

To: CSLS Readers

From: Kathy Abrams

Re: Feeling Work in the Undocumented Students' Movement

In the paper that will emerge from this memo, I aspire to do three things. First, I want to describe one part of the immigrant justice mobilization as it has occurred in AZ: the emerging participation and leadership of undocumented youth. Second (and this is the primary focus of what follows) I aim to offer an account, drawn from ethnographic observation and interview data, of how the practices of organizations of undocumented youth foster certain emotion-states that enable successful pro-immigrant activism. Finally (and this is more inchoate, particularly in the memo that follows), I hope to describe and theorize the ways that participants in social movement organizations can work to counter a stigmatized identity constructed by law, and foster a distinct identity around which actors can mobilize and ultimately challenge the law. I have made certain choices in this memo that may not be reflected in subsequent versions of what I will write. The account that follows is rendered almost exclusively in an affective register: emotions play the mediating role in all phases of activism, and the organizations' role in cultivating them is my virtually exclusive focus. I may want to modify this, because emotion may play a more central mediating role in some phases of activism than others. I also draw a lot of my examples from a particular kind of campaign, the civic engagement (voter registration, or get-out-the-vote) campaign. This focus makes sense for a number of reasons: these campaigns have been a central pre-occupation of undocumented youth in Phoenix, I have a lot of data on them and have begun to analyze this data first, and I suspect these campaigns are particularly important in giving activists a sense of connection to or belonging within the political system. In future iterations, however, I imagine I will also draw more on direct action strategies, legislative efforts, and social media campaigns. But I hope that these emphases will suffice to make clear at least some of my current thinking, so that we can discuss it.

I'm grateful for any time you can put into this draft, and look forward to discussing it.

## Feeling Work in the Undocumented Students' Movement – Kathy Abrams

[preliminary work – please do not cite or circulate without permission]

### Introduction

The immigrant justice movement in Arizona has increasingly been fueled by the energies of undocumented youth. What began as a campaign led by Latino citizens and Anglo allies to resist state policies of “attrition by enforcement” directed against undocumented immigrants, has become a multi-faceted, forward-looking movement populated and in many cases led by undocumented activists. This transition entails a paradox: those who have been targeted by law enforcement, and excluded from virtually all indices of belonging by state legislation, have come to feel empowered not only to claim a stigmatized identity in very public ways, but to make claims on the state and on their fellow residents for change. My project, based on (still ongoing) qualitative empirical research with a dozen organizations in Phoenix and Tucson, seeks to understand this paradoxical transition.

My focus in this memo is on the ways that social movement organizations help to form the activist identities manifested by undocumented youth. Organizations act on the stigmatized identities imposed by law: they help participants to experience their undocumented status, and approach the communities in which they live, in unfamiliar and potentially empowering ways. Many different practices play a role in this transition from stigmatized target to self-possessed claims-maker; but, in what follows, I argue that this process is mediated importantly by emotion.<sup>1</sup> Participants learn new affective responses to secrecy

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<sup>1</sup> Emotion is a concept that is both contested and dynamic, within and across disciplines. Some theorists identify a set of primary emotions--happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust--that exist across cultures and that have a biological basis; but most agree that cultural context can shape the meaning and interpretation of emotions and the ways that they are communicated to others. Damasio (1999) and Barsalou (2009) My own understanding of emotion accords with many elements of the following statement by Susan Barsalou (2009), which emphasizes the complex and contextually-variant dimensions of both neurological and socio-cultural understandings of the term:

There is no accepted definition of the term emotion. Indeed, the more light is shed on the dynamics of cognitive processing, the less clear it is that emotion defines a discrete function or phenomenon... . Current neurobiological research views emotions as a set of processes, distributed throughout the brain, that assist us in appraising and reacting to stimuli, and that are very sensitive to context. Recent work in psychology and sociology also portrays emotions as processes; formed, interpreted and communicated in social context. They influence the way we screen, categorize and interpret information. They influence our evaluations of the intentions and credibility of others. They help us decide what is important or valuable. Perhaps most important, they drive us to care about the

and disclosure, to struggle and disappointment, and to the manifestation of emotion itself. They learn to be comfortable with discomfort as they press themselves to learn new skills and share their complicated stories in new contexts. They develop a sense of belonging within the very institutions and processes that have marked them as 'alien' or 'other.' Within organizations that are animated by but also insulated from the constructing force of law, they develop identities which are distinct from those shaped by law – in some sense (to riff on Ewick and Silbey's terminology) "beside the law" -- but through which they ultimately seek to change it.

### Some Notes on Methodology

This particular paper draws on observation and semi-structured interviews with members of two organizations, A and L, comprised primarily of undocumented youth in Phoenix. These organizations are among the half dozen or so groups in Phoenix with which I have worked regularly during this project. I have been working with L since I began my research in spring 2012; I began working with A in fall 2012. I have attended regular membership meetings – particularly meetings at which they welcome new members; I have attended events the groups organized or sponsored; I have also participated in voter registration training and canvassing with L. While I occasionally speak at meetings, and engage in ice-breakers, simulations, role-playing and similar organized activities, there is no question that I am there as an observer and not as a member of the organization. Most participants would draw this inference from my ethnicity and age (although there are some Anglos in both organizations and an increasing number of middle-aged participants in A); but I also explain my reason for being there when I introduce myself at meetings. I have at this point done recorded interviews with approximately 15 members of each organization, as well as some of their officers or leaders. I have had many more informal conversations with members and leaders of each group.

A was organized in the mid-2000's, in response to Arizona's Proposition 300 (2006), which made it illegal for undocumented students to receive in-state tuition at state universities, or state-funded scholarships. Although legal residents and citizens initially played an active role in the organization, the group came, by 2008 or 2009, to be led by undocumented youth participants themselves. The group participated actively in campaigns for various incarnations of the DREAM Act. A developed strong ties to United We Dream (UWD), a leading national organization of undocumented students; many of those who take leading roles (chapter or campaign leaders) in A have traveled to Washington and other cities to participate in UWD-sponsored national trainings. A is organized by chapters: these chapters either have a particular constituency (high school students or parents, for example), or a combined constituency and substantive focus (undocuqueer issues or visual arts advocacy, for example). Within chapters and sometimes across chapters, activists participate in particular campaigns – a voter registration campaign, a fundraiser, or internet outreach to stop specific deportations. Although A was in its earliest phases led

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outcome of our decision-making, and motivate us to take action, or refrain from taking action, on the situations we evaluate. All these processes are shaped, refined and communicated in a social and cultural context.

by men, during the time of my research it has been led by undocumented Latina women. The president and vice president are both graduates of Arizona State University, as are a number of more senior members (who attended on private scholarships which have more recently been discontinued). Most others participants attend community colleges, some full-time, some part-time. Several long-standing members now have leadership positions in other immigrant rights organizations in Phoenix. Although the group consists predominantly of undocumented youth (many of whom are now DACA-mented), the group welcomes residents and citizens, and several citizens play active roles in the organization. Parents have historically played a supporting role: their chapter coordinated driving, cooking, and other forms of moral and logistical support. More recently parents have organized two chapters that undertake their own campaigns. There are now so many parents at bi-weekly meetings that, in spring 2013, group members began addressing the group in both Spanish and English, rather than English only. Members of A are likely to be long-term participants. A number of those I interviewed have been active for five or more years; those who have joined more recently envision A as a part of their lives for the foreseeable future. They think of themselves as activists. Members have deep social ties and often refer to each other as “family.”

L was organized in 2010, in response to the many issues created for immigrants by SB 1070. It is a membership organization, which uses organizing principles derived from the labor movement. Although it has had a primary focus on immigration, it has also organized anti-poverty campaigns (direct action efforts against banks that have foreclosed on community members, for example). Civic engagement is a particular focus for L: it has organized many successful efforts to register voters and turn out the Latino vote. L’s orientation is predominantly state and local. It does not have ties to national organizations; and while it participates actively on national immigration issues such as comprehensive immigration reform, processing DACA applications, or registering voters for the Presidential election, it often focuses on state or local legislation, or city council campaigns. Meetings at L are conducted in English and Spanish, role-playing and other exercises tend to be in English. L is unusual among pro-immigrant organization in Phoenix in that it was founded, and is formally headed, by a woman who is Anglo (a daughter of European immigrants who spent time living in Latin America, and has a labor background). She has been keen to transfer leadership of the organization to an activist who is Latino/a, and has mentored a young undocumented activist, who has gradually assumed responsibility for the organization’s civic engagement campaigns and a number of its other central functions. They now effectively lead the organization together. L is open to all comers, whether undocumented, resident, or citizen. It has always had a substantial component of undocumented youth, but numbers of undocumented participants have rapidly increased over the past year, as L began using its DACA information and application sessions as organizing opportunities. Many undocumented youth participated in its 2013 registration and gotv efforts for the recent, hotly-contested Phoenix City Council election. Few members of L attend four-year universities; some are part-time students at local community colleges, while some aspire to return to school but are currently working. Activists appear to cycle in and out of L: they participate in a particular voter registration campaign, or a series of events, and then their participation diminishes as they return to a focus on school or work. But even those who are no longer active retain a strong sense of allegiance to L and to its two leaders: I see many returning to visit, or even using the space to do homework; some

return for a subsequent campaign. In contrast to participants in A, members of L do not necessarily view themselves as life-long activists; they talk frequently about using the skills they gained in L in other aspects of their lives.

L and A view themselves as allies and both are represented at large immigration-related marches and rallies. There is little or no common membership, although they occasionally collaborate. One recent example was an effort to protest Gov. Jan Brewer's executive order denying driver's licenses to DACA recipients. Assisted by the ACLU, A brought a lawsuit against Brewer; L organized a direct action protest on Valentine's Day that involved sending scores of "Let the DREAMers Drive" valentines to Brewer, as well as disrupting one of her public appearances.

My research on this paper is also informed by interviews and observation with a third group, P. P is a pro-immigrant organization whose focus is predominantly on civic engagement. It receives substantial funding and on-site trainings from a national community-empowerment organization. Although I have spent a good deal of time with P, and interviewed close to a dozen of its participants, it is not a focus of this particular paper for two reasons. First, I have not had an opportunity to attend meetings at which it welcomes or trains new members; and second, it recruits and mobilizes very young participants, primarily high schoolers and a substantial number of middle-schoolers. These participants are too young to be included formally in my research, according to my IRB protocol. But I have interviewed leaders of P, attended its public events, and studied the training materials it uses in its voter registration campaigns. They reflect important parallels with some of the patterns I identify in A and L below; but I suspect they may also involve some different dynamics, because activists who are in some ways still children may apprehend differently the risks they undertake and the benefits they secure through activism.

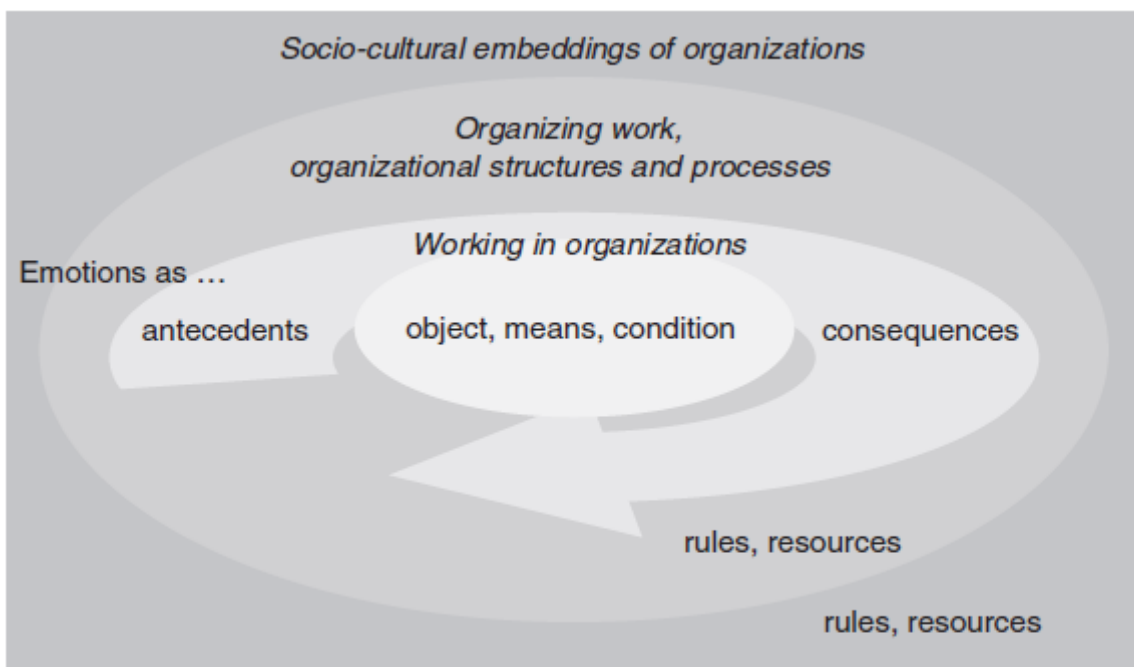
### How Organizations Use Emotions in Shaping Activist Identities

Although I describe emotions, in the broadest sense, as "mediating" the transition from stigmatized target to self-possessed claims-maker, emotions play several different roles as organizations acclimate and socialized their new members. Sometimes emotions are specifically targeted as goals or objects of the organization's efforts. Sometimes they are developed as means that enable the ongoing work, etc. To parse the different roles that emotions play in bringing about this larger change, I will use a schematization that was developed to by Barbara Sieben. Sieben sought to analyze the role of emotions organizations such as workplaces or political parties.<sup>2</sup> I see her analytic frame as applicable to social movement organizations, though, at the moment, my focus is not on extending or refining that frame

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<sup>2</sup> There are schematizations of the role of emotions in social movements (see e.g., Jasper (1998)). They're not as helpful for my purposes because they're about how emotions (reactive emotions and affective bonds) are utilized by social movements as they pass through various phases of their life-course, from mobilization, to persistence in abeyance, etc. In contrast, I'm analyzing a more specific question about one kind of work social movements do: producing activists, or shaping the identities (and on the road to that the affective stances or dispositions) of their members.

(although it might be later). I offer her framework here as a vehicle for highlighting the different ways that emotions mediate the formation of activists by social movement organizations.



*Figure I2* Appearances of emotions in organizations

*Source:* Adapted from Sieben (2005: 4)

### **Emotions functioning as antecedents**

In my research so far, I have identified at least two distinct trajectories into A and L, which are accompanied by different emotion-states. Both constellations of emotions, however, are shaped by participants' legal status – that is, they reflect affective responses to the experience of being undocumented in Arizona at a time when undocumented immigrants have been the targets of several forms of hostile state legislation, and, in Maricopa County (where Phoenix is located), the targets of pervasive enforcement efforts by Sherriff Joe Arpaio.<sup>3</sup> but ultimately reflect some of the same emotional appraisals of being undocumented. Many undocumented youth come to social movement organizations when they are at a crossroads with respect to their undocumented identities. The feeling-

<sup>3</sup> These efforts include traffic stops, which were implemented even before the district court removed the injunction on Section 2(b) of SB 2070, neighborhood saturation patrols, and workplace raids. Arpaio's enforcement efforts have been the subject of lawsuits by federal officials and civil rights groups for a number of years. Last year, in *Melendres v. Arpaio*, Arpaio's practices were found to have violated the constitution; his office is in the process of being placed under the supervision of an independent monitor.

state produced by this moment, combined with outreach from a friend or classmate, or from the organization itself, leads the youth to attend his or her first organizational meeting.

Many participants report that they have joined A or L during a period of despair. For many undocumented youth, childhood and adolescence are periods in which they feel largely indistinguishable from their documented peers. Because of Plyler v. Doe's guarantee of K-12 education for undocumented immigrants, they attend school, learn English, participate in activities indistinguishably from many of their classmates (Abrego, 2011). For some, their undocumented status, or the vulnerability of their family to separation may be part of their consciousness: this is particularly true if members of their family have been detained or deported. But many reach age 15 or 16 either unaware of their undocumented status, or unaware of the constraints that can impose on their lives. For many, it is when they begin to apply to college, look for a job, or seek a driver's license – when some combination of these circumstances leads them to ask their parents for their social security number – that they realize that their lives are taking a different shape from those of their classmates. This is particularly true in Arizona, where undocumented students must pay out-of-state tuition and may not receive state-funded financial aid, and where workplace raids are not infrequent. This discovery frequently precipitates a period of re-socialization, which Roberto Gonzales (2011) has described as “learning to be illegal.” For Gonzales' (large) sample, and for the youth to whom I have spoken, this period is frequently accompanied by deep despair: the youth finds it difficult to envision a future, and may feel paralyzed or despondent. For some of my interviewees, this period coincided with the passage of SB 1070, so that a sense of fear or imminent risk exacerbated the more general feeling of hopelessness. Some during this period contemplated returning to Mexico, a small handful reported feeling suicidal. At some point, most reached what they described as a turning point. For some, they realized that they could not live indefinitely in this state of despair and had to try something to improve their situation, even if they were not convinced it would produce results: at this point they were contacted by a friend or classmate who was a member of A or L – or they recalled that such a contact had happened earlier – and they came to the organization. For others, some external event – such as the detention of a family member – spurred in them a feeling that they needed to do something to produce change, and they decided to join an organization.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I did not see in the patterns of these activists evidence that they joined in response to what Jasper and others have called a “moral shock” – an external event so powerful as to re-frame prospective participants' understanding of their circumstances and lead them to political action (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995). I found this interesting because one might assume that SB 1070 would have played that role. Although it appears to have had that effect for some adults: both L and the third organization, P, were formed in response to SB 1070. But while many of these youth report attending a walk-out or a protest after the law was passed, SB 1070 does not appear to be the event that galvanized these youth to become activists. Perhaps being both young and (previously) apolitical, they did not fully understand its significance. But SB 1070 does appear to have contributed, along with Prop 300 and other Arizona laws restricting the benefits and opportunities available to undocumented immigrants, to the construction of these youth's emergent sense that to be undocumented was to be stigmatized and outside the mainstream, with limited opportunities for self-sufficiency and self-development through education or employment; and the emotion-state produced by that dawning recognition ultimately led them to join these organizations.

Some, particularly in L, joined the organization at moment of hope. For many of these youth, it was the easing of constraint and the sense of greater possibility produced by DACA that prompted them to become active. When L members assisting applicants with their DACA materials invited them to a meeting, they felt unusually and newly free to respond. Some reported that they had turned to activism on learning about DACA, without any instigation from the organization: DACA relieved some of the sense of stigma, reduced the fear that they had associated with identifying themselves as undocumented, and made them appreciate the prospective benefits of further political action. One young man described getting in the car and driving to A, as soon as he heard President Obama's announcement. A few others turned to these organizations at a personal moment of empowerment: one young woman joined L after she had successfully challenged a traffic citation that she believed was unfounded and perhaps the result of racial profiling.

But whether youth join at a moment of despair or a moment of hope, both bring with them common elements of their socialization as undocumented immigrants in Arizona. They are accustomed to viewing their lack of status and that of their family members as a source of fear (generally but particularly in relation to law enforcement), and sometimes a source of shame (particularly if they have experienced confrontations with, or have witnessed their parents or relatives being mistreated by law enforcement or immigration officials). For most, their status is also a source of isolation: not only do youth see it as foreclosing the kinds of lives or opportunities enjoyed by their friends and classmates, but it is often something that they feel reluctant to mention outside the home.<sup>5</sup> Many youth have told me about keeping their undocumented status even from their close friends (including sometimes people who were also undocumented, and equally silent about it). In some cases, the fear and shame are so deep that it is taboo to mention undocumented status even among family members. These youth are shaped, to varying degrees,<sup>6</sup> by what Abrego and Menjivar (2012) call "legal violence" against undocumented immigrants.

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<sup>5</sup> One activist related: "I remember my dad was working once and for every little thing ... [they] would tell him, we're going to call the border patrol on you. I was like—oh my god, I don't want to do something bad and then for them to be like I'm going to call the border patrol on you. So I was like I'm not going to say anything. I kept it [to] myself..." Or as another observed, "there was this whole ... taboo going on in the Hispanic community about your legal status. You will not talk about that. You will not share it with anybody. You will not ask and you wouldn't tell... So then I would hear all these people, they would share their stories. Undocumented. And I was like, "Oh my god; how can they do that?" You know, something could happen to you. You never know."

<sup>6</sup> In emphasizing the ways that the legal construction of undocumented immigrants bears on undocumented youth, I do not want to suggest that there is no variation, or that youth lack all sense of agency before they enter activist organizations. There is in fact wide variation, which I may take as a subject of inquiry in another part of this project. There are a number of influences that seem to contribute to an individual sense of empowerment or resilience among undocumented youth, including parents who treat their immigration status matter-of-factly and without shame and express confidence in their children's ability to succeed, early success in or mentorship at school (a frequent pattern for the early DREAMers), or sometimes simply an extroverted personality which inclines the youth toward leadership roles during the period when s/he is largely indistinguishable from peers.



## Emotions functioning as explicit objects or goals within the organization

There are at least two ways that emotions function as the explicit objects or goals within these organizations. First these organizations hold and enact the view that emotional engagement with state actors and, particularly, with members of the public is a, if not the, central means of generating support for immigrant rights. One of the most striking patterns since the enactment SB 1070 has been the progressive transposition of pro-immigrant politics into an affective register. The regulation of immigrants through vehicles such as SB 1070 has long been infused with emotion; but at the time the law was enacted the most conspicuous expressions of or appeals to emotion were being made by anti-immigrant forces. The campaign for SB 1070 was a sustained effort to arouse fear, anger, and disgust against undocumented immigrants. Sponsor Russell Pearce repeatedly conflated immigrants crossing the border to find work with members of drug cartels bringing patterns of violence then terrorizing Mexico to Arizona. He and allies described dangers to ranchers at the border, to police assaulted or killed by “illegals,” and to members of the public subject to rape, child sexual assault and other depredations perpetrated by recent migrants. Supporters also spoke to subtler fears of a loss of cultural control by referencing the “tide” or “invasion” of Mexican immigrants coming over the border, or the numbers of children crowding state elementary and secondary schools. Opponents of SB 1070 in the legislature conducted a highly objectivist campaign, challenging Pearce’s imagery with statistics on the low crime rates in immigrant neighborhoods, and immigrants contributions to the economy. Even as the law was passed, and protest marches and rallies began, the emotional tone of pro-immigrant forces was careful and restrained. Latino marchers – an indistinguishable group of citizens, residents, and undocumented immigrants – manifested dignity rather than anger, indignation or outrage, and carried American flags and placards expressing their humanity, their affirmation of American values, or their desire to work. It was only as undocumented students began to “come out of the shadows” and identify themselves in public campaigns – first in support of the DREAM Act, and later in protests over anti-immigrant enforcement in Arizona, that pro-immigrant appeals took on a strongly emotional character.

Drawing on a set of practices and understandings (or in Seiben’s term, cultural resources) that became central in the LGBT movement, DREAM activists reasoned that “coming out” as undocumented would put a human face on the movement, and would defy the legally-supported shaming that had succeeded in keeping many undocumented immigrants isolated, intimidated, and silent (Seif (2012), Cuison Villazor (ms, 2013)). Thus, particularly in protest events – such as the 2010 sit-in at the Arizona offices of Senator John McCain -- DREAMers began explicitly to identify themselves as undocumented. Yet this self-identification was only part of the strategy that undocumented activists embraced. Once self-identified, undocumented youth also engaged in public self-narration: they shared with audiences at public events painful and often intimate details of their lives as undocumented. Here these activists mobilized resources not only from LGBT activism but from the second-wave feminist movement (in which women surmounted stigma and sexual shame to narrate, often in vivid and concrete terms, the details of their victimization) and from the mass meetings of the civil rights movement (in which participants spoke of the sacrifices and challenges involved in becoming “first class citizens”). Although the narratives varied widely – some were about being unable to afford college, or find a job, others

focused on the detention or deportation of family members – they had common structural elements: not only a revelation of what it meant to live without rights or opportunities in the state of Arizona, but an affirmation of the strength and potential for resistance that the speaker had found in collective action. These narratives traced a trajectory of growing empowerment through activist organizations, a pattern which elicited the sympathy and the admiration of listeners, and invited them to join in the effort to bring about change. These stories were often charged with emotion, fueled not simply by the pain or partial transcendence of difficult experience but by the tension of self-revelation, particularly when or where it was not clear how law enforcement officials would respond. The immediacy of these narratives – the affective highs and lows they communicated – often provoked a powerful response in listeners. Like civil rights, feminist, and LGBT activists before them, undocumented students saw the potential in that kind of palpable emotional connection with audiences. Sharing “stories of self” became a hallmark of the undocumented students’ movement. UWD and affiliated organizations such as A describe a participant’s personal story as one of the greatest resources s/he brings to public action. As one activist from A observed:

...the power of the story is so important. In every single training that I’ve ever done or every single training that I’ve ever attended, the story of self is always there. It’s so important, and you can motivate and mobilize an entire community based on stories. Of course, you need facts to back up those stories and to reinforce it to the people that are more business-minded, but everyone has a heart, and you can reach out to them through those stories.

Even organizations like L, which use personal stories more selectively in their campaigns, argue that they can be crucial helping both participants and listeners to understand the stakes of pro-immigrant politics.

This affective turn in pro-immigrant activism means that new participants, who have learned to respond to legal constraints on undocumented immigrants with fear, shame, and self-isolation, have to internalize a new appraisal of their status. If they are going to be able to acknowledge their status and narrate elements of their story, they have to loosen the hold of the stigma that has been legally and socially attached to that status, and develop a new set of affective responses to being undocumented. This new set of responses varies among organizations, but has certain recurrent themes. Being undocumented is not simply a legal status, but an identity, which is widely shared. While it can be the source of fear (of law enforcement action), pain (of family separation) or frustration (of personal goals), it can also be the source of pride and of power. Living as an undocumented immigrant, one gains resourcefulness, tenacity, and the ability to surmount obstacles; by working together, undocumented activists can achieve voice and learn to exert (collective) influence in ways that are unattainable by even the most accomplished youth acting alone. By speaking of and protesting their condition, undocumented activists can raise public consciousness and create social, political and legal change. The affective turn also means that new activists have to become comfortable with emotionally direct or revelatory styles of communication. Many of the practices of both A and L are designed to facilitate this affective reappraisal of being undocumented, and the emotional transparency that developing and utilizing it requires.

A welcomes new members at its bi-weekly general meetings. New participants may first join a chapter and attend its meetings; some report that it is when they attend a general meeting that they feel they have really “joined” the organization. The general meeting is held in the front room of A’s offices, a small space for the 40+ people who often crowd the room. The close friendships among many of those present are evident: people greet each other with hugs and exclamations, the noise level in the room before and after the meeting can be intense. The house “rules” are posted at the front, and sometimes discussed by the meeting’s leader. Familiar rules like “one mic” (only one person talks at a time) and “stand up, stand down” (don’t hog the airtime), and less familiar variants like “don’t yuk my yum” (show respect for the preferences and judgments of others ,even if you don’t share them), are designed to foster careful listening, broad participation, and warm reception. Meetings routinely include introductions and icebreakers, which help members to feel comfortable with each other and often require humorous and trivial forms of revelation: members are asked not only their name but their favorite superhero, or are invited to play a round of “two truths and a lie.” Most meetings also feature a “DREAMer’s Story”: a member of the group comes to the front and shares an experiential narrative. This story – like the stories that DREAMers share in public settings – often has a recognizable structure. It begins with a difficulty, or experience of suffering, produced by lack of legal status, proceeds to a turning point which often involves a move toward collective action, and concludes with some change or improvement produce by organizing with others. The story is received enthusiastically by members: they listen intently if the narrator struggles with memory or emotion, snapping quietly to show support or agreement; as the narrator proceeds to the moment of victory or change, the snaps grow louder and are sometimes joined by laughter or shouts of affirmation. This “DREAMer’s story” allows established members to learn more about one of their number, experience the intimacy of this form of storytelling, take heart from a story of undocumented progress. For new members however, it communicates a more basic kind of message – a message that has substantive and affective dimensions. Being undocumented is a condition that is pervasive and shared, that it can be a source of connection as well as isolation, and that when one acts together with others to resist its harshest effects, it can be a source of efficacy and pride. And revelation of that identity is not simply or even primarily a dangerous act, but rather an act that evokes interest, warmth, and support, that is capable of producing change. A similar message is delivered, at a greater pitch of intensity, if a new member volunteers a part of her story. Even minor revelations are met with snaps and murmurs of encouragement or laughter. Fuller narrations are met with rapt attention and audible support. Expressions of strong emotion which sometimes emerge – tearing up, weeping, or shouting in anger or resolve – are attended with warmth and support. An A activist related:

I remember my very first meeting, I ended up telling my story and bawling my eyes out in front of these strangers. And it just felt amazing being able to talk about the kind of struggles that you’re going through to a group of people that know exactly what you’re feeling... They held my hand, and they told me and my sister that it would be okay.

The explicit message is that powerful feelings are understandable in the challenging lives that undocumented immigrants lead; but activists also learn that these strong emotions can be valuable

resources in future political efforts.<sup>7</sup> Nor does this receptive attention end with the formal end of proceedings: new attendees are often swamped by existing members at the conclusion of the meeting. Explicit experiential narratives are not the only occasion for disclosure at this meeting: speakers are highly transparent about the emotions they are feeling as they make their presentations. If they feel nervous as they are speaking, they share that response; if they feel anxious as they try to bring a presentation in both Spanish and English within allocated time limits, they voice that feeling as well. This combination of practices reflects and reinforces the “feeling rules” that characterize the organization: disclosure – of the intimate, painful details of one’s life – is a valuable, indeed imperative, practice. And the expression of a range of emotions – whether fear, frustration, grief or exultation -- is accepted and encouraged.

L greets new members in two contexts. Those interesting in joining the organization sometimes come to the Thursday evening meetings that are held several times a month. But the most focused vehicle for appealing to new members is the “house party.” These gatherings, which are frequently used to recruit or organize new participants for a specific, upcoming campaign – such as a voter registration effort – were originally held at the home of members, to place at greater ease those prospective participants who were not entirely comfortable in public settings. While these meetings may still be held at private homes, they are also now held at L’s offices, reflecting perhaps the greater comfort undocumented youth feel about assembling in public and semi-public places. Attendance at such frequently approaches 20 people. The atmosphere of these house parties may be more subdued at the outset: there are fewer ‘repeat players’ than at weekly meetings, and the many prospective recruits may know only the person who invited them. Food is served, and a humorous icebreaker – one recent example involved a series of group hugs – helps participants to relax. The meeting, frequently led by AG, the undocumented activist who is assuming leadership in the organization, follows an agenda posted at the front of the room: a series of questions and challenges through which AG moves in methodical fashion. The first question “who are we and why do we fight?” connects SB 1070, and what it has meant for families, to the need for better representation to produce better public decisionmaking. In the next part of the program, entitled “My Story,” AG and other discussion leaders share their own stories: painful disclosures about the difficulties of being undocumented and how those circumstances can be changed by collective action. Participants are then divided into groups and asked to share a story of their own. AG offers a narrative structure: think about a challenge, a choice, and an outcome. While she does not specify the content, most participants follow her example and speak of their experience as undocumented youth. This exercise gives new activists an opportunity to share their stories of undocumented experience in a small and supportive setting. The narrative structure utilized also

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<sup>7</sup> This same activist described the role that her emotions played in a later, public presentation: “...So I found myself tearing up in front of 300 people. And then I look out to the audience, and then these 300 people are crying. They’re hugging each other. And *then I knew that that’s when my message would come across the strongest*, and so I told them, “I know we’re here crying, and we’re thinking we’re the victims, but don’t think like that. We’re warriors too. We can get our message across, and you have rights. Don’t let people mistreat you.” (emphasis added).

suggests a new way of understanding that experience: that being undocumented, while sometimes difficult, is a shared circumstance; that you can solve the problems it presents; that you can then experience pride in being an undocumented fighter or undocumented problem-solver. From this point, the discussion moves to “our story”: having heard a range of narratives, participants are asked to identify some common challenges that affect them – as undocumented, as Latino/a, as youth. They are then invited to strategize about the kinds of political action that might generate an effective response. Through this initial exposure to forms of political mobilization, they learn that addressing their circumstances requires action, but before action can take place, coalescence or unity. Once attuned to thinking of themselves as problem-solvers, participants are invited to think about problem-solving collectively and politically. By the time AG reaches the final part of the discussion -- “who is ready to take action?” – most participants are prepared to sign on.

There are important differences between the approaches of A and L, reflected in their early socialization of new members. A’s approach is more purely affective: new members are emotionally embraced by the group and invited into a world where direct affective engagement is at the core of political action. The story of self is the key to that connection – among activists and between them and their prospective audiences – and it is nurtured and cultivated carefully. L’s approach is more cognitive and more traditionally politicizing: new members are being enlisted less as family than as fighters. The story is a vehicle for learning about themselves, and seeing their connection to others. It may also be a vehicle for shaping the views of the public; but there are other routes to political change, such as engaging the more immediate self-interest of voters, or reflecting on the accountability of decisionmakers for bad decisions. Both organizations, however, cultivate a new set of affective responses to the status of being undocumented. Once a source of fear, shame, and isolation, it is reframed as a source of connection, pride, and hope – to be realized through collective action. The story of self is at the very least the vehicle for this kind of connection; the ability to share it – with the emotional transparency that entails – is a capacity undocumented activists should possess.

### **Emotions function as means or conditions of organizing**

As new members begin their work, the organization’s challenge is to get a group of fledgling participants, who glimpse the affective transition that activism requires, to persevere in the highly demanding circumstances of a political campaign. Activism creates a set of practical challenges for those who have never engaged in politics before, and are expected to acquire a broad and deep set of skills on the job. These challenges are complicated for undocumented immigrants who have to accomplish these tasks in the polarized anti-immigrant environment of Arizona. Two kinds of emotions seem central as means to managing this transition. The first is confidence. Confidence, as developed by sociologists of emotion, is an emotion that entails both self-regard and an orientation toward action in the world. Barbalet (1994) argues that confidence involves recognition (by self and others) of qualities that are praiseworthy and access to resources that translate those qualities into efficacy in the world. For newly-politicized undocumented youth, this means developing a sense of competence and efficacy as an activist or organizer. Poudier (2005) argues that institutions can build this sort of confidence through interpersonal engagement, between managers and supervisees, or among peers. But while this kind of

emotion would need to be engendered in any new activist, undocumented activists face additional hurdles. The unpredictable engagements that political action requires – whether with members of the public or agents of the state -- offers forceful reminders of the legal view of undocumented status. These encounters are capable of re-igniting the affective responses that this “legal violence” creates. A kind of fearlessness, which permits undocumented activists to resist the call of that view, is also required. Although they approach it somewhat differently, the practices of both organizations help to foster these emotions.

### Confidence

One of the most striking features of undocumented activism in Arizona is the speed of the trajectory. A teenager who hadn't seen a ballot, read a map, or led a group of people can, a month later, be guiding a team of 10 over a voting district he knows like the back of his hand. One explanation for this rapid trajectory is a pervasive emphasis on learning by doing: with minimal introduction and simulation, new activists are given a task and asked to complete it. Voter registration – which is a gateway activity for many undocumented activists in Phoenix – is a good example. After a hour or two of background and a bit of role-playing, young activists are handed a map, a voter list, a set of registration forms or early voter ballots, and dropped off in a neighborhood. Several hours later, they're picked up and they're expected to have figured it out. There's a bit of tough love to this: one activist reported that during his first day of canvassing, he had gotten so confused about the map that he ended up knocking on only 2 doors in three hours; the director of L didn't hide her concern and disappointment when she picked him up. And organizations don't deny the fact that there are some people who can't rise to this challenge – as one leader put it: this isn't for everyone, and it's good to find that out up front. But that isn't the expectation or the usual state of affairs: in this case the director sat down with the errant canvasser, talked to him about the map, and expressed her complete confidence that the next day he'd get it right. And he did. This example highlights two features common to these groups' approaches: first leaders often use the difficulty of the challenge as a way of conveying their confidence in the potential of the fledgling activist. And second while they challenge their new recruits, they don't permit them to work entirely without a net. Canvassers are sent out in teams of two, so that the novice can draw on the experience of the person who's done it once or twice. And they are almost always debriefed when they finish, so that they can learn from their mistakes, see the positive example of others, and gain a feeling of solidarity -- a sense that there are people behind them in their task. These practices supply the two ingredients of Barbalet's concept of confidence: recognition for the skills and efforts of participants, and access to the collective resources of the organization.

The trajectory after this initial point amplifies these early patterns. For those who are performing well, the escalation of responsibility can be rapid. Someone who is a new recruit today can be a team lead two weeks later, and the lead organizer for an entire campaign a few months down the road. This rapid, progressive uptick in responsibility can be extremely stressful, even for those activists who have a strong sense of commitment to the effort. One A organizer described the feeling of this all-encompassing effort:

working in the campaigns was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life... we had this immense pressure going on from all kinds of different sides as a [team lead] to reach goals to organize. So much was going on at the time, and things were evolving so quickly, it was a struggle trying to keep up with everything, especially since here in Arizona, it's the center of all these immigration groups and all these different bills that come out and we're trying to fight. So it was a lot of information and a lot of different things going on at the same time. But I definitely learned how to multitask and how to run on a little sleep. I'll say that... by the end of it, after the three months, we were completely exhausted. But were we still open and down to go to a protest? Heck, yeah. No matter. You were never too tired for that.

One form of support for this effort comes from a feeling rule embraced by both organizations: it is acceptable, indeed desirable, to operate perpetually just outside your 'comfort zone.' The expectation that one will feel off-balance, pressed, and slightly overwhelmed, as one approaches a range of new tasks can prove reassuring when these uncomfortable feelings arise. Moreover, activists draw sustenance from the oft-repeated view that this experience of being pressed beyond one's current boundaries ultimately produces growth. As one leader in A explained:

I put myself purposely in situations that make me a little uncomfortable so I can become comfortable with them and become stronger that way. And believe me, even now, when I do a news interview or I know that I have to do some sort of presentation, an hour beforehand I will be freaking out and going over everything in my head a billion times. And then once I'm actually there, it disappears and it just flows out of me.<sup>8</sup>

The escalation in demand and responsibility is also facilitated by two organizational practices: "voluntelling" and active competition. "Voluntelling" – a term that was new to me, which I first heard used in A – literally means signing someone up for a responsibility without asking them first. This is pervasive in both organizations, and sometimes it's just a way of getting a job done.<sup>9</sup> But in contexts involving serious responsibility, it means actively promoting those whom leaders believe can handle the challenge. It is facilitated by the fact that performance in these organizations is highly transparent – everybody seems to know how everybody else is doing. At L, for example performance is posted all over the walls: the number of voter registrations or PEVLs (voters signed up for the Permanent Early Voting List) that each canvasser has accumulated. This transparency is a way of fostering accountability, but it is also a means of assessing preparedness for responsibility. In A – a peer-based organization – this form of

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<sup>8</sup> This activist expressed the same philosophy toward those within her team: "what was most rewarding is to see these people come in, these really motivated people who wanted to do something but they didn't know how. And they had this power and this drive, and they were so hard working, and all they needed was a little direction and a little bit of a confidence boost. And [we] put them in situations that made them a bit uncomfortable, but in the end, they just ended up growing."

<sup>9</sup> The first time heard the term, people not present at a meeting were being fingered for leading an 8 am clean-up squad the night after a major fundraising party.

voluntelling can be done in an almost off-hand way. But it is done with full information: people at A have a remarkably informed and nuanced sense of who's good at what (I have frequently heard the same, surprisingly detailed assessments of particular members, from a variety of peers.). At L, which has slightly more hierarchy, and a more explicit culture of mentoring, these decisions tend to be made by one of the two directors. She sees someone who has a particular skill, and finds ways of pressing him to develop it. One young man I interviewed proved to be particularly self-possessed as a canvasser, so one of the directors told him it was time for him to be a team lead. After he did that, she told him it was time for him to organize a rally. Once he had organized the rally, she told him it was time to speak at the rally, and then to engage the attention of a city councilman. The positive regard implicit in this form of voluntelling is widely understood by participants, fueling the positive self-regard of those so selected. Because it happens in a stagewise fashion, and makes the resources of the organization available to the activist as she steps up her game, this practice combines recognition with the resources necessary to translate capacity into action.<sup>10</sup>

The second vehicle for promoting rapid acquisition of new skills, and the positive self-regard that accompanies it, is active competition. This came as a surprise to me, particularly at A, which seemed, in its treatment of new activists, to be more nurturant and empathic than competitive. But at the same meetings where I witnessed the respectful encouragement of experiential storytelling, I saw activists chiding and provoking each other to better performance. In one of the most memorable examples, a high school-age, Vietnamese-American activist who is a citizen was asked to speak about an ongoing, highly successful canvassing effort he was leading. He responded with a challenge to the other members, the gist of which was "I'm a citizen, so when it comes to immigration reform, this election doesn't bear on me the way it does on all of you – and if I'm out there getting all these signatures, you damn well ought to be, too!" My first reaction was to be indignant on behalf of those being lectured: where did this *child*, who had neither the experience of being undocumented, nor of living as Latino in Joe Arpaio's Arizona, come off lecturing his hardworking fellows? Then I noticed that people were *loving* this throw-down: there was widespread, approving laughter, and the snapping was escalating in volume. Having witnessed this, I began to notice other things: that A had a regular "DREAMer of the month" competition in which top performers went head to head; that activists regularly spoke about challenging their team-mates to gather the most signatures on a particular date or at a particular location. And there were those figures on the wall at L, listed according to the name of the canvasser, and available for all to see. Competition in these organizations seems to incite participants to step up their performance. But it serves a number of other purposes. First, it is one expression of a camaraderie than binds activists to the organization. Many youth explain that what fuels the 12 hour days, or months

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<sup>10</sup> One young organizer in L, who was developing skills as a media contact, was approached by a news organization to speak about A's lawsuit against Governor Jan Brewer, for her executive order denying driver's licenses to DREAMers. Although he knew little about the details of the lawsuit, the directors of L felt it would be valuable for him to take the call. As he began to research the issue, both directors of L, and ultimately the president of A worked alongside him, sending him background information, links to online articles, and other resources that would help him in composing his comments.



without a family dinner or television show, is the friendship, energy, and company they find within the organization. However hard they are working, they are never doing it alone; there is always someone to decompress with when the day is over. Sibling-like competition among people who spend long days together is an expression of that connection. Second, competition fuels pride and confidence in the resources of the organization: even if you are not the best at a particular task, you are working closely with someone who is, and her efforts benefit the cause and reflect well on the organization.<sup>11</sup> Activists at both A and L regularly brag about the accomplishments of other members of their organization. Finally, competition routinizes, or renders manageably mundane, tasks that might otherwise feel like risky undertakings. As several activists have noted, they never know when the person behind the door will hear your story of self, pick up the phone and call the sheriff or immigration. Competing for PEVLs is a way of keeping your mind focused on the task before you, and not on the sobering prospect that might lie behind the next door.

### Fearlessness

As this last example suggests, the undocumented activist – for all the comparability in skill set – is not precisely like the suburban youth canvassing for Obama. Disgruntled canvasees do occasionally call law enforcement; they also deride canvassers as “illegals” or “wetbacks.”<sup>12</sup> Many things can happen in a public campaign which invoke the danger, or the stigma, associated with undocumented status. Activists must be able to summon a kind of fearlessness – an ability to confront and withstand risks that are specific to their embattled identities – as well as more familiar forms of confidence. Organizational practices help activists to cultivate such fearlessness in two kinds of ways. Many of the same techniques that help them to routinize a steep learning curve also help them to manage the greater hazards of public action. Competition is one example, youthful exhilaration and camaraderie are another. When young canvassers can look forward to a group debriefing at the end of the day, the slur one person experienced becomes one more thing to dissect with friends, along with the man who kept a team in his living room for close to an hour complaining about the lack of streetlights on his block. Moreover, the strategies activists learn to diffuse frustration and keep their focus on the task, from deep breathing to the art of the polite disengagement, can be used for stigmatizing encounters as well as for more

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<sup>11</sup> One activist in A, well-regarded for his skill in obtaining PEVLs, described this competition and its collective benefits: “in two hours, I was able to get about 80 pledges ... it was the first shift. The other two shifts gave me around 150. So that was very exciting. And also, the excitement, I saw it in my peers as well. And we started creating competitions to see who would get more. And I remember M, she’s one of our canvassers, volunteers, she would always pick at me and tell me, “Hey, you’re not going to [win this]. I’d better get more than you.” But I knew the numbers were going to help.”

<sup>12</sup> Although civic engagement campaigns generally target Latino voters and neighborhoods, there are inevitably non-Latinos among those approached as well. In addition, while this is not the primary pattern, Latinos who are citizens occasionally demonstrate hostility toward those who are undocumented.

quotidian aggravations.<sup>13</sup> The best canvassers become skilled at simply moving on to the next encounter, no matter what the problem with the present one might be. Even the feeling rule that it is beneficial to work persistently outside one's comfort zone can help to manage the anxieties of organizing while undocumented. Discomfort about the possibility of a risky or stigmatizing encounter comes to be tolerated in the same way that new participants handle discomfort about reading a map, speaking in public, or managing a team.

Supplementing these general strategies, however, are responses more specific to undocumented identity. Debriefings and supervision by team leads remind undocumented activists of the distinctiveness of their contribution. For every story about a door slammed or an epithet muttered, there are half a dozen about citizens who marvel and the commitment of undocumented canvassers, or come to understand the stakes of voting in a way that they did not before. Fledgling activists are affirmed in the conviction that providing the story of self, putting a human face to the controversy – personally engaging the undecided voter or member of the public – is something that is not fungible, that cannot be done by someone without that particular experience. Activists also develop a deep belief in the power of the organization: they are never alone when they assume risks, and the organization has the power and agility to respond if they face an immediate danger.<sup>14</sup> The reach and influence of collective action – and of their organization in particular – are qualities that are brought home to participants in A through many of the group's efforts. At one meeting on a petition campaign, a team leader projected a powerpoint chart, which demonstrated the numbers who could be reached if each activist contacted five friends and family members, who then contacted five more; at another, a room full of participants took out their computers and sat together until they had collectively Facebooked several thousand people for an upcoming fundraiser. Members of A believe this power can be mobilized on their behalf if they encounter serious problems: they are quick to tell the story of a successful national social media campaign which was organized to prevent the deportation of one leader's mother. While activists are palpably aware such efforts will not always succeed, they provide a line of defense and, perhaps more importantly, a sense of solidarity. Activists feel supported, rather than alone, when they take risks associated with their status. Finally, new activists are spurred to action by the emulation of their most fearless colleagues. Virtually everyone I speak to tells me of a team member or leader

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<sup>13</sup> One L organizer described his strategies for remaining focused in the face of hostile responses: "I would just say to myself, "Breathe. Breathe." And for the most part I would just tell them, "Thank you very much for your time," and just walk away. Even though when I was a few houses after the house I would just curse myself out and even scream sometimes... You know, just try to get the anger out and be ready for the next house... Just to get the anger out. That way it wouldn't stay with me."

<sup>14</sup> One L activist related a story about a neighborhood resident who called the police when he witnessed the activist canvassing. The activist explained his project to the policewoman, who was ultimately sympathetic, and the problem was diffused. But activists at L also readily note the skill of M, one of the directors of the organization, at sorting out conflicts when the police are called in response to canvassing.

whose persistence, innovation, or courage has been an inspiration; many explicitly draw the conclusion, “if X can do this, why shouldn’t I?”

### Belonging to the Political Community

A final affective transformation required by undocumented activism involves participants’ relation to the political community. Undocumented activists are not only working socially to confront stigma by revealing their status to friends and community members. They are also making demands on a state which, in the case of Arizona, has used its lawmaking power to deprive undocumented immigrants of any form of benefit, recognition, or membership. Developing a feeling of authorization to confront the state requires that members acquire a sense of membership or belonging: a feeling on the part of undocumented activists that they are part of the political community to which the state, whether Arizona or the federal government, should be accountable. To foster this feeling of belonging, undocumented students’ organizations take the pre-existing sense of social belonging experienced by most undocumented youth and extend it to political institutions and practices, through education and the forms of direct engagement in the political process required by many pro-immigrant campaigns.

Undocumented youth experience an ambivalent relation to the broader society in which they reside (Abrego 2011; Gleeson and Gonzales, 201?). Due primarily to the guarantee of K-12 education, most have experienced a childhood and adolescence in which they felt a relatively uncomplicated sense of membership in their community and relation to the citizens and legal residents around them. They learned to speak the language and they integrated dominant social norms: depending on the degree of assimilation to which they aspired, their embrace of mainstream popular culture – in music, entertainment, or food – paralleled or eclipsed their embrace of cultural norms preserved in their families and neighborhoods. While this sense of social membership is complicated as high schoolers encounter the constraints imposed by undocumented status – or as one activist put it, “fall from the cloud of normal existence” – it remains a resource that organizations can draw on as they orient their members toward the political system. When undocumented activists tell me that they “are Americans, in every way except the papers,” they proffer as evidence their fluency in language and popular culture, as well as the broad efforts at self-improvement that they see as reflecting the American ethos.

Undocumented students’ organizations take this sense of social belonging, and extend it to political institutions.<sup>15</sup> This occurs first through the substantive education that both A and L undertake. When activists in L begin a civic engagement campaign, they learn about the institution whose members are being elected. In a city council election, for example, the walls of L are covered with maps identifying the city’s council districts, and the particular districts being contested. Canvassers learn about the kind of issues city council members are responsible for, both so they understand the stakes of the election, and

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<sup>15</sup> In terms of the four strands of citizenship articulated by Bosniak (2000), one might say that this strategy takes *citizenship as identity* or *solidarity* (which exists, as Leti Volpp (2013) explains, on the terrain of culture), and extends it to *citizenship as political activity*, in service of the ultimate goal(s) of securing *citizenship as rights* or *citizenship as formal legal status*.

can engage those they will encounter in neighborhoods. At A, the process of civic education is broad and ongoing. At each general meeting, members receive a federal and a state/local update, which involves a description (complete with power point slides) of the institutions involved in decisionmaking. At a recent meeting, for example, the discussion leader asked participants how many votes would be required in the House of Representatives to discharge the immigration bill recently voted by the Senate (a 50-year old mother called out the correct answer). Later, in a discussion of an effort to obtain in-state tuition for undocumented community college students, participants learned how many representatives sat on the Maricopa County Commission. This exposure creates a sense of familiarity with and proximity to the institutions of government.

But the most robust sense of connection emerges through the experience of activism itself. The varied campaigns of undocumented students' organizations place activists in roles that facilitate both political participation and political accountability. Although they do not themselves exercise the vote – one important formal vehicle for connecting these two parts of the political process – their performance of active roles in both facets of that process creates important benefits for undocumented activists. The visible, accurate appearance of engagement enables them to “perform citizenship”: to appear in the many of vital the public roles we ascribe to citizens, as a means of persuading members of the public that they deserve more formal opportunities. But the immediate experience of engagement provides a separate, affective benefit. Undocumented youth develop a sense of investment in and ownership of the political process, a strong commitment to the experiences of voice and demand that make it work.

In the civic engagement campaigns mounted by A and L, activists play many different roles in facilitating the vote. They explain to low-propensity voters the stakes of an election, surmounting inertia and pessimism by sharing stories of their struggles or identifying issues that voters care about. They extoll the greater ease and predictability of voting by early ballots. They remind those registered when it is time to vote, they collect their ballots, they answer questions about filling out those ballots. In A's “I am a DREAM Voter” campaign, canvassers persuade those already registered to vote on their behalf on DREAM-related issues. This intimate and sustained exposure to the experience of voting, and active role in facilitating the votes of others, gives activists a sense of political engagement and political voice. Activists at A routinely observe that they have political voice, because people – activated by their campaign -- were willing to vote on their behalf. As one activist declared

Don't you dare tell me that I don't have a voice... [because] I have family members; I have friends; I have community leaders, community members who care about me, and they're going to be voting for something that I care [about]. I do have a voice in that sense, because even though I might not have the right to vote, I have made the choice to empower those who can.

Activists in L point to the people they have registered or turned out to vote, who would not otherwise have voted. One activist, who helped a voter to understand the issues on her ballot, explained, “it was like even though I'm not able to vote, I pretty much voted... [because] I made it possible.” Another enthused, “every time I signed someone up to vote, it was like I voted ... [I felt like] I voted 100 times.” As one L organizer explained, enabling people to vote can create an even more intimate sense of

connection with the political process: “the way I see it is a lot of people that don’t have the privilege to vote are the most engaged, to make the people that actually have to privilege realize that they have that.”

Undocumented activists also develop an appreciation of the responsibility of public officials and a desire to hold them accountable. Canvassing is one important vehicle for appreciating this relation. Canvassers who returned several times to the same neighborhood became familiar with the issues that affected residents who lived there. After hearing people voice the same complaints about street lights, or local parks, or other issues that had not been addressed, and activists began to think about who was responsible and what could be done. As one L organizer explained:

And I can go to any street, and I can tell you ... that this neighborhood wanted this... maybe they said roads are cracked, they’re old, they need fixing ...And I want to go up to somebody and tell them, “You know what? This is going on, and this community wants this, this, and this. How do I know? I knock on these doors. I go personally, and I talk to them, and this is what they want. You don’t believe me? I have it on paper, this and that. And if you want, we can even go up to these communities, and I invite you to come with me” ... three years later, this is what’s burning inside of me. I want to hold somebody responsible for what’s going on.

Other kinds of campaigns can also hone activists’ appreciation of political accountability. Direct action campaigns by both organizations position activists directly in the path of state and federal officials as they voice their demands. When members A sit in at Sen. John McCain’s office, or members of L disrupt Gov. Jan Brewer’s public appearances to contest her executive order on drivers’ licenses, their posture is one of protest, aimed at officials whom they do not expect to comply. But their broader stance is one of holding elected officials accountable: these representatives are responsible for decisions that are harming the community, and activists are there to call them to account. Accountability is also at the fore when members of A go to Washington to lobby members of Congress on the DREAM Act, or utilize social media to mobilize support for immigration reform or fight deportations. Though undocumented activists cannot hold elected officials accountable with their own votes, they learn to articulate their demands in ways that engage the attention and participation of those who do. By gaining deep familiarity with the political process, and devising indirect yet innovative ways of achieving voice and holding officials accountable, undocumented activists develop a strong sense of connection to or belonging within the political community.

### **Emotions as a Consequence of Undocumented Activism - “Undocumented and Unafraid”**

Emotions, finally, emerge as consequences of undocumented activism. One set of emotions on which I will focus is the state of being “undocumented and unafraid.” This term is used in a number of ways by the undocumented students’ movement. It is sometimes used as an “empowerment term,” or term of public self-presentation. Used in this way, it captures the emboldened or even defiant state in which undocumented youth refuse to remain in the shadows, and present themselves to the public, including to those law enforcement officials who see them as “illegal” or as violating the law. Often

mobilized in public demonstrations -- particularly instances of civil disobedience -- it can be used as a rallying cry, which often takes on a performative resonance. Demonstrators waiting to be arrested often shout “undocumented and unafraid!” to bolster their resolve. As they remain in place, they begin to recognize that others see them as unafraid (even if they are, as one activist put it, “dying inside”); and this may buoy their confidence. As the shout is taken up by activists surrounding them, this form of solidarity may ease their sense of facing something fearsome alone and may consequently allow them to feel less afraid.

But the term also evokes a broader experience: it describes the affective and cognitive process undocumented youth undergo as they mobilize the new identities created by their activism to confront a legal system that considers them in a very different way. Youth who join organizations like A and L are supported in seeing their undocumented identities in a new way, as a source of difficulty, but also of strength, solidarity, and transformation. But even as they are forming identities and affective stances that stand apart from legal construction or “beside the law,” they remain aware of the ways that their status has been constructed by and through law. For some, they face a series of progressive challenges to this new self-conception, as they encounter hostile canvasees, counter-demonstrators, anti-immigrant legislators, and perhaps law enforcement officials. For others, the challenge comes more abruptly, if they or a family member are subject to detention or deportation. For many of those with whom I have spoken, the term captures the process they go through and the point at which they arrive, as they seek to reconcile the new affective and identitarian resources with which activism has provided them with the constraining and stigmatizing view imposed by law.<sup>16</sup>

The first thing activists emphasize is that becoming “undocumented and unafraid” is an inevitably incomplete process. Most activists never extricate themselves entirely from their fear. It is daunting to live as undocumented in Arizona, and it is even more frightening to acknowledge that identity publicly. One activist discussed these fears in concrete terms: “[even now] there are things that make me afraid. I mean, speaking publicly is very scary. Sharing your story is very scary. Having a one-on-one civil debate with an anti-immigrant person is very scary.” Another captured the larger sense of risk and precariousness:

I’m not going to lie...I’m a little afraid. I’m a little afraid of losing everything I have right now. Like I said, ... my family has felt that danger of separation not so long ago. And it gives you the understanding that it is real. It’s not just something that people are talking about. It is real. You do see tears. You lose hope... When you are talking about family and your mother, your dad, your son, it’s not just playing games...

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<sup>16</sup> For this reason, I have thought that the term was an important one to examine and I have asked many of those interviewees who identify themselves as undocumented an open-ended question like “this is a term I’ve heard used a lot in this movement, can you tell me what it means to you?” The following discussion reflects some of the more evocative answers I have received.

But being undocumented and unafraid, for these activists, means using what they have learned as activists to act in spite of these fears, and to resist the stigmatizing identity imposed by law. Some draw on the self-understanding and self-realization that arise from engaging in challenging efforts. One activist declared: “[a]s time went on and I got more involved, I realized ... I’m not going to let what other people say about me decide who I am. Because I know who I am.” Another elaborated:

[These things may be] terrifying, but ... I refuse to be a victim of my circumstances. I refuse to be turned into this little person because of a situation that I’m in. And so I’m undocumented, and I have had some immense challenges in my life ... [but now] I appreciate the situations that I’ve been put in and the strength that has come out of that ... And so the whole undocumented and unafraid is saying that I’m undocumented but I refuse to stay quiet any longer.

For these activists, their experience permitted them to put the legal view of their status in perspective: it became the view of people who didn’t understand who they were, or who sought to turn them into “this little person” because of “a situation [they were] in.” The law’s view, to them, becomes an incomplete, contingent view that they can counter with their greater self-knowledge and self-possession. For others, being undocumented and unafraid is about mobilizing the strength of the collectivity that surrounds you when you publicly acknowledge your status:

... when somebody goes and protests or sits on the street saying that they’re undocumented and unafraid, I don’t think their intention is to be disrespectful to the police or to the law. They just want to transmit that message that we are going to be strong and that we are together. Perhaps the message we have is that we are not alone. That’s what not being afraid is.

Through coalescence with others, undocumented activists find the strength to push back against the constraining vision of the law. For still others, the process of becoming “undocumented and unafraid” is about seeing the law in a new way: not as an uncontroversial, defining force, but as a human artifact that can be changed by the humans who made it. One activist spoke eloquently about the emotional effects of what Abrego and Menjivar have called “legal violence”: “I feel that this is something that affects us on the emotional level, psychologically. Feeling like you are less than other people, feeling like you do not belong or you’re not supposed to be here is really—I don’t know—like tiring. Sometimes I did become very overwhelmed [by] this...” But she noted that her experience as an activist with A had given her a different perspective both on herself and on the law:

I feel that going through that process of being undocumented and unafraid really helps us remember that we are human, just like everybody else... if our presence is illegal here, that’s something that can be changed. Because we make the laws, the human beings are the ones who made the immigration laws.

An activist who is unafraid in this sense has developed the sense of agency or authorization and the view of law that will permit her to play a role in changing it.