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Kevin Zevallos
kevin.zevallos@uconn.edu

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**The American Dream(ers): Undocumented Youth's (Re)interpretation of Social Movement
Frames**

Kevin Zevallos

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Master of Arts Thesis

The American Dream(ers): Undocumented Youth's (Re)interpretation of Social Movement

Frames

Presented by

Kevin Zevallos, B.A.

Major Advisor _____
Manisha Desai

Associate Advisor _____
Marysol Asencio

Associate Advisor _____
Daisy Reyes

University of Connecticut

2018

ABSTRACT

The dreamer narrative and its accompanying frames have become a staple of immigration debates in the United States. Dreamer narratives afford undocumented youth organizations visibility to articulate their socio-political needs. As undocumented youth make claims for legal and social recognition, they utilize dreamer frames that highlight undocumented youth as productive, patriotic, and/or deserving members of U.S. society. Based on 18 semi-structured interviews with undocumented youth and Connecticut state legislators and participant observation of undocumented youth-led rallies, lobbying campaigns and organizational meetings, I examine how undocumented youth organizers react, respond and utilize nationally derived social movement frames in a local context. I found that undocumented youth share ambivalence about using dreamer frames but believe it to be the only way to achieve their political goals. I argue that undocumented youth's ambivalence with using the dreamer frame stems from (1) a sense of betrayal towards their families, (2) the fear of further marginalization of other immigrants, and (3) a disconnect between their own personal experiences and the narratives highlighted by the dreamer frame. This research contributes to the sociology of social movements by showing how nationally-constructed frames are modified to suit the needs and political goals of local immigrant rights organizations.

We are talking about young people whose dream is to seek higher education, work here and contribute to our state's economy. Connecticut's workforce is second-to-none, and by increasing access [for undocumented immigrants] to post-secondary education we are telling employers and businesses across our globe that we have the labor force to fill the jobs of tomorrow. – *Governor Malloy*, Greater Hartford Patch, April 28, 2018

A testament to youth and immigrant rights organizing success, on April 27th, 2018, Governor Dannel P. Malloy signed Senate Bill 4 into law, allowing undocumented students¹ who attend Connecticut public colleges and universities the opportunity to qualify for the state's system of financial aid. For five years, Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D), a youth-led immigrant rights organization, has led a political campaign, **Afford to Dream**, to lobby for a bill that would allow undocumented students in Connecticut to access institutional need-based aid in Connecticut public universities and colleges. As each year passed, C4D (re)evaluated their organizing strategies, recruitment tactics and lobbying skills; this (re)evaluation process led to internal debates and concerns with the extent to which identifying as a DREAMer and using its accompanying frames is an effective organizing and political tactic. Identifying as a DREAMer, a term created by national immigrant rights organizations² meant that you are an exceptionally good immigrant and particularly deserving of legalization. It was a framework that influenced how organizers created messages and arguments about themselves and their cause (Nicholls 2013a: 14). Currently, the immigrant rights movement has garnered the public's attention, especially because of the Trump administration's position on immigrants and immigrant reform. In a political climate that places the lives of all immigrants in limbo, fissures within the immigrant rights movement have been made more visible. These debates consider how rights should be represented, and who should

¹ There are strict stipulations for which members of the undocumented immigrant would qualify for institutional aid.

² I am primarily referring to the National Immigrant Law Center, which helped draft the language of the first DREAM Act, the Reform Immigration for America, the Center for Community Change, the National Council of La Raza, the National Immigration Forum, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations and the National Day Labor Organizing Network (Chavez 2013a, 2013b; Nicholls 2013a).

be representing immigrants and their struggles in the public sphere (Nicholls 2013a: 15). Consequently, I look at one state's immigrant rights movement by talking to different types of political actors (legislators, organizers, and allies) to study these fissures. I use thematic (Braun and Clarke 2006) and framing analysis (Boykoff and Lascheyer 2011; Snow et al. 1986) and identify three types of frame ambivalences: (1) betrayal of families, (2) marginalization of other immigrants and (3) disconnect between DREAMer identity and their own personal experiences.

Consequently, my research examines how DREAMer frames from the immigrant rights movement are (re)interpreted locally. More specifically, I qualitatively examine how one, local immigrant rights organization, Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D), use, react and respond to nationally-based frames in their own organizing through participation observation of C4D events and rallies as well as interviews with C4D members and allies. Part of C4D's original and current organizing efforts involve engagement and building relationships with Connecticut state leaders and government officials to advocate for policy that would (1) charge undocumented immigrants living in Connecticut in-state tuition³ and (2) provide access to institutional aid for undocumented college students, policy that centers on the well-being of undocumented immigrants. Since DREAMer frames in Connecticut are primarily, but not exclusively, used at the state capitol and with Connecticut state legislators, I also interviewed legislators, particularly state representatives and senators and other state government officials who have worked with and for undocumented communities in the state to contextualize undocumented youth's ambivalence with the use of DREAMer frames.

BACKGROUND

³ House Bill 6390 was passed on June 13, 2011, allowing undocumented students who meet certain requirements to qualify for in-state tuition. House Bill 6844 was passed on June 19, 2015, reducing the number of years in high school undocumented students must attend in Connecticut to two years in order to be eligible for in-state tuition.

The term DREAMer speaks to the lived realities and experiences of roughly one million children and youth who have a shared immigration status; they migrated to the U.S. without authorization when they were children and grew up without legal residency, having “shared feelings of disappointment when realizing the difficulty of achieving their dreams and aspirations” (Nicholls 2013a: 2 see also Abrego 2006, 2008, 2011; Abrego and Gonzalez 2010; Gonzalez 2011; Gonzalez and Chavez 2012). Their (namely, undocumented youth) immediate goal was to pressure the U.S. congress to support the Development, Relief and Education and Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), which would have provided undocumented youth the legal right to stay in the United States (Nicholls 2013a). Consequently, undocumented youth came to be known and referred to as DREAMers, making a powerful demand for residency status by ‘coming out’ and demanding that they be recognized as human beings who belonged in the country (Nicholls 2013a). Undocumented youth did not exist as a political group until the start of the 21st century (Burciaga and Martinez 2017; Lauby 2016; Nicholls 2013a). The explosion of open, public and assertive demonstrations across the country in spring 2010 marked their entry on the national political stage as the DREAMers (De la Torre and Germano 2014; Nicholls 2013a: 4) Youth activists and organizers collectively asserted that they were undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic (Nicholls 2013a: 4; De la Torre and Germano 2014; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014). They publicly rejected a “life in the shadows” and demanded the right to be recognized as rights-deserving human beings (Nicholls 2013a: 4).

DREAMers as a political group was not necessarily created by undocumented youth themselves. Rather, professional rights associations (e.g., National Immigration Law Center and Reform Immigration for America) identified a niche for well-integrated undocumented students in 2001 and launched a campaign to pass the DREAM act (Chavez 2013a, 2013b; Nicholls 2013a).

While large and professional rights associations sought to exercise control over the DREAMers, the youth eventually asserted autonomy and control over their own struggle and their place within the immigrant rights movement, collaborating and mobilizing fellow DREAMers alongside other groups and actors in the immigrant rights movement (Nicholls 2013a: 7). Consequently, undocumented youth around the country, with the assistance of immigrants' rights associations, formed college campus support groups, advocacy organizations in their communities (e.g., Dream Activist), and online networks (e.g., Undocumented Youth and Resource Network and National Immigration Youth Alliance) through social media and national organizations (Chavez 2013b; Nicholls 2013a: 5). DREAMers in these organizations also extended their reach outward into their communities, providing new opportunities to establish new connections to isolated and unconnected youth (Nicholls 2013a: 6). DREAMer organizations and networks have also helped to circulate arguments and messages concerning why undocumented youth deserve the right to live in the country. Through their interactions with other undocumented youths, they learned the discourses, arguments, and messages that framed their claims to equal rights (Nicholls 2013a: 6). Their formation into a self-conscious and an internally bounded group made it possible to gain support from broad swaths of the public and mitigate the risks of detention and deportation (Nicholls 2013a: 6). Consequently, I use the term 'DREAMer' to describe "politically active undocumented young adults who *self-identify* as DREAMers and who have worked in campaigns to advance the rights of undocumented youth in the country (Nicholls 2013a: 18 emphases added). My research shows how undocumented youth who may self-identify and are (externally) identified as 'DREAMers' feel ambivalent about self-identifying as a DREAMer and using its accompanying frames in order to secure political rights/gains for the local immigrant community.

I study one immigrant rights organization in Connecticut, Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D), to show how undocumented youth in local contexts express frame ambivalence in their organizing at the state capitol. Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D) are a group of undocumented youth-organizers⁴ and allies⁵ that came together in 2010 to discuss how they could organize to promote and advance the federal DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act by participating in rallies and lobbying campaigns, primarily organized by United We Dream, in Washington D.C. to put pressure on the U.S. Congress to vote on the DREAM Act. In 2011, they organized “Connecticut’s first ‘Undocumented and Unafraid: Coming Out event,’ where students shared their stories of being undocumented and came out publicly to their communities” (ct4adream.org). Eventually, C4D molded into their own locally based organization and worked to push in-state tuition for undocumented students in Connecticut, which passed in 2011, using personal testimonies and lobbying efforts. With the passage of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), membership⁶ in C4D soared creating three youth-led chapters in Bridgeport, Danbury and Stamford (ct4adream.org). As cited on their website, C4D’s mission is to:

advocate for legislation and policies that benefit immigrant youth and their families...to use our policy and advocacy campaigns as an organizing tool to organize and mobilize our members, to grow the leadership and skills of our youth, and to put the people affected by the issue at the forefront of fighting for the issue (ct4adream.org).

⁴ I use the label/identifier ‘organizer’ to respect the language of the field-site and the labor of undocumented youth.

⁵ Broadly, in this context, allies refer to people who are documented (U.S. resident or citizen), regardless of racial identity.

⁶ To clarify, C4D has no formal membership process, and, thus, no way to gauge and measure internal membership patterns/trends. I assess membership by (1) the number of paid staff, and (2) the extent to which unpaid members organize local events in their town or campus.

Based on C4D's mission and Afford to Dream political campaign, my research questions are: How do locally-based political actors (legislators, organizers and allies) interpret, justify and utilize DREAMer frames? How do organizers and allies use DREAMer frames that resonate with and/or convince legislators to vote yes on the Institutional Aid bill? The primary source of qualitative data are the 18 semi-structured interviews with undocumented/documentated organizers, allies (aged 18 years and older) and Connecticut state legislators. I have also spent one year participating in and writing fieldnotes on C4D's public (monthly) organizational meetings, (monthly) rallies and (weekly) workshops/trainings. Participant observation of C4D's public organizational meetings, rallies and workshops/trainings is important for examining the internal social dynamics where members and allies strategize how they will communicate their goals and/or work to the college campuses, broader immigrant community and/or Connecticut state legislature. Most of C4D's strategizing efforts occur in these spaces.

This research study contributes to an understanding of the processes and dynamics of intra-movement frame disputes, showing how DREAMer frames may be widely used but are not readily accepted or used without hesitation by organizers and allies. Organizers and allies ambivalently use DREAMer frames but concede that being identified as a DREAMer, particularly by legislators, provides them a certain visibility that makes it easier to talk about (higher) educational inequity in Connecticut and convince legislators to vote yes on the institutional aid bill. Immigrant rights organizers continue to use frames from "perfect DREAMer" narrative despite its limitations through a logic that Spivak (1988) calls *strategic essentialism*. This paper uses the case of strategic essentialism in the C4D immigrant rights movement to identify: (1) how organizers justify the "perfect DREAMer" narrative and its subsequent frames; (2) the ambivalences and concerns organizers have over DREAMer frames; and (3) the strategies of resistance to DREAMer frames.

I find that organizers used three main justifications: the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narratives provide organizers frames that underscore (1) visibility of undocumented youth, (2) allow organizers to talk about undocumented youth as deserving, and (3) is the most, if not only, effective tactic when talking to legislators. But deploying the DREAMer frames came at a cost to the organizers themselves. Organizers felt that they (1) betrayed their families, (2) marginalized other immigrants and (3) experienced a disconnect between the DREAMer identity and their own personal experiences. Some activists did develop strategies for resisting the use of DREAMer frames, such as planning acts of civil disobedience in the Connecticut State capitol building. This project shows how framing strategies are constantly modified depending on the local context, (re)creating and (re)defining which groups within the undocumented youth community get visibility over others.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing as a Strategic Act

Social movement frames (also referred to as collective action frames) refer to how social movement actors organize their ideas in order to mobilize potential organizers and/or allies (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). To Snow and Benford (1992) a frame is “an interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (p.137). There are three components to social movement frames. Social movement actors identify the problem (diagnostic framing), identify action-steps to address and rectify the problem (prognostic framing) and create a call to action (motivational framing) (Snow and Benford 1988). To summarize, frames are necessary conditions for social action because they help interpret social problems, suggests action-steps to remedy the problem, and compel others to become involved in social movement activities (Snow and Benford 1988; Zamora and Osuji 2014).

All three components are actively created and re-created through social interaction amongst organizers, allies, constituents, the media and in the case of this paper, legislators (Evans 1997).

Part of the work of social movements is to construct and negotiate (collective) identity, which takes place within “dialogic struggles” with actors both within and outside of movements (De la Torre and Germano 2014: 453 see also Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Collective identity can impact one’s individual identity, but the relationship between individuals and identities is variable, with some embracing the identity strategically or tentatively and others as an essential part of their self-understanding (De la Torre and Germano 2014). However, as Benford and Snow (2000) made clear, “the question of how participation precipitates the enlargement of personal identity, or the correspondence between individual and collective identities, has not been satisfactorily answered by scholars investigating this linkage” (p.632). My research shows how undocumented youth are collectively identified as DREAMers but have to negotiate the disconnect between not self-identifying and, at times, even disavowing the DREAMer narrative while recognizing its use for their visibility and organizing goals. To clarify, this paper does not attempt to address how DREAMer frames were formed and/or constructed because they originated from a larger undocumented youth and immigrant rights movement, rather, I show how C4D, a Connecticut-based, youth-led immigrant rights organization, a spillover social movement, (re)interprets and utilizes DREAMer frames locally.

DREAMer Framing Tactics and Strategies

Undocumented youth were constructed and perceived as ‘illegal aliens’ and ‘undeserving outsiders’ and were therefore not recognized as legitimate claims makers or holders of inalienable rights (Chavez 2013b; Nicholls 2013a: 9). Crafting a (political) voice/identity required them to undertake an arduous process of identifying “small cracks in the legal and moral systems of the country, making arguments for why their group deserved basic rights, gaining the support of many

different allies, and asserting a certain degree of unity and discipline within their ranks” (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016; Nicholls 2013a: 10). Investing considerable cultural and symbolic capital, leading immigrant rights associations, like the National Immigration Law Center, created the public figure of the DREAMer; youth that were exceptionally good immigrants and particularly deserving of legalization, serving as a framework that influenced how activists produced messages and arguments about themselves and their cause (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016; Nicholls 2013a: 14). Consequently, undocumented students became the ‘poster children’ of the larger immigrant rights movement (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016). By representing undocumented youth 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 United States ‘not by fault of their own,’ leading immigrant rights organizations hoped to garner support amongst conservative American politicians and voters (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016; Nicholls 2013a) Under the slogan of ‘undocumented and unafraid’, undocumented youth across the country formed a number of organizations (e.g., the Immigrant Youth justice League, the Dream Act Coalition), with the goal of “promoting federal legislation that would provide them with a way to legalize their status, focusing on the federal DREAM act [of 2001]” (Chavez 2013b: 185; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014).

In 2010, undocumented youth decided to become an autonomous movement, organized and headed by the undocumented students themselves (Chavez 2013a, 2013b; Fiorito and Nicholls 2016: 295). Consequently, they decided to “change certain elements of the master frame as taught by the immigrant rights activists and organizations” (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016: 295). 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

[coming out as undocumented stories] and stressing that ‘their parents were courageous’ for bringing them to the U.S.” (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016: 295). DREAMers, however, continued to use the political strategy of representing themselves as “deserving American youths fighting for their American DREAM” (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016: 295). DREAMers learned how to construct compelling rights claims, identify public arenas, such as campuses and the Internet, to express their claims, plan and undertake high-risk protests, and lobby public officials to support bills recognizing their rights and the rights of other undocumented immigrants in the country (Nicholls 2013a: 8). DREAMers argued that they were raised in America, they only knew this country and they were important contributors to its economic, civic, and moral life. For example, DREAMers have use the image of students in graduation robes and mortarboards to draw attention to their plight as college students without legal immigration status (Chavez 2013b: 187).

Undocumented youth find others with shared experiences, strategize how to increase their visibility, experience new kinds of equality as they participate in decision making and organizing and become far more civically engaged (and visible) than the average person (De la Torre and Germano 2014; Nicholls 2013a). Training sessions, organized by leading undocumented youth organizations like United We Dream, helped socialize youth activists into the DREAMer discourse, shaped their views of their place and rights in the country and contributed to forming individual undocumented youths into a common political subject with common worldviews, aspirations and emotional dispositions (Nicholls 2013a: 14). Trainings, held by United We Dream and the Immigrant Youth Justice League, kept activists on message, but it also transformed youth into “actual DREAMers who saw, felt and experienced their political worlds in similar ways” (Nicholls 2013a: 14). These representations help transform a diverse array of individuals—with

many different qualities, backgrounds, and cultures—into a coherent and deserving ‘group’ that fits an available niche.

Undocumented youth claims tend to align with “notions about meritocracy and deservingness; as such, they often adopt frames that are more appealing to the public” (Burciaga and Martinez 2017: 454; Chavez 2013a, 2013b; Lauby 2016 see also Dingeman-Cerda, Burciaga, and Martinez 2016; Nicholls 2013b; Yukich 2013). Undocumented youth rely on and use ‘perfect DREAMer’ narratives in their presentations of themselves and of others, but “activists are now stepping away from the ‘perfect DREAMer’” (Lauby 2016: 375). The ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative relies on frames relative to achievement, innocence, meritocracy, individualism and injustice, which together create the story of the ideal, high-achieving undocumented youth who is unfairly prevented from gaining access to college and pursuing their dreams (Lauby 2016: 376). Though it may borrow frames related to achievement and individualism, the DREAMer narrative presents a different story compared with other immigration narratives, such as the hard-working entrepreneur (Lauby 2016; Zamora and Osuji 2014 see also Newton 2008). I build on the literature of social movements and immigrant rights by empirically showing how organizers express ambivalence about using DREAMer frames, afforded to them by the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative. Those ambivalences affirm prior scholarship that shows how using DREAMer frames leads to the marginalization of other undocumented immigrants that are implicitly constructed as less deserving of resources and opportunities because they cannot access and utilize ‘perfect DREAMer’ narratives and its accompanying frames (Lauby 2016; Patler 2017). Even though undocumented youth are aware that ‘perfect DREAMer’ narratives marginalize the lived experiences and make the (material and political) needs of other immigrants more invisible, undocumented youth continue to use frames drawn from the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative. My

research examines how and why undocumented youth continue to use DREAMer' frames and what 'costs' (politically and socially) this has for immigrants' rights organizing, and immigrants, broadly.

Intra-movement Frame Disputes

The goal for any organization/movement is to have an "accepted version of reality for consensus mobilization" (Benford 1993: 679). Frame disputes are a crucial, if not essential, feature of the everyday life of movements (Benford 1993: 698). Frame disputes occur within movements over interpretations of reality and disparate visions of an alternative reality. Specifically, disagreements can range from a disconnected diagnosis of the social problem(s) raised by the movement, and/or how the social problem(s) ought to be transformed and addressed (Benford 1993: 679). Furthermore, debates over which framing strategies will be most effective constitute another type of intra-movement frame dispute: "The issue is not what is or ought to be real but rather how reality should be presented, that is *frame resonance*." (Benford 1993: 679). In sum, disagreements within a movement can occur over what is, over what ought to be and over how to represent a movement's versions and visions of reality (Benford 1993: 679). Youth movements are particularly "susceptible to fractures over group aims, identity, and political visions, especially when trying to project these to adult publics" (Burciaga and Martinez 2017: 455). A movement is comprised of numerous organizations (Benford 1993: 678; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Meyer and Whittier 1994). While a movement's various organizations share an overarching goal, disagreements frequently erupt within and among movement organizations regarding specific objectives, strategies, and tactics. (Benford 1993: 678). While frames are crucial to social movement dynamics because they serve to guide individual and collective action, not all movement participants will necessarily share the same frame or interpretation of reality (Benford 1993: 678). My research contributes to the literature on intra-movement frame disputes by

complicating how organizationally-endorsed and accepted frames may be used by organizers and allies even as they express ambivalences regarding its use. While organizers and allies express reservations with using DREAMer frames they do so reluctantly because they do not think there is another framing strategy that is more or just as effective.

Depending on the social context, undocumented youth utilize frames that will resonate with the targeted audience, but for the purposes of this paper, I focus primarily on undocumented youth-legislator dynamics. I examine how undocumented youth and allies express their concerns, hesitations and reservations with utilizing DREAMer frames. Consequently, my research draws on and contributes to the research on internal frame disputes that show how while undocumented may identify frames that may be more inclusive they are reluctant to use them for reasons of visibility and public appeal, but more importantly for securing specific political goals e.g., accessing institutional aid in Connecticut public colleges and universities. My research contributes to the literature of frame disputes by showing how frame ambivalences are negotiated through a reconciliation of achieving an organization's political goals with making a movement/organization as inclusive as possible.

Disputes of DREAMer Frames

The long and arduous struggle to create a political group (DREAMers) with a legitimate voice has rendered important cleavages between the different allies involved (Nicholls 2013a). These cleavages have resulted in forceful disagreements and conflicts over who deserves rights, how rights should be represented, and who should be representing immigrants and their struggles in the public sphere (Nicholls 2013a: 15). The disagreements resulting from internal contradictions may be “destructive because they give rise to factionalism that can undermine the collective power of the movement, but they can also be creative because they allow different activists and advocates to create new ideas and discourses about equality, rights, and citizenship” (Nicholls 2013a: 17).

Debates and disagreements permit activists and organizers to discover the limits of preexisting strategies and create new ones that they believe are more appropriate, inclusive and equal.

Undocumented youth have begun to develop alternative framing strategies that begin to address constructions of undocumented youth as ‘perfect DREAMers’. Undocumented youth organizations make claims using citizenship frames in “politically and legally restrictive contexts” (Patler 2017: 3). Citizenship frames are based in legal and normative ideologies of citizenship that underscore acculturation, civic engagement and humanitarian concerns (Patler 2017). A central component of citizenship frames is that they both reflect and influence laws and policies. Undocumented youth use them to strategically contest and blur the boundaries between citizen and noncitizen and between lawful and unlawful. Undocumented youth also use *immigrant worker* frames and the *social and racial injustice* frames (Zamora and Osuji 2014). The immigrant worker frame responds to the popular narrative of immigrants as socially draining to society because they contribute nothing positive (socially and economically) (Zamora and Osuji 2014). The social and racial injustice frame tackles the history of structural inequality that still impacts racial minorities (Zamora and Osuji 2014). Undocumented youth have also begun to utilize an intersectional collective action frame that encourages members to be “highly cognizant of the multiple forms of oppression they faced, while motivating and guiding their efforts to build inclusive organizations and broaden the scope of their movement” (Terriquez, Brenes and Lopez 2018: 261).

Broadly, undocumented youth activism has yet to receive full attention in social movement scholarship (Burciaga and Martinez 2017: 451). One’s immigration status has consequences for how rights are articulated; when organizers emphasize the right of some (immigrants) to remain within the nation-state or receive resources from the nation-state. They also inadvertently define who gets left out, marginalized, criminalized and deported (Patler 2017; Schwiertz 2016; Unzueta

Carrasco and Seif 2014). At the same time, however, undocumented youth challenge frames used and maintained by legislators and media that continue to demonize parents and older immigrants (Lauby 2016; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014). In response to Benford's (1997) review of the framing literature, this paper seeks to respond and contribute one of the many gaps/shortcomings highlighted by Benford: "greater attention devoted to the negotiated, contested dimensions of movement framing processes [is needed]" (p.424). More specifically, my research empirically shows how a local immigrant rights organization (C4D) utilizes and negotiates the use of nationally-derived DREAMer frames that are available to them as undocumented youth in Connecticut. In so doing, I demonstrate how frame ambivalences highlight internal processes of social movement organization's work to achieve frame alignment.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to understand how Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D) utilizes DREAMer frames constructed by the broader undocumented youth movement, and, thus, how frames are interpreted and modified, in specific localities, I conducted⁷ 13 interviews⁸ with C4D organizers and allies while collecting ethnographic data at the Connecticut state capitol building and all other related C4D events and functions (see Table 1 for C4D sample). Interviews with C4D organizers and allies were about 40 to 140 minutes, with an average time of 86 minutes. Furthermore, in order to understand how legislators conceptualized and responded to the framing strategies of C4D organizers and allies, I also interviewed five Connecticut state representatives and state senators. Interviews with legislators were about 16 to 45 minutes for an average time of 31 minutes. Interviews with C4D organizers and allies focused on (1) the decision-making processes that

⁷ I received Institutional Review Board approval to conduct research. I also consulted with the administrative staff of C4D for approval and consent of my data collection efforts.

⁸ All respondents, organizers, allies and legislators, were informed of the research study before the interview and completed a written consent form prior to the interview.

facilitate the use of frames depending on the context and audience (e.g., legislators, higher education administrators, educators, other immigrants), (2) their (interviewee) personal experiences, and history of organizing for immigrant rights, (3) how/why they use certain terms (e.g., undocumented, immigrant, DREAMer) to identify themselves and what role/impact that has for their organizing efforts, (4) reservations and concerns with identifying or being identified as a DREAMer and (5) how they rationalize the continued usage of DREAMer frames. Interviews with legislators were slightly different, focusing on: (1) their personal experiences, and history, lobbying for immigrant rights, (2) reasons why the institutional aid bill did/would not pass, and (3) what it would take for the bill to pass this year.

I began fieldwork in the summer of 2017 where I attended my first organizational statewide meeting. Since then, I have attended monthly statewide meetings, monthly rallies organized by C4D that have responded to the Trump Administration's response to immigration reform (e.g., the termination of the DACA program), two weekly trainings/workshops on how to lobby and talk to legislators, and, have attended three C4D 'Day of Action' events (lobbying) at the Connecticut State capitol for the institutional aid bill. When asked by new members, I disclosed my status, both as a U.S. citizen and a researcher. I wrote fieldnotes after each event had concluded. Participation observation in C4D's programs, events and actions (like rallies and political campaigns) allowed for an examination and analysis of how frames are used, modified and negotiated depending on the spatial context; the frames used by undocumented youth in the state capitol were not the same as the ones used on a college campus. Furthermore, participating in organizational meetings and workshops showed how frames are taught, reflected on, and disputed within the organization.

Recruitment

I first learned about C4D through local meetings and rallies that took place at the University of Connecticut – Storrs. Consequently, I met local organizers and allies who connected me to the

broader C4D network and administrative staff. C4D does not have any physical space to hold large organizational meetings, just a small office space for the executive director in Bridgeport, CT. Since undocumented youth live all over Connecticut, Wallingford, CT was chosen as a meeting point; with the Spanish Community of Wallingford building serving as the location for statewide meetings. While C4D advertises free rides for members wanting to attend statewide meetings, this is only accomplished by coordinating rides with people who already live in the surrounding area, meaning if someone from (as an example) New London, CT wants to attend a statewide meeting, they would be unable to do so if no one from the New London area could drive them there. There are also meetings for local communities held in C4D regional branches: namely Danbury, Stamford, New Haven and Hartford, but these are completely youth-led and held inconsistently; since the start of my field work in August 2017 only five meetings in Hartford were advertised. Besides the local and statewide meetings, which are held in community centers, most of the events sponsored by C4D are lobbying campaigns or rallies, which are primarily organized at the state capitol in Hartford. It was challenging for me to gauge who compromised the general body membership or what their relationship is to the staff and leadership team because there are no physical⁹ spaces or events for the general membership to come together, aside from bi-monthly (every two months) statewide meeting. Consequently, rapport-building with C4D members occurred mostly through informal social gatherings, on my local campus community through getting lunch in the school cafeteria and/or doing homework together. When I received IRB approval to conduct interviews and participant observation of all C4D related events and functions, I relied on snowball sampling, where I used my personal contacts at the University of Connecticut

⁹ I eventually learned that the majority of planning and delegating of responsibilities for C4D events occurs online, through Facebook group chats and bi-weekly conference calls with select members. Since I am not undocumented or a formal member of C4D, I was never invited to either of these (digital) spaces.

– Storrs, to reach out to local C4D members (organizers and allies) for an interview. It was difficult to reach potential respondents who were not known within my local networks, or who were not as active in C4D, or, just as importantly, discontent, disappointed and dissatisfied with C4D. To reiterate, C4D does not have any formal membership requirements or guidelines, nor do they have a list of members, but they do emphasize being a youth-led organization, focusing most of their recruitment efforts on high-school and college-age youth. Consequently, I could not reach ‘former’ C4D members who ‘aged out’¹⁰ of the organization.

Demographics

Although, C4D does not refer to itself as a Latinx/a/o serving organization, its membership (and staff) are predominantly Latinx and the majority of the locations (e.g., Hartford, Wallingford and Danbury) where they host meetings are in Latinx serving organizations (e.g., Spanish Community of Wallingford, the Center for Latino Progress in Hartford and the *Ecuadorian Civic Center* in Danbury) located in predominately Latinx neighborhoods. Consequently, the majority of my participants interchangeably self-identify as ‘Latina’, ‘Latinx’ or ‘Hispanic’, with some respondents clarifying their (skin) color as well (e.g., ‘Brown Latinx’ ‘White Latinx’) (see Table 1). Furthermore, the majority of my participants self-identified as women with an average age of 22 years old (see Table 2). While C4D does recruit and work with high school-aged undocumented youth, I decided not to recruit them for the interview for the following reasons: Since the majority of the high-school age youth cannot drive they do not and cannot attend most C4D meetings and events; even if they drive and had a car, the school day also prevents them from attending. Furthermore, most high-school youth only participate in C4D’s college-access program and have little knowledge or experience working directly with or for the organization, particularly in regards to the Afford to Dream campaign. To ensure, I had a diversity of experiences within the

¹⁰ According to the administrative staff, with backing from the members, a youth is anywhere from 14-25 years old.

organization, however, I recruited and interviewed participants with varying positions and roles within the organization. Organizers refer to positions that contribute to the planning and facilitation of all C4D events, workshops and programs. I differentiate organizers with paid staff members and board members to highlight status differentials within the organization (see Table 1). They (organizers, paid staff and board members) all have a similar role in organization except that paid staff receive monetary compensation for their organizing and board members play a more formal and consulting role. Allies refers to people who are not undocumented and/or a child of undocumented parents. Ex-members are people who self-identify as ‘retired’ from the day-to-day activities and responsibilities of C4D but at one point served as an organizer.

I decided to speak only to legislators who have been in support of the bill and campaign in the past. Support meant legislators who have (1) consistently voted ‘yes,’ (2) co-sponsored the bill, (3) spoken in favor of the bill during press conferences and/or (4) pushed the bill up for a vote. Of the five legislators I spoke to, not all met these four criteria; first, only certain legislators (e.g., the speaker of the house) can call a bill up for a vote. Secondly, all five legislators I spoke to voted ‘yes’ on the institutional aid bill, but not all legislators have or would express their support for the bill publicly because of their respective districts; consequently, two of the five spoke to me on the condition of anonymity. To recruit legislators, I contacted the offices of legislators who worked in the Higher Education (HE) Committee; because every year this bill was proposed it first went through the HE committee. This meant that these particular legislators (1) knew the content of the bill well, and (2) were also aware of the public sentiment for the bill since hosted the public hearings for the bill. Afterwards, legislators introduced me to other legislators who they thought would have strong insight and want to talk to me.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

I coded my interviews and field notes using thematic and framing analysis (Boykoff and Lascheyer 2011; Braun and Clarke 2006; Burr 1995; Saldana 2016). I used thematic analysis to help identify, analyze and report patterns (themes) within my interviews and fieldnotes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis at the ‘latent level’ goes beyond the semantic content of the data and starts to:

identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations—and ideologies—that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data from a constructionist perspective, meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals (Braun and Clarke 2006: 84; Burr 1995).

Therefore, thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided (Braun and Clarke 2006).

I transcribed all interviews¹¹ and typed up all fieldnotes. I took an open-coding approach to examine these notes and transcripts line-by-line in Atlas.ti Qualitative Software. Specifically, I coded the interviews for (1) justifications of the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative, (2) ambivalences about DREAMer frames (3) alternatives to DREAMer frames. The field notes, however, were coded more specifically for alternatives to DREAMer frames; C4D organizational meetings and events were spaces where members reflected on the drawbacks of using DREAMer frames. I found that organizers used three main justifications for using the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative: (1) it provides visibility, (2) is the most effective tactic, and (3) allows organizers to talk about

¹¹ All interviews were in English, with the exception of one, which was in Spanglish.

undocumented youth as deserving. But deploying the perfect DREAMer narrative came at a cost to the organizers themselves. Organizers felt like they (1) betrayed their families, (2) marginalized other immigrants and (3) felt a disconnect between the DREAMer identity and their own personal experiences. Some activists did develop strategies for resisting the use of DREAMer frames such as acts of civil disobedience, like occupying offices of target legislators at the Connecticut state capitol building.

Alienation from the “Perfect DREAMer”

Few organizers actually believed they met the high standards set by the “perfect DREAMer”. Lorena¹², said “So, I am an immigrant. I am undocumented. But, by definition I would not be a DREAMer.” For Lorena, a DREAMer was “an A+ student who is the best,” someone “going to Yale,” but she considered herself “just an average student”— “not really extraordinary.” Like Lorena, Karina felt that her accomplishments fell short of the “perfect DREAMer,” since her efforts to join the military were for instrumental reasons, not a desire to serve her country:

You know I tried to...enroll in the military in high school, which I did because...if you sign up for the military...you may have a pathway to residency... So that’s why I wanted to enroll, [but the politician’s]’ eyes sparked up a little bit [and he said] ‘Oh you want to serve my country?’”

Other activists presented more general alienation from the perfect DREAMer narrative. Selena saw the frame as incorporating only “students who want high achieving jobs like doctors, lawyers.” Likewise, Celeste said the frame “excludes youth that cannot attend higher education, youth who only work, it excludes our parents, the LGBTQ community.” Across the interviews and in my field notes, the consistent finding was that organizers did not actually *believe* in the perfect

¹² For all quotes used, the interviewer’s words will be bolded. Furthermore, all quotes will retain the language of the interviewee, with any edits made for clarify and ease of reading. All names are pseudonyms.

DREAMer. They considered it essentializing and alienating. But organizers consistently made the strategic choice to use it anyway.

Uses and Justifications of DREAMer Frames

In preparation for the Afford to Dream political campaign, C4D organized multiple trainings and workshops to prepare undocumented youth and allies to speak to legislators and talk to them about voting yes on the institutional aid bill. During these workshops, C4D would pass out worksheets emphasizing three talking points undocumented youth and allies can use when communicating with politicians about the institutional aid bill. A worksheet given to me during one of their statewide organizational meetings about how to lobby at the state capitol, C4D teaches you to talk about how passing a bill allowing undocumented youth to access institutional aid will (1) make education more equitable, (2) help the state economy and (3) affirm Connecticut's progressive values. For the purpose of this paper and in conversation with the data, I will focus primarily on the talking point surrounding making education more equitable, since that is the talking point that was most utilized by organizers. During C4D's how-to-lobby workshops, organizers stressed that this bill was a matter of equalizing educational access (motivational framing) for all students and shared with us different talking points and scripts we could use when talking to legislators. When talking about educational inequity in the state to legislators the worksheet notes:

All students should have equal access to higher education, regardless of socioeconomic or immigration status. This is common sense, fair legislation—if your tuition dollars fund this aid, you should be able to access this aid if you have financial need! This is a matter of fairness that all students are able to access the funds to which they contribute.

This particular talking point centered on educational inequity is a slight departure from frames that draw on notions of meritocracy and deservingness when talking about undocumented youth. The educational equality frame talks about access to higher education as an issue of fairness, rather

than something undocumented youth ‘deserve’ based on their qualifications and hard work. Approaching the issue of access to higher education as an issue of fairness, organizers used DREAMer frames to strategically show how these group of immigrants, DREAMers, are high-achieving students unable to actualize their dreams. C4D encouraged and taught people how to utilize DREAMer frames. During a workshop on how to lobby held at the University of Connecticut—Storrs, Valeria played a short clip of Selena that showed how not having access to institutional aid would prevent Selena from attending college and actualizing her dream to be a medical doctor. When the video concluded, Valeria explained to the audience that they [C4D] use the clip because they want legislators (and the public) to know that “this is a real issue affecting people’s lives,” emphasizing that “appealing to the personal matters because you want to emphasize the positive contribution youth make to society.” The content of the video emphasizes the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative, showing how youth (in this case Selena) want to ‘give back to Connecticut and achieve their (high-status) career goals, which makes them deserving of institutional aid, and other resources/protection from the government.

In an interview, Celeste acknowledges that there are “strategic moments, where we [C4D] have used the word [DREAMer] without correcting the person who called us DREAMer or we have identified as such when we’re advocating for policy, specifically educational ones.”

Similarly, Karina explains that when she is lobbying for the institutional aid bill:

White politicians call me a DREAMer...[since] I have to please them, so that they could pass this damn bill and I could get their damn vote...I have to use this term that I hate so much...[and] use points such as ‘I get good grades. I was the top [percentile] in my class in high school—I am a DREAMer, and that I love this country and [*laughs*] I want to be a citizen and be an American.

Like Karina and Celeste, Lorena also clarifies when it is okay to refer to yourself as a DREAMer:

When we talk to allies, we say this DREAMer narrative is really harmful, it's not accurate. But when you're talking politics, you have to be like, are ‘you really [going to] do this to

all these kids who are just good students?’ It depends on who you're talking to, but I see it as, I do what I have to do.

Lorena understands that the bigger goal is to ensure that the bill gets as many ‘yes’ votes as possible, even if it involves using a DREAMer frame that C4D recognizes has negative consequences for the broader immigrant community. Organizers felt disconnected to, and in some cases were discontent about using DREAMer’ frames but recognized it was the most effective way to get legislators to listen and potentially vote ‘yes’ on the institutional aid bill and so used it intentionally when speaking to legislators. Taught systematically through workshops and shared in written materials on how to lobby, organizers believe that using the ‘perfect DREAMer’ frame and referring to themselves as high-achieving students and patriotic members of society works to positively impact and reach legislators. While the literature shows that “activists are stepping away from the ‘perfect DREAMer’” (Lauby 2016: 375) narrative, my research shows that while undocumented youth and allies may feel ambivalent about their use of DREAMer frames, they remain steadfast in their use of DREAMer frames.

Celeste knows that the goal of the Afford to Dream campaign is to “gain as many [yes] votes as we can.” Organizers feel that the best way to secure these ‘yes’ votes is to refer to themselves as DREAMers and use frames from the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative. Celeste noticed that when you tell legislators you are advocating for institutional aid, legislators respond by saying “you’re advocating for the DREAMers.” She clarifies that “while we try to distance ourselves as much as we can because we know that hurts our bigger community, there are moments where we strategically use that word or let ourselves be called DREAMers.” Like Celeste, Karina feels like the ‘perfect DREAMer’ narrative grants organizers the *visibility* to speak to, and be heard by, legislators because “white politicians have always seen us” as “high achieving students that deserve to be here” and not as “students that are students.” Organizers’ continue to strategically

use frames that reinforce notions of achievement, merit, and individualism (Lauby 2016), which allows undocumented youth to be perceived as productive members of society.

During the interviews, legislators said that there were some districts that had constituents who were opposed to the institutional aid bill, which made it hard for them [legislators] to support and vote yes for the bill, even if they personally wanted to vote ‘yes’. Representative Roland Lamar explained that a “us [citizens] versus them [undocumented] mentality” had “developed” in certain districts where concerned constituents expressed this fear that the “if I open up doors to this other group [undocumented students] then that means my kid’s going to get less.” Organizers were well aware of this anti-immigrant sentiment. They knew that legislators often neglected to vote in favor because they and/or their district felt socially and materially threatened by the idea of having institutional aid distributed equally to all students. Consequently, Karina uses DREAMer ‘strategies’ because she believes that:

There was no other way—no one else was getting to him. I had to use those DREAMer strategies to be able to communicate with him and for him to actually think about voting on the bill, [but] I hate doing that shit, it was just horrible.

Using the ‘perfect DREAMer’ frame, which emphasized deservingness, made it easier for legislators who were undecided or previously unsupportive to vote in favor of the bill because, to them [supportive legislators] *DREAMers were ‘us’*. None of my interviewees deny the visibility and (frame) resonance that DREAMer frames provide. Consequently, most organizers justify their use of the DREAMer frames by arguing that there is no other alternative (frame). The reality (educational inequity) is not challenged or undermined by frame ambivalence, rather, there is an internal reservation or hesitation with using the ‘perfect DREAMer’ frame that continues to perpetuate and reify immigrant hierarchies and binaries of good/bad immigrants (Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014). Furthermore, frame ambivalences highlight the disconnect between a

social actor's individual identity and the collective, in this case DREAMer, identity (De la Torre and Germano 2014).

Frame Ambivalences

I elaborate on how political actors share ambivalences about using the DREAMer frames but believe it to be the only way to achieve their political goals. I found that ambivalence with using DREAMer frames stems from (1) a sense of betrayal towards undocumented youths' families, (2) the fear of further marginalization of other immigrants, and as I have already discussed in the above sections (3) a disconnect between undocumented youth's personal experiences and the narratives of the DREAMer frame. These three overlapping concerns contribute to ambivalences with using DREAMer frames and make clear the disconnect between social movement participation and individual/collective identities.

Sam recognized that C4D's work on increasing access to higher education did not benefit all immigrants, particularly immigrants who are more vulnerable than undocumented youth referred to as DREAMers: "I've worked closely with a lot of unaccompanied minors from Guatemala and their concerns were a lot different— [and] that caused some tension for me, at least in my work [at the state capitol]." While Sam himself was not undocumented, there was clear reservation about how organizing for higher education and referring to oneself as DREAMers did not in any way address, ameliorate, or make visible the issues of other immigrants in Connecticut. Representative Roland Lamar, a long-time supporter of the Afford to Dream campaign, expressed his concerns with how "framing [immigrant rights] as a DREAMer issue versus a broader issue" negatively impacted the socio-political status of the parents of undocumented youth. For Representative Lamar, criminalizing the parents of undocumented youth, DREAMers, is "antagonistic to our American story... that person [parent] did exactly what you and my family would have done in similar situations and probably did do in some situations, just a generation

earlier.” Representative Lamar acknowledged how the ‘perfect DREAMer’ frame made it possible to criminalize parents while simultaneously absolving youth of all the ‘blame’ of being in this country. Organizers understood how parents were negatively impacted by the DREAMer narrative. At a public rally held at the University of Connecticut-Storrs in response to the termination of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, Ricardo, spoke to the crowd and identified himself as “DACA-mented¹³.” His speech stressed the undocumented community be more thoughtful with using “the DREAMer narrative.” While he publicly identified as a “DREAMer” he disavowed the DREAMer narrative because it continues to “protect students because they’re the best kind of folks who contribute to society while simultaneously criminalizing parents who break the law by coming here ‘illegally’.” He concluded by saying we should all fight for “legislation that defends all immigrants’ rights to be in this country.”

I argue that frame disputes are distinct from frame ambivalences. Frame disputes occur over interpretations of reality and disparate visions of an alternate reality (Benford 1993). These interpretations can stem from disagreements over what the (social) problem is (diagnostic frame disputes), and/or how the (social) problem should be addressed and resolved (prognostic and motivational framing) (Benford 1993; Snow and Benford 1988). Consequently, disputes over how to best identify the (social) problem leads to discussions regarding how to best represent reality and what frames will be most effective (Benford 1993). I argue that frame ambivalences are empirically and conceptually distinct from frame disputes. No one is disputing the political effectiveness and salience of DREAMer frames. On the contrary, all of my interviewees had a shared (agreed-upon) understanding of the social problem (diagnostic frame): that undocumented

¹³ “DACA-mented” refers to youth who are undocumented but have (or had) DACA. To clarify, undocumented youth who were eligible for and were part of the DACA program were able to legally work and attend colleges and universities in the United States. DACA recipients, however, are not and were not eligible for (federal) financial aid.

youth cannot, but should be able to, access institutional aid. Additionally, all my interviewees had a shared (agreed-upon) understanding towards how to best achieve their goal (prognostic and motivational frame) of passing an institutional aid bill in the Connecticut State Legislature: (1) teach people to lobby at the state capitol using DREAMer frames, (2) have constituents contact their legislators to vote yes on the bill and/or call the bill up for a vote, and (3) ask allies to sign petitions in support of the bill. Respondents agree that DREAMer frames are the most effective way to secure ‘yes’ votes and get the bill to pass but feel ambivalent regarding its broader impacts on the overall immigrant community and do not feel personally connected to being a DREAMer. In other words, political actors (individuals) and C4D (social movement organization) have a shared interpretation of reality but recognize that their interpretation may undermine the ability of other immigrants to mobilize and receive similar access to resources and protection.

Resisting the ‘perfect DREAMer’

Because organizers feel reservations or ambivalences about using DREAMer frames some organizers have begun to think about utilizing alternative frames, even in the state capitol. Since these interviews were conducted prior to the passage of the institutional aid bill, I am not sure the extent to which their sentiments would be different now. But before the bill was passed and signed into law, organizers felt as if the DREAMer narrative was not enough and did more harm than good. Sam believes that:

the DREAMer narrative makes us vulnerable because if one of our leaders gets arrested, committing vandalism then there goes our whole campaign because we built our whole campaign on this lie, this myth that all undocu—all students are perfect, clean records— 4.0 GPAs, giving back to our communities but that’s not the full story.

During the 2017 legislative sessions, after one of the organizers was arrested, many legislators rescinded their support of the bill. showing the rigidity of the DREAMer narrative. Anything that is counter to that, undermines the success of the campaign. Consequently, other organizers

suggested disruption, or civil disobedience, as a way to get legislators to act more quickly on the bill:

So, we were talking about tips for new and incoming organizers and lobby-ers and you were talking about disruption.

Yeah, you got to take it there. They're [legislators] not going to all of a sudden start caring about us...so we got to interrupt one of their events— do a big ass action, a civil disobedience, make them look bad at this point because we've tried playing nice, like a lot.

Kristaps believed that after five years of campaigning, the DREAMer frames were not enough to secure the votes necessary for the bill. Like most organizers, Kristaps knew that legislators did not “care” about undocumented youth, which is why “playing nice” has not worked. Civil disobedience would undermine the “good immigrant” frame, that organizers have strategically utilized when campaigning and contribute to the growing literature on undocumented youth organizing that shows how undocumented youth have begun to change “certain elements of the master frame [surrounding DREAMers]” (Fiorito and Nicholls 2016: 295).

Frame ambivalences are an important social phenomenon that merit more empirical investigation. Frame ambivalences reveal the disjuncture between a movement’s collective identity and individual (political actors) interests, values and beliefs (Snow et al. 1986). Although, undocumented youth and allies utilize strategic essentialism to construct undocumented youth as good, high-achieving, and patriotic DREAMers, they also acknowledge the risks, or negative consequences of employing strategic essentialism. Overall, frame ambivalences help to explain and illuminate how social movement actors rationalize, justify and utilize social movement frames they may not feel connected to or comfortable using. Frame ambivalences can contribute to the literature on social movement frames by showing how social movement actors negotiate frames’ effectiveness with their negative consequences and its implications for coalition-building, community-building and mobilization.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

DREAMers learned how to construct compelling rights claims, identify public arenas, such as campuses and the Internet, to express their claims, plan and undertake high-risk protests, and lobby public officials to support bills recognizing their rights and the rights of other undocumented immigrants in the country (Nicholls 2013a: 8). Cleavages within the immigrants' rights movement have resulted in forceful disagreements and conflicts over "who deserves rights, how rights should be represented, and who should be representing immigrants and their struggles in the public sphere" (Nicholls 2013a: 15). Consequently, certain locally-based immigrants' rights movements are: (1) distancing themselves from the 'perfect DREAMer' narrative (Lauby 2016; Nicholls 2013aa) and (2) developing intersectional collective action frames (Terriquez et al. 2018). More research is needed on how and what political contexts help to manifest these new directions within the immigrant rights movement (Burciaga and Martinez 2017). Furthermore, immigrant rights movements and organizations are beginning to disavow and challenge good/bad immigrant binaries (Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014) due to their reification of social hierarchies within immigrant communities (Lauby 2016). My research shows that while C4D members are receptive to and aware of these broader shifts in the immigrant rights movement regarding the use of DREAMer frames and the 'perfect DREAMer' narrative, C4D members remain committed to the use of DREAMer frames because it is effective in securing political and material benefits. Consequently, undocumented youth and allies feel ambivalence regarding the use of DREAMer frames and are strategic in its use. Frame ambivalences are empirically and conceptually distinct and integral to social movement dynamics and merit more empirical and theoretical investigation. Frame ambivalences help explain the relationship between frame resonance, the ability of a collective action frame to resonate or appeal to a targeted audience(s) (Snow and Benford 1988)

and frame disputes (Benford 1993; Burciaga and Martinez 2017; Nicholls 2013aa) showing how and why social movement frames are (re)negotiated and (re)interpreted. Furthermore, frame ambivalences help to illuminate the disconnect between the formation/maintenance of a movement's collective identity and an individual's values, beliefs and identity; undocumented youth and allies use DREAMer frames but do not feel like they are DREAMers themselves.

Methodologically, identifying and gaining access to private and protected enclaves (Chavez 2011) as a site of frame contestation, has been particularly difficult. Most of the internal communication among organizers is done by conference calls or google hangouts, digital spaces, as a researcher, I do not have access to, since I am not an organizer or undocumented. Consequently, more work needs to be done on comparing the relationship between public (e.g., rallies, workshops) and private (e.g., internal de-briefing and planning meetings) enclaves.

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TABLE 1. Demographics of C4D Respondents¹⁴

Pseudonym	Demographic Profile
Karina	Mexican, 19, Organizer
Caroline	Hispanic, 18, Organizer
Sam	South Asian, 23, Ally
Lorena	Latina, 22, Organizer
Celeste	Latinx, 21, Paid Staff
Selena	Latinx/Brown Latina, 19, Organizer
Gabriel	White Latinx, 26, Paid Staff
Kristaps	Latino/mixed, 26, Ex-Member
Mukthi	Asian/Bangladeshi, 22, Ally
Maple	Latinx, 24, Board Member
Marisol	Latina, 21, Ally
Valeria	White/Latina, 27, Paid Staff
Autumn	White, 21, Ally

Table 2. Demographics of C4D Respondents (N=13)		
Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Mean Age</i>	22	--
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	9	69
Male	4	31
<i>Note: All demographics were self-reported. These figures do not include the sample of legislators who were interviewed.</i>		

¹⁴ All demographics are taken from the self-identification respondents reported during the interviews. The average age of the respondents is 22 years old. These figures do not include the sample of legislators who were interviewed.