youth activists who previously identified as Dreamers no longer want to be labeled as such and are unwilling to engage in political action merely for DACA, the Dream Act, or undocumented youths. Instead, they are now organizing for all 11 million undocumented immigrants, including those with criminal charges. The undocumented youth movement is now divided into those who still identify as and mobilize for the Dreamers and those who explicitly have a more inclusive mobilizing agenda.

Many activists who previously identified as and mobilized for the Dreamers have become far more reflexive, radical, and inclusive in their organizing strategies and social movement work. They now stress the importance of a clean Dream Act²³ and point towards the vulnerable and stigmatized position of queer or trans undocumented people. Moreover, many emphasize that they are now consciously fighting against the effects, structures, and interlinkages of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, gentrification, and environmental degradation. They aim to do this by developing, distributing, and enacting counter-hegemonic discourses and political actions that purposefully counter everyday hateful tropes and include and celebrate the existence and intersectionality of immigrant, poor, queer, trans, women, and people of color identities. Thus, as a consequence of the political

success of the undocumented youth movement and the Dreamer narrative and collective identity, the movement has become more divided, inclusive, and radical, and it has become more focused on the intersectionality of marginalized identities.

These developments within the movement have also impacted the lives and social mobility chances of the undocumented youths who participated in this study. How does the undocumented youth movement limit upward social mobility for undocumented youths? That is the final sub-question (2b), which I will now answer.

My research has shown how processes of politicization, pressure, and social control within the movement have affected how undocumented youth ambivalently experience the transition from an undocumented to a (liminally) legal status and from a working-class to a middle-class position, which the success of the movement and DACA made possible. I have argued that there is an emotional price to pay for the transition to legality and corresponding social mobility, as it comes at the cost of survivor guilt and other issues, such as isolation, estrangement, ontological fragmentation, and the burdensome need to give back to the undocumented community. Many transitioning participants experience survivor guilt and other social mobility-related issues because the movement has (1) politicized and changed them in lasting ways, (2) shamed them and made them feel guilty about their newfound privileges and possibilities, and (3) pressured them into giving back to the undocumented community.

First, the movement politicizes undocumented youth by teaching oppositional discourses that reject and reframe normalized stigmatizing and criminalizing discourses and instead emphasize the courage and strength of their undocumented parents and the suffering caused by the immigration and criminal justice systems and by ethnic profiling practices. Undocumented youth activists thus feel it is unfair and unjust that they receive certain citizenship rights and privileges while their parents and other undocumented immigrants are actively targeted, detained, and deported. Many participants feel that they should use their valorized social positions and stronger political and legal positions to fight for the legal rights of other undocumented immigrants. Moreover, because participation in the movement made undocumented youths fully embrace their undocumented identity, they still have feelings of identification, belonging, and solidarity towards their undocumented community even after they transition to (liminal) legality.

Second, many activists feel guilty about gaining certain privileges, such as legal, high-wage employment, health care, and protection against detention and deportation, because the movement has called out and shamed undocumented youth activists for supposedly being divisive and selfish Dreamers. Threats of being the object of envy, criticism, and gossip, being accused of “acting white” or “selling out,” or being ostracized and isolated function as social control mechanisms that keep

activists invested in fighting for the undocumented community at large.

Third, changes in legal status and socioeconomic position can create deep pressures and tensions, such as rivalry and resentment among friends, families, and communities. Those changes can also be accompanied by social control and peer pressure within the movement to share the responsibilities and burdens associated with undocumented legal status.

As a consequence of these internal dynamics, many DACAmented youths try to give back by (1) offering substantial financial and social support and taking on many household responsibilities, (2) choosing nonprofit careers related to immigration or other social justice causes, and (3) making the movement more inclusive by fighting for the rights of all 11 million undocumented immigrants, including those with other marginalized identities.

These dynamics can limit the social mobility prospects of (undocumented) youths active within the movement, in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Qualitatively, as discussed at the beginning of this section, the movement negatively influences participants' emotional experience of upward mobility. Moreover, through the movement, their very definition of personal and societal success changes. Because many movement participants are critical of capitalism and materialism, they are less interested in climbing the mainstream social mobility ladder and "selling out" to a corporate career outside the nonprofit sector. Subsequently, this also affects their social mobility prospects in a quantitative sense. Furthermore, my research has shown how these movement dynamics have sometimes led to eligible youths not applying for DACA, thereby limiting their possibilities for gaining lawful employment and building mainstream adult lives.

Hence, the political success of the undocumented youth movement has its lighter and darker consequences. On the one hand, the strength of the Dreamer narrative, performance, and collective identity has led to concrete political-legal gains, such as DACA and the California Dream Act. On the other hand, DACA brought forth an increase in immigration enforcement that has led to strong critiques of DACA and of the divisiveness of the Dreamer narrative, which has led to the subsequent breakdown and deconstruction of the collective identity of the Dreamers. These changes have resulted in more inclusive and counter-hegemonic organizing strategies, with undocumented youths mobilizing for all immigrants rather than just Dreamers. Finally, the political success of the undocumented youth movement has led to social mobility benefits but also to restrictions on social mobility through the mechanisms of survivor guilt and other social mobility-related issues.

This dissertation thus adds to the sociological study of social mobility in different and novel ways. First, by arguing that through participation in the movement

undocumented youth experience social mobility in the form of collective status enhancement and the widening of worldviews, I conceptualize social mobility not simply in a quantitative sense as occupational and economic progress, but rather in a more qualitative sense as the subjective, emotional experience of social mobility. Therefore, I focus on how people themselves subjectively experience their social position and profess to feel that they have personally grown in relation to their parents, upbringing, and background. Second, by showing that undocumented youths pay an emotional price for their social mobility, I do not frame social mobility as something unequivocally progressive and positive; instead, I also show the darker, more complicated side of social mobility by arguing that upward social mobility, especially through the mediating mechanism of legalization, can negatively affect one's relationships and positionalities as well as one's emotional life and sense of self.

Final concluding remarks

In my aim to understand the movement's political success, and its consequences, within a hostile social-political environment, I conceptualized political success in divergent ways. On the one hand, I described the political success of the movement as consisting of undocumented youths becoming legitimate political actors as Dreamers in mainstream American politics and subsequently accomplishing concrete political wins, such as DACA, educational legislation, and the 2019 Dream Act. Regarding how this was possible, I pointed towards the importance of their opportunist and assimilationist political strategy and mobilizing frame, the identity and emotion work needed to construct a strong collective identity as Dreamers, and the resources and networks embedded within the movement. I also noted how DACA fitted within a particular opportunity structure (President Obama's executive power) as part of a political negotiation and exchange process. Therefore, I subscribe to a traditional, instrumental, and mainstream understanding of political success and build upon social movement literature that emphasizes the importance of understanding the role of political opportunity structures, resource mobilization processes, framing processes, and emotions in the success and decline of movements.

On the other hand, by describing the personal empowerment, liberation, transformation, and agency that undocumented youths experience through their participation in the movement, I hold a very different, less instrumental, notion of political success. My understanding of success relates to their personal and political agency within an era of hate and repression. Despite President Trump's efforts to stop the DACA program, enhance immigration enforcements, build a border wall,

and discursively frame undocumented immigrants as dangerous criminals who need to be stopped from coming into the US at all costs, undocumented (youth) activists are continuing their fight for the rights of (undocumented) immigrants and other marginalized groups. Moreover, while the Trump administration has tried to use the Dreamers, DACA, and the Dream Act as bargaining chips for the building of the border wall and the enforcing of stricter immigration policies, many undocumented youth activists are unwilling to surrender to this divisive technique and are explicitly fighting for a clean Dream Act and for the rights of all 11 million undocumented immigrants regardless of race, gender identity, or criminal record. Whereas theories of political opportunity structure stress the importance of studying political openings in seeking to understand the emergence and decline of movements, my dissertation shows how marginalized groups can remain personally empowered and politically capable of action, despite harsh and repressive political times. This is made possible through profound processes of politicization, emotional and discursive techniques of cognitive and emotional liberation and transformation, and practices of social control and peer pressure occurring within movements.

In repressive times, marginalized and stigmatized groups such as undocumented immigrants can either seek to minimize the cause of their supposed deviance by pointing towards their normality and stressing that they are just like everybody else, or they can, instead, proudly celebrate their alterity and divergence from the norm. At the start of the undocumented youth movement, undocumented activists chose the first option and presented themselves as assimilated Dreamers. Today, however, through the circulation of counter-hegemonic politicized discourses and other contemporary oppositional cultural resources, many undocumented activists are choosing the second option, presenting themselves as “illegals in times of crisis,” “revolutionaries,” and “proud indigenous Mexicans.” This shift in discursive and political framing fits within the movement’s wider move towards more inclusive and more radical organizing practices in which activists celebrate their multiple marginalized subjectivities as indigenous, trans, queer, black, Latinx, female, or disabled undocumented immigrants. I am interested to see how this move towards more inclusive organizing practices unfolds and how it creates new opportunities and challenges, new solidarities and tensions, new ways of giving voice and silencing, and new practices of inclusion and exclusion.

This brings me to a final note on the importance of this dissertation for nonacademic publics. My analysis of the emotional techniques that empower and transform stigmatized and marginalized groups into powerful, confident agents with a strong sense of personal pride, power, and agency, can be very useful for oppressed and stigmatized groups seeking to empower, liberate, and transform themselves

and others. Much could be learned from how the undocumented youth activists who participated in this ethnographic research project empowered themselves through sharing and healing circles and through counter-hegemonic cultural resources and politicized narratives of self and self-world relations. Through these techniques, oppressed groups could learn that their stigmatized and marginalized social positionings and identities are not inherently shameful, but rather, that they are being wrongfully made to feel ashamed.

NOTES

- 1 Paulo, F. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsburg: 49.
- 2 Quote taken from a poem written and performed in Los Angeles by Adrian Gonzales, an undocumented youth activist and artist. Performance observed by author on October 22, 2011.
- 3 All names of individuals in this dissertation are pseudonyms.
- 4 LGBTQIA+ is the most recent and inclusive term for the queer/LGBTQ movement. It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, HIV-positive/plus all other genders, sexes and sexualities that are not included in this list.
- 5 Quote taken from the California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance (CIYJA) website. California Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance. (2019). *About CIYJA*. Retrieved from <https://ciyja.org/about-us/> (Accessed: January 9, 2019).
- 6 While social scientists sometimes differentiate between emotion and affect, I use them interchangeably to discuss people's feelings.
- 7 As a side note, but nevertheless an interesting fact that recasts the common right-wing anti-immigrant charge that undocumented immigrants only benefit from and do not contribute to the US economy, many undocumented immigrants pay taxes because they use somebody else's social security number or an ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) to work.
- 8 This chapter is published in *Qualitative Sociology* as: Fiorito, T.R. & Nicholls, W.J. (2016). Silencing to Give Voice: Backstage Preparations in the Undocumented Youth Movement in Los Angeles. *Qualitative Sociology*, 39(3), 287-308.
- 9 Peacekeeping within this context entailed acting as a mediator and maintaining an orderly atmosphere by ensuring that people with anti-immigrant sentiments did not become too aggressive during the protest actions that the undocumented youths performed.

- 10 Chola(s)/Cholo(s) has many different meanings. The term has long been used in a derogatory way to refer to low-income and inner city (“tough”) Mexican immigrants. More commonly, it has become associated with a subculture of Mexican American gangs with a very particular style of dress and speech. Many activists in the Chicano/a movement have re-appropriated the term and image as a source of cultural pride.
- 11 This chapter is published in *New Diversities* as: Eisema, D.J., Fiorito, T.R. & Montero-Sieburth, M. (2014). Beating the Odds: The Undocumented Youth Movement of Latinos as a Vehicle for Upward Social Mobility. *New Diversities*, 16(1), 23-39.
- 12 The *Time* magazine’s cover portrays a photograph of undocumented youths with undocumented, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Jose Antonio Vargas, who wrote the cover story. Link to cover: Vargas, J.A. (2012, June 25). We are Americans, just not legally. We’re some of the nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. Why we’re done hiding. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20120625,00.html>. (Accessed January 8, 2019).
- 13 Quote taken from the UCLA Labor Center website. UCLA Labor Center. (2012). *Dream Summer*. Retrieved from <https://www.labor.ucla.edu/>. (Accessed: June 4, 2013).
- 14 This chapter is published in *Mobilization* as: Fiorito, T.R. (2019). Beyond the Dreamers: Collective Identity and Shared Subjectivity in the Undocumented Youth Movement. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 24(3), 345-363.
- 15 The term DACAmended is used by undocumented youth activists to refer to those youths who make use of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy measure. The term signals that their liminal legal position is somewhere in between undocumented and documented.
- 16 This CultureStrike video was posted on CultureStrike’s Facebook page. Permission to refer to the video in this dissertation was given by CultureStrike. Link to video: Iñiguez, J. & Salgado, J. (2017, September 25). *Self-Caring While Undocumented*. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL_JCTznvD0. (Accessed: January 7, 2019).
- 17 Quote taken from the text *The Fight to Save DACA Exposes the Sour Side of Complacency Within the Immigrant Rights Movement*, posted on the blog *DreamersAdrift*. Permission to refer to this blogpost in this dissertation was given by author Nancy Meza. Link to blogpost: Meza, N., Pech, Z. & Escobar, I. (2017, September 12). The Fight to Save DACA Exposes the Sour Side of Complacency Within the Immigrant Rights Movement. *DreamersAdrift*. Retrieved from:

<http://dreamersadrift.com/editors-pick/the-fight-to-save-daca-exposes-the-sour-side-of-complacency-within-the-immigrant-rights-movement>. (Accessed: January 7, 2019).

- 18 This chapter is under review with *Citizenship Studies*.
- 19 Latinx is the gender-neutral alternative to Latino/Latina. The term is increasingly being used by scholars, activists, and journalists to move beyond gender binaries and to be more inclusive of all Latin American descendants. The people quoted in this chapter also use the term Latinx themselves.
- 20 Though the Trump administration has tried to terminate the DACA program, different courts have halted this process and have ordered DACA's continuation.
- 21 The Obama administration made it possible for DACAmented individuals to apply for advance parole, a permit that allows non-nationals to re-enter the country after travelling abroad for humanitarian or educational reasons. This provided a loophole for many DACAmented youths seeking to legalize, as they had now re-entered the country lawfully and no longer faced a ten-year ban when applying for citizenship after an eligible event, such as marriage to a US citizen.
- 22 The way that I use (*liminal*) legality here not only highlights its ambiguity, uncertainty, and temporariness but stresses that it can also be an important improvement in citizenship rights.
- 23 A clean Dream Act is one that does not harm other undocumented immigrants by providing benefits for Dreamers in exchange for harsher treatment of non-Dreamers or for the building of a US-Mexico border wall.

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APPENDIX

Documentary Film: *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles*

Watch the documentary film *Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles*, directed by Dirk Eisema and Tara Fiorito, on YouTube or on the following website: funky-boom.com

Synopsis

Undocumented and Unafraid in Los Angeles is a documentary film about the lives, struggles, and agency of determined and daring undocumented youths fighting for citizenship rights in the United States.

Brought up in the capitalist, neoliberal city of Los Angeles, with Hollywood celebrities and extreme disparities of wealth, these youths all went through a period of hardship when they realized what it means to be undocumented. Adrian saw his parents being deported, and Graciela was thrown into a detention cell and now faces deportation.

Despite their different life stories, they are united within the undocumented youth movement. In this film, undocumented youth are followed during a high-risk civil disobedience action in which five undocumented youth face arrest by conducting a sit-in at the immigration court building in Los Angeles. It is the start of a national campaign to pressure President Obama for administrative relief: a temporary relief measure against deportation and a way to gain work authorization.

The film was shot during six months of ethnographic fieldwork in Los Angeles and was produced in the Netherlands through a scholarship funded by the Institute of Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) from the University of Amsterdam.

SUMMARY

Currently, in 2019, undocumented youth activists in the United States have a powerful political voice and a valorized social status. In the early 2000s, this was not the case. Undocumented youths did not exist as a public and political subject. There was great shame, fear, and stigma associated with their undocumented status, and their parents stressed the importance of hiding their status from friends, teachers, and others outside their closest networks. However, in the late 2000s, undocumented youths came out of the shadows of “illegality” and stepped onto the public stage as “undocumented and unafraid.” They became commonly known as the Dreamers because of their mobilization for the federal Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, an immigration reform bill that would provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youths who fit the bill’s criteria. This policy measure concerns a group of approximately 800,000 immigrants who came to the US “illegally” with their parents when they were children and, hence, were raised and schooled in America. Nowadays, the term Dreamers is often used in the country’s institutionalized politics and mainstream media: it is mentioned in Congressional meetings, in newspaper articles, at the Oscars awards ceremony, and even on Dutch news.

Though the Dream Act, despite repeatedly being up for a vote, has never passed the Senate, the undocumented youth movement has had concrete political wins such as the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA, a temporary program that was installed by the Obama administration in 2012, grants undocumented persons who entered the country “illegally” when they were minors temporary protection against detention and deportation and the right to work, travel, study, and drive legally for a renewable period of two years.

The Dreamers’ emergence and success on the political and public stage are truly remarkable because undocumented immigrants often experience feelings of fear, shame, stigma, inferiority, confinement, and loneliness related to their undocumented status. For undocumented youths to be able to come out as undocumented and unafraid and dare to engage in high-risk political actions, such as civil disobedience, they need to go through a process of personal liberation and affective transformation.

Based on longitudinal ethnographic research (2011–2018) on the undocumented youth movement in Los Angeles, this dissertation seeks to understand the political success of the movement as a whole. It looks at how stigmatized and marginalized undocumented youths manage to come out of the shadows as undocumented and unafraid, and work to gain political voice and instigate political reform. In doing so, it considers how the shared subjectivities – or inner life worlds and affective states – of undocumented youths participating in the movement are constituted by power and

practices stemming from both inside and outside the movement. And it particularly looks at the role of emotion work in establishing this collective personal transformation and emancipation and reconstituting the subjectivities of undocumented youths. Finally, it scrutinizes the consequences of the movement's political success and examines how the movement both enables and limits the social mobility prospects of undocumented youths.

My research shows that the political success of the undocumented youth movement is connected to the strength (or social, cultural-symbolic resonance) of the representational strategy of the Dreamer narrative, the strength (or the training and identity and emotion work that go into the construction) of the Dreamer performance and collective identity, and the strength of the movement's network of resources, support, and encouragement.

The Dreamer narrative stakes a claim for undocumented youth's place in the American Dream by appealing to mainstream patriotic American values and stressing the "deservingness" of undocumented youths. Dreamers are supposedly "deserving" of American citizenship rights because (1) they are contributing youth who are the future of America and "the best and the brightest of their generation," (2) they are typical patriotic and assimilated American youths who completely identify as Americans because they came to the US at a very young age, were raised in American schools and communities, and hold no emotional or cultural ties to their countries of origin, (3) they are not responsible or to blame for their current legal status because they came to the US "not by fault of their own."

The strength and national cultural-symbolic weight of the Dreamer narrative was crucial for the movement's political success, but its success also depended on undocumented youths consistently and convincingly presenting themselves and their life stories as Dreamers in disciplined frontstage performances. To accomplish this, they needed to experience and feel their undocumented stories in common ways. For them to act like a coherent group of Dreamers (strength of the performance), they needed to feel like a group of Dreamers, that is, they needed to emotionally identify with other Dreamers (strength of the collective identity). In this dissertation, I show that this process of creating frontstage discipline and unity from diversity depended on preparations and emotion and identity work done in the backstage spaces of the movement. This essential backstage identity work consisted of (1) training activists to become disciplined frontstage performers, (2) converging their feelings through emotion work, and (3) managing their differences and conflicts in the free spaces of the movement.

Through their strong, coherent, and consistent frontstage performances in the public sphere, the Dreamers gradually became known as a strong and virtuous social

and political identity. Because the movement taught undocumented youth to present themselves as powerful and capable personas during disciplined and organized performances in the public sphere, the collective status of undocumented youth was enhanced and the Dreamer identity became synonymous with educated, powerful, assertive, and capable human beings. Consequently, undocumented youths no longer felt like “unworthy illegals” but like a powerful and legitimate political group instead.

My research also shows that the movement helps undocumented youths in becoming undocumented and unafraid by providing them with material and financial resources and emotional and practical support as well as storytelling training and encouragement and know-how for engaging in civil disobedience actions. The movement not only offers a (legal) safety net against detention and deportation but also helps undocumented youths develop the professional activist dispositions and feelings of self-confidence that are needed to present themselves as undocumented and unafraid in the public sphere.

Reshaping subjectivities through emotion work

In this dissertation, I explore how power becomes inscribed in the subjectivities of undocumented youths, both through the legal and discursive practices of authoritative power structures (power and practice outside the movement) as well as through the emancipatory and empowering practices within the movement (power and practice inside the movement). Legal power becomes embodied in the subjectivities of undocumented immigrants as a result of living a life in the shadows of “illegality” and having to deal with the constant threat of detention and deportation. The experience of everyday life as an undocumented immigrant creates existential anxiety and feelings of inability and inferiority. The subjectivities of undocumented immigrants are further shaped by the embodiment or internalization of stigmatizing and hateful discourses that dehumanize and derogatorily position, categorize, and label undocumented immigrants as “illegals,” “criminals,” “aliens,” “rapists,” or “murderers,” and the like. Being confronted with these hateful discourses causes lasting experiences of shame, inferiority, anxiety, pain, and trauma.

The movement then reshapes the subjectivities of undocumented youths through emotionally intensive therapeutic exercises (emotion work) and alternative, politicized narratives in order to intentionally and actively establish collective personal transformation and emancipation and to repair their socially inflicted negative self-images, thereby turning shame into pride and building social and personal resilience. Undocumented activists thus use emotional techniques, such as healing circles and

other therapeutic exercises, to offer consolation and support, to counter and heal some of the pain and trauma of being undocumented, and to create intersubjective convergence (emotional alignment, collective effervescence, and a sense of belonging) among the individual activists. Moreover, through the movement, these stigmatized and marginalized youths distribute alternative politicized discourses on relevant topics, such as the relationship between capitalism and the immigration system, to recast blame for their predicament onto external structures and to provide undocumented youths with narratives that reject and reframe stigmatizing discourses, thereby equipping movement members to engage in contemporary debates on these issues. Their shared subjectivities are thus reshaped through the internalization of experiences of emancipation, empowerment, belonging, and politicization. Though the legal power and violence of the citizenship regime and the stigmatizing power of discourses of hate still have a harmful impact on undocumented youths' inner life worlds, affective states and experiences of self and self-world relations, the different sources of empowerment work to reconstitute undocumented activists' shared subjectivities. The movement thus mitigates some of these harmful effects and offers undocumented youth new sources of strength, courage, agency, resilience, and support.

Political success: The good, the bad, and the ugly

However, the political success of the undocumented youth movement also has a darker side. On the one hand, the strength of the Dreamer narrative, performance, and collective identity has led to concrete political-legal gains, such as DACA. On the other hand, DACA came at the cost of an increase in immigration enforcement and the further criminalization (detention and deportation) of undocumented immigrants. This led to a strong critique within the immigrant rights movement concerning the divisiveness of the Dreamer narrative and eventually to the subsequent breakdown and deconstruction of the Dreamers' collective identity. Dreamers were called out for being selfish in their political strategy and messaging, causing them feelings of shame and guilt. This resulted in many undocumented youths no longer wanting to be identified or labeled as Dreamers. But it also led to more inclusive and radical organizing strategies, with undocumented youths mobilizing for all 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Moreover, through DACA, many undocumented youth activists were able to put their professional and academic qualifications to use by working as professional organizers and consultants for nonprofit organizations involved with different social

justice movements. As these activists matured and became part of other social justice spaces, they also became more reflexive, radical, and inclusive. Consequently, many now actively work to develop, distribute, and enact alternative discourses and political actions that purposefully counter everyday hateful tropes and include and celebrate immigrant, poor, queer, trans, women and people of color identities. They are now consciously fighting against the effects, structures, and interlinkages of capitalism, patriarchy, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, gentrification, and environmental degradation.

Finally, the political success of the undocumented youth movement led to social mobility benefits, but it also restricted social mobility through the mechanisms of survivor guilt and other social mobility-related issues. The movement functions as a vehicle for upward social mobility because (1) it helps undocumented youths overcome their fear of migration authorities and feel collectively empowered, (2) it enhances the collective status of undocumented youths and transforms highly stigmatized youth into legitimate political subjects (destigmatization), (3) it helps undocumented youth activists acquire professional activist dispositions and skills that are transferable to other domains of social and professional life, and (4) it offers a large and open network of job, internship, and funding opportunities.

Moreover, through DACA, many undocumented youths were able to gain lawful employment and live more mainstream adult lives. The transition from undocumented status to (liminal) legal status, either through DACA or through marriage to a US citizen, and the subsequent transition from being part of the working class to being part of the middle class, translates into new privileges and feelings of joy, as well as new feelings of guilt. I show how this shift in legal status and social position profoundly affects people's positionalities, subjectivities, and relationships, as it translates into new opportunities, privileges, and feelings of joy and relief, as well as new feelings of survivor guilt, isolation, estrangement, ontological fragmentation, and the obligation to give back to their families and undocumented communities. The legalization and social mobility of previously undocumented youth activists often results in feelings of survivor guilt for having been spared particular ills and misfortune when others were not. Moreover, because participation in the movement made them fully embrace their undocumented identity, undocumented youths still have strong feelings of identification, belonging, and solidarity towards their undocumented community even after they transition to (liminal) legality.

While these experiences of survivor guilt and other social mobility problems are derived from their durably embodied undocumented subjectivities, their mixed-status families and the uneven distribution of legal rights within them, and the immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice, they also stem from politicization, pressure, and

social control in the immigrant rights movement. Experiences of survivor guilt also come from being part of a movement that tells them that they *should* feel guilty and give back to the undocumented community. As a result, some undocumented youths did not even apply for DACA or citizenship status and many activists give significant parts of their income, resources, time, and energy to other undocumented immigrants. In this way, the movement can limit the social mobility prospects of (undocumented) youths active within it.

In sum, the undocumented youth movement has been extremely successful in using emotion work to transform stigmatized and marginalized youths into confident agents with empowered subjectivities and a strong sense of personal and political agency. However, the Dreamer narrative and collective identity created a division between the supposedly “deserving” and “undeserving” immigrant, and DACA actually led to an increase in detention and deportation rates, which created a division within the movement itself. Thus, previously undocumented youth activists experienced feelings of survivor guilt and are now fighting for all 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

This dissertation conceptualizes the political success of the undocumented youth movement in two divergent ways. First, the movement’s political success consists of undocumented youths successfully mobilizing around the assimilationist narrative and collective identity of the Dreamers, thereby becoming legitimate political actors in mainstream American politics, accomplishing concrete political wins, and experiencing upward social mobility. Second, the movement’s political success consists of offering undocumented youths emotionally intensive rituals and counter-hegemonic resources that aid them in going through an emotional and cognitive transformation and liberation process in which their subjectivities are reconstituted, their shame is turned into pride, and they are able to experience their political agency as undocumented and unafraid.

SAMENVATTING

In de Verenigde Staten hebben ongedocumenteerde jongeren, anno 2019, een krachtige politieke stem, een sterke sociale positie en een gevaloriseerde sociale status. Dat is opmerkelijk, aangezien ongedocumenteerde jongeren rond het jaar 2000 überhaupt nog geen politieke stem en publieke identiteit hadden. Ongedocumenteerde ouders benadrukten bij hun kinderen het belang van het verborgen houden van hun “illegale” status ten opzichte van vrienden, leerkrachten en anderen buiten de persoonlijke kring. Ongedocumenteerd zijn bracht namelijk schaamte, angst en stigma met zich mee. Rond 2010 kwam er echter een fundamentele kentering. Ongedocumenteerde jongeren kwamen in opstand, wierpen het stigma van de “illegaliteit” van zich af en presenteerden zich op het publieke toneel als “ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd” (*undocumented and unafraid*).

Deze ongedocumenteerde jongeren staan bekend als de Dreamers. Dit vanwege hun politieke campagnes voor de federale Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Deze immigratiewet behelst het verkrijgen van bepaalde burgerschapsrechten voor ongeveer 800.000 ongedocumenteerde jongeren die als kind met hun ouders ongeautoriseerd de VS binnenkwamen en daar opgroeiden en naar school gingen. Tegenwoordig is de term Dreamers niet meer weg te denken uit het politieke en publieke debat. Zo worden de Dreamers besproken in de Amerikaanse politiek, in mainstream media, bij de Oscaruitreiking en zelfs overzees op het Nederlandse journaal.

Hoewel er in het Amerikaanse Congres herhaaldelijk gestemd werd over de Dream Act, werd de wet keer op keer afgewezen. Desalniettemin heeft de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging politieke successen geboekt. Zo voerde voormalig president Barack Obama in juni 2012 met een decreet een afgeslankte versie van de Dream Act in: DACA (Deferred Action for Child Arrivals); een tijdelijk programma voor migranten die minderjarig waren toen ze de grens overstaken. DACA biedt bescherming tegen detentie en deportatie en geeft onder andere het recht om legaal te werken, reizen, studeren en autorijden voor een hernieuwbare periode van twee jaar.

De plotselinge publieke verschijning en het politieke succes van de Dreamers is juist zo opmerkelijk, omdat ongedocumenteerde migranten vaak veel gevoelens van angst, stigma, schaamte, beperking, eenzaamheid en minderwaardigheid ervaren. Voordat ongedocumenteerde jongeren naar buiten kunnen treden als ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd en het aandurven om mee te doen aan risicovolle politieke acties zoals burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheidsacties, is het noodzakelijk dat zij een proces doormaken van persoonlijke bevrijding en affectieve en cognitieve transformatie.

Op basis van longitudinaal etnografisch onderzoek (2011–2018) naar de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging in Los Angeles, heb ik het politieke succes van deze sociale beweging bestudeerd. Mijn dissertatie onderzoekt hoe gestigmatiseerde en gemarginaliseerde ongedocumenteerde jongeren uit de schaduw van de “illegaliteit” durfden te treden als ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd, een politieke stem verkregen en politieke hervormingen zoals DACA bewerkstelligden. Mijn onderzoek richt zich met name op het bestuderen van de wijze waarop de beweging bepaalde technieken van emotiemanagement gebruikt om deze collectieve persoonlijke transformatie en emancipatie te bereiken. Daarmee onderzoek ik hoe de gedeelde subjectiviteiten – of de innerlijke belevingswereld en affectieve toestand van het politieke subject – van de ongedocumenteerde jongeren die deelnemen aan de beweging gevormd worden door macht en praktijken binnen en buiten de beweging. Verder kijk ik in deze studie ook naar de consequenties van het politieke succes van de beweging en bestudeer ik hoe de beweging de sociale mobiliteitskansen van de jongeren zowel mogelijk maakt als beperkt.

Mijn dissertatie laat zien dat het politieke succes van de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging – ofwel het vermogen van de beweging om gestigmatiseerde en gemarginaliseerde jongeren bij te staan ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd te worden, een politieke stem te verkrijgen en politieke hervormingen te bewerkstelligen – verbonden is met de kracht (of de sociale, cultureel-symbolische resonantie) van het Dreamer narratief, de kracht (of de trainingen en het identiteits- en emotiewerk die nodig zijn voor de constructie) van de Dreamer performance en Dreamer collectieve identiteit, en de kracht van het netwerk van hulpbronnen, steun en aanmoediging dat de beweging tot haar beschikking heeft.

Het Dreamer narratief is zo succesvol gebleken omdat het benadrukt dat deze groep ongedocumenteerde jongeren deugdzaame Amerikanen en “goede” migranten zijn die het verdienen burgerschapsrechten te krijgen om daarmee deel te kunnen nemen aan de *American Dream*. Het is een strategie die appelleert aan, en resonanceert met, mainstream, patriottistische Amerikaanse normen en waarden. Het Dreamer narratief steunt op drie centrale pijlers. (1) Dreamers leveren een bijdrage aan de Amerikaanse economie en maatschappij, omdat zij de excellerende toplaag van hun generatie zijn en daarom de toekomst van Amerika (*the best and the brightest of their generation*). (2) Dreamers zijn typische, patriottistische en geassimileerde Amerikanen die zich volledig met Amerika identificeren, omdat ze heel jong waren toen ze naar Amerika kwamen, opgegroeid en geschoold zijn in Amerika en geen culturele binding voelen met het land van herkomst. (3) Dreamers zijn niet verantwoordelijk voor, of schuldig aan, hun “illegale” status omdat ze onschuldige kinderen waren toen ze naar Amerika kwamen (*not by fault of their own*).

Naast het belang van het nationalistische, cultureel-symbolische gewicht van het Dreamer narratief, was het politieke succes van de beweging ook afhankelijk van de kracht van de performances en de collectieve identiteit van de Dreamers (zie hoofdstuk één). Om ervoor te zorgen dat het Amerikaanse publiek deze ongedocumenteerde jongeren echt zou erkennen als Amerikaanse jongeren die recht hebben op burgerschapsrechten, was het van belang dat ongedocumenteerde jongeren zichzelf, en hun levensverhalen, continu op een nette, gedisciplineerde en georganiseerde wijze presenteerden op het publieke toneel (*frontstage*). Om dit te bewerkstelligen was het van belang dat zij de overeenkomsten in hun ongedocumenteerde levensverhalen zelf zouden ervaren. Als zij zich echt overtuigend wilden presenteren als een coherente en verenigde groep Dreamers – de kracht van de performance – dan moesten zij zich ook echt als een coherente en verenigde groep Dreamers *voelen* en zich emotioneel identificeren met andere Dreamers – de kracht van de collectieve identiteit.

Deze dissertatie laat zien dat het creëren van *frontstage* discipline en het scheppen van eenheid vanuit diversiteit afhankelijk is van het voorbereidingswerk dat gedaan wordt in de *backstage* (achter de coulissen) van de beweging. Dit *backstage* werk is belangrijk om te onderzoeken omdat gestroomlijnde uniformiteit in de *frontstage* niet automatisch of natuurlijk is. Ongedocumenteerde jongeren (net zoals andere groepen) verschillen van elkaar op het gebied van klasse, ras, gender, etniciteit, nationaliteit, godsdienst, seksualiteit, leeftijd, enzovoort. Tevens passen hun persoonlijke levensverhalen uiteraard niet allemaal perfect in het strak omlinjende en politiek-strategisch geconstrueerde Dreamer narratief. Dus, om ervoor te zorgen dat ongedocumenteerde jongeren hun collectieve identiteit, emotionele synchronisatie en *frontstage* performance als Dreamers bleven ervaren en performen moest hier *backstage* aan gewerkt worden. Dit essentiële *backstage* werk bestond uit: (1) het trainen van activisten om gedisciplineerde *frontstage* performers te worden, (2) het convergeren van de gevoelens van de activisten door emotiewerk, en (3) het managen van verschillen en conflicten in de *free spaces* van de beweging.

Door de herhaaldelijk sterke coherente en consistente *frontstage* performances van de Dreamers in de publieke sfeer, werden de Dreamers geleidelijk een sterke en deugdzame sociale en politieke groepering. De beweging trainde de ongedocumenteerde jongeren om goed georganiseerde publieke performances neer te zetten waarin zij zichzelf presenteerden als capabele personen. Dit leidde tot een collectieve statusverbetering. De Dreamer kwam synoniem te staan voor opgeleid, sterk, assertief en capabel. Hierdoor voelden ongedocumenteerde jongeren zich niet meer “onwaardige illegalen”, maar juist machtig en legitiem. Een politieke groep waar je rekening mee dient te houden (zie hoofdstuk twee).

De beweging helpt op meerdere manieren om ongedocumenteerde jongeren ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd te maken en te houden. Zo biedt ze hen emotionele, praktische, materiële en financiële steun en worden er trainingen gegeven over hoe je je levensverhaal het beste kan vertellen en hoe je op een verantwoorde manier burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheidsacties kan houden. De beweging biedt daarmee niet alleen een vangnet tegen detentie en deportatie, maar helpt jongeren ook om zich te ontwikkelen tot professionele activisten met zelfvertrouwen. Het nieuw vergaarde zelfvertrouwen en de professionele activistendisposities zorgen er daarmee tegelijkertijd voor dat ongedocumenteerde jongeren zichzelf durven te presenteren als ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd (zie hoofdstuk twee).

Het omvormen van subjectiviteiten middels emotiewerk

Deze dissertatie levert een bijdrage aan de sociologie van emoties en aan de literatuur over sociale bewegingen en emoties door te laten zien hoe sociale bewegingen gebruikmaken van emotiewerk – emotionele *formats/feeling rules* en andere technieken van emotiemanagement – om gedisciplineerde en politieke *frontstage* performances te creëren, collectieve identiteiten te vormen en participanten aan te moedigen deel te nemen aan burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheidsacties; allemaal in naam en dienst van een (heldere en strakke) politieke strategie (zie hoofdstuk één).

Mijn dissertatie leidt ook tot het beter kunnen begrijpen van de agency en subjectiviteiten van gemarginaliseerde en gestigmatiseerde groepen. Dit door te laten zien hoe gemarginaliseerde en gestigmatiseerde groepen zoals ongedocumenteerde migranten gebruikmaken van emotioneel-intensieve therapeutische oefeningen (emotiewerk) en alternatieve, gepolitiseerde discoursen om actief en bewust collectieve persoonlijke transformatie en emancipatie te bewerkstelligen bij de deelnemers en hun een sociaal/extern beschadigd negatief zelfbeeld te repareren (zie hoofdstuk drie). Daarmee wordt persoonlijke schaamte getransformeerd tot persoonlijke trots en wordt de sociale en persoonlijke weerbaarheid van deze groepen vergroot. Ongedocumenteerde activisten gebruiken emotionele technieken, zoals *healing circles* en andere therapeutische oefeningen, om troost en steun te bieden, de pijn en trauma's van de ongedocumenteerde ervaring te genezen en intersubjectieve convergentie (emotionele stroomlijning, collectief bewustzijn en een gevoel van verbondenheid/thuishoren) tussen de individuele activisten te creëren. Daarnaast krijgen gestigmatiseerde en gemarginaliseerde jongeren door de beweging toegang tot alternatieve, gepolitiseerde discoursen over bijvoorbeeld de relatie tussen het kapitalisme en het migratiesysteem. Deze alternatieve, gepolitiseerde discoursen

verleggen de schuld van hun situatie en “illegale” status van henzelf en hun ouders naar structuren buiten zichzelf. Daarmee voorzien zij ongedocumenteerde jongeren met alternatieve, bekrachtigende discoursen die stigmatiserende discoursen afwijzen of omvormen. De jongeren worden daarmee tevens onderlegd om deel te kunnen nemen aan hedendaagse debatten over deze onderwerpen.

Door deze emotionele technieken en discoursen internaliseren en belichamen ongedocumenteerde jongeren bekrachtigende ervaringen van emancipatie, verbondenheid, thuishoren en politisering, waardoor hun gedeelde subjectiviteiten worden omgevormd. Terwijl het juridische geweld en de macht van het burgerschapsregime, evenals de stigmatiserende macht van haatdragende discoursen (“illegalen”, “bezetters”, “verkrachters”), nog steeds een schadelijke impact hebben op de innerlijke belevingswereld van deze jongeren en op hun ervaring van het zelf en hun relatie met de buitenwereld, hervormen de verschillende bronnen van empowerment bewust de gedeelde subjectiviteiten van ongedocumenteerde jongeren. Daarmee worden sommige van deze schadelijke invloeden ietwat verzacht of weerlegd en krijgen ongedocumenteerde jongeren nieuwe bronnen van kracht, moed, steun en weerbaarheid toegereikt (zie hoofdstuk drie).

Politiek succes: elk voordeel heeft zijn nadeel

Helaas kent het politieke succes van de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging ook een schaduwkant. Aan de ene kant heeft de kracht van het Dreamer narratief, de Dreamer performance en de collectieve identiteit van de Dreamers tot concrete politiek-legale overwinningen, zoals DACA, geleid. Aan de andere kant zorgde DACA voor strengere immigratiehandhaving en verdergaande criminalisering (meer detentie en deportatie) van andere ongedocumenteerde migranten. Dit leidde tot een sterke kritiek binnen de migrantenbeweging over hoe het Dreamer narratief verdeeldheid schept onder ongedocumenteerde migranten, wat vervolgens weer tot de afbraak en de deconstructie van de collectieve identiteit van de Dreamers leidde. Dreamers werden opzettelijk en openlijk beschaamd en beschuldigd van het creëren van verdeeldheid en egocentrisch handelen in hun politieke strategie en boodschap. Dit zorgde ervoor dat vele ongedocumenteerde jongerenactivisten zich niet meer identificeerden of labelden als Dreamer. Het resulteerde tevens in een meer inclusieve en intersectionele sociale beweging waarbij ongedocumenteerde jongerenactivisten zich actief in gingen zetten voor de rechten van alle 11 miljoen ongedocumenteerde migranten in de Verenigde Staten.

Door het behaalde politieke succes van DACA werden ook veel ongedocumenteerde jongerenactivisten in de gelegenheid gesteld om hun professionele en academische kwalificaties in te zetten in betaalde banen. Velen kwamen te werken als professionele activisten of consultants bij organisaties in de non-profit sector. Omdat deze activisten zich verder ontwikkelden en onderdeel werden van andere sociaal-maatschappelijke organisaties en sociale bewegingen, werden ze ook reflectiever, radicaler en inclusiever. Veel van hen zijn nu actief met de ontwikkeling, distributie en uitvoering van alternatieve discoursen en politieke campagnes die zich bewust bezighouden met het tegengaan van alledaagse haatdragende discoursen en het omarmen van de intersectionele, gemarginaliseerde identiteiten van mensen van kleur, transgendermensen, migranten, kansarmen en vrouwen. Deze groep activisten zet zich nu in voor het bevechten van de structuren en gevolgen van het kapitalisme, patriërchaat, racisme, xenofobie, misogynie, homofobie, transfobie, gentrificatie en de aantasting van het milieu.

Het politieke succes van de beweging heeft zowel tot sociale mobiliteitskansen als tot beperkingen van de sociale mobiliteit van ongedocumenteerde jongeren geleid; dit laatste door mechanismen van overlevingsschuld (*survivor guilt*) en andere sociale mobiliteitsproblematiek. De ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging is een middel tot opwaartse sociale mobiliteit (zie hoofdstuk twee) op vier manieren. (1) De beweging helpt ongedocumenteerde jongeren hun angst voor autoriteiten te overwinnen en zich individueel en collectief bekrachtigd te voelen. (2) De beweging verhoogt de collectieve status van ongedocumenteerde jongeren en transformeert uiterst gestigmatiseerde jongeren tot een legitiem, politiek subject (de-stigmatisering). (3) De beweging helpt ongedocumenteerde jongeren met het ontwikkelen van professionele activistendisposities en -vaardigheden die over te dragen zijn naar andere professionele en sociale domeinen. (4) De beweging biedt ongedocumenteerde jongeren toegang tot een groot en open netwerk van baan-, stage-, en financieringsmogelijkheden.

Door DACA kunnen ongedocumenteerde jongeren legaal en betaald werk krijgen en een middenklasse leven leiden. Deze transitie van een ongedocumenteerde status naar een (liminale) legale status en daarmee van de arbeidersklasse naar de middenklasse (opwaartse sociale mobiliteit) kan gepaard gaan met zowel gevoelens van vreugde en privilege, alsook schuldgevoelens (zie hoofdstuk vier). Veelal dient er een emotionele prijs betaald te worden. De transitie wordt namelijk vergezeld door gevoelens van schuld, isolatie, vervreemding, ontologische fragmentatie en de plicht om terug te moeten geven aan de ongedocumenteerde gemeenschap. De sociale beweging van jongerenactivisten, die ooit ongedocumenteerd waren, gaat dus gepaard met gevoelens van overlevingsschuld, omdat hun bepaalde misstanden, ellende en pijnen bespaard worden, terwijl hun ongedocumenteerde families en

gemeenschappen dat geluk niet hebben. Door deelname in de beweging hebben ongedocumenteerde jongeren hun ongedocumenteerde identiteit volledig omarmd. Hierdoor ervaren zij, zelfs nadat ze de transitie hebben gemaakt naar (liminale) legaliteit, blijvende gevoelens van identificatie, solidariteit en saamhorigheid ten aanzien van de ongedocumenteerde migrantengemeenschap.

Aan de ene kant komen deze ervaringen van overlevingsschuld en andere sociale mobiliteitsproblematiek voort uit hun bestendig belichaamde ongedocumenteerde subjectiviteiten, hun mixed-status families en de onevenredige verdeling van rechten binnen hun families, en het migranten narratief van zwoegen en opoffering (*the immigrant narrative of struggle and sacrifice*). Aan de andere kant komen deze ervaringen ook voort uit de sociale controle, sociale druk en processen van politisering binnen de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging en de bredere migrantenbeweging. Ervaringen van overlevingsschuld zijn daarmee ook te wijten aan het onderdeel zijn van een beweging die mensen vertelt dat ze zich schuldig *moeten* voelen. Als een gevolg hiervan zijn er zelfs ongedocumenteerde jongeren die zich niet eens hebben aangemeld voor DACA of Amerikaans staatsburgerschap. Ook geven veel activisten die wel DACA of burgerschapsrechten hebben verkregen, en daarmee onderdeel zijn geworden van de middenklasse, aan dat ze significante delen van hun inkomen, middelen, tijd en energie aan andere ongedocumenteerde migranten besteden. Op deze manier werkt de beweging dus ook als een beperking voor de sociale mobiliteitskansen van (ongedocumenteerde) jongeren die actief zijn binnen de beweging.

Door de kwalitatieve (etnografische) conceptualisering en bestudering van sociale mobiliteit, draagt deze dissertatie bij aan de sociaalwetenschappelijke literatuur over de subjectieve ervaring van sociale mobiliteit. In plaats van de veel voorkomende kwantitatieve focus op beroeps- of economische mobiliteit, met de bijbehorende assumptie dat sociale mobiliteit onmiskenbaar ervaren wordt als iets positiefs, richt dit onderzoek zich op de wijze waarop mensen zelf hun sociale mobiliteit ervaren. Als mensen zelf hun levensloop definiëren als sociale mobiliteit of aangeven een bepaald onderscheid of persoonlijke groei te ervaren ten aanzien van hun ouders, opvoeding of achtergrond, dan past dat binnen de in deze dissertatie gehanteerde definitie van sociale mobiliteit.

Concluderend, enerzijds is de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging heel succesvol geweest in het gebruikmaken van emotiewerk om gestigmatiseerde en gemarginaliseerde jongeren te transformeren tot zelfverzekerde personen met bekrachtigde subjectiviteiten en een sterk gevoel van persoonlijke en politieke agency. Anderzijds heeft het politieke succes van de beweging ook zijn schaduwkanten. Het Dreamer narratief en de collectieve identiteit van de Dreamers heeft niet alleen

bijgedragen aan een onderscheid tussen de zogenaamde “goede” en “slechte” migrant, maar DACA heeft ook tot hogere detentie- en deportatie aantallen geleid. Dit resulteerde bij activisten die gebruikmaken van DACA in gevoelens van overlevingsschuld en leidde er mede toe dat zij zich nu sterk inzetten voor alle 11 miljoen ongedocumenteerde migranten in de Verenigde Staten.

Deze dissertatie benadert het politieke succes van de ongedocumenteerde jongerenbeweging op twee manieren. De eerste is een meer instrumentele benadering van politiek succes. Deze benadrukt dat de beweging succesvol is omdat ongedocumenteerde activisten strategisch gebruik maakten van het narratief en de collectieve identiteit van de geassimileerde Dreamer. Dit zorgde ervoor dat zij beschouwd werden als een politiek legitieme groep en konden zij politieke successen als DACA behalen en stijgen op de sociale mobiliteitsladder. De tweede benadering van politiek succes benadrukt dat de beweging succesvol is in het produceren van emotionele rituelen en counter-hegemoniale discoursen die het mogelijk maken voor ongedocumenteerde jongeren om door een emotioneel en cognitief transformatieproces te gaan. Een emancipatieproces waarbij hun subjectiviteiten positief hervormd en bekrachtigd worden, hun persoonlijke schaamte getransformeerd wordt tot persoonlijke trots, en zij hun politieke agency als ongedocumenteerd en onbevreesd ervaren.

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