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Digital DREAM: the DREAMer Identity, Struggle, and Political Engagement on Facebook

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**Digital DREAM: the DREAMer Identity, Struggle, and Political
Engagement on Facebook**

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Dedication

This is dedicated to Ady and Gabi. They have been there for the good, the bad, and the ugly, and I love them unconditionally for that. This is also dedicated to every DREAMer in this country and to the homeless people who shared the Yarborough Library with me this past two years. We are all equally displaced. I hope we someday find a good place to stay.

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Digital DREAM: the DREAMer Identity, Struggle, and Political Engagement on Facebook

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2016

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This dissertation seeks to understand the role Facebook plays in the (re)creation of online identities of members of the DREAMer community, the way their undocumented status impacts their usage of the social networking site, and how code switching is used. Through in-depth interviews, this study gathered non-identifying data in order to try to understand the motivations and actions of DREAMers while on Facebook, how they define themselves, and whether the battle for citizenship and the DREAM Act play a role in the way they behave on the social networking sites. The data gathered was analyzed using discourse analysis and the results were evaluated using Social Identity Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Chicana Theory. Furthermore, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was used to explore the way in which limited access to the opportunities that citizens of the United States have, as well as economic and personal issues, have an effect on the way DREAMers behave on Facebook. Lastly, this study questions whether a popular image of the DREAMers as a group actively seeking citizenship applied to all participants or if another experience merited attention.

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Introduction

With 1.59 billion users worldwide as of 2016, Facebook remains the world's most popular social networking site (www.facebook.com). Although it originally started as a local exchange for students at Harvard University, it grew exponentially, including a growth spurt of 22% in users between 2012 and 2013, and now attracts participants from a wide array of countries, ages, occupations, education levels, and sociopolitical backgrounds. The most recent data points to continuous growth. According to the information offered by the company for the first quarter of 2016, all users presented double-digit percentage increments:

- Daily active users (DAUs) were 1.09 billion on average for March 2016, an increase of 16% year-over-year.
- Mobile DAUs were 989 million on average for March 2016, an increase of 24% year-over-year.
- Monthly active users (MAUs) were 1.65 billion as of March 31, 2016, an increase of 15% year-over-year.
- Mobile MAUs were 1.51 billion as of March 31, 2016, an increase of 21% year-over-year.¹

Today, Facebook defines itself as a place without boundaries where connections can be made "with people all over the world." However, for some users, the social networking

¹ Facebook's first quarter financial report: <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2016/Facebook-Reports-First-Quarter-2016-Results-and-Announces-Proposal-for-New-Class-of-Stock/default.aspx>

site addresses much more than that: It is a place for connecting with a home left behind; a forum for the discussion of political ideas; a tool that can be used to achieve something; a digital space that allows for the constant (re)construction of identity and the (re)definition of self, and an arena to engage in social change, among other things. One of these groups is the DREAMer community.

DREAMers are individuals who meet the general requirements of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, an legislative proposal for a multi-phase process that would first grant conditional residency to undocumented immigrants and, upon meeting further qualifications like joining the army or graduating college, permanent residency. The DREAMers are mostly Mexican and are found in big immigrant-receiving states with large unauthorized populations, such as California and Texas. They belong to an age range that would, according to data from the Pew Research Center, put them in the top group in terms of internet usage.² This dissertation looks at the way they use Facebook, the role of language, and the way the social networking site impacts both their online identity (re)creation processes and the way they deal with their undocumented status while using the site. With 1.7 million unauthorized immigrants belonging to this group, it is crucial to understand the way they are using, interacting, and defining themselves in one of the world's most popular social networking sites.

² <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/latest-stats/>

History

Created in 2004, the Facebook platform allowed students to create a personal page and use it to share experiences, leave and receive messages, and keep in contact with acquaintances. Facebook took off almost immediately:

In little time, Facebook extended to other Universities such as MIT or Boston University, and in September of 2006 it was opened to any person who had an e-mail address, provoking an explosion in social networking until reaching 34 million users worldwide. There are many motives for the success: simple yet eye-catching interface, easy configuration and functionality, totally personalized privacy...and the most important, it's an open platform for developers in which anyone can develop an application, share it and integrate it on Facebook³.

A chronology simplifies Facebook's history and clarifies its waves:

- 1- First wave 2004-2006: used by college students.
- 2- Second wave September 26, 2006 – 2007: popularity skyrockets. Because anyone with a valid e-mail address can join, Facebook grows exponentially and surpasses MySpace as the world's most popular SNS. Used mainly by college students, young professionals and recent graduates.
- 3- Third wave 2008 – present: Older professionals and family members join. Facebook is used by some universities during the application process. Potential employers use it as part of the evaluation process for potential employees. Marketing communication adapted to its format in the interest of capitalistic

³ From the article What is Facebook?: <http://liboh.es/?p=343e>

expansion. Other institutions and government agencies integrate it into their processes.

Today, the multiplicity of actions that can be performed on Facebook and the growing inventiveness of its users creates a never-ending plethora of causes, fan pages, applications, and groups.

Since the Internet, especially in urban areas, is now as popular and present as television and other media, if not more so, predictably communication scholars and other researchers turn their interests to the digital public sphere. In fact, given the popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, some scholars conclude that the Internet is even more popular than other media amongst young people. (Steinfeld et al., 2008; Steinberg & Kincheloe 1998; Curran, Fenton & Freedman, 2016).

Facebook and Identity

Driven by participants, Facebook became a digital space where individuals explore, expand, transform, (re)define, and (re)create their identities. From the way they engage language to the images and content they share, to the groups they associate with and the causes they choose to support or oppose, users can spend as much time as available (re)designing themselves, creating a public image, forging a visual identity/discourse, and transforming their identity (Papacharissi 2011; Cunningham, Brody, Davis et al 2012; Uimonen 2013; Seargent & Tagg 2015;). In fact, elements like visual identity on

Facebook have been recognized as indicative of a visual turn in digital media in general and social media in particular (Mirzoeff 2009).

Identity is frequently defined very basically as a set of attributes an individual possesses (Faith, 2007), but sociologists (Harman, 1956; Lawler, 2007; Taylor, 2010; Deaux, 2015) and anthropologists (Lindholm, 1946; Cohen, 1994; Luhrmann, 2015) have studied and tried to define identity for decades, constantly adding layers to the definition, pluralizing the prisms through which it can be studied, and expanding as well as explaining the multiplicity of ways in which it plays a role in a numerous academic fields that range from communication and psychology to anthropology, sociology, and law.

Among the earliest works with a lasting impact and still cited are those of sociologist Peter Berger, whose seminal works *An Invitation to Sociology* (1963) and *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967, Berger & Luckmann) are still relevant. It posits that identity perennially shifts and morphs as a response to the conditions that surround an individual and the social landscapes in which he or she resides and develops.

Furthermore, and compatible with the themes of this research project, Berger argued that identity changes in response to its existence within a group and through socialization:

Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality and, like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it. Societies have histories in the course of which specific identities emerge; these histories are, however, made by men with specific identities. (1963, p. 194)

While the preceding definition and those discussed in the literature review were chosen to offer a theoretical framework of identity, they are not the only definitions offered. In fact, the literature on identity is so voluminous that there is literature dedicated to trying to bring all of it together. The plethora of definitions stems from the diversity of academic fields that conduct research involving identity. These scholars, affiliated to a multiplicity of specific fields within disciplines that belong to social science and humanities, all share an interest in questions concerning identity and thus are forced to either adapt or adopt existing definition, rework and expand on said definition, or, more rarely, come up with entirely new definitions that will allow them to frame their work properly (Hogg and Abrams, 1988; Taylor, 1989; Deng, 1995; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Jenkins, 1996; Hall, 1989).

Within political science, for example, which deals with systems of government and the analysis of political activity, engagement, and behavior, all research deals with people, their ideas and motivations, and the way they interact with others and themselves, thus forcing researchers to regularly engage with the concept of identity. Students of American politics, especially in recent years, have conducted a lot of new research in the areas of identity politics and the places where it meets sexuality, religion, gender, and race. Given the current political landscape, where these issues have been brought to the forefront of most political discussion, this is not likely to stop. In fact, these issues, along with nationalism and national identity, will probably continue to be dealt with, especially

in fields such as comparative politics, where identity is crucial to understanding nationalism, political participation, political protests, and ethnic conflict.⁴

Comparing identity definitions is the perfect way of reaching the definition that best works for any given research. However, in doing so, those other views need to be addressed because they are in conflict or because they reinforce the definition being used. For example, Hogg and Abrams define identity as “people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (1988, p. 2). In this case, while the definition is not new, it gets at the core of identity. In the same vein, Taylor’s classic philosophical text *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989) offers one of those definitions that are hard to ignore and possess implications that carry it into contemporary research with undiminished importance: “My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose.” (p. 27). Similarly, Deng’s (1995) definition, while given in the context of ethnic violence, complicates it further and adds a few elements that are crucial to the way researchers in all academic areas see identity now. He defines it as “the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture” (Deng 1995, p. 1). Jenkins, whose definitions and work on social identity theory will be discussed later in this research, both pluralizes and further expands the meaning of identity while placing it inside society by

⁴ For more on this, see *Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity* (Deng & Laitin 1995) and *Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War* (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

defining it as “the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities” (Jenkins 1996, p. 4). Lastly, perhaps the researcher/thinker/academic who most approaches the fluid definition of identity used in this research is Stuart Hall, who believes thinking about identity as a “fixed point” is a “mistake” and adds Otherness to the equation: “Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself.” (Hall 1989, p. 6).

Regardless of the definition being used, researchers of online identity construction find the same phenomena that researchers in other fields have found and also have to deal with mediated identities and the possibilities and new areas of study created by online platforms and social networking sites. (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Marwick 2013; Aresta and Pedro, et al 2015; Weber and Dixon 2016). Moreover, research pertaining to online behavior and identity construction consistently demonstrates that identity is not a monolithic entity or a set list of attributes (Lingel and Naaman 2014; Hu, Zhao and Huang 2014; Nagel and Frith 2015). Instead, scholars in new media and those in the medical field (Davies 2007; Mehdizadeh 2010; Papacharissi 2010; Yang and Brown 2016) consider identity to be an ever-changing, dynamic, multilayered, and ongoing process affected by biology, heritage, culture, politics, group dynamics, class and sociopolitical standing, to mention but a few influences. This subject will be developed more deeply in the Theoretical Framework section and in the words of selected interviewees.

While identity in a social environment has a rich history of academic inquiry, the Internet era brought forth a variety of changes that include the possibility of different, alternative personae and the ability to push back elements like gender and age to a secondary, much less crucial role, that would be true in face to face relationships. In fact, the Internet itself, as Nakamura (2002, 2008) and Daniels (2009) have shown, now provides a place where racial identity, to name one element, can be (re)constructed.

Social networking sites such as Facebook give users the ability to develop identity profiles that can constantly be revised, altered, and restructured. These identity profiles can subsequently be shared publicly and linked to other friends' profile pages and the users' other online social media presence and accounts (i.e. blogs, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram etc.). Each individual page may consist of multiple forms of self-expression. These forms include language use, activities, photographs, links to external content from any place on the web, lists of personal interests (i.e. movies, websites, music, books, etc.), political affiliations, social causes, and even relationship status. Facebook currently allows for the customization of more than forty settings that can be personalized to create a user's desired identity (Stross, 2009; Gohel 2015). Given the ease with which these settings can be tweaked, users continually (re)shape, (re)define, and (re)construct their identities in digitally mediated spaces. In fact, according to Fletcher (2010), by 2009 participants shared more than twenty-five billion pieces of personal information on Facebook in a given month. More recent information provided by Facebook, whose analytics tools are constantly being updated, points to a growth in participation. For

example, there were 1.51 billion mobile active users (MAU) for March 2016 (Source: Facebook as of 4/27/16) an increase of 21 percent year-over-year, and over 1.65 billion monthly active Facebook for the same date. Of those users, 1.09 billion log in daily. Furthermore, the sharing has increased exponentially. For example, there are an estimated 4.75 billion pieces of content shared daily on the site, which represents a 94 percent increase from August 2012. To put Facebook's relevance in perspective, the site's 1.49 billion monthly users exceed those of WhatsApp (500 million), Twitter (284 million), and Instagram (200 million) combined.⁵

Besides having the ability to constantly (re)construct their identity through their profile, Facebook users can acquire and (re)construct a community identity because the site allows them to join interest groups (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Chen and Sharma 2015), thus acquiring a shared identity with that entity. Under these new forms of identity manipulation, individuals often create online personas that differ significantly from the identity imposed on them by their physicality in "real life" (Turkle, 1995 and Stone, 1996). This freedom is not always welcome. In a CNN article published in August 2012, journalist Heather Kelly shone a light on the estimated 83.09 million fake accounts Facebook wanted to disable. In that piece, Facebook's chief security officer Joe Sullivan was quoted:

⁵ <http://investor.fb.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=967167>

“On Facebook we have a really large commitment in general to finding and disabling false accounts...Our entire platform is based on people using their real identities.”⁶ While most of the fake accounts belong to pets, groups, companies, spammers or are accounts created by individuals for other individuals, there are still a group of accounts/profiles that are created by a user under a false name/gender. These were not addressed in the article. What Kelly did address was the action taken by Facebook once these accounts are discovered:

Facebook disables any false accounts it finds, and while it wipes all the information associated with the name from public view, it doesn't delete the account from its servers "for safety and security" reasons. The disabled account goes into a sort of Facebook limbo, where the owner of the account can't get their hands on any of the content -- photos, posts, videos -- not even by requesting a copy of the data, according to Facebook. (CNN website, 2012)

Facebook and DREAMers

One participant group, which the Center for American Progress (www.americanprogress.org) estimated had at least 2.1 million members of their organization as of 2014, is comprised of the DREAMers, who are often now at the forefront of identity (re)configuration in Internet content. They remain a significant academic research focus given the urgency of their issues. Trapped by immigration policy and often skillful with digital communication options, DREAMers currently use Facebook to build support for immigration reforms that would directly affect their legal status. Through information and communication technology (ICT) they reach out,

⁶ <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/02/tech/social-media/facebook-fake-accounts/>

interact, and use the Facebook site as an identity-constructing platform as well as a political tool. They and their strategies deserve further study. Also, because DREAMers do not have the same access to opportunities and do not get the same protection under the law as citizens do, this study will explore how those limitations affect them and question whether a popular image of the DREAMers as a group actively seeking citizenship applied to all or if another experience merited attention because they are more crucial to their day-to-day survival.

DREAMers

The DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) is bipartisan legislation pioneered by Sen. Orin Hatch [R-UT] and Sen. Richard Durbin [D-IL]. First introduced in 2001 it remains unpassed because opponents will not allow it to proceed to the floor for a vote. Under the DREAM Act, "qualifying undocumented youth would be eligible for a 6-year long conditional path to citizenship that requires completion of a college degree or two years of military service."

Although it has thus far failed to become law, the DREAM Act consistently draws support from both Republicans and Democrats during each session of Congress. This has been the case since originally introduced after Sen. Hatch learned of the cases of college bound students facing deportation. Although individuals currently undocumented and

pursuing a degree are collectively known as DREAMers, the members of the group are not all equal nor do they share the same characteristics. The Immigration Policy Center (<http://www.immigrationpolicy.org>) offers a synopsis of each group that would be affected by the DREAM Act and could potentially apply for conditional lawful permanent resident (LPR) status:

- An undocumented high-school graduate or GED recipient would be eligible to adjust to conditional lawful permanent resident (LPR) status if they have been physically present in the United States for at least five years and were younger than 16 when they first entered the country.
- This LPR status would be granted on a conditional basis and valid for six years, during which time the student would be allowed to work, go to school, or join the military.
- The conditional status would be removed after six years and the person granted LPR status after six years once the student has either completed two years in a program for a bachelor's degree or higher degree or has served in the uniformed services for at least two years and, if discharged, has received an honorable discharge.
- DREAM Act students would not be eligible for federal education grants. Students would, however, be eligible for federal work study and student

loans, and individual states would not be restricted from providing financial aid to the students.

While the main legislation points remain the same, the act has been reshaped and rewritten in a quest for acceptance. According to the Center for American Progress, two years ago "A 2010 version of the DREAM Act passed the House of Representative and achieved a majority of votes in the Senate, falling just five votes short of achieving cloture, which would have enabled a straight up-or-down vote on the measure. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) reintroduced the DREAM Act in the current 112th Congress, though it has yet to come up for a vote." (We are now dealing with the 114th Congress and still waiting.)

According to recent estimates by the Migration Policy Institute (www.migrationpolicy.org), about 220,000 DREAMers are currently enrolled in or have recently graduated from college. This number speaks little of the importance of this population. However the work of Dr. Roberto Gonzales, Assistant Professor at the University of Washington School of Social Work provides a better understanding of what these DREAMers mean and why they should be studied. In *Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students and Why Integration Matters: Undocumented Immigrant Youth and Making a Case for Moving Beyond Enforcement* (2015), he states:

Undocumented students are a potential source of productive contributors to society and highly skilled workers for the nation. These students have successfully navigated our K-12 schools, overcoming the challenges of

migration and discrimination, in addition to the everyday difficulties of adolescence. They are prepared to take on the challenge of higher education to invest not only in their own future but also in the collective future of the nation. The DREAM Act can support their ambitions, aspirations and contributions. (p. 22)

Besides the DREAM Act, a program introduced by Obama in 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (“DACA”), also deals with undocumented youth. DACA matters to many college-aged undocumented students because they fall under the policy’s criteria. According to Immigration Equality (<http://www.immigrationequality.org>), undocumented youth can apply to the program if they:

- are under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012;
- came to the U.S. while under the age of 16;
- have continuously resided in the United States from June 15, 2007 to the present. (For purposes of calculating this five year period, brief and innocent absences from the United States for humanitarian reasons will not be included);
- entered the United States (see above) without inspection or fell out of lawful visa status before June 15, 2012;
- were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
- are currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or armed forces;
- have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor, or more than three misdemeanors of any kind; and

- do not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

While DACA is a positive program and a move in the right direction, it is only a temporary measure designed to allow undocumented youth to remain in the country, but doesn't address the issue of citizenship. The DACA does not grant legal status/citizenship to the individuals that the DREAM Act aims to benefit. Furthermore, a recent ruling from the Supreme Court has temporarily halted the implementation of the initiatives offered under the program and its expansion. A synopsis of the case given by the American Immigration Council:

On June 23, 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 4-4 decision in *United States v. Texas*, the case challenging expanded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). This means that a preliminary injunction temporarily halting the implementation of these initiatives stands. This ruling does not impact the original DACA program launched in 2012. However, it does have a profound and disappointing impact on the millions of would-be eligible immigrants whose lives remain in limbo after the Court's ruling.

Despite the potential benefits offered by DACA, granting the right to lawful permanent resident status or citizenship is something only Congress can do. That is why many students and supporters believe it is so important to keep fighting for the DREAM Act. This essential difference between the DACA and the DREAM Act narrows the scope of this research to the matter of the DREAM Act and its crucial role for undocumented youth currently enrolled in college or recently graduated.

The current immigration crisis that affects them motivates the way they (re)construct their identities online, and the relationship those identities maintain within their

sociopolitical struggle. To begin to understand these processes, it is necessary to examine the migration of social identities to the digital realm.

DREAMers Online

Computer mediated behaviors allow the creation of new forms of interaction, innovative cultural constructions, definitions, and identities. According to Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), the Internet changed the traditional conditions of identity production because it eliminated the constraints imposed by face-to-face interaction. This new type of communication, which initially happened in “disembodied text mode” (p. 1817), later along with images and content shared from around the web, allows for absolute anonymity to be maintained, if so desired, through the withholding of crucial information that, in other types of communication, can be much harder to disguise. This is particularly true on Facebook, which as noted above, tries to force people to disclose real and detailed identities.

Under this new paradigm, age, sex, race, personal background, name, geographical location and, most important in the case of DREAMers, social standing, citizenship and accents can remain hidden. The combination of disembodiment and anonymity has undergone a change. Originally, it created new modes of identity production (Bargh et al., 2002 and McKenna et al., 2002). Nowadays, the boundaries between the online self and the real self are so blurred that disembodiment and complete anonymity are much harder to accomplish because physicality is once again a constant element that must be

dealt with, that is more difficult to hide and ignore (Cover 2016). Furthermore, computer mediated interaction provides access to new forms of relationships, online communities, and digital cultures. The relationships and communities developed online can become very important to social media users because they can acquire the same realness, depth, and significance as connections made outside the digital realm (Anderson, 1982; Njami, 2011; Aviles, 2016). Members of online communities can maintain interaction with like-minded individuals for extended periods of time providing additional information exchanges, which can lead to a sense of belonging and community. Baym, 2010).

This is not unlike the phenomenon described by Benedict Anderson (1982) when print media allowed the creation of “unified fields of exchange and communication...” that allowed speakers within other realities and languages “who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation to (become) capable of comprehending one another via print and paper.” (p. 44) This allowed an expansion of community. “These fellow readers to whom they were connected through print formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility the embryo of the nationally imagined community.” (p. 44) It can be argued that the Internet by connecting individuals with similar “secular, particular, visible invisibility” to operate within an imagined community with different issues than those described by Anderson yet experiencing the similar connections. This seems especially important in the case of DREAMers who are spread across the nation and mostly do not know one another personally.

These are additional reasons why and the way they use Facebook merit further study.

Besides allowing users to (re)create their identity, online connections and interactions can also affect the way individuals behave when "offline." This becomes extremely significant when online networks generate aspects of imagined communities whose users belong to, interact or communicate with a real-world counterpart (Zhao et al, 2008). In the case of the DREAMers, their imagined communities don't require face-to-face interaction but rather have a powerful element of cohesion that brings its members together, or digital places of belonging (Kozinets, 2010).

These are not just virtual spaces or digital communities: they represent real groups with a true social meaning, shared identity markers and struggles, as well as sociopolitical and cultural reasons to come together. These real world connections make the struggle for a path to citizenship a battle DREAMers wage on both a real and a digital front. The role Facebook plays in the identity they create to fight that battle is precisely what this research project studies. Crucial elements of Facebook usage in the DEAMers community surface in interviews of them and demonstrate this unity.

Research Questions

Following are some key research questions that informed the development of the interview questions and that served to frame the study:

How did these DREAMers come to the US?

Are they alone here?

Do they see themselves as DREAMers? Are they engaged in the DREAMer political battle? Do they keep up with the news about the Act?

How do they express identity in general? What aspects of their lives do they consider central/crucial to their identity? How do they perceive their national identity now that they are in the United States?

Do they recall earlier identity perceptions in other media?

When and why did individuals begin to communicate using Facebook?

What drew them to Facebook communication?

How do they think they benefit by using the social networking site?

How did they decide what to reveal about themselves?

Was this a gradual or total initial revelation?

What led them to feel confident in revealing themselves?

Positionality: A Disclaimer

At some point everyone confronts issues of identity. Those of us who straddle more than one culture navigate a more complex set of options and mandates. For instance, juggling two languages, strange political statuses, widely diverging cultural practices and accepted behaviors can be at once enriching and confusing. From here, researching identity within that framework requires special tools. For example, this project's methodology is rooted in social/cultural anthropology. This means that the interviews will be conducted using what Spradley (1979) calls an "ethnographic approach." As such, instead of impersonal

surveys, subjects will be interviewed in depth in person and will for the most part control the process. This ethnographic approach requires an understanding of positionality and writing that is fully aware of it at all times.

Positionality refers to the way an anthropologist defines, explains, and describes his or her own social position in relation to the individuals or groups he or she works with and/or studies (Rose 1997; Merriam 2001; Sheppard 2002; Muhammad et al 2015; Waldron 2016). Explaining to interviewees and readers the researcher's positionality is necessary for various reasons. First, DREAMers live in a state of tension where their citizenship status remains unresolved and deportation is always a possibility.

Understandably, this leads to insecurity and lack of trust for anyone inquiring about their situation, life as a student, and issues of identity and Facebook usage. Second, allowing interviewees to know about the individual researching them can help build trust and thus could help to facilitate longer, more in-depth interviews as well as honesty when replying to the questions they are asked. Also, revealing a researcher's positionality establishes and makes researcher and others aware of how it can affect the dynamic during the interviewing process and the interpretation of the responses after said interviews.

Furthermore, discussing positionality provides a way of accepting and dealing with subjectivity, thus also allowing the researcher to seek to keep it under control.

I was born in Puerto Rico. Politically, Puerto Rico remains an unincorporated territory of the United States, which according to the U.S. Supreme Court's Insular Cases is "a territory appurtenant and belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United

States." Thus I was born an American citizen, but Puerto Ricans are not granted the same rights as those born on the mainland, which means they are second-class citizens.

Furthermore, unlike the mainland, Puerto Rico has two official languages--English and Spanish. Despite that, only 20% of Puerto Ricans speak English fluently according to the 1990 US census.

In addition, they are American citizens with limited civil rights (i.e. they can't vote for the President despite being able to vote in the primaries) and are regarded as a completely different culture. In my experience, the political and cultural space occupied by Puerto Ricans is at once strange, frustrating, and fascinating. Having navigated the identity construction processes of my generation both on the island as well as on U.S. soil for the past seven years, I have come to understand the resonance my own experience has on my research interests and how crucial it is to fully understand the topic of identity construction in relation to migrants. I believe this peculiarity gives me a better understanding of the impact of limited rights for DREAMers and grants me a valuable empathetic perspective on the way they imagine/desire a future as full citizens.

Literature Review

In recent years, researchers have investigated the relationship between identity, identity performance, and social networking sites because new generations increasingly use the internet and online social networking sites have become a significant way for people to communicate and interact with others in their daily life (Cheung and Lee 2010).

Similarly, academic research has begun to point out that, more than merely entertainment or a tool for work, social networking sites are now a “social force” (Posey, Lowry, and Ellis 2010) and a place where even images are used in shaping identities (Uimonen 2013; Farguhar 2013), especially for young people.

Manago, Graham, Greenfield, and Salimkhan (2008) examined several components of identity among young adults within the context of MySpace, a now defunct interactive Internet site. Drawing on Erikson’s theory of identity during adolescence, these four authors argued that the internet may be viewed as a site of personal exploration with possible selves. The fact that social networking sites allow users to explore their identities and subsequently (re)construct and share them makes places like Facebook key digital locations for exploring the processes behind the (re)construction. Research conducted by Manago, Graham, Greenfield, and Salimkhan (2008) also suggests that the social identities presented by young adults on MySpace were very different from those regularly and concurrently performed in face-to-face situations. While no research has proven the same thing for Facebook, there is research that shows there is a difference between the offline or real life identity of a person and what they manage to (re)create online, which

is also referred to as a “persona.” (DiMicco and Millen 2007). Furthermore, researchers have also established that there is an implied difference between the online and offline world and that the (re)creation of identities inside the digital context will always present differences when compared to that of the offline world:

Since the inherent contradictions and differences embedded in the idea of intercultural communication frequently lead to conflicts and misunderstandings, social networking sites couch the prickly and messy nature of such interactions as an alternative to the face-to-face versions of these interactions. (Sudeshna 2012, p. 6)

In face-to-face situations, identity is constructed under a unique set of constraints because physicality plays a major role (Miller 2011; Sudeshna 2012). The presence of the body provides obvious elements like race and sex for example. In non-digital social encounters that makes it difficult for individuals to claim identities inconsistent with their visible physical characteristics. These constraints force those involved in face-to-face interaction to construct identities that reflect realities, but they may in that exchange use elements in their environment that they can manipulate (i.e. appearance, non-verbal communication, language). Identity construction under these constraints focuses on generating a desired impression on others (Goffman, 1959). In situations where face-to-face interactions happen between individuals who never interacted before, individuals can choose to alter non-physical elements of their identity such as personality and background in order to create a new identity. However, even these changes don't allow the individual to transcend the boundaries imposed by physicality.

More recently, Cover (2016) has made a strong point for the impossibility of a total identity online that exists outside the boundaries imposed by physicality. While online communication was once thought of as the non-physical space of cyborgs, which Haraway (1983) defined as “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. (P.149), now voice, body, and image are an integral part of it. Furthermore, participation in social networking sites, especially Facebook, is more a part of everyday life than a life onto itself. This constant crossing back and forth between the mediated life on both sides of the screen complicates the creation and performativity of an entirely fake online identity:

Rather than the pretense of the bodyless subject floating in the digital ether, or the idea of the subject who can express an identity online differently from that which is coded and constituted in representations of the body, or the notion that we all are on the way to becoming semirobotized creatures losing the primacy of the flesh, it remains that digital media and communication use in Web 2.0 and 3.0 frameworks is very much about the body. This includes, but is not limited to, representations of the self online as a visual presentation, the drawing together of bodies and digital interactivities through new relationalities that focus on the body such as wearable technologies, citations of bodily practices, and norms from online representation in the materialization of the body. (Cover 2016, p. 105)

While until recently research mainly focused on these types of problems related to visible identity and the processes involved in living that imposed on individuals, the development of the Internet allowed a change in the way identities are presented and thus in the ways research methods must approach it. This combination of removal of physical constraints, anonymity, and the ability to (re)create an entirely new identity also brings

forward new forms of identity construction processes (Bargh et al., 2002 and McKenna et al., 2002). The fact that new identities can be created may be seen as liberating for individuals who, for some reason, want to navigate within different social circles with different persona or wish to interact online while remaining relatively anonymous, although recent research points to that being complicated (Cover 2016).

Interacting online allows individuals to hide or change the elements of their physicality that they dislike and to create a new personality for themselves thus adjusting their visible invisibility to the motivating objective in their outreach. This "role-playing," as defined in the literature that addresses it (Worth and Book, 2014; Fuster et al., 2015), can enable disadvantaged individuals to eliminate the obstacles imposed by their physicality in face-to-face interactions. For example, a woman can pretend to be a man to eliminate gender inequality and people of color can assume a white identity in order to free themselves from the shackles of racism (McKenna et al., 2002). In this way, the Internet becomes a space in which the lack of physicality can lead to new, empowered identities, but only as long as the two identities can be kept completely separated. Thus, these types of identities are better suited for transitory or entirely bodiless interactions such as chat rooms and online gaming (Cover 2016).

While this freedom to become a replacement individual may be advantageous for those who want to leave behind their physically-bound identity, social networking sites like Facebook are problematic because users communicate with friends, colleagues, cohorts, family members and other individuals from the real world who are aware of the user's

physicality and non-digital identity. Zhao (2008) calls these relationships "anchored relationships," meaning that they take place online but have an element that ties them to the real world. Anchored relationships are also labeled "nonymous," the opposite of anonymous. In the real world, individuals who stray from normative/accepted behaviors can face ridicule or punishment. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman argues that when someone is forced to wear a mask in real life to cover his or her true identity for fear of repercussions, that mask becomes that individual's "real" identity and replaces the individual's "true" self. On the other hand, this is not an issue in the online world and individuals have the opportunity to remove the masks they wear in the real world and embrace their "true" selves.

Researchers have examined the separation between who we are and who we desire to be with interesting results. For example, Markus and Nurius (1986) argued that an individual's notion of self can be divided into two categories: the "now selves" and the "possible selves." For DREAMers and members of other oppressed or repressed groups, this differentiation is crucial. The now selves are the established identities an individual shares with others. On the other hand, the possible or potential selves represent the selves unknown to others because the individual has not yet shared them. Furthermore, as explained by Higgins (1987), the hoped-for possible selves are a subcomponent of the possible selves that differs from the suppressed or hidden "true self" on the one hand and the unreal "ideal self" on the other. The most central element of the hoped-for possible selves is that they are socially desirable identities an individual would like to establish

and believes that they can be established under the right conditions. The online world often allows individuals to create or locate the right conditions while also freeing them of the constraints imposed on them by physicality, social or civic status in the real world. This changes both the way we interact and the nature of our interactions because it shifts, or eliminates, the elements that could lead one individual to feel superior or inferior, in control or controlled, during a face-to-face interaction.

Most relations are power relations. This is very evident when individuals search for a partner, a process that forces them to evaluate their identity and change those elements they deem undesirable. One might think of this as designing or constructing a “marketable self.” On a small scale, these behaviors, which are developed in order to seem more attractive or desirable, can easily be extrapolated to the rest of our lives because much of our time we spend wondering about how other individuals perceive us, whether or not they like us, and what we can do to be more appealing. In fact, Internet meetings draw upon these impulses by applying the term “friends” to digital connections and asking communicators to approve or “like” various offerings.

Some studies examined identity construction processes in Internet dating, which, in terms of seeking approval and likeability, generates a specific online environment (Yurchisin et al., 2005; Gibbs et al., 2006; Zhao et al. 2008). Internet dating sites provide a useful prism through which to examine identity creation processes because these sites are designed with the opposite intent of anonymity. In other words, they are created with one purpose: to allow individuals to attract others by selectively sharing their personal

information. This predictably includes age, sex, race, occupation, political beliefs, religion, background history, and physical descriptions, all of which impose the constraints of physicality found in the real world. While many of these elements can be altered to impress others, there is a possibility, an expectation even, of a future face-to-face encounter and that would strip away the nonymity provided by the online environment. In other words, the possibility of face-to-face encounters narrows the differences between “actual selves” and “ideal selves” in people’s online self-presentation (Ellison et al., 2006). Still, even with face-to-face encounters on the horizon, individuals produce identities not entirely real or somewhat warped or wishful thinking versions of their real identity. Yurchisin (2005), found that individuals tend to “stretch the truth” when presenting themselves and (re)creating their identities on dating sites. These constraints can also constrict those DREAMers who as activists become spokespeople for the drive for citizenship when their visible invisibility becomes simply visible. In the case of DREAMers, they wish for something that is desirable not only within the context of their lives but also within the larger context of the society in which they live in. Being a citizen is not only something that allows them certain rights and benefits; it is a status that puts them on equal ground with those who surround them and grants them opportunities they would otherwise be denied. While the DREAM Act is not yet a reality and the current political landscape doesn’t seem to favor it becoming reality soon, the desire for full citizenship is undiminished for DREAMers. This means that they could act like citizens or simply try to keep that element of their identity hidden. In this

regard, the existence of a life outside the digital realm and constant face-to-face interactions with others, both known and unknown in the online realm, does not diminish the wishful thinking. In other words, much like someone who hides the fact that they're very short while construction a profile on a dating site. DREAMers can decide not to be vocal about their civil status.

Research on the construction of hoped-for possible selves in Internet dating sites also suggests that individuals, aware of the way they present themselves online, consider their presentation a seminal element of their overall identity production processes.

Furthermore, studies suggest that individuals, cognizant of discrepancies between their real self and the self they portray online, take measures to try to coordinate their online identity with their offline self-performance. Because of the presence of nonymity, Internet dating sites give individuals the opportunity to make what Walker (2000) calls public "identity statements." These statements, central in the case of DREAMers and members of other groups inextricably attached to an ideology or strong political discourse, are declarations that individuals would normally not do offline because of possible repercussions. Thus they remain statements by actors visible only in selected ways within their invisibility. These statements are public announcements of identity claims, either explicit or implicit. The explicit identity statements an individual makes while defining his or her self are openly stated, clearly written. Such statements can be found in autobiographical paragraphs or autobiographic descriptions given by individuals as part of their profiles. On the other hand, implicit identity statements may be

impressions individuals generate through their selection of supporting elements like profile picture, hobby descriptions or, most importantly in the case of this dissertation, the affiliations with certain groups an individual might claim.

Despite the fact that researchers exploring the nuances of identity construction processes in Internet dating sites have produced some interesting findings and established some important differentiations, it is also true that the sites they analyzed are goal specific.

Participants select in them with a clear possible objectives in mind. This differs significantly from the way individuals use social networks. Seeker individuals use the Internet to find a partner—a major determinate in the way they present themselves. That limits the applicability of their research findings to the interest of this dissertation. To move the study of identity (re)creation processes forward, and closer to the focus of this research, requires a discussion of the merger of identity construction and Facebook.

Researchers studying identity on social networking sites often rely on the work of Goffman (1959), whose most relevant work on identity significantly predates the arrival of the Internet. Nevertheless, his findings parallel some of those found in digital construction. This indicates that identity construction operates as a deep-rooted human need. As explicated in *Performance and Self Presentation in Everyday Life*, we perform our identities on the stage of actuality and (re)define/(re)create ourselves constantly albeit today often in digital environments.

An important difference between real life identity construction and identity construction at online social networking sites is that the latter allow users more time to carefully craft

their identity (Champagne, 2008). This extra time, which also affords strategization and the anonymity provided by computer mediated communication, led researchers to conclude that identities on Facebook may only have a somewhat limited correspondence to identities in the “real” world (Sunden, 2003). This discrepancy generates debate about whether Facebook profiles are used to create and communicate idealized or wishful thinking versions of selves or whether social networking sites serve as an extension of our social context in which one’s actual personality characteristics can be expressed (Vazire and Gosling, 2004; Ambady and Skowronski, 2008; Manago et al., 2008; Back et al., 2010).

Other writers suggest that because we use the Internet on a daily basis, the distinction between our online and “real” world identities blur because Facebook and its counterparts exist as a constant presence in our lives, particularly amongst young people (Livingston, 2008; Elliott 2013; Cover 2016, Haimson, Brubaker and Dombrowski 2016). As this debate about the separation of identities continues, other researchers focus on the interactive nature of self-presentation on social networking sites. For example, Boyd and Heer (2006) argue that other users play a crucial role in shaping the presentations of others on Facebook because they provide feedback, support, and even resistance through comments, “friending” and “unfriending,” liking and or giving a thumbs down in posting on an individual’s wall or profile page.

User presentations take into account the diversity of an audience consisting of familiar and not-so-familiar social relationships (DiMicco and Millen 2007). The

Facebook community can be conceptualized as a team performance, achieving Goffman's (1959) "dramaturgical cooperation" in confirming one another's performances of self (Westlake 2008, p. 27). Some authors point to the way identity is performed on personal pages through a combination of text, image and sound (Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield 2007; Uimonen 2013; Farguhar 2013; Flanigan and Hocevar 2014). Such crafted representations are "purposeful and outer-directed" and "self-production is heavily narrated," indicating the connection between user profiles and the mainstream culture industry (Hearn 2008, p. 197). Many users provide access to their daily 'diaries', complete with photographs that may or may not be heavily selective. Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) found that users do not necessarily create personal artifacts but prefer to display material (quotes and images, for example) already in the public domain. As such, these users "predominantly claim their identities implicitly rather than explicitly; they 'show rather than tell' and stress group and consumer identities over personally narrated ones." (2008, p. 1816).

Online Identity and Real World Collision

Identity even within the context of a community can change inside and outside the digital realm. Recent academic studies of Internet dating provide additional perspective of online DREAMer behavior because, while DREAMers face much more serious issues they also navigate an online/real world dichotomy.

For DREAMers, this is an interesting conundrum. On one hand, for self-protection they must stay hidden because they could face not only legal but also social repercussions. On the other hand, they seek to be a compelling active voice for their cause. Meanwhile, they have to leave the computer safety barrier and go to work, take classes, and interact with others. In other words, they have to constantly balance their online identity and the entitled one they present as “real” while they navigate everyday life.

The conundrum faced by groups like online daters, social networking site users of various races, and DREAMers, all of whom possess identity elements that they would rather keep secret while constructing or managing their online identity, is addressed by Zhao (2008):

Research on the construction of hoped-for possible selves in Internet dating suggests that users regard their online presentations as an integral part of their overall identity production and seek to coordinate their online identity claims with their offline self-performance.

In other words, in some sense, online identity influences offline presentations. Because of the presence of nonymity, Internet dating sites provide individuals with the opportunity to create what Walker (2000) calls “identity statements.” Identity statements are public announcements of about an individual’s identity. These can be made either explicitly or implicitly. In the first instance, the statements take the form of autobiographic descriptions given by the individuals (for example, saying something like “I was born in Puerto Rico and my parents are divorced.”) In the second instance, the statements can be found by interpreting the choices made by individuals in regard to their preferences or affiliations (for example, if someone states that they want Donald Trump to be the next

president, it becomes easy to assume their thoughts on immigration). This, again, is where daters and DREAMers meet, and where the research done on one group can illuminate the other. If by claiming allegiance to certain groups or political movements individuals can implicitly make an identity statement about him- or herself, then those online identity production strategies enable people to stage a public display of their promotional selves unknown to others offline. This doesn't assure that being associated with a DREAMer group will immediately identify an individual as a DREAMer, but it certainly also may say a lot about their political views.

This is something that also puts DREAMers, on more than one level, on the same ground as groups of racial minorities for example. Nakamura (2003) coined the term "cybertypes" to talk about computer generated identities that are created while taking into account the fact that the internet, while not a physical space, is a very racialised space and members of racial minorities are as subjected to prejudice and racism as they are in the real world. In this regard, DREAMers and members of the African American community, for example, share a space—one in which the creation of an identity is tied to the possibility of discrimination. This has also been examined within the frame of pornographic self-display (Jacobs 2010) and gaming (Higgin 2008; Pace, Houssian and McArthur 2009).

Research on identity construction in Internet dating has generated important findings, and those findings deserve to be considered in terms of whether they can have an impact on

other groups. Since Internet dating sites represent a particular type of anonymous online networking sites oriented specifically toward the development of offline romantic relationships, they force a hybrid identity (re)construction process that balances the desired self with the real one. This affects the ways in which users present themselves, and makes would-be daters a group that shares more navigation similarities than others with DREAMers.

The present study seeks to extend the existing research on self-presentation in anonymous settings while simultaneously adding to the plethora of different and new elements that the DREAMers present. For them, balancing two identities means much more than damaging chances for getting a date or a landing a job; it risks their entire existence, and that existence, when online, is mostly spent on Facebook. Hovering in the subtext of both ventures however is the issue of imitation or “fraud.” Furthermore, this study seeks to draw an introductory map of the space, if it exists, in which said fraud and self-protection cross. When your place of residence and immediate life situation are threatened by your identity, the way you present it to the world becomes a crucial aspect of life itself.

A key element of constructing online identities is the profiling of identities on Facebook. Profiling key characteristics of the self, such as religious or political views, preferences in music or film, membership to social groups, sexual orientation and relationship status is central to what Farquhar (2012) terms “online embodiment”:

Facebook profiles can be thought of as an online embodiment of real persons using the site. The term ‘embodiment’ refers in this work to the individual’s representative in a computer-mediated interaction...The profiles have conversations with each other; when we talk to someone online, we are talking to

his or her profile...In the virtual world of Facebook, this embodiment is present even when the Facebooker signs off. Other users can still interact with it. (p. 2)

Facebook and Political Engagement

DREAMers occupy a very politicized space in mainstream discourse thanks to the political limbo they live in and the focus on immigration reform that is currently part of the political landscape in the United States. As such, this study expects to find that DREAMers engage politically on Facebook, which is something that Conroy et al (2012) has shown is a possibility:

The 2008 election solidified the importance of the Internet broadly, and SNS specifically, as critical elements of politics and campaigning today. We find that Facebook allows for the creation of online political groups that provide many of the benefits that we have known face-to-face groups to provide for decades, such as information, motivation for political action, and a forum for discussion and communicative exchanges. In this sense, Facebook is fostering political engagement.

This political engagement could also be affected by Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs.

The original hierarchy of needs five-stage model includes:

1. Biological and Physiological needs: food, water, shelter, sleep.
2. Safety needs: security, stability, order, being free from fear, and protection from the elements.
3. Love and belongingness needs: intimacy, being part of a group, having friends, being in a romantic relationship, and having family and friends.
4. Esteem needs: being independent, achieving things, having prestige, self-respect, and being respected by others.

5. Self-Actualization needs: realizing personal potential, growing as an individual, and self-fulfillment.

Because DREAMers belong to a special group, one that is not guaranteed the same benefits and rights as citizens and that does not have access to the same opportunities, there is a chance that the hierarchy of needs will play a role in the way members of this group define themselves and the way in which they use Facebook.

Theory

Three theories lend themselves to analysis of DREAMer use of the Internet:

Social Identity Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory and Feminist Theory/Chicana Cultural Theory.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity is considered Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution to the field of psychology. An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict, crafted by Tajfel and co-author John Turner (1978) emerges as one of the most crucial tomes in the study of social identity. They discussed social identity as an individual's sense of who they are based on their group membership. The authors proposed that for members a group provides a source of pride and might even directly affect their self-esteem. Furthermore, Tajfel and Turner stated that belonging to a specific group or series of groups allows people to become, and feel a part of, the social world. In the case of my dissertation research, DREAMers are in more than one way, entirely defined by the group to which they belong. Social Identity Theory informs my research more completely than other theories because what Tajfel and Turner propose is that people have a natural tendency to categorize themselves into one or more "ingroups." These ingroups become part of their identity and may inform their identity-building processes. As part of these ingroups, individuals think of their identities not as something that solely belongs to themselves and is defined by their actions but as something larger that exists within the dynamics of

membership to a group. By belonging to a group that shares the same interests, DREAMers help define themselves while also enforcing boundaries with other groups.

On the other hand, Althusser's concept of interpellation states that individuals are absorbed by dominant social ideologies. Interpellation was first popularized as a concept by Althusser in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" (Althusser, 1972). In his writing, Althusser studies the relationship between the state (the primary imagined community stated by Anderson), its modes of (re)producing power, and ideology from a Marxist perspective, defining ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1972, p. 162). According to Althusser's definition, ideology mediates between power and individuals. He sees ideology functioning as a mediator between systems of power and individuals. What happens is that hegemonic power (in the case of the DREAMers, there are actually two acting as one: the government and the bigoted majority) has the ability to reproduce its discourse until there seems to be no other. This leads to repression and the overpowering of dissenting ideologies. In the case of DREAMers, they are fighting against the dominant ideology while simultaneously trying to construct alternative spaces and ideologies.

Breakwell's Identity Process Theory argues that identity is a dynamic, ever-changing concept that's the product of our interaction with memory and consciousness. However, this theory doesn't consider distinctions between personal and social identity, which might be a very important element when exploring users who (re)create an identity online

while also having a social identity as part of a larger group, which is the case with DREAMers. Although Social Identity Theory might seem like a better option, Identity Process Theory deserves a space here because Breakwell looks at what happens to groups under special circumstances:

My analysis of the enormous body of literature from psychology but also from other disciplines led me to conclude that a key to understanding the processes that drive identity development and expression lies in understanding how individuals respond when their identity is threaten. (2010, p. 19)

If DREAMers feel threatened by their undocumented status, then Identity Process Theory would help explain the way in which they define themselves and join groups.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Blumler and Katz's (1974) Uses and Gratification Theory posits that media users have a conscious, active role in choosing the media they use and, consequently, in the way they use and adapt to it. Because the Internet continues to evolve and, in that continuous process, renders some communication product options less appealing than first thought (MySpace faded away for example) and privacy concerns weaken, (“sexting” raised new issues), these pleasure-seeking dynamics, in some cases, almost render early communication/media theories like the Bullet Theory and others that stated that media dictates its consumption obsolete because it gave the consumer a voice and considered their motivations an essential part of the decisions they make when consuming media. For example, Boyd (2011) studied how Facebook replaced MySpace based not only on

the fact that MySpace was mostly only music-centric but also because what Facebook offered was much more appealing than MySpace:

The college-centered nature of Facebook quickly appealed to those teenagers who saw college, and thus Facebook access, as a rite of passage. They were aware of the site through older family members and friends who had already graduated high school and gone off to college. Before access became readily available, college-bound teens began coveting entrance. For many, access to the social world of college became a marker of status and maturity. Even those who had MySpace accounts relished the opportunity to gain access to the college-only Facebook as a rite of passage. (2011, p. 8)

Nowdays, the Internet allows for both levels of control and interaction previously unknown. Blumler and Katz recognize that media users have a goal in mind when using media, which DREAMers clearly do, and they are currently inhabiting a digital space that's constantly changing and that constantly forces them to reevaluate their use and their relationship to said use. Given this interaction between media and user, Uses and Gratifications strengthens my theoretical framework because it allows me to explore the agendas and goals DREAMers have when using Facebook.

Do these media users look for the communication avenues that help them accomplish stated objectives or meet their interactive needs? Does their decision to join others who pursue a normalized social and legal status reflect a thoughtful strategy? Is there a catalyst that triggers their decision? Then there's a reason why DREAMers turn to Facebook and a reason behind the things they share, the discourse they construct, and the relationship between their sociopolitical agenda and their Internet use, which they can describe.

Since this theory allows for a more humanistic approach to research, it well supports ethnographic methodology based on in-depth interviews. Uses and Gratifications allows for much deeper contextualization because, once use has been established, it opens the door to exploration on the reasons a specific medium is being used. More than a theory about communication, Uses and Gratifications Theory allows the researcher to look at the reasons behind the use, the personal and communal agendas of users, and the expectations of users.

Feminist Theory/Chicano Culture Theory

The introduction to the third edition of the Feminist Theory Reader (McCan and Kim, 2013), defines feminism as "political activism by women on behalf of women." They go on to state that Feminist Theory provides an "intellectual tool by which historical agents can examine the injustices they confront and build arguments to support their particular demands for change." Both this sort of political activism and the examination of historical agents however, also impact men. No analysis of the social, political or economic realities of women, for instance, operates in a vacuum. DREAMers are not just women, they are or seek to be agents of change—change that will impact both sexes. The Feminist Theory offers ways to see and interpret, to frame and discuss the struggles of oppressed groups regardless of gender. In fact, third wave feminism is less about focusing on women and more about discussing social justice issues in general and finding ways to eradicate discrimination based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status. Moreover, these theories often deal with the duality identity of those who navigate an

imposed social reality and a personal more open existence. (Anzaldúa, 1987) All of those elements make it very useful for my research given the fact that all undocumented immigrant students face not only discrimination but deportation threat, which causes actual serious harm. Navigating their identity confronts these issues simultaneously. Likewise, and especially in the case of DREAMers, Chicano Culture Theory, especially the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and her concept of a "borderlands" identity, offers a perfect tool to study fused identity in the United States, particularly that of members of a group commonly referred to as "illegal aliens" a stigma that compounds their search for self. This theory is especially useful because many of these individuals had no idea of the irregularity of their status until a catalyst, often high school graduation, forced parents to divulge it. Thus these individuals faced a sudden challenge to their understanding of self and a recalibration of identity. Locating others in this situation through Facebook provides a conscious outreach choice. How did they evaluate safety issues while recognizing the need for group support?

A constant presence and visibility is one strategy that DREAMers use to show their legitimacy and struggle. Action is part of their identity. Hall (1997) states that identity is "the ground of action. And we have in more recent times a psychological discourse of the self, which is very similar: a notion of the continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding, inner dialectic of selfhood. We are never quite there, but always on our way to it, and when we get there, we will at last know exactly who we are." (p. 42). The DREAMers embody an identity in motion. The Internet is their construction tool: it

allows them to break new ground in terms of reach and presence while simultaneously permitting them to draw on or discover their own history, to establish their heritage and its importance in U.S. culture, economy, and sociopolitical landscape thus seeking to counterbalance stigma with positive data. Just like their predecessors, the DREAMers want the same rights as all other U.S. citizens, but they're different in the sense that they want the opportunity to take a normalized route to citizenship.. Zhao (2008) explains that the Internet has “changed the traditional conditions of identity production.” (p. 1817). As the DREAMers debate and explain, they also (re)define themselves.

Gloria Anzaldúa argued that we need a new way of talking about difference, a way that can improve our definitions of self (1987). One of the main points of her work is the discussion of what she calls *mestiza* or borderland consciousness. DREAMers are caught between here and there, between the immediacy of their situation as undocumented immigrants and the uncertain future that they must fight for on a daily basis. In a way, they live a unique brand of borderland consciousness. For example, regardless where they live in the United States, the border and its implications remains a component of their identity. Furthermore, there is a constant self-awareness and a perennial struggle in Anzaldúa's work that anticipates what others like the DREAMers will go through. Her concept of home can be easily applied to the United States because, for DREAMers, this country is a multiplicity of places: the home in which they live and the home to which they want to go...and the place in which they're not wanted. Their quest to stay resembles the quest for a home/acceptance presented in Anzaldúa's work. This quest is one of the

biggest markers of their collective and personal identities. In the end, it's all about the freedom to be allowed to be: "I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face...to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture--*una cultura mestiza*--with my own lumber, my bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture." (p. 22). That thirst for freedom and equality has driven immigrants since the border crossed them, in 1848 and continues to do so now. The discussion need not echo because although it's the same, the way in which the discussion is being formulated and the identity that the main discussants establish breaks new ground. That's exactly what/where/who I hope to explore.

While these two theories (Feminist Theory/Chicano Culture Theory and Uses and Gratifications are deeper and more nuanced than those first mentioned, they are also the only two that don't have any substitutions. DREAMers are undocumented and it is not in their power to change that part of their identity or to remold the aspects that have been attached to it in terms of their identity despite the fact that they are, in most cases, inaccurate. These two theories allow easy entrance into the territory of multicultural, displaced individuals and help frame and possibly understand the situations DREAMers face. In other words, I chose to combine these two along with those of Tajfel, Althusser, Breakwell, and Blumler and Katz, among others, because they are the best combination when working with a group like DREAMers.

Historical Parallels: Contextualizing Mexican/Mexican American identities

The United States has a long anti-immigrant history including rejecting among others Irish, Italians, Germans, Chinese, and Japanese (Spickard, 2012). Although DREAMers include those who as youngsters came from many nations—China, Honduras, Venezuela, Iran, Dominican Republic, Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina to name a few—predominantly the group is Mexican⁷. Their contemporary experience and situation in many ways parallels those of earlier Mexican newcomers, especially those who became Mexican American by legislation that normalized their presence in the United States. The current state of Mexican identity in the United States is, as it has been since the beginning, in constant flux in part in response to a push/pull relationship with the United States. Mexicans are welcome when needed during labor shortage then scorned when the crisis passes. (McWilliams , 1949; Zinn, 1980; Acuña, 1981; Chomsky, 2007). Broadly speaking, three major periods (with obvious overlapping) precede the present situation. The first one begins in 1848, immediately after the United States defeated Mexico in the Mexican-American War and seized half of what had been Mexico. That moved the U. S.-Mexico border south and west. It engulfed what we now know as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and parts of Nevada, Colorado, and Utah. It might sound humorous now, but even academics like Anzaldúa and Darder agree on the undeniable truth behind a popular saying among those whose land was suddenly U.S. territory: "We never crossed the border; the border crossed us." And with that crossing came the first identity problems.

⁷ Immigration Policy Center: www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/who-and-where-dreamers-are

The individuals who lived in the new territory were granted citizenship option by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which put an end to the war. However, they were never treated as equals or welcomed as citizens. Nor were many titles to their land honored as assured by treaty (Acuña 1981; McWilliams 1949; Zinn 1980). In fact, a long history of conflict began. Through a plethora of legal tactics and blatant racism, both of which countless scholars have documented (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gómez-Peña 1996; López 2004; Acuña 1981; McWilliams 1949; Zinn 1980), Anglo Americans ensured that the new citizens became second-class. From owning land and a national identity, the new Mexican Americans found themselves simultaneously devoid of both. In fact, the rights they'd been assured of were quickly stripped from them, to the point that Mexicans were as discriminated against and disposed as indigenous peoples. Once slavery ended discrimination became the treatment suffered by African Americans as well. Luckily, the first of many changes would soon come.

As a result of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the largest number of Mexicans in history to that date migrated to the United States (Guerin-Gonzalez 1994; Monto 1994; Hernández-León 2008; Henderson 2011). They received little welcome outside communities of others of similar descent, which were located predominantly in the southwest. Indeed, the southwest became majority Mexican And Mexican-American in many areas. Out of sight and powerless, they were largely forgotten by Washington.

In 1917 the United States entered, World War I, which brought a sudden demand for labor in the United States as young men entered the armed services. The resulting void

gave Mexicans an opportunity to work and to move north. Likewise, the boom in agriculture brought about by the expanded military needs also offered them a chance to become an integral part of the economy. Suddenly Mexicans were needed. These opportunities did not mean the end of institutionalized racism. In fact, it grew worse (Guerin-Gonzalez 1994; Monto 1994; Hernández-León 2008; Henderson 2011). The growing economy ended in 1930 with the Great Depression. Millions lost their jobs exacerbating racism that helped fostered one impression that lingers today: that Mexicans take jobs away from Anglo Americans, from U.S. citizens. (Chomsky, 2007) The number of Mexicans entering the United States had doubled over the preceding two decades (Henderson 2011) but it was sharply reduced as a result of deportation policies and racism. Until 1930 Mexicans were considered white. Then Congress defined them as a separate race (Chomsky, 2007). By 1940 millions of Mexicans had been pushed out of the country (Monto 1994). Additionally, many Mexicans realizing the evaporation of the American Dream, returned south. With them went many children born in the United States or raised here from such an early age that they knew no other home, language, or culture. Politicians used economics to justify the push.

In a pattern that would become repetitious, World War II brought an urgent search for workers to replace drafted Americans and to address the demand for defense equipment and food. Again the flow of Mexicans into the United States swelled and was welcome. During this period, however, many Mexicans also crossed the border to find work but did so without the proper documentation. Undocumented workers became vital to the war

effort and contributed to economy in major ways. The Bracero program (1942-1964) allowed Mexicans to come to work under tightly controlled agreements (Calavita 1992; Cohen 2013). But this soon led to problems caused by employers who did not comply with the programs terms: unmet salary and working conditions required of employers led to conflict (Calavita 1992; Cohen 2013). In 1954, the U.S. Department of Justice created Operation Wetback to arrest and deport undocumented Mexican migrant workers. Enforced by the Immigration and Naturalization Service it led to a series of raids in fields and factories. President Eisenhower declared the program a success a year later. (Chomsky 2014). It continued the cycle of pull/push. Maria Socorro Tabuenca offers a solid overview in her essay in *Anti-Immigration in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2011):

The plan was put into action after President Dwight D. Eisenhower was challenged to deal with the fact that undocumented immigration had increased 6,000 percent between 1943 and 1954. This increase originated with the open door policies of previous Congresses and the Good Neighbor Policy, which was eventually transformed into the *Bracero* Program in 1940 (a U.S.-Mexico guest worker program). When Eisenhower took office, he confronted more than 1,000,000 undocumented crossings a year and a relaxation of ethical standards in Congress. A Texas study conducted in 1950 by the President's Commission on Migratory Labor found that cotton growers in the targeted area paid undocumented workers half the wages common in other parts of Texas, or half what a U.S. citizen would get paid for picking cotton. This situation caused the displacement of local workers and discrimination towards the wetbacks that were seen as a menace and social ill in local communities. (p. 375).

The decade that followed the implementation of Operation Wetback offered more of the same. Continuing the cycles begun since the border crossed them a hundred years earlier, Mexican-Americans faced second-class citizenship. For the most part Mexicans without

entry papers sought to remain as inconspicuous as possible given the unwelcoming nature of the culture that surrounded them and risk of deportation.

The end of World War II accelerated minority activism for equal rights. It started during the war as the Double V movement (victory abroad and victory at home) by black leaders and pushed by black media. These efforts alarmed Washington Activists, who agreed to suspend these efforts until the war's end. Returning Mexican Americans organized the G.I. Forum. Soon Latino leaders formed La Raza Unida, a political party. The G.I. Bill, which along with other benefits, provided funds for higher education. This opened new opportunities for those who had served and increased awareness of discrimination.

Issues of identity became a central focus of the Chicano Movement. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court found segregated schools unconstitutional.

By the 1960s a period of contested change and violence in the United States revolved around the demand for equality. The post war era also marks an important period of Mexican-American identity construction. However the most important developments for Mexican, and Mexican American identity during this time period warrant brief mention. For example, many Mexican American embraced, then celebrated their differences. Most were bicultural, and bilingual many were binational. The Chicano identity was born.

Later activist women insisted on tweaked language to recognize their existence.

Chicano/a was created. (Del Castillo, 1990)

However, with this embrace/redefinition of their identity came a realization that Alicia Gaspar de Alba (1995) points out in her chapter in *Culture and Difference: Critical*

Perspectives on the Bicultural Experience in the US: “Chicano/a identity is, ultimately, a border identity: neither side wants you and you can’t go home.” (p. 107). The media only paid attention when things got violent. Even academia tried to ignore The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, especially its demand that courses be taught about Mexican American history, literature and economics. (Del Castillo, 1990)

In a nutshell, the Chicano movement "grew out of an alliance of diverse groups including farm workers in California and Texas, land-grant owners in New Mexico, the urban working classes of the south-west and mid-west, and the growing radicalization of student groups across the country. Although never universally accepted by Mexican Americans or other Latinos due to political, class and cultural fracturing, the politics of these diverse groups initially coalesced around a consensus of socio-political and cultural concerns. These included arguing for such basic rights as just representation in government and the courts, fair treatment from the police and the military, a decent standard of living, and bilingual and bicultural education." (Jacobs, 2006, p. 7). This new identity had some markers, namely political struggle, a new pride in its heritage, and an acceptance of the duality originally celebrated by Anzaldúa.

The Chicano movement was about civil rights, social justice, eliminating racism and ensuring that the treaty rights granted to Mexicans when the United States seized half of Mexico could finally be enjoyed by Mexicans and Mexican Americans. It was an anti-racist resistance movement that took a stand for disenfranchised people. Activists sought ways to improve working conditions and quality of life for this segregated population.

Those ideals became an identity marker, for those who identified with the Chicano movement, which was largely working class. Class issues divided this population however. In 1964 civil rights legislation passed expanding opportunities. Many Mexican-Americans found their way to a better life, more acceptance, and equal rights, but the road ahead was as uneven as the road behind them. And identity remained disputed territory.

The tumultuous 1960s did not bring significant social and cultural change to Mexicans. Mexicans and Mexican Americans continued to face racism. Many inequity issues resurfaced or remained intangible. Nevertheless between 1970 and 2000, the three decades that make up the third period, many things changed. The markers of identity shifted as the population grew and voters' numbers increased. Unfortunately, many things also stayed the same. Racism as strong as ever led to ongoing political, social, and legal action against immigrants. For example, in 1994, voters in California passed Proposition 187, which among other restrictions, required the state's public schools to expel children of undocumented immigrants. But challenged in court, most of its provisions were ruled unconstitutional (Jacobson, 2008). Despite this, repeated legal battles focused on denying undocumented immigrants access to jobs, public education and health care (Jacobson, 2008). Stereotypes exacerbated hostility toward certain physical attributes leading to racial profiling. This generated the appeal of managed online identities, which emerged under a different context in 2003 along with My Space and began to surge in 2004 with the advent of Facebook.

Today the Latino civil situation in the United States remains conflicted. Technology now plays a major role in making the immigrant situation a broadly discussed sociopolitical issue. Meanwhile immigrants make use of its tools to (re)define themselves. As Darder (1995) mentions, "It is impossible to fully grasp the social formation of ideological distortions about class, "race" and gender in the postmodern world if we ignore the overwhelming impact of today's accelerated media and communications technology." (p. 9). The Internet is well established as the communication tool used by immigrants to make themselves, their perspectives, opinions and struggles visible. One group that fully combines a strong identity discourse, a political activism worthy of a 1960s Chicano, and the computer knowledge and access to take full advantage of this new ever expanding technology are the DREAMers.

This research seeks to understand these identities within the context of Facebook and to explore how the social networking site affects the struggle of DREAMers as they navigate a hostile political environment and express themselves online while going to college.

Methodology

This dissertation focuses on the role Facebook plays in the construction of an online identity as conducted by DREAMers. It examines the DREAMers use of Facebook, their preferences, and their motivations and looks at the way they present themselves on the social networking site. Using ethnographic methods, nine DREAMers were interviewed in person using open-ended questions in a semi-structured in-depth interview. The interviews lasted between two and three hours with one of them lasting one hour. The results were analyzed utilizing discourse analysis as explained by Michel Foucault (1969).

The interviews, which were conducted using a general interview protocol for semi-structured interviews, produced data that allowed for the development of an understanding about the role of Facebook in their identity-creating processes. The protocol allowed for the modification of specific questions and their order as well as for the interjection of new questions that arose from the conversation. Each interview was conducted in an open way that facilitated the development of rapport and to maximize the interviewees' level of comfort and comprehension as well as to encourage them to share their motivations, ideas, and emotions about their use of Facebook and the way they present themselves on the social networking site. They were also asked about their life, the way they came to the United States, school, work, and their motivations for staying in the country. This research also seeks to document the role the site plays in their lives, the use of language while using Facebook, and the relationship between their online persona

and their sociopolitical status. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to talk openly about their Facebook use, to explore any idea that came to mind while discussing their use of the site, and to share as much as they wanted about the things they post, the amount of time they spend on the site, and whether they think their privacy is compromised by using the site.

While these questions⁸ were used as guides, participants were encouraged to share their views on the relationship between Facebook and identity, online behavior and image, the use of both English and Spanish when posting and sharing content from other sites, their awareness of different social groups within their Facebook profile and exchanges therein, and their views on Facebook as a political arena as a communication tool for political commentary. Furthermore, all interviewees were encouraged to share any thoughts they had regarding Facebook and politics, anecdotes, privacy, and memorable personal experiences from their use of the site.

Given the fact that DREAMers are considered undocumented residents, extreme caution was taken to offer them anonymity and protect their identities. A pseudonym (a last name only) is used to discuss their responses.

While previous research about online identity has mostly been done using quantitative methodology, some of it points to the need of new, more appropriate methods to approach identity online (Adler and Adler, 2008; Kozinets, 2010; Armstrong, 2008). In

⁸ Please see Appendix I for a complete list of questions.

order to address these concerns, this research used a self-triangulating system of conducting discourse analysis of interviews.

To achieve this, the interviews were conducted using what Spradley (1979) calls an "ethnographic approach." According to Spradley, ethnographic interviewing involves "two distinct but complementary processes." The first one is developing rapport, which refers to establishing a pleasant relationship between ethnographer and informant that makes both parties feel comfortable and thus encourages interviewees to share information about themselves and their culture. The second is eliciting information, which fosters the development of rapport. The problem with rapport is that, according to Spradley, it is impossible to identify universal qualities that build rapport because "harmonious relationships are culturally defined in every society." This forces the researcher utilizing the ethnographical method to pay particular attention to friendly relationships in each cultural scene in order to learn local, culture-bound features that build rapport. Despite this unpredictability, Spradley says that rapport tends to develop in a patterned way and goes on to suggest a model of the rapport process in ethnographic interviewing. More than a set guide of how things will progress, Spradley establishes that the model is more like a "compass" that will help the interviewer/ethnographer recognize when rapport is developing well and when something has made it wander off course. The model created by Spradley as a guide to ensure that rapport is being successfully established and thus that quality data will be collected passes through four stages:

1. Apprehension

2. Exploration
3. Cooperation
4. Participation

Apprehension is first because, according to Spradley, every interview begins with a sense of uncertainty, but the important thing is knowing that it can be overcome: “The realization that ethnographic interviews begin with some uncertainty in the relationship can help the beginning ethnographer relax and accept this fact. At the same time, several things can help move the interviews through the stage of apprehension. The most important thing is to get informants talking.” (p. 46).

Spradley’s work taught him that asking descriptive questions is the best way to get informants talking and break through the apprehension barrier. In this early stage, what is being said is not as important as keeping the interviewee talking because that way the interviewer can listen, show that he or she is paying attention, and, most importantly, has the opportunity to respond in a non-judgmental way. After the interviewee has talked for a while, the process moves into the exploration stage.

The exploration stage starts when the comfortable interaction is already established and the interviewee trusts the interviewer enough to talk but not enough to be certain on how much, and to what depth, he or she is willing to share/divulge/explain. This means that the interviewee is not fully willing to cooperate with the interviewer yet. Furthermore, at this point, both individuals are still seeking a comfort zone as they observe and measure how they interact with one another. In order to overcome this stage, Spradley suggests

making repeated explanations, restating what the interviewees say, and not asking for meaning, asking for use. This last part means that the interviewer is not trying to find the meaning behind the answers but rather to really understand what's going on. Repetition reinforces what has already been established and helps the interviewee stay focused. Restating demonstrates that the interviewer is listening and demonstrates an interest in learning the informant's language use and culture: "Restating embodies the nonjudgmental attitude which contributes directly to rapport. When the ethnographer restates what an informant says, a powerful, unstated message is communicated—"I understand what you're saying; I am learning; it is valuable to me." (p. 47). Finally, asking about meaning after an interviewee has explained something can be interpreted as containing a judgmental component that could affect the rapport. Once the exploration stage is over and the interviewee is more comfortable, the rapport process enters the cooperation stage.

While many interviewees cooperate with the interviewer from the beginning, what Spradley refers to here is a stage in which cooperation is total and happens in a more comfortable environment because some rapport has already been established:

"Informants may offer personal information and feel free to ask the ethnographer questions. Most important, both share in the definition of the interviews; they both know the goal is to discover the culture of the informant in the language of the informant."

The final stage in the rapport process is participation. Arguably, this is the most difficult stage to reach in this research form because, according to Spradley, it usually happens to

interviewers once they have interviewed the same interviewee for many weeks and the time spent together creates a new dimension that is added to the relationship in which the interviewee recognizes and accepts his or her role as teacher/informant.

Considering the preceding information, interviews were conducted with explicit purpose, asking descriptive questions, and encouraging participants to expand on their answers by maintaining a very conversational/informal tone. Notes about tone, behavior, pauses, laughter, and code switching were taken during the interviews.

Once finished, the interviews were analyzed as a whole in order to identify frequent discursive fragments from which the overall discourse were constructed. This system was based on Foucault's (1969) proposal of building a discourse analysis based on the appearance and interrelations of discursive elements which, when looked at as a whole, appear as clearly cohesive and contribute to the formation of a metadiscourse. In order not to lose track of the disjointed nature of discursive fragments, the interviews were analyzed keeping in mind Foucault's (1969) idea that discourse should be understood as a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. (p. 131).

With the theoretical foundation for this system in place, analysis was divided into three major steps. The first step consisted in identifying the ideological/discursive domains of

each individual interviewed by pulling out passages from their replies, which formed the individual discursive domains. Next, the domains that emerged from each interview were compared to those of other participants.

Once the dominant ideological/discursive domains were identified for the entire group, each ideological/discursive domain was studied in relation to DREAMers and their realities and online-life experiences. In order to do this, cohesive elements that arose organically from the interviews were analyzed using the tool discussed in this section and within the theoretical framework proposed for this study. Furthermore, new research avenues opened up during the interviewing process. Themes that appeared there were also be analyzed if they seemed to have a relation to the major themes being discussed in this research (i.e. identity, code switching, communities, online behavior, etc.).

About the Interviews: working with DREAMers, a look at the shifting political landscape, and unexpected realizations

The profound and complicated correlation between DREAMers and politics has an undeniable impact on the study of members of the DREAMer community. Caught between the promise of a legitimate chance at citizenship and the harsh reality of life as undocumented immigrants in tense political landscape ripe with racist undertones, youth who belong to this group occupy an interstitial space between having to be vociferous about their demands in fighting for their rights and being silenced by racism and prejudice so not wanting to be too visible because they fear repercussions. For this dissertation, the search for interviewees lasted about eleven months. Because the research

focuses on DREAMers in Texas, the search for interviewees included contacting people in Austin, Dallas, Killeen, San Antonio, San Marcos, El Paso, McAllen, Pflugerville, Edinburg, Donna, and Houston. Individuals contacted ranged from academic, translator, and Mexican-American author David Bowles to poet Edward Vidaurre, whose bilingual work reflects the struggles of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Unfortunately, none of the potential interviewees contacted through writers, professors, academics, and journalists eventually agreed to an interview. Furthermore, during the eleven months of searching, contact was made with groups of interest online and in the real world, including groups at the University of Texas at Austin and various online groups like Dreamers, Texas Dreamers, Don't Mess With Texas DREAMers, Dream Act Now! At UTSA, and Los Otros Dreamers. Facebook blasts were sent in and out of these and other DREAMer-centric pages on Facebook. Furthermore, a group of academics and journalists helped getting in touch with members of the community who were willing to be interviewed. Lastly, once initial contact was made with a member of this community, they were asked to spread the word among their family, friends, and acquaintances in hopes of achieving a snowball effect. Ultimately, this last system turned out to be the most productive and 5 of the 9 interviews conducted happened thanks to other contacts in the DREAMer community.

Getting in touch with DREAMers was much harder than originally expected. Then, once contact was made and interview times had been set up, the first seven interviewees cancelled for reasons that ranged from moving to Katy, TX, and suddenly developing a

fear of being identified to entering rehab or simply disappearing and never again replying to emails or phone calls. In the case of some DREAMers who were contacted through someone who had agreed to be interviewed (Mendoza's cousin, for example), they simply refused to be interviewed and said they had no interest in participating or talking about their identity or Facebook usage. In all, the first eight interviews that were scheduled did not happen. Also, the leads from academics and journalists did not lead to interviews. Lastly, only one of the five Facebook groups used to contact potential interviewees yielded results, and these were only "likes." Of the Facebook groups found and contacted, the following information was acquired:

- Dreamers: the page disappeared sometime in late 2015 without explanation.
- Texas Dreamers: this page is available but inactive. The last post, an article from Univisión titled "Solo un 2% de los 'Dreamers' se han beneficiado del programa Acción Diferida," was made on October 13, 2012.
- Don't Mess With Texas Dreamers: while no contacts were made through this page, it is still available and the last post, an article from 12newsnow.com about the Supreme Court titled "Supreme Court sets election-year clash on immigration," was made on January 19, 2016. As of July 2016, the page remained unchanged since January.
- Dream Act Now! At UTSA: The last post was about an event and was made on September 19, 2012. The page still available and has 622 followers despite having been inactive since 2012.

- Los Otros Dreamers: this is the only page still active almost daily. Users share a variety of articles about migration but also share articles about writing in Spanish (aimed at bilingual writers who find it easier to write in English or who want to improve their writing skills), music videos from YouTube, links to museums, links to pages offering English classes, links to job opportunities, and more.
- Chicanos in Action at Austin Community College: this page is still available but inactive. Their last post was made on July 30, 2015.

Analysis and Results

The interviews for this study were conducted between June and August of 2016 in various places in Austin, TX. Two were conducted in a private meeting room at a company in North Austin. One was conducted at a coffee shop in North Austin. Two were conducted at my house. Four were conducted in the houses of the interviewees. The opening and guide questions, as well as all follow up questions, were asked in Spanish. In two interviews, parts of some questions were translated into Spanish to ensure comprehensions of the question at hand.

Of the nine interviewees, six were female and three were male. They ranged in age from 23 to 31 and all were employed at the time the interviews were conducted. Four of them had children. Six of the nine participants had their parents living in the United States. One was married, two were not in a relationship, and six were in a relationship. All of them were born in Mexico. All of them identified as religious; eight of them identified as Catholic. Two of them said church is a crucial part of their lives and something they put a lot of time and effort into. Eight of them were currently enrolled in a university or community college in Austin. Here is some general information about the participants.

- Ostorga: at 23 years of age, Ostorga was the youngest of the interviewees. She already had family in the United States when she came to the country. Her life revolves around school (she is registered and taking night courses at Austin Community College), her parents, and her church. She did not offer an official description or title for her job, but mentioned twice that she works taking care of

children at her church. She does not have any children of her own, lives with her parents in North Austin, and was not in a relationship at the time the interviews were conducted. She was smiling throughout the interview, agreeable to all questions, and seemed comfortable with every subject discussed. Ostorga offered one of the longest interviews, which lasted three and a half hours. She was aware of the fact that her status as a undocumented student puts her in a special category. She mentioned wishing she could study for and take the citizenship exam like a Venezuelan friend of hers. She also talked about Facebook as a space where she can share her faith with others and said she regularly shares bible passages and images with positive comments or advice.

- Durán: the second youngest at 25 years of age, Durán was diametrically opposed to Ostorga in the sense that she is married and has a young daughter. Furthermore, she was the only one who was not actively using Facebook at the time of the interview. Much like all other interviewees, Durán already had family in the United States when she decided to move, but she was one of only two participants who did not come straight to Texas. Instead, she spent two years living and working in Boston, where her husband had been able to find a job through friends who were already there and told him to come there first. Durán spoke about the loneliness they felt in Boston and about how hard it was for her to adapt to the cold winters. Her interview lasted two hours and the first hour was spent talking about her family and how having to run a household and take care of a child

- almost left no free time. That free time, Durán uses for school, so she had to deactivate her Facebook account because she felt she did not have enough time to maintain it and did not want to have the temptation of spending time she does not have using the social networking site. Durán was employed at a bilingual call center at the time of the interview and had been in that job for half a year. Of all the participants, Durán was the one who placed the most emphasis on the importance of having family and friends and the one who spoke the most about missing them and feeling the need to stay in contact with them regularly. With her Facebook deactivated due to lack of time, she uses her phone to stay in touch with family and friends back in Mexico and in various parts of the United States.
- Corral: brought by his parents to the United States when he was a toddler, Corral has been in the country for 25 years and considers English his first language. He spent his youth in Santa Ana, California, and moved to Austin in his 20s. He was 27 years old at the time of the interview. His parents are still in Santa Ana. He was enrolled at Austin Community College at the time of the interview. Corral is homosexual and has had the same partner for eight years. They are planning to get married “before the end of 2016.” Corral’s interview was the shortest of all, lasting only one hour. While he seemed willing to talk about anything and quickly agreed to be interviewed, once the interview started he offered short answers and did not expand on many topics when questions were rephrased and asked again. While he looked comfortable and joked about his online interactions, he appeared

to possess a dark sense of humor and cynical view of Facebook as a place where he goes to “waste time.” He was vocal about disliking political content and talked about the internet as a bad place where most people have agendas and are out to get what they want from others. Also, while he was aware of the topics that would be discussed during the interview and he agreed to it, he refused to talk much about his personality and identity online and mentioned he did not have to define himself for anyone online or offline.

- Mendoza: 24-year-old Mendoza is only one year older than Ostorga, but was the female participant with the most kids, the most active on Facebook, and the one with the most interesting educational and living situations. At the time the interview was conducted, she was working in an insurance company doing data entry. Mendoza has two young daughters from the same father but they are not married and do not live together permanently. Instead, Mendoza spends some time living alone with her daughters, some of it living with the father of her daughters, whom she calls “boyfriend” or “el papi de mis nenas,”⁹ and some of it living with a family member in South Austin who helps her take care of her youngest daughter when she is sick or can’t go to the house of the woman who Mendoza pays to take care of both of her daughters. Mendoza has been in country since she was 4 years old and says English is her first language. Despite that statement, she used Spanglish regularly throughout the two and a half hours of the

⁹ My daughters’ daddy.

interview. Mendoza spoke at length about using Facebook to share her life with others as well as using the social networking site to stay in touch with family and to peak into the lives of her friends and stay updated on what each of them are doing. She also mentioned sharing photos of herself and her daughters regularly and considering Facebook a part of her daily life, going so far as to say that she stays connected all day long instead of logging in a few times a day. While she was brought to the United States by her parents at an early age, she considers both the United States and Mexico her home and mentioned having friends and family in both countries and keeping in touch with both circles regularly as well as in both languages.

- Torres: 24-year-old Torres mentioned having friends and family in the United States when she moved to the country, including family in Orlando, Florida, but she spoke of the move more as a decision that she took based on the perceived differences between what Mexico had to offer her in terms of possible career paths and quality of life and what the United States offered. Her mother and one brother are still in Mexico. She is the mother of a young boy and spoke at length about the way the social networking site became an online support group, book club, and recipe club. Torres mentioned that using Facebook is a natural thing that she does a few times a day, like checking her email, and said that she does not think it is a waste of time. She was very conscious of her privacy and was knowledgeable about the changes in privacy that Facebook has gone through. In

terms of language, she mentioned the need to use both English and Spanish and that she was intentionally raising her son bilingual because she considers it an advantage that could help him learn quicker and do better once he starts school. When speaking about identity, Torres was the only participant who spoke about the way she looks. According to Torres, people think she was born in the United States and generally assume she is from Argentina or Venezuela because she has light-brown skin and very light-brown eyes. Torres' interview lasted two and a half hours. Her answers mostly revolved around the way Facebook has become a part of her life but not something that takes away from her daily chores and obligations. She defined herself as a mom first when asked about her identity. Despite her status as a undocumented student currently enrolled at a college of university she did not want to share, she mentioned that the United States is still in her eyes, as well as in the eyes of many others, a place where a good education and positive disposition can help individuals achieve their goals. While she mentioned friends and family, Torres was the only participant who clearly and repeatedly stated the different groups she belongs to online and how they serve specific purposes. For example, she talked about the friends she has in her book club and how they all speak and read only English and thus force her to only use that language when interacting with them. She also spoke about friends who enjoy cooking and sharing recipes online and how those friends have no interaction with

- the friends from her book club. Torres said she was employed but did not want to give information about what she does for a living.
- Hernandez: 27-year-old Hernandez is the only participant who does not have family other than her daughters in the United States. He moved here with his parents when he was 10 years old and then stayed when they moved back to Mexico for reasons he did not wish to discuss. At the time of the interview, which lasted an hour and a half, he was working with a company that helps insurance agencies sell shares online. Hernandez lived with a woman for a few years and has two young daughters. He and the mother of the girls share custody and he picks them up from school three times a week and has them on alternating weekends. When not with his daughters, he mentioned having a “very active” social life and using Facebook as a tool to make events, get-togethers, and other events easier to schedule and to spread the word among his friends. He also mentioned having a lot of friends at his place of employment.
 - Martinez: first came to the United States when his parents moved here. He doesn't remember how old he was at the time, but mentioned being “just a little kid.” He lived in Miami, Florida, until the age of 20 and then moved to Austin with his parents when his father got a job driving a truck for a bread company. Martinez worked at the same company for a year also a truck driver. He mentioned he and his father lost their jobs at that company because there was a problem with the way they were being paid. At the time the interview was conducted, he was

working for a company that assists individuals with translations over the phone. He had been at that company for seven months and liked it more than his previous job at a cafeteria. Martinez remembers living in Florida and speaking Spanish everywhere he went and being forced to change that and work on losing his accent once they moved to Austin. He also mentioned that living in Florida meant not having to think about his roots or status because “everyone was Latino, everyone was from somewhere else.” During his interview, which lasted two hours, he spoke a lot about how hard it is to find jobs that pay well in Austin and that studying is the only way to get better jobs. He is currently enrolled in a community college he did not want to name and said he wanted to get married before the end of the year. He had no children at the time of the interview and said that while marriage is something he wants to do soon, he does not plan to have children. Like Hernandez, Martinez said Facebook is a tool he uses to share “things about football” and to make sure that his plans for the weekend are in order. He mentioned that Facebook allows him to share his plans with a lot of friends much more easily than it would be if he had to do it over the phone and that, because other users can let them know that they will be joining him with a single click, it makes planning a lot easier in terms of knowing how many will be at a certain activity, trip, or get-together, which makes buying or telling people to bring food and alcohol much easier. Martinez said he is not interested in politics and mostly uses Facebook for socializing, planning, and following and sharing

- information and articles about football leagues from Mexico, Argentina, and Spain. When it came to the discussion of identity, Martinez said he has a hard time thinking about himself as being from another place. Because he has been in the United States for so long, he said he feels like he was born here and this is his country of origin. He added that he has no interest in visiting relatives in Mexico at any point and that his parents also lack interest in returning.
- Flores: 26-year-old Flores spoke about work, church, and school being the three things her life revolves around. On her free time, she uses Facebook to stay in touch with people and entertainment. She works as an administrative assistant in an office in North Austin. Her interview lasted an hour and a half. At the time the interview was conducted, she did not have children and was not in a relationship. She spoke about how her time is consumed between church, work, and school. Flores, like Ostorga, said she dedicates a lot of her time to church and church activities and described herself as a “devoted Christian and Guadalupana” when we reached the identity questions. Like Martinez, Flores did not recall her age at the time her family moved to the United States and, like Ostorga and Martinez, she still lives with her parents.
 - Melguizo: 31-year-old Melguizo gave the second longest interview, which lasted three hours. She came to the United States with her mother when she was 14 years old. They moved to El Paso and then she came to Austin by herself. She is enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin. Melguizo has a 2-year-old daughter

and works in an office directing phone calls. She lives with the father of her daughter, a United States citizen. They are not married but plan to get married in the summer of 2017. Melguizo gave the most candid interview regarding her past. Both she and her father have gone through rehabilitation, her father for alcohol and Melguizo for cocaine. She also spoke at length about her concerns regarding Facebook and privacy, especially the images she shares of her daughter.

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Some DREAMers are vocal about their support of the DREAM Act. In fact, these were precisely the DREAMers who were expected to participate in this type of research because their continuous support for their cause and the very outspoken way they go about it make them the perfect interviewee—they are apt to have thought about their identity before and be constantly discussing it. However, the majority of DREAMers are more involved in everyday things and tend to consider their status an inevitable part of who they are; a relatively unimportant element of their identity that they don't think about most of the time. Here is Ostorga's take on it:

I know what I am. I'm a Christian and I'm a woman. I work and I work with the people in my church. I live with my parents. I don't spend my day thinking about that. I think I only think about things like that when someone tells me they're getting ready to take the (citizenship) test. I have to worry about my job and passing my classes at ACC. That's what I think about."

The DREAMers interviewed have no desire to discuss their status and no special interest in keeping up with the political landscape that has held back the DREAM Act. The idea that most DREAMers are staunch supporters of their cause, informed about current

events, and politically engaged probably stems from the fact that those who are vocal about it are strong-willed, eloquent, educated, and determined to make a difference by doing everything in their power to get the word out about their cause.

However, the majority of these DREAMers are different and present a somewhat apathetic discourse when it comes to the Act that could offer them a path to citizenship. In this regard, Melguizo, who had a lot to offer in terms of her Facebook usage, perhaps epitomizes the view of a large group of DREAMers with the short answer she gave to the question of whether she considered Facebook a place for politics: “I could care less about politics.” On the other hand, while not really engaged in the DREAMer community, Mendoza said she sees Facebook as a political arena and that, when it comes to politics, the social networking site is her only source of news:

Heck yes, Facebook is a place for politics! Trump, Hillary, Black Lives Matter...if I want to quickly read about politics or what's trending I use the hashtag on Facebook and it gives me all the recent articles on something and I don't have to go anywhere else.

While Melguizo and Mendoza are examples of different ends of the disinterest spectrum (neither cares much for news, but one at least uses Facebook to read about current events), perhaps the clearest case of disinterest was Durán, a 25-year-old mother of one who agreed to be interviewed because she had heard the research was about “living in U.S. as a foreigner.” Durán heard about the research from Ostorga and said she would be happy to sit down for an interview and discuss her life as an undocumented student. The first portion of the interview went smoothly. Durán spoke about her life in the U.S., first in Boston and, more recently, in Austin. She opened up about the financial struggles of

migrants and even shared her current concern: how much money to give her 5-year-old daughter for the tooth she recently lost. However, when the questions about Facebook began, the interview changed. Durán explained she had had a profile “for a while,” but life at home prevented her from participating in social media. Both she and her partner work, and between their hours working, the class she takes at a local community college (she didn’t want to say which), life at home, and raising a young daughter, there is no time for social media. She also talked about barely keeping up with current politics and having no interest in the outcome of the DREAM Act:

I had Facebook for a while. I would use it to stay in touch with friends and all that, but I closed my account because I don’t have any free time in my life. Any time that I’m not doing something, I use it to spend time with my daughter or cleaning the house. I liked it, but I know that I don’t have time for it right now. I don’t even read newspapers any more because I’m just going, going, going all day.

Mendoza, Melguizo, and Durán all spoke at length of the impact their children have on their time and their Facebook usage. Of the six females interviewed, four are mothers. Mendoza, is 24 years old and has two young daughters. Her living arrangement fluctuates between an uncle she has in South Austin and living with a Cuban man who she calls her boyfriend and who is the father of her two daughters, but hasn’t acknowledged them or given them his name. Mendoza explained:

R¹⁰. came to the U.S. years ago because he won the visa lottery in Cuba, so he’s here legally, but we’re not married. I’m not sure I want to get married. He gives

¹⁰ While Mendoza originally used her boyfriend’s full name, she then mentioned not wanting her name, his full name, or the names of her daughters, which she also used at various times before switching to calling her oldest daughter “la gorda” and her youngest “la chiquita.”

me money and takes care of his girls. I only pay for their day care and he pays for the rest. He found an old Cuban lady who takes care of kids at her house. It's not a school. All they do is sit in the living room and watch Dora, but I can't afford to send them to a real school."

Mendoza has been registered at the University of Texas at Austin twice. The first time, she was accepted into the College of Natural Sciences. She wanted to study chemistry. After a year of bad grades and financial hardships, she dropped out. A year later, she was in school again, this time in the College of Liberal Arts. Now she is out of college again but working toward readmission. Despite the changes, she is still uncertain about whether to pursue higher education.

Like, I loved chemistry, but it's too hard. I just couldn't do it. Then, when I went back, I took a bunch of classes and there's a lot of stuff I liked. I'm thinking about maybe studying English or Spanish literature, you know? But I don't know. I can get a job without spending all that money.

Whenever she spoke about the University of Texas at Austin and higher education, her discourse focused on getting a degree so she could get a job. She never mentioned education as a path to citizenship. Furthermore, she was one of three interviewees who didn't bring up citizenship at all.

Mendoza and Durán were just two good examples of how there's a dichotomy between outspoken DREAM Act activists who make a lot of noise and have an online presence or think about their identity within the framework of their sociopolitical status and the group of students who have a life and see higher education as a non-integral part of a life full of things like paying bills, taking care of children, dealing with partners, and making money.

Another interesting element pointed at a wide gap between the DREAMers that make the news and serve as the voice of the movement and those that are in that community but don't see it as a crucial part of their identity. The interviews only started becoming possible after potential interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. The first few contacts were told they could use a fake name or be given one. They were also offered various degrees of identification. Ostorga was the first one who was told her first name and city and date of birth, along with other information that could lead to her identification, would not be used. She became the first successful interview. Addressing this with the interviewees, it soon became clear that DREAMers settle into a relative comfort as undocumented students, parents, city dwellers, and workers, and they fear anything that remotely suggests affecting that comfort. By taking their names out of the equation, the process became one to which they could not be directly linked. This, combined with the difference made by the presence of young children, shifted the way the interviews were handled and affected the research as a whole because a plethora of crucial elements were added to their definitions of identity and, in many cases, they pushed out or relegated other elements to secondary or tertiary realms of importance.

With an overview of the issues faced before and during the interviewing process, it is easier to delve deeper into the results of the 9¹¹ interviews that were used in the results section.

¹¹ Although she is not an active user, Durán had a lot to share and her answers about Facebook and politics helped strengthen the overall analysis.

Interestingly, as previously stated, the dichotomies between the vocal DREAMer who makes the struggle for citizenship a main element of his or her identity and the silent DREAMer who mostly sees his status as an undocumented student as a relatively unimportant aspect of their life are many, and those differences shaped the results of this study. For example, none of the participants in this study belong to a DREAMer group or organization on Facebook. They also share a lack of interest in mainstream news outlet and prefer to use the social networking site for communication with friends, letting people know what they are doing, and, in the case of those who read and share articles and news content, mostly lean toward celebrity, gossip, light news, and, in one case, food and recipes.

While 9 participants are not enough to make a case for all DREAMers, there were very strong cohesive elements among the participants:

- None of them belong to groups or organizations on Facebook that deal with the DREAM Act or citizenship.
- None of them use fake names or nicknames on their profiles and all of them have pictures of either themselves alone or themselves with family or friends as their profile photo.
- None of them use Facebook as a political platform, but they all mentioned that Facebook is a place where a lot of other people get political, discuss politics, and share content that is political in nature.

- None of them felt that Facebook offers them a sense of community. Interestingly, five of the eight participants who are currently active on Facebook mentioned being part of groups and starting Facebook groups in order to plan get-togethers, weekends, birthdays, and even weddings, but none of those who belong to groups belong to a group that is political in nature or where identity or citizenship is being discussed.
- All of them are aware of the fact that there are risks involved with using Facebook and understand that their privacy is not ensured.
- All of them post and share content in both English and Spanish.
- All of them use the social networking site mainly to stay in touch with family and friends on both sides of the border.
- None of them have ever been in the military and they mentioned have no interest in joining the military.
- None of the participants have had encounters with the police in ways that have made them feel unsafe.
- Eight of the nine participants identify as Christian. Three said they go to church regularly. Two of them talked about church more than once and said that going to church, spending time with the people they know from church, and organizing, participating, and helping out with event organized by church was a big part of their lives.
- None of the participants have plans to return to Mexico.

- None of the participants have been deported.
- None of the participants have family members or friends who have been deported.
- All of the participants have email addresses, computers at home, and smart phones with internet access.
- All of the participants said their main way of staying connected is through their phones.
- None of the participants said they regularly do or would in the future describe themselves as undocumented students, DREAMers, temporary residents, or illegal immigrants. Replies to this ranged from “I’m a mom first of all” (Torres) to “I’m me. I don’t have to describe or define myself to people” (Corral).

The way the nine interviewees came to the U.S. is relatively similar. In all cases, they already had family in this side of the border and that played a role in their decision, or the decision of their parents, to move. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 31 years of age and have been in the United States anywhere from 7 years to 20 years. All of the participants except Ostorga were comfortable conducting the interview entirely in English. In the cases of Mendoza, Flores, Corral, and Melguizo, there was little to no accent. The other five interviewees had accents that ranged from perfectly intelligible to very thick. In the case of Ostorga, code switching was used throughout the interview and some of the questions had to be repeated to her in Spanish because she asked for it or in order to ensure that the question was fully understood.

At the time the interviews were conducted, all of the participants were employed at least half-time and 8 of the 9 were enrolled in college. No data was collected regarding place of work to protect their identity and that of their employers. None work in construction or landscaping, which goes against the mainstream idea of undocumented workers mostly performing manual labor.

None of the interviewees had a degree or certification from a previous institution or from their country. While going to college was recognized as something important, 5 of the 9 participants mentioned having a job without a degree. None of them mentioned having plans to attend grad school. All those who have children had them in this country.

For all participants, the reasons for coming to the United States had to do with two things: family and opportunity.

Torres: "I came here because things work in this country. The hospitals work. The government is not corrupt. Even public transportation works."

Melguizo: "My father had problems when he came here and then he got clean. That's when me and my mom came. I also had problems and got clean. Now I have a daughter and I'm getting married next year."

Martinez: "I don't think about my reasons for being here because I came when I was so young. This is my country. English is my first language. I don't even remember coming!"

Ostorga: "My whole family is here. I live with my mom and dad. This is the land of opportunity for a lot of people and that's why we came."

While asking for background information helped enrich the narrative of their lives, humanized them as subjects, facilitated rapport building and made it easier to establish a comfortable tone, and provided a better frame of reference when it came to analyzing

their Facebook usage, not much was gained from it and, except for those who have children and thus spend less time online and the fact that most are fully bilingual, no argument can be made that their background has a direct effect in the way they use and present themselves in the social networking site. Furthermore, no correlation could be established between the amount of years they have been in the U.S., their work, or their language skills and their Facebook usage. In fact, even those who code switched during the interview and appeared to be more comfortable and eloquent when speaking Spanish or Spanglish declared that they post in both languages.

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant information arising from the interviews is that most interviewees share a non-political discourse and that they all use Spanish and English while on Facebook because the site allows them to keep in touch with family and most of their family is either in Mexico or in the U.S. but use Spanish as their first language. This use of code switching was echoed in all interviews:

Ostorga: “I used English and Spanish. Those are my two languages. If I knew more, I would use more!”

Mendoza: “Spanish, English, Spanglish. I use them because I am a bilingual beast that can do both, and so do my friends and family! (Laughs)”

Melguizo: “I use English and Spanish because those are the two languages I know. My friends and family speak Spanish and a lot of my friends speak only English, so I use both.”

Torres: “I’m raising my son as bilingual, so I use both. My mom and my brothers and some friends back home don’t really speak English that well, but I also have a lot of friends that I’ve made in Austin that only speak English, so I have to use both. I also share a lot of articles, and the magazines and websites that I read are almost all in

English, so that means that most of the articles that share about food or politics are in English.”

Fernandez: “I use English and Spanish. Spanish because that what my family here and back home use and understand and English because I also have a lot of friends from school and work that only know English.”

Corral: “I post in English and Spanish.”

Other similarities were the fact that all the interviewees have only one profile/page and that all of them use their real names. Also, all eight active users have a photo of themselves either alone or with family as their profile picture. These two elements are important because, although they are not vocal about their undocumented status, they are not looking to hide their face or name and freely interact with family and friends (including new friends and friendly acquaintances) using personal information. This is even more interesting when compared to the fact that all of them wanted to keep their identities anonymous as part of their participating in this study.

Facebook usage varied among the participants. Melguizo said she has used it “for over ten years” and Ostorga said she has been using it “for about seven years.” Others were more precise. For example, Mendoza remembers opening her profile account in 2009 when she was in her senior year in high school and Torres remembers opening it in 2005 because a friend told her it was a great way to find people she hadn’t talked to in a long time. The participants also showed a wide range of usage hours during a regular day. They were asked to think about how often they log in, how often they check it, interact, post, and update their profile. The answers ranged from “a few times a day” (Hernandez) to “six or seven times a day” (Melguizo) to “all day long” (Ostorga).

Important differences started appearing when the issue of purpose was approached. After presence and usage had been established, the participants were asked to describe their usage, to talk freely about what makes them get on the site, and what they do when they are there. The only strong response, the only one that, when analyzed, turned into an element of cohesion in their discourse, was keeping in touch with friends and family:

Torres: “I use it to keep in touch with my friends and family back home and to keep in touch with my friends here. I’m a book club and we only meet once a month, but the rest of the time we talk about the book on Facebook and share ideas. I also have a lot of friends who like to share things like recipes and I like that. Other friends like to talk to me about what their watching on TV, what series they’re watching, and even though I don’t watch a lot of shows, I like to hear about what they’re enjoying. I also belong to a few mommy groups and those are great because we can talk to each other there and it’s like a little support group. We can talk about babies not sleeping and toddlers not eating and everyone goes in and offers support and ideas to help with the situation.”

Ostorga: “I use it to keep in touch with my friends and family.”

Hernandez: “To keep in touch with my family back home and all my friends.”

Melguizo: “I use Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends that live far away and of course for chisme!¹²”

Martinez: “Mis viejos¹³ are here and I live with them and don’t really stay in touch with a lot of people back home, but I use it to talk to my friends here, to stay in touch with them. I hate phone calls and there’s no phone calls when you use Facebook. You can plan to go tubing on the weekend and never have to call anyone. You can plan an entire party and invite your friends without having to call them one by one.”

Durán: “I missed my family a lot when I moved to Boston. I, like, needed to have them with me, so I used Facebook to stay in touch and to tell them all the things that were happening to me.”

Corral: “To stay in touch with my friends and family.”

¹² Gossip.

¹³ Referring to his parents.

When it came to discussing issues of identity and privacy beyond the use of names and photos, the cohesive elements that arose from the answers were two: most participants do not think of Facebook participation as a place to change or (re)construct their identity and they use it despite knowing that the privacy settings on Facebook are not a great tool to keep their online presence hidden from those who are not their friends on the social networking site. To the participants, Facebook is a place to share, and the gratification they get from sharing and consuming what others share makes the potential negative outcomes of Facebook usage worth the risk. In that regard, identity, sharing, and safety and privacy are all intricately entwined in a way that made the discussion of each element separately impossible because, regardless of the question, the participants kept mixing them together. The most eloquent response came from Torres, but everyone echoed her thoughts in various ways:

Torres: “A couple of years ago I know that people couldn’t find me if they typed my name in Google. Now they can. A lot of people I don’t want to have anything to do with have sent me friend requests. I think Facebook changed their privacy part and now you think you have it set to private but people can still find you very easily. The way I see it, you use Facebook and you don’t have to pay for it, but you pay in other ways because, like, none of your information is really private.”

Corral: “The internet is an ugly place and everyone is out to get something, just like in real life, so I use it and keep it real, I’m not a poser. I give people the real me.”

Mendoza: “Have I experienced any negative outcomes? No, but you said something about evaluating the risk, and I think I do that. I can take a risk because I am mindful of what I post and when I post. Instant information is highly addictive and it’s worth knowing what’s happening instantly even if Facebook is a dangerous place.”

Ostorga: “I don’t hide or anything, I’m myself on Facebook. I know that it’s dangerous because there are... personas mal intencionadas¹⁴ that use it to find other people and then kidnap or rape them.”

Flores: “I present myself the way I am, but I’m careful with the photos I share because you don’t know who’s looking at your profile or what they want, so you always have to be careful.”

Melguizo: “I am not sure about how to answer this question. (Pause) I know that Facebook obviously uses our information and has it available at the hands...for anyone to look me up on Google or whatever. I know that anyone can steal my pics and make their own profile with them. I do pay attention to the fact that I don’t let just anyone see my profile or add me as a friend. I have that at private.”

Toward the end of the interview, Melguizo was offered a chance to add anything to her responses or to discuss anything else that she deemed important if it had not been addressed. She was the only want to speak after the offer, and she went back to the issue of privacy and identity theft:

Melguizo: “Oh my God! Now that I had to think about it, I don’t even know if I’m safe. I don’t want to keep posting pics of my family and shit because I know that people are monitoring it. This is crazy. I use Facebook, but I don’t feel like I’m part of a community or anything. I’m just addicted to getting on there and seeing what other people are doing since I have no social life! (Laughs)”

While everything they said about Facebook was perfectly understandable within the context of a social networking site, the participants offered a different view of it when asked if Facebook is a political place or if they use it to build community, achieve something, or present an agenda. Everyone mentioned friends and family when talking about reasons for using the site and what they get out of it, which could be seen as a way

¹⁴ People with bad intentions.

of maintaining the connections with their community strong, but when politics was added to the mix, the answers changed:

Corral: “Some people use Facebook for politics and they’re always sharing political articles and Trump this and Bernie that, but I’m there to have fun and talk to my friends. I’m not into politics, so I just ignore politics on Facebook.”

Ostorga: “Yeah, I think Facebook is a place for politics, but it’s a place for politics for politicians, not for me. They use it to influence people and for propaganda, para darse a conocer o hacer quedar mal a la oposición.¹⁵”

Flores: “I’m sick of politics, so I just stay away from that. Everyone likes to argue, but I don’t. You’re not going to change anyone’s opinion because you fight with them on Facebook, so I don’t do it.”

Melguizo: “I could care less about politics.”

Less cohesion was found when it came to explaining their motivations. Despite the fact that all participants said they use Facebook mostly to stay in touch with friends and family, when asked about what motivated them to log in and participate, the answers were varied:

Ostorga: “I just use it because it’s simple to use.”

Corral: “I need a place to waste my time. It’s either Facebook or YouTube, and Facebook lets me look into the lives of other people, so I go with that.”

Torres: “I never stop to think about why I use it. It’s on my phone and it’s like checking my email for me, it’s just something that I do a few times a day.”

Flores: “I log in because it’s something to do. I go to church and go to school and go to work. Then I have free time, and that’s when I use Facebook. It’s something that’s always there and there’s always something new.”

¹⁵ To make themselves known or to make their opposition look bad.

Mendoza: “Oh, I use it for many reasons. Sometimes I just want to see what other people are up to or I want to post a selfie. I post those, and picture of my girls, and interesting articles. I don’t know...so people can see what I look like at the moment? The pictures of my family are so other family members who live far can see them. Or more for me to see how I’ve changed over the years, just documenting my belleza. (Laughs)”

Compared to the users described in the literature discussed in the literature review section, DREAMers are not much different. Their use of Facebook centers on communication with friends and family and their identity while on the social networking site is not significantly altered in order to use the site. Furthermore, the only noticeable difference between the DREAMers interviewed and most of the users described in youth/college-centric literature is the presence of children and the pressing need to make money to survive instead of having the ability to rely on loans or on support from their parents. The participants in this study have been in the United States for a while, and even the two who are relatively recent arrivals have already fallen into a somewhat normal routine that includes family, friends, work, and school, so elements of their identity like being undocumented or having to fear deportation are elements that have been relegated in their long lists of activities, preoccupations, and responsibilities. While there are a number of vocal, passionate advocates for the DREAM Act out there, many DREAMers are not focused on their undocumented status and don’t make fighting for the DREAM Act a part of their lives. In fact, while this group is too small to make generalizable observations, the fact that some of the discursive similarities are so strong probably points to elements that are prevalent among DREAMers. For example, the lack of political engagement seems to point to a disenchantment with the fate of the DREAM

Act, and perhaps the current political landscape, one in which Donald J. Trump's candidacy has given racists an excuse to be very vocal and where talk of building a wall between the United States and Mexico, only aggravates the situation and further pushes DREAMers to try to conceal that part of their identity or to just ignore it. Also, the lack of activity in almost all of the Facebook groups designed for and by DREAMers probably points to a declining interest in the subject, especially now that the movement has been dealt a few blows and President Obama, who was a big supporter, is finishing his second term in office. The University of Texas at Austin and Austin Community College, two of the higher learning institutions in which participants in this study are currently enrolled, have or have had groups developed to help and support DREAMers, but the students interviewed who are enrolled in these institutions do not belong to them. Furthermore, they said they have no interest, need, or time to belong to these groups. Likewise, none of the participants belonged to any DREAMer groups or pages on Facebook. Again, this shows that the DREAMer part of their identity is not crucial or at the top of their list when it comes to identifying themselves online.

The conclusions drawn from these interviews don't necessarily apply to all DREAMers because there are definitely DREAMers who take their role in their community very seriously and constantly try to effect change by being vocal, demanding equal rights, and trying to educate the populace about their situation. However, the major conclusions drawn here go against the grain in terms of what was expected:

- DREAMers use Facebook to stay in touch with family and friends and don't consider it a political tool or a platform to communicate their agenda as undocumented students.
- There is a generalized sense of apathy toward anything having to deal with politics and many of those interviewed actively ignore or steer clear of political discussion while using Facebook.
- When DREAMers don't consider their undocumented status a crucial element of their identity, they don't participate in DREAMer groups on or offline.

More research should be done on those DREAMers who see themselves as primarily as undocumented students and want to change their status by receiving a college education. In the case of the participants in this study, having a job and making money were more important than finishing a college education, and the completion of that education was not seen as a viable path to citizenship. Again, having children probably plays a big role on that vision. It would also be interesting in doing a long-term study that looked at the way the financially-focused vision of these DREAMer parents impact the decisions made by their children regarding college and higher education.

The DREAM Act is still alive in terms of possibility, but some of the observations made during this study, namely the lack of active pages and the dispiritedness with which the DREAMers interviewed spoke about the Act, reveal the very real possibility that the DREAMer movement is, while not necessarily losing ground or support from its most vocal advocates, at least being pushed down the list of priorities for DREAMers who

already have a job or who have to deal with the responsibilities that come with parenthood. How the dichotomies between these two groups come together, along with the impact the next elections could have on the DREAM Act, is something that will need to be revisited once the next President of the United States is elected. For these groups of DREAMers, the political future of this country could have a big impact on the way they define themselves and conduct themselves both in the real world and on Facebook.

Conclusions

The theories selected to aid in this study were valuable to various degrees in terms of the way they illuminated the findings. Social Identity Theory was somewhat useful, but only in that shed some light into the way the findings differed from what the study expected to find. Tajfel and Turner (1978) stated that belonging to a specific group or groups allows people to become part of the social world. In this study, the DREAMers were expected to define themselves primarily as belonging to the DREAMer community. That was not the case. The DREAMers belonged to two main groups: DREAMers and Facebook users. Because citizenship is an important element that places DREAMers in a special group that is at risk of deportation, among other things, I expected their undocumented status to be the main element in their discourse when discussing belonging to groups and defining themselves based on their membership to those groups. I expected their status to be one of the main reasons they use Facebook. Since Social Identity Theory proposes that people have a natural tendency to categorize themselves into one or more "ingroups" and that these ingroups become part of their identity and may inform their identity-building processes, but the participants named other ingroups before DREAMers, namely Facebook users, Christians, workers, and family members and parents. Within these ingroups, individuals think of their identities as something that is defined by their actions, and in this case, those actions were mostly staying in touch with family and friends on both sides of the border and sharing photos, status updates, and articles that were rarely political and that never had to do with their undocumented status. This points to a small

flaw in my hypothesis, namely that Facebook is a place for political engagement.

Furthermore, this finding is something that previous research has already signaled needs to be addressed:

As political participation via the Internet becomes more important in contemporary politics and young people are increasingly attracted by the Internet and Facebook, learning more about how personality traits affect online political participation, acquires much significance. Given that some personality traits encourage more participation, and more visibly so than others, an analysis of personality traits and their effect on political engagement is one of the first steps in understanding who shapes the agendas on the Internet, and what the consequences might be. (Quinterlier & Theocharis, 2013, p. 286-287)

Uses and Gratifications Theory, which was used to explore the reasons why DREAMers turn to Facebook and the motivations behind the things they share, the discourse they construct, and the relationship between their sociopolitical agenda and their Internet use, proved to be very useful. Using the theory, this study asked if DREAMers were using Facebook because it allowed them to accomplish stated objectives or meet interactive needs. The answers were clear: DREAMers use Facebook to share their life with others, for entertainment, and to stay in touch with friends and family. However, they do not use the social networking site to pursue a normalized social and legal status. As expected, this theory permitted a more humanistic approach to research and analysis because it opened the space for the interpretation of answers in a way that considered individual goals and preferences, which complemented the ethnographic methodology by opening the door to further questioning in relation to the reasons why DREAMers logged into Facebook.

Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *mestiza* or borderland consciousness was also useful.

DREAMers are caught between here and there, between the immediacy of their situation as undocumented immigrants and the uncertain future that they must fight for on a daily basis. While their struggle was not as active as expected, they are caught in a place where "home" is elsewhere and where their status prevents them from feeling like they belong, thus their constant referrals to "home" and "back home" and their need to stay in touch with those on the other side of the border, which exemplifies borderland consciousness. Regardless of the lack of vocal support of the DREAM Act by these participants, the implications of being caught between countries, languages, and cultures remains a strong component of their identity. Anzaldúa's work applies to DREAMers because this country is a multiplicity of places for them: a home in which they are no equal citizens, a home where member of their family and friends are missing, and a home in which they don't always feel wanted. Their quest to stay resembles the quest for a home/acceptance presented in Anzaldúa's work. This quest is one of the biggest markers of their collective and personal identities.

Those considered DREAMers share a very important basic set of elements that affect their identity in the United States: they are under the age of 35 and, if seeking a path to citizenship, are enrolled in college or the military and are undocumented. Beyond those identity markers, this group suggests that other aspects of their lives are as integral to them as the definers of members of any other group. They cannot be generalized. They hold distinctive approaches to life, inhabit different social spheres, like and dislike

different things, a matter often overlooked once they become categorized as a group. In other words, this moniker makes them both acknowledged and yet unknown

Their personal complexities complicated this study in some ways. Texas is a southern state where the long entrenched history of racism means that individuals whose physiognomy or accent suggests a Latino heritage are often subjected to discrimination, assumed to be undocumented and treated with hostility. Even when they start school in the elementary levels, they are most apt to go to underfunded schools in minority neighborhoods, thus assured the disadvantages of U.S. born Mexican Americans.

The major issue this study faced became the difficulty locating willing participants. The first seven months of looking for interested DREAMers who would be willing to be interviewed about their lives in the United States and their use of Facebook were frustratingly unproductive. Groups at various universities were contacted, authors and journalists who have worked with DREAMers were asked to let other know about the research, personal contacts were asked to do the same, and Facebook messages and posts were sent to all DREAMer groups on Facebook. They all went unanswered, group postings were ignored, and even some of those interviews that were set up eventually were cancelled or the participant stopped responding. Interestingly, despite the fact absolute anonymity was immediately offered as a choice, the first participants were secured only once anonymity was guaranteed rather than offered. This was hard to understand and seemed contradictory. On the one hand, all of the interviewees used their real names and posted profile photos of themselves on Facebook without much concern

for privacy, but were only willing to be interviewed once absolute anonymity was promised.

Why are non-vocal DREAMers apparently comfortable with their status but not willing to talk about it under circumstances that may compromise their anonymity? All of the participants in this study were promised anonymity from the start and only talked about privacy and anonymity in relation to Facebook. If they fear deportation, why do they use Facebook mostly openly and with seeming unconcern about discovery? When asked, most of them said Facebook is only for friends and family and other mentioned knowing that Facebook was not secure, but no one offered more. They do not hide behind fake names or images.

This small number of DREAMers are somewhat comfortable with their DREAMer status and feel no need to fight for the DREAM Act. But in the case of a survey they want to avoid being tied to their answers and comments. Ultimately, these DREAMers—who are not vocal participants or supporters of the cause that purports to defend and support them—accept their insecure undocumented status the way some individuals accept an unseen physical deformity: it is present, but they would rather not acknowledge it if possible.

The frustration that came with being unable to secure interviews and with scheduling interviews that then did not occur also reinforced an important lesson learned by others: those whose identities if revealed could put them at risk in some way will talk about their identity freely, but only as long as the researcher allows them selective revelation and

otherwise provides them a safe space in which they can become separated from their own reality.

I found my second conclusion more complex and unexpected: for some DREAMers, the DREAM Act lost its value as something worth fighting for. They remain generally aware of its existence, but don't consider it a path to citizenship, which is what it would be if it ever became law. This provides more texture to the study of DREAMers because it does two things. It separates DREAMers into two large groups: supporters and activists and those who speak or behave as if indifferent to it. The second leads researchers and activists to question the role of programs like the The Longhorn DREAMers Project, which seeks to "strengthen support services on campus for undocumented students enrolled at The University of Texas at Austin." Mendoza, for example, has registered for classes at UT Austin twice before our interview and is in the process of applying for readmission again. However, she didn't recall a specific example of how the program helped her out. Similarly, Ostorga recognized that some people assisted her to register "without papers" at Austin Community College and allowed her to pay for some classes using her debit card, but she did not recall if those individuals she belonged to a specific office or were part of a special program. Unfortunately, all attempts to contact DREAMers through this program were unsuccessful and none of the participants had anything to share regarding it, so nothing could be said in the study about their use, their impact on DREAMers' life, or their ability to keep undocumented students enrolled all the way to graduation.

A long-term study following a group of DREAMers through the application, enrollment, and first two years of college could be very enlightening because it might shed light on the changing necessities of those students, the reality of having much of their time absorbed by studies and work. It could illuminate the way that pursuing a degree shapes and perhaps limits their day-to-day lives. Furthermore, it might identify areas in which they need additional assistance and how these situations affect DREAMers in ways that regular students are not affected.

The third realization drawn from this study indicates that the correlation between social networking site use and real life needs to be studied more profoundly. Much has been written about the discrepancies between online identities and real life identities can be found, but not enough research exists about the way that everyday elements like work, children, financial struggles as well as the humanizing needs for family, friends and social contact impact online behavior. Likewise, the current political turmoil and the racist, anti-immigration discourse being used by the Republican Party warrants additional research. This rhetoric currently pours into the digital realm. This political content may affect those politically engaged to become even more so while simultaneously pushing those who were not yet as connected further into political apathy.

This study demonstrated areas of sensitivity to be practiced. For example, assuring absolute anonymity and removing technology like audio recorders should be done from the start. Once these were eliminated, it only took two months to set up and conduct the

nine interviews that were used in this study. Populations like the DREAMers want remain low profile and absolutely anonymous when talking about their status.

While nine interviews can provide a pilot exercise toward enriching a map of how DREAMers currently behave on Facebook in relation to their identity, the characteristics of this group urge awareness of class and priorities. This group was homogenous in some regards so the findings can only be extrapolated to DREAMers of the same age range. Xx years later, those who inspired the DREAM Act grew older, maybe married, became parents. These changes are apt to change priorities. This group and those to be compared to them should share some specific identity markers: a general indifference toward politics, treating their undocumented status like a bothersome element best kept hidden, and a personal, real-world life that demands constant work, effort, time, and attention. It may be safe to assume that DREAMers now focused on obtaining a degree, have no children, and do not work full-time or part-time outside their college or university will probably be more vocal and engaged when it comes to the DREAMer community. They have to worry about each paycheck, have mouths to feed at home, and have to constantly worry about partner satisfaction, their performance at work, and the plethora of aspects that come into play in child rearing. Students with these concerns may find activism, engagement, and civic interaction impossible to include in their lives.

A study comparing the two distinctive groups might provide new information. The differences between these groups of DREAMers must be explored, addressed, and understood if they are to be enabled to move forward and become participating members

of a growing community whose impact on this country in the coming years could dictate the course of the nation's fate.

Appendix

Appendix I – Guide Questions

There are the guide questions that were incorporated in each interview:

How did you end up living in the U.S.?

What brought you here?

Did you have family and/or friends in this country before moving here? Did that have any impact on your decision to move here?

Would you like to talk about your experience and how your life changed after you arrived?

How long have you been in the U.S.?

Is there anything about your background that you think is crucial to who you are that you would like to share?

When did you first start using computers and why?

Do you use Facebook? When did you begin to use it?

Why do you use it?

What language do you use when participating in social networking sites? Why?

How often do you use Facebook?

Do you have more than one page? Do you log in under multiple names?

Do you have multiple online identities?

Do you think Facebook allows you to protect your identity? Do you pay attention to security and privacy settings on your profile?

Are you a member of a group that uses Facebook for a specific purpose?

For what purposes do you use it?

Do you think Facebook is a place for politics? Why or why not?

What do you hope to accomplish in its use?

What are your motivations?

What do you think are some of the benefits?

Have you realized these benefits? In what way?

Can you provide an example?

Do you believe there are drawbacks to using social networking sites?

Have you experienced any negative outcomes?

Can you give me an example?

Are there risks in using Facebook? What do you believe those are?

How do you evaluate the risk as opposed to the benefit? In other words, what makes taking a risk worth it?

In what ways do you think Facebook affects your interactions with others?

What kind of content do you usually share? Why do you select this content?

How do you think Facebook changes the way you present yourself online?

Do you feel like you're part of a community when you're using Facebook? If so, could you explain why?

Are you a member of different groups on Facebook? Why?

To what extent do you think Facebook is a place for political commentary? Do you share your political views on Facebook? If so, what do you think you're accomplishing by doing so?

Have you had any memorable encounters or experiences while using Facebook that you would like to share?

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