Mobilization Strategies within The Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles

THESIS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Master’s Thesis to my parents, Ana and Jose. I can never thank them enough for their continuous support, encouragement, and sacrifices. I could not have achieved this accomplishment without them. I would also like to dedicate this Thesis to my wonderful wife, Kathryn, who has taught me to never give up and strive for excellence. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this Thesis to all the immigrant rights organizations and their members who made this project possible.
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Mobilization Strategies within The Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles

By

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As the United States experiences another increase in anti-immigrant laws and targeted enforcement practices of the undocumented community, immigrant rights organizations are responding with mobilization strategies as forms of resistance. Through interviews and observations with immigrant rights advocates in Los Angeles, I identified six mobilization strategies. These include: (1) educational and awareness campaigns; (2) counter surveillance efforts; (3) legal representation efforts; (4) non-violent protest and demonstrations; (5) the New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary Cities; and (6) “Get Out the Vote” campaigns. Each of these strategies responds to a specific form of repression and illustrates how immigrant rights groups respond to U.S. immigration agencies’ efforts to reinforce power relations, fear and panic, deception, surveillance, lack of fair and due process, threats to the unity and solidarity among immigrant rights groups, and other harmful effects. These mobilization efforts reveal how advocates and organizations challenge the institutions by establishing leaders and advocates from this community. Also, these strategies reveal the particular sort of power relationship within which migrants and immigrant rights organizations are struggling. The variation among these six strategies
demonstrates how mobilization strategies are fluid and changing based on the challenges migrants face at a specific time and place. As a result, advocates in these organizations were found to focus on these six strategies to contest immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality efforts in Los Angeles in 2016. Further analysis could focus on how legal violence and migrant illegality shape the experiences of the undocumented community in the post-2016 election.
INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2016, I interviewed Walter, a 30-year-old attorney who works with an immigrant rights organization in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in Los Angeles. Throughout our interview, Walter described his efforts to empower undocumented immigrants so that they could defend themselves against raids and deportations conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Walter told me,

We are providing awareness, education, and services. We are giving out these little red cards with your rights if you are ever detained or arrested by ICE officials. These are part of [the] broader base education [efforts] by letting the community know that we are here and giving them a sense of the services that we provide. We also have a section of what to do during a raid which is part of the education aspect of going to local schools, community centers, and just talking [to everyone] briefly about the reality and this is what’s going on but these are your rights and how to proceed.

Walter’s statement reveals the sorts of strategies that advocates pursue in hope of empowering the undocumented community. For example, Alan, 56, who is also an advocate from a Los Angeles immigrant rights organization, described the difference between organizing for and with the undocumented community. He said that organizing is not just about chanting and taking over the city streets but “it’s about developing the power of the people to fight and to stand and to advocate for themselves and to also help others, that’s our job [to] develop leaders in the community.” As a result, immigrant rights advocates and organizations not only help in creating a space for the community to be educated, organize, and meet but also attempt to train and establish leaders.
This need for empowerment strives from the fact that certain laws target the undocumented community in the United States, further creating what scholars have termed legal violence. Legal violence is defined as the way that law exerts control on the lives of immigrants, which tends to have a harmful effect (Menjivar & Abrego 2012). This form of violence is specifically created and supported by anti-immigrant policymakers, interest groups, and voters who enact exclusionary laws (i.e. Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070) and targeted enforcement practices (i.e. 2016 immigration raids of Central America refugees) that affect immigrants’ attempts to legalize their status. As a result of exclusionary immigration laws, immigrants experience everyday feelings of otherness, exclusion, systematic oppression, and even criminalization, further creating “migrant illegality” (Willen 2007). Migrant illegality represents the daily reproduction of migrants’ vulnerability based on U.S. immigration laws where there exists a continuous threat of deportation from the U.S. nation state (De Genova 2004). While scholarship on legal violence and migrant illegality advances understandings of power relations, this literature tends to overemphasize victimization. To counter this tendency, I argue that it is essential to investigate not only how undocumented immigrants are victimized but also how they respond to the effects of immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality. Based on the present study, I focus on the efforts of advocates from different immigrant rights organizations in creating and implementing mobilization strategies that challenge the effects of immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality.

In this paper, I demonstrate how immigrant rights advocates and organizations in Los Angeles attempt to both identify and counter the effects of immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality through mobilization strategies with the purpose of
protecting and empowering the undocumented community. Through interviews with advocates, I identified six mobilization strategies. These include: (1) educational and awareness campaigns; (2) counter surveillance; (3) legal representation efforts; (4) non-violent protest and demonstrations; (5) the New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary Cities; and (6) “Get Out the Vote” campaigns. Each of these strategies responds to a specific form of repression. These strategies illustrate how immigrant rights advocates and organizations respond to U.S. immigration agencies’ efforts to reinforce power relations, fear and panic, deception, surveillance, lack of fair and due process, threats to the unity and solidarity among immigrant rights groups, and other harmful effects. But more importantly, these mobilization efforts reveal how organizations challenge the institutions that regularly detain and deport many undocumented immigrants by establishing leaders and advocates from this community. Also, these strategies reveal the particular sort of power relationship within which migrants and immigrant rights organizations are struggling. The variation among these six strategies demonstrates how mobilization strategies are fluid and changing based on the challenges migrants face at a specific time and place. As a result, advocates in these organizations were found to focus on these six strategies to contest immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality efforts in Los Angeles in 2016.
Chapter 1:

Literature Review

Legal Violence and Migrant Illegality

The literature on immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality sheds light on how undocumented immigrants are victimized by exclusionary immigration laws and targeted enforcement practices. Legal violence manifests itself through exclusionary laws at the local, state, and federal level, which result in promoting, “a climate of insecurity and suffering among individual immigrants and their families” (Menjivar and Abrego 2012; De Genova 2002). It becomes legal violence since it is “embedded in legal practices, sanctioned, actively implemented through formal procedures, and legitimated while seen as normal and natural because it is ‘the law’” (Menjivar and Abrego 2012). For example, legal violence has an effect on immigrants’ work experiences as immigration officials target undocumented workers through workplace raids and ignore different forms of abuse in the workplace (Holmes 2007; De Genova 2002; Menjivar and Abrego 2012). This form of violence also has an effect on family dynamics as immigration policies not only impact migrants but also an entire family and community with ties to immigrants (Gomberg-Muñoz 2015, 2016; Dreby 2012; Menjivar & Abrego 2012; Coutin 2013, 2015). Similarly, it manifests itself in educational institutions as undocumented students in higher education attempt to gain access to colleges and universities, apply for in-state tuition, seek financial aid, such efforts are followed by blocked paths to mobility and intense stigmatization of youth as they seek belonging (Enriquez 2016; Huber 2015; Corrunker 2012; Menjivar and Abrego 2012; Abrego 2011; Flores 2016; Olivas 2012). Evidently, exclusionary immigration

In addition, undocumented immigrants are forced to endure the everyday experiences of otherness, exclusion, and even criminalization as a result of exclusionary laws, further creating migrant illegality. Illegality profoundly shapes migrants’ subjective experiences of time, space, embodiment, sociality, and self (Willen 2007). But undocumented immigrants experience illegality differently based on how they are racialized in the U.S. through stereotypes where Latinas/os are perceived to be criminals, while Asian and Pacific Islanders are perceived as law-abiding (Enriquez 2016; Herrera 2016). As a result, undocumented migrant’s life experiences and outcomes are shaped by the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status (Covarrubias 2011; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Chavez 2012; Willen 2007; Abrego 2016; Bryane 2014). Similar to the effects of legal violence, migrant illegality has repercussions on family dynamics and experiences (Menjivar 2006; Abrego 2016; Dreby 2012, 2013). The effects of migrant illegality are further reinforced by border patrol, law enforcement, employers, and other institutions that produce stigmatized and exploitable populations of migrant workers (Chavez 2008; De Genova 2002, 2005; Heyman 2001; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Wheatley and Gomberg-Muñoz 2016, 2010; Steuesse and Helton 2013). Undocumented immigrants come to learn to live a life of being “illegal” where they are constantly aware that at any moment they could be both apprehended and deported from the country (Chavez 2012; Willen 2007; De Genova 2002). As a result, scholars argue that legalization is necessary to counter the effects of migrant illegality (Abrego 2016). However, even when some migrants legalize, legal violence prevents the majority of undocumented immigrants
from escaping the conditions of migrant illegality. As a response to the constant victimization, many are forced to engage in different survival and mobilization strategies alongside immigrant rights organizations and advocates to avoid further victimization and deportation from the U.S.

While scholarship on legal violence and illegality advances understandings of power relations, this literature tends to overemphasize victimization. For example, legal violence exclusively focuses on the ways exclusionary laws have a harmful effect on the lives of immigrants (Menjivar & Abrego 2012). Similarly, migrant illegality focuses on how immigrants’ undocumented status forces them to experience everyday feelings of otherness, exclusion, and even criminalization when confronting government agencies, institutions, and employers (Willen 2007). Furthermore, such work treats illegality as a master status in which undocumented status surpasses the impact of other social identities including gender, class, and race, all of which could also influence the construction and experiences of illegality (Enriquez 2016; 2017a; 2017b). As a result, in order to more fully understand forms of empowerment and the ways that legal status intersects with other social identities, it is necessary for scholars to focus on the ways that immigrants in liminal statuses respond to and mobilize against threats. In the present study, I found that immigrant rights groups provided mobilization strategies through which undocumented immigrants could challenge these institutions through educational and awareness campaigns, counter-surveillance, legal representation efforts, non-violent protests and demonstrations, the New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary Cities, and “Get Out the Vote” campaigns. The forms of mobilization by advocates were a direct response to the effects of structural (i.e. deportation force), symbolic (i.e. deportability), and legal (i.e. exclusionary
laws) violence targeting the undocumented community. Advocates and organizations play an instrumental role in their efforts to mobilize and empower immigrants into becoming agents of change by participating in the immigrant rights movement.

**Advocating for Immigrant Rights**

In the United States, a national immigrant rights movement was founded in response to an increase in exclusionary immigration laws, anti-immigrant policymakers, and targeted enforcement practices of the immigrant community. The movements’ primary goals are to protect the immigrant community from discrimination, excessively repressive enforcement of immigration laws, and to advocate for legislation that will provide a path to citizenship for immigrants (Engler 2009; Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). Immigrant rights groups regularly advocate for legislation at the local, state, and federal level, which demonstrates that they tend to rely on the law as a means of obtaining justice (Engler 2009; Menjivar 2006). In order to undertake the goals of the movement, it is reliant on well-established institutional networks of immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations and actors (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008; Blumer 1969). Through these collaborations, organizations could respond to threats towards the undocumented community.

*Services within the Movement:* Immigrant-serving organizations vary from small community groups to national service organizations. Through collaborations among organizations, they offer different programs that contribute to the social and economic incorporation of immigrants (i.e. educational programs, housing assistance, health care, job training, emergency services, and arts and cultural programming) (Engler 2009; Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). Secondly, organizations provide advocacy and organizing
opportunities to address and improve immigrants’ lives and needs (i.e. political voice and participation, demonstrations, and policy issues related to immigrant rights) (Engler 2009; Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). Lastly, organizations also promote political participation campaigns that focus predominantly on voter education and registration in order to increase immigrants’ access to political and civic institutions (i.e. voter registration drives and collaborations between member organizations and schools to educate the Latino electorate) (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008).

The Structure Of The Movement: The immigrant rights movement has focused on advocating for the interests of the community through coalitions and networks (Engler 2009; Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). Most immigrant rights coalitions are composed of community leaders, media personalities, elected officials, churches and faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, social service providers, national organizations, hometown associations, state and city advocacy organizations, and trade unions and labor federations (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008; Engler 2009). Also, solidarity and advocacy have existed between ethnic groups including Latina/o, Korean/Asian, African, Arab, and European groups through coalitions with various local and national organizations, and international labor organizations (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008; Park 2012).

Scholars have found that organizations created collaborative relationships due to internal-organizational related and external or contextual reasons. The internal reasons are to develop and increase services, reduce costs, gain access to and share information and resources, and enhance their reputation. While the external reasons focus on government- and funder-driven collaborations (Cordero-Guzman 2004; Edwards and Gillham 2013). But,
organizations could find themselves constrained as they are forced to meet certain expectations and obligations when acquiring resources from external sources when compared to organizations that rely on self-generated sources (Edwards and Gillham 2013). Other scholars have found that the purpose behind coalitions is the need for solidarity with the local community, social action, and provision of services when describing religious-based coalitions (Pipes and Ebaugh 2002).

In addition, immigrant-serving organizations have been found to be part of organizational coalitions and networks to “enhance their visibility, viability, and influence in local decision-making processes” (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). However, not all coalitions and networks are the same, as levels of involvement vary, each campaign has its own organization dynamic, and relationships among members varies. For example, Cordero-Guzman and colleagues (2008) found three broad types of networks among organizations in Chicago and New York City: (1) Coalition organizations, who adopted a structure that gives equal participation to all the member organizations; (2) federated model/umbrella organizations, who concentrated power in an umbrella organization; and (3) highly networked lead organizations, who rotated leadership with network organizations assuming leadership roles at particular points during a campaign (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). These same scholars found that coalitions perform three distinct roles as policy intermediaries: (1) They strengthen alliances between immigrant-serving organizations; (2) they bridge between organizations and the state as they interpret state policies, communicate the impacts of policy change, identify policy threats, and present a united front to advocate for policies to advance their constituents’ interests; and (3) provide a medium for social service organizations to become involved in policy advocacy,
without those organizations risking their contractual relationships with government agencies or even violating their nonprofit status (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008; Edwards and Gillham 2013; Engler 2009). In addition, coalitions also have become more involved in direct mobilization as they handled most of the planning and logistics that made the 2006 nationwide protests possible. These organizations were able to demonstrate the significance of their mobilization efforts to policymakers and the general public, while using the protest as a platform for advocating policy changes that would support immigrants and acknowledge both the economic and social contributions they make to the United States everyday (Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008).

*The Movements’ Challenges:* Although many immigrant rights organizations participate in highly networked coalitions, some organizations continue working for the community without these alliances, which could limit their influence. Also, many immigrant rights organizations tend to articulate their grievances by making them visible during demonstrations, which forces many groups to reject cooperation with certain government authorities (i.e. immigration agencies including Border Patrol and ICE) (Fernandez 2008; Engler 2009; Cordero-Guzman et al. 2008). But organizations that receive governmental assistance could be threatened with the loss of funding if they do not cooperate with authorities or if they participate in violent demonstrations (Edwards and Gillham 2013). Organizations also struggle to fight for the rights of all immigrants as some groups’ fight for the rights of some immigrants (i.e. students), while further marginalizing other immigrants (i.e. criminals) (Nicholls 2013; Gomberg-Muñoz 2016). However, many immigrant rights groups have publicly announced their solidarity with all immigrants. In addition, many immigrants remain reluctant to join the movement as a result of threats of retaliation by
oppositional groups, limiting the self-expression of individuals as they join a large-scale national movement, creating distrust, and lack of organizations in certain regions (Abrego 2016; Holmes 2007). But, immigrant rights organizations are determined to advocate and support the undocumented community.
Chapter 2:

Methods

To understand how undocumented communities respond to the effects of migrant illegality and legal violence, I studied the mobilization efforts used at several immigrants’ rights organizations in Los Angeles, California. The majority of immigrant rights organizations were concentrated in predominantly Latino neighborhoods within the City of Los Angeles. The community organizations included immigrant resource centers, law firms, university immigrant resource centers, public charter schools, youth centers, churches, youth shelters, and immigrant rights advocacy centers. Most organizations provided legal and social services, sanctuary/protection from deportation, advocacy and employment opportunities, and educational services. However, not all organizations created or implemented the same mobilization efforts due to limited funding, professional staff, and resources, which led to highly networked organizations and strategies. In addition, many organizations benefited from networks, as funding was usually limited according to many advocates. Some organizations were more likely to interact and communicate with immigration agencies, government officials, and policymakers when compared to others who remained distrustful. Also some organizations were recently established while others were established many years ago, which reflected in the number of services, staff, and even mobilization strategies implemented. However, all of the organizations included were focused on improving the livelihood of the undocumented community.

My analysis was based on 30 semi-structured interviews in English and Spanish with 19 advocates (non-attorneys) and 11 attorneys (pro-bono and private attorneys) from various immigrant community organizations in the Los Angeles area. Interviewees were
ages 18 to 82 years old. Among the participants, 23 identified as Latina/o and 7 as Caucasian, while 18 identified themselves as males and 12 as females. Also, the group of advocates included pastors, student and family resources coordinators, support staff, youth center directors/coordinators, advocacy coordinators, members and staff of university resource centers, and organizational directors. For example, I interviewed Pastor Francisco, who declared his congregation a sanctuary church and also founded a welcome refugee center in 2014 in response to the migration of Central American unaccompanied minors. I also interviewed Felipe, who works at a shelter for unaccompanied minors. I interviewed several student activists such as Julio from a local community college, who was very involved in supporting undocumented students on his campus with resources. In addition, I interviewed several immigration attorneys such as Martin, who oversees his organization’s legal department. Advocates’ educational levels ranged from some college training to masters or law degrees. The interview questions focused on the primary services provided by their organizations, past interactions with immigration agencies, awareness of immigration enforcement practices, impact of targeted enforcement practices on the undocumented community, and the organizational response to enforcement practices.

In order to recruit interviewees, I used a purposive and snowball sampling method in the Los Angeles region. I first attended community forums in community resource centers to recruit participants. I also used personal and professional networks to access participants. I recruited further from participants’ own social networks. For example, I asked executive directors and administrators from immigrant serving organizations for potential participants. Through this method, the research participants identified other potential participants from their organizations but for some of them their contact
information was found through publicly identifiable sources (i.e. organization’s website). I also posted on social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) and email listservs where I was able to recruit additional immigrant rights advocates. The interview process took place from June to September 2016. All interviews were audio-recorded upon informed consent. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper to protect confidentiality. Participants were advised that they did not have to answer questions that they considered sensitive, and were also invited to introduce topics that they felt were important. Through the process, I was transparent about my positionality— I identified myself as a son of Salvadoran immigrants, who came from a working class background. Participants had the opportunity to talk about their experiences of working within the immigrant rights movement, which often times goes unobserved. The interview was an opportunity for advocates to address their concerns, share the challenges they face, and the effects of legal violence and migrant illegality on the communities they serve, which included the support for mobilization strategies.
Chapter 3:

Findings

Overcoming Victimization with Resistance

The mobilization practices by immigration rights organizations and advocates in Los Angeles shed light on the specific challenges experienced. For example, exclusionary immigration laws in the United States have denied undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship, eligibility for asylum status, access to publically funded social services, court appointed and paid counsel, access to vote in government elections, blocked paths to social mobility, employment, and much more. However, some immigration laws and policies have enabled some immigrants to obtain asylum and legalize their status but a large undocumented community remains. Consequently, exclusionary immigration laws have generated targeted enforcement practices of the undocumented community by authorizing immigration officials, law enforcement, border security, and other government agencies to conduct workplace raids, home raids, continual surveillance, policing, mass detention, and deportation.

As such, organizations implemented educational and awareness campaigns due to intensified confusion, uncertainty, and misinformation produced by immigration agencies and laws. Secondly, organizations participated in counter surveillance efforts through social media and mass media platforms due to targeted enforcement practices, intensified surveillance, and isolation produced by exclusionary immigration laws and anti-immigrant policymakers. Thirdly, organizations and advocates supported and provided legal representation to undocumented immigrants who were denied court-appointed legal counsel and a fair and due process because of their undocumented status. The fourth
strategy was non-violent protest and demonstrations in order to demonstrate unity and solidarity as targeted enforcement practices and exclusionary immigration laws attempted to divide such groups in order to isolate and deport immigrants. The fifth strategy includes the New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary City Movement where both cities and religious congregations refused to cooperate or comply with exclusionary immigration laws and targeted enforcement practices that further criminalized, victimized, and deported undocumented immigrants. Lastly, organizations participated in “Get Out the Vote” campaigns as undocumented immigrants experienced disenfranchisement as they continue to be denied the opportunity to vote in local, state, and federal elections in the U.S. due to their undocumented status. The six strategies ultimately attempt to counter the effects of migrant illegality and legal violence. However, these strategies and organizations could potentially be challenging or drawing on the victimization of undocumented immigrants for organizational growth and funding, increased membership, and national recognition.

**Educational and Awareness Campaigns**

One type of event that was common during my fieldwork was a know-your-rights community meeting where the organization’s advocates and attorneys shared with the audience on what to do if Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) officers arrived to your home. Educational and awareness campaigns were widely sponsored and supported by all of the organizations in my study including: immigrant rights advocacy centers, youth shelters, youth resource centers, sanctuary congregations, public schools, university immigrant resource centers, private law firms, and immigrant resource centers. The
presentation covered immigrant’s legal rights, forms of legal relief, recent immigration events and statistics, and enforcement practices. Once the presentation was over, who provided little red cards that have a statement in both Spanish and English stating the individual’s constitutional rights, which could be read when confronted by any law enforcement and immigration official. The card states, “I do not wish to speak with you, answer your questions, or sign or hand you any documents based on my 5th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution. I do not give you permission to enter my home based on my 4th Amendment rights under the United States Constitution unless you have a warrant to enter, signed by a judge or magistrate with my name on it that you slide under the door. I do not give you permission to search any of my belongings based on my 4th Amendment rights. I choose to exercise my constitutional rights.” As mentioned, educational and awareness campaigns were implemented due to advocate’s observations of increased confusion, uncertainty, and misinformation among immigrants as a result of conflicting messages from government agencies and understanding of laws. Immigrant rights groups were using their limited resources and funding to educate the community in hopes of reducing the number of individuals deported as they face a highly funded and government-supported deportation force. As a result, these groups focus on educating the undocumented community about their legal rights, how the legal process works, and the steps needed when confronted with enforcement practices. Through this process, organizations attempted to empower undocumented immigrants in order to defend themselves legally while also calming much of the panic and anxiety that was widespread throughout the community as a result of national immigration raids.

A. Know-Your-Rights Campaigns
As described, one of the most common ways of educating the undocumented community were regular know-your-rights presentations. Through such presentations, members would learn about their legal rights, immigration laws, and recent immigration activity. These informative meetings were designed, as advocates believed that undocumented communities were continuously experiencing confusion, uncertainty, and misinformation produced by contradicting sources. An advocate named Paco, age 29, serves as staff at a youth center in Los Angeles that works closely with Central American unaccompanied minors as they incorporate art and media to tell their stories and share them in film festivals. He discussed the role of know-your-rights efforts in educating the undocumented community.

I think I have been blessed with having a[n] [immigrant rights] community that I know is out there and that is working on a different level to stop the [immigration] raids or it tries to bring peace in our community...through those efforts there have been know your rights efforts as well to have the community learn their rights, not only learn their rights, but also practice their rights.

Paco found that know-your-rights forums empowered the community to learn and practice these legal rights. Paco also discussed the need for additional educational efforts, as immigration raids would increase as a result of anti-immigrant sentiment. He described, “The best thing we can do is definitely educate people and do more know your rights [presentations] and be more united by creating a stronger front.” In addition to these efforts, Asuzena, age 26, who serves as an immigrant rights policy coordinator works closely with legislators, assembly members, senators, and other government representatives in order to move forward legislation and policies for the undocumented
community including the comprehensive immigration reform. Her organization found it necessary to collaborate with media agencies to expand their educational and awareness efforts. She argues, “So we try to do community forums as much as we can, know your rights forums, but then we also try to partner with Spanish media to really let the community know what these rights are and when these forums are occurring.” Through such efforts, organizations and advocates not only educate the community about their legal rights and recent events when they visit one of the organizations but also through media platforms in several languages. Asuzena’s organization also hosted a large musical event in order to draw the community in order to share information about their legal rights and resources available.

    However, several advocates mentioned that know-your-rights presentations were not enough to assist the undocumented community. For example, Natalie, age 31, who serves as a private immigration attorney in the city of Los Angeles and has worked closely with Central American unaccompanied children and families told me, “I think know-your-rights [presentations] are great but they are so general so you really can’t focus on one person or you can’t get all these issues a person has so when we do the consults, you are talking to people and maybe they’re more receptive and taking more information than as a general presentation.” Although presentations were useful, advocates found that they were limiting since they could not help constituents on an individual level when compared to consultations. As a result of this issue, many immigration attorneys provided consultations while community organizations present the know-your-rights presentations. Natalie said the following: “Sometimes we let the organizations do the know-your-rights [presentations] and we answer the [legal] questions...the organizations that are smaller
don’t have attorneys so that’s when we come in and do the question and answers.” In addition, advocates found that know-your-rights presentations are more effective with smaller groups or on an individual basis. An advocate named Rosalva, age 33, who works closely as a youth coordinator with undocumented students and parents at an immigration rights organization, found that presentations must be altered based on constituents’ age and language to be successful.

The know-your-rights campaigns work more when it’s one on one with the students. When I’m talking to them specifically through our parent and youth leadership academy. We see how there is this generation gap right and the whole fact that the kids, well they’re bilingual. But for the most part they understand and comprehend English a lot better. So when information is being dispensed to them in Spanish they grasp some stuff but not in it’s totality. So usually I check in with the students: what’s going on? What are you thinking? So we do smaller sessions in this sense and yeah just try to hear them out and hear what concerns they have and try to squash what might not be truthful.

Based on Rosalva’s statement, language differences affect the way students and their parents understand the information provided at know-your-rights meetings. As a result, Rosalva uses personal meetings to address any concerns or assumptions they may have in order to control any anxiety and fear that might be produced through the media and other sources. Rosalva attempts to provide accurate information in order to educate and empower youth and adults.

B. “Little Red Cards”

In addition to know-your-rights presentations and community forums, many immigrant rights organizations developed creative ways to share this same information in different
designs. An advocate named Alan, age 56, who serves as the organizational and leadership director at his immigrant rights organization in Los Angeles works on organizing and lobbying for immigration laws at the local, state, and federal level while motivating the undocumented community to become politically engaged, described the alternative ways his organization shared know-your-rights information. He told me,

We [also] did know-your-rights DVD’s to tell the people what to do when ICE comes to your house, to your work, when ICE is stopping you with no [driver’s] license on the street. So we were educating and we were talking about it nationally and we were stopping ICE and ICE operations...we have to educate our community and we have to also teach our immigrants, undocumented immigrants, on how to survive being undocumented in the U.S. You need to know the laws that are affecting you, you need to know immigration laws or if there is a [detention] release and how much it cost, you need to be prepared to fight against your deportation.

Based on Alan’s statement, educational efforts could potentially help the undocumented community avoid immigration raids and deportations by learning their legal rights and the laws that target them. According to advocates, the way to survive as an undocumented person is to learn the laws of the U.S. including immigration and non-immigration laws, which does not always work. Through this method, immigrants will be able to extend their time living in the U.S. In addition, many organizations were engaged in distributing “little red cards” that included a script to read to law enforcement and/or ICE agents if they were ever apprehended and/or detained. Interestingly, the little red cards are the same size and shape as an identification card, which could be symbolized as a document declaring the immigrant’s legal rights (i.e. driver’s license). Asuzena, who was quoted above, discussed
the creation of wallet-sized cards that stated individual’s rights. She mentioned, “We partnered up with other organizations to create these wallet-sized cards that have your rights when you are being detained or what to do when immigration comes to your door. So I think those have been really helpful too.” Walter, age 30, who serves as an immigration attorney in Los Angeles and works closely with Central American unaccompanied minors and families, also mentioned the importance of educating the undocumented community on their legal rights as non-citizens through the “little red cards.”

We are giving out these little red cards with your rights if you are ever detained or arrested by ICE officials...We also have a section of what to do during a raid which is part of the education aspect of going to local schools, community centers, and just talking about briefly of the reality and this is what’s going on but these are your rights and how to proceed.

Similar to other organizations, they focus on educating the community by offering information about legal rights although it is structured in different ways. For example, advocates have included the same information on how to avoid being deported through an immigration raid in a comic book format with pictures and words. Others have created flyers with numbered steps of what to do step-by-step with ICE arrives to detain you. Through different designs, organizations could better reach and educate more children, youth, and adults. Similarly, Jeanine, age 34, who serves as a supervising attorney and oversees the legal branch of her organization in a predominantly undocumented Latina/o neighborhood in Los Angeles, also mentioned the purpose and distribution of these “little red cards.”
We have a stack of little red cards that we give out to people who we think might be concerned about raids [because it helps them know] what to do in an event of a raid. We have had some outreach events both in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley on education on what to do in an event of a raid.

Ultimately, advocates and organizations have made an effort to educate the undocumented community on their legal rights, exclusionary immigration laws, forms of legal relief, and the steps they should follow if they are ever detained or arrested by ICE officers. These educational tools are offered to individuals who have minimal U.S. law education, but are able to understand visuals and read in Spanish or English, or both. Similar to community forums, the educational strategies presented attempt to contest the effects of immigration related legal violence and migrant illegality.

**Counter-Surveillance Efforts**

Secondly, organizations and advocates participated in counter-surveillance efforts through social media and mass media platforms as a response to targeted enforcement practices, intensified surveillance, and isolation produced by exclusionary immigration laws and immigration agencies such as Border Patrol and ICE. Counter-surveillance is defined as civilians participating in watching and alerting potential victims about the actions of law enforcement, immigration agencies, and other enforcement groups, all of who also participate in surveillance. The community participates in observing the same group that is responsible for surveilling them. As technology progresses, it has become easier for immigrant rights groups to observe and report the actions taken by immigration enforcement officials through the use of cell phones, social network sites, the Internet, and
other methods. As such, social media and mass media platforms are primarily used by immigrant rights organizations to educate the community about their legal rights, announce recent immigration enforcement practices, share personal stories of undocumented immigrants to change anti-immigrant perceptions, and the social and legal services they offer. But more importantly, advocates and immigrants have shifted the focus on to the government’s actions as a form of counter surveillance. In this context, mass media is defined as a form of communication through written, broadcast, and other mediums that attempt to reach a large audience. This includes newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet. Social media is defined as social media sites and applications on the Internet and/or on cell phones. This includes Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, blogs and other sites that require people to participate and interact with one another. Through ethnographic fieldwork, I found that advocates used their cell phones and text messages in order to distribute information to undocumented family members and friends about immigration raids, police and immigration checkpoints, law enforcement presence, and other enforcement practices. Through such methods, organizations and advocates attempted to challenge the effects of legal violence and migrant illegality.

A. Mass Media

An immigrant rights advocate and clergy from a faith based organization named Galindo, age 49, who focused on providing resources and support to Central American refugees, discussed how several organizations used mass media to share the stories of Central American recent arrivals and other undocumented immigrants to optimistically change public perceptions and denounce the mistreatment of refugees.
Besides the advocacy and public education, we did media outreach because [we] wanted to tell the stories of these [Central American] children because the way the government was responding to the crisis, they didn’t want to recognize them as refugees. To this day, they don’t want to recognize them as refugees. The stories were from [the conservative] media and government [focused on] that these kids were coming to use the system, economic reasons, take advantage of welfare, take advantage of our taxes right, so that’s why the media outreach and the public education was very important.

Galindo and colleagues found it necessary to challenge the efforts by the U.S. government and conservative media whose misrepresentations of immigrants support the Latino Threat Narrative (Chavez 2012). In response, organizations presumably presented the factual stories of Central American and other refugees. However, most of the stories presented by immigrant rights organizations focus on immigrants who are either considered “law-abiding,” victims, or educated individuals who are seeking asylum, refugee status, and other forms of legal relief (e.g. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) while leaving out the stories of immigrants involved in crimes, dropped out of school, and not the ideal immigrant since it could potentially support conservative perceptions of immigrants. This example also demonstrates the influence the media has in changing public perceptions on immigrants and other issues (e.g. healthcare, drug use, etc.).

Similarly, Julia, age 26, who serves as the digital and lead organizer for one of Los Angeles’ largest immigrant rights organization and works closely with documenting the stories of Central American unaccompanied minors and families, shared her experience as a documentary filmmaker and an advocate.
Like I mentioned I have worked with many families but I am also a documentary filmmaker and I am currently working on a documentary that is on [immigration] issues. So I have had the chance to interview a lot of people who are fortunate enough to be here. They have either won their cases or currently fighting their case. Many people who I have worked with are happy and smiling which makes me happy to be able to share their stories since many felt comfortable enough to share their life stories with me. I think I have been fortunate to work with people who have made it and maybe one day capture the stories of those who didn’t make it or were deported back.

Not only have stories been therapeutic for immigrants but also their stories were eventually shared among thousands of viewers through documentaries in order to educate the public on the experiences of Central American and other refugees.

Mass media was also helpful in informing advocates about recent immigration laws, policies, and targeted enforcement efforts. During my fieldwork, most of the advocates argued that they used both mass media and social media as an initial source of information, which required further investigation before sharing with their clients and the rest of the undocumented community. For example, Ernesto, age 29, who serves as a supervising attorney that represents Central American unaccompanied minors in immigration proceedings, mentioned that one of the best methods of informing the community of recent immigration activity and laws was through mass media outlets, however they are required to be very careful that their intentions do not result in exaggerated claims, panic, and fear. So he described that they first listen to the undocumented community’s concerns and then address the community through the media in order to send out accurate messages.
Other times it's what we hear directly from our clients and so going back to what I was saying, one of the benefits of working here is the opportunity to provide those legal services to these clients so we have a network of clients who are on the ground and living those moments and those experiences. So often times it's them coming to us saying this happened and this is what we saw and then we turn around and try to respond by informing the greater network and making sure that we can connect with media and send out the larger message.

So, the ultimate purpose by organizations' use of the media is to share accurate information to the larger audiences in order to control any inaccurate claims, fear, and panic. Organizations face conservative media outlets that distribute inaccurate accounts of all immigrants as beneficiaries of welfare, American jobs, involved in criminal networks, resist assimilation, and much more. In addition, there are numerous media outlets that present different information on enforcement practices that result in confusion and general fear of deportation. For example, one media station will inform the immigrant community of immigration raids but fail to address that it was conducted in a different region of the country or they specifically targeted recent arrivals or immigrants with deportation orders.

As a result, organizations use mass media outlets to counter the rhetoric, inaccurate claims, and fears produced and distributed by immigration officials, which attempt to challenge the cycle of migrant illegality.

B. Social Media

In addition to using mass media, immigrant rights organizations repeatedly described the use of social media platforms in order to receive and share information at a faster rate. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Email, Instagram, and other social
media sites are considered the modern way of sharing information through the Internet and phone applications. When working with immigrant youth, Rosalva, who was quoted above, found the importance of using social media platforms to inform the immigrant community of recent enforcement activity while it was also a source of information for herself.

I’m usually made aware [of new immigration activity] through social media, that’s usually how the students find out. Our organization is pretty quick to respond when something does occur, the organization will have something up on our newsfeed on Facebook and Instagram or our website. We are also trying to do our part by keeping the community informed.

In this statement, Rosalva discusses how her organization responds to immigration enforcement practices such immigration raids, police checkpoints, and workplace raids in the community by announcing it on the organizations social network accounts. Similarly, Julia, who was quoted above, told me that she collected her information from social media sites (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) but also received information from immigrant rights social networks (e.g. other immigrant rights organizations and advocates).

It’s a combination of a lot of things, I think it’s social media, we’ve built a network with people where like we know that here in the organization with the alliance and working with folks in different areas, I think it’s mostly people who are organized so it’s just having a close knit relationship with those who are well connected via phone, text messaging, and general messages and then Facebook.”

Similar to Julia and Rosalva, Fermin, age 29, who serves as a private immigration attorney in the city of Los Angeles and has experience representing and assisting Central American
undocumented immigrants in immigration proceedings, uses a similar strategy to keep informed. He mentioned, “Usually social media, a lot of social media. There are different things that we hear from different organizations, attorneys sending emails, but mostly social media. That’s how we basically keep up; I think that’s the way many of us keep up.” Based on such findings, undocumented immigrants and advocates have been found to depend on social media and mass media platforms to keep themselves informed of recent immigration laws, policies, and targeted enforcement activities by immigration officials, which could defer the deportations of many.

Due to the increased threat of deportation, many undocumented immigrants use social media sites to keep informed on threatening enforcement practices. Alex, age 23, who is part of an immigrant rights group at a local university, described how organizations and fellow advocates used social media sites as a strategy to alert the undocumented community about police checkpoints and immigration raids.

Through Facebook you can see a lot of communities who are very involved in making [the community] aware that there’s a DUI checkpoint here, there’s going to be raids in this city and in that city. So just the fact that there’s a greater increase in the amount of communities who are trying to make people aware of this and honestly it is a danger because for some of us we have DACA, some other family members may not. So that danger becomes evident one way or another. I do believe that there’s been a spike, and actually when we were in Mexico during the winter, we would be in Mexico and we would receive messages of deportation and stops and we would be worried, we really need to train our families on what to say and what not to say.
Based on the statement, I found that organizations, advocates, and immigrants (documented and undocumented) themselves made an effort to inform family members, friends, and the rest of the undocumented community of police checkpoints to avoid detection and deportation. This action directly challenges the government and immigration agencies’ efforts to detain and deport immigrants. Although immigrants who are recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) are temporarily protected from deportation, immigrants with or without any legal documents are affected by such enforcement practices. As demonstrated, the use of mass media and social media platforms serve to contest the effects of migrant illegality and legal violence. Immigrant advocates and the community themselves participate in informing each other in order to control and assume the role of vigilantes on the actions by immigration agencies. Social media and mass media platforms are also used by immigrant rights organizations to educate the community, announce immigrant rights organization events, and the social and legal services they offer. But more importantly, such strategies serve to challenge the U.S. government’s attempts to isolate, apprehend, and deport undocumented immigrants.

Interestingly, advocates and immigrants have transferred the focus on to the government’s actions as a form of counter surveillance. However, not all undocumented immigrants benefit from such strategies as many immigrants lack access to technology, possible marginalization of certain immigrants’ stories not considered ideal, and the accounts of raids could ferment fears.

**Legal Representation**
The third strategy focuses on the efforts by immigrant rights organizations and advocates in providing legal representation to undocumented immigrants undergoing immigration proceedings who were denied court-appointed legal counsel, which results in a threat to their fair and due process as a result of their undocumented status. Although, non-citizens who are in criminal proceedings are afforded public defenders, many non-citizens undergoing immigration proceedings continue to be denied public defenders. As a result, the difference is in the type of proceeding. Non-citizens undergoing immigration proceedings could face either deportation or legal relief while those undergoing criminal proceedings could either face imprisonment, deportation, or both if found guilty. But more importantly immigration court is an administrative court unlike criminal court proceedings. As such, individuals undergoing immigration proceedings are not incarcerated but detained until their hearing while individuals undergoing criminal proceedings are incarcerated. Since undocumented immigrants are denied court appointed legal counsel, this affects their opportunity to win asylum or other immigration relief cases. Often times, immigrants are forced to represent themselves which could be extremely challenging for someone without a law education background or fluent in the English language as it challenges the fair and due process requirement upheld by the U.S. constitution. As a result, immigrant rights organizations have made an effort to provide legal representation to unaccompanied minors, undocumented families, and detainees at a low cost (low bono), no cost (pro bono), and at normal costs (private attorneys). Studies have found that Central American and other undocumented immigrants fare much better with the simple presence of an attorney than with those who do not have an attorney present during their immigration hearing (Stinchcomb & Hershberg 2014).
A. The Need for Legal Representation

During my fieldwork, I found that immigrant rights organizations collaborated with other organizations and law firms to provide legal representation to undocumented immigrants in the Los Angeles region. Martin, age 34, who serves as a supervising immigration attorney and oversees nearly 400 immigration cases of Central American families and unaccompanied minors, described that one of the primary branches of his organization was on direct representation work. Martin told me, "We provide direct representation to individuals in their removal proceedings [and] in their affirmative cases so that’s going to be before immigration courts, state court, USCIS, the asylum office, and the appeal courts if necessary." As such, there are different types of immigration cases that require legal representation according to Ernesto, who also serves as an immigration attorney and quoted above.

As far as the legal services right, we try and provide as much as we can as far as affirmative work. You may hear the difference between affirmative and defensive work, so affirmative cases are those where the client is not in removal proceedings with the immigration court and so we provide a lot more affirmative types of services here at the organization.

Based on this statement, organizations work both on affirmative cases, which are those where the individual is not in removal proceedings, and defensive work for immigrants who are currently in removal proceedings. Organizations with a legal department tend to focus on either one or both type of cases based on the changes to immigration laws and enforcement practices. In addition, the types of cases vary based on region and time period as the country is experiencing changes in migration patterns and increased deportation
enforcement so removal proceedings were more common among Central American unaccompanied minors and families.

With the changing migration patterns of Central American refugees since 2014, the need for legal representation skyrocketed in cities like Los Angeles where immigration attorneys were inundated with hundreds of cases. Jane, age 52, who serves as a directing attorney at her organization that serves undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles, described the legal representation work her organization did for both unaccompanied minors and adults.

My agency provides legal representation and does policy and impact work in a whole range of areas. But my project only works on immigration and we provide direct services including direct representation, impact and policy work, and impact litigation. So right now we are heavily impacted by the Central American crisis so we represent about 200 unaccompanied minors but we [also] represent immigrants from all over the world, almost exclusively undocumented immigrants pursuing asylum, U Visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, etc.

Although immigrant organizations serve all migrant groups and immigration cases, Los Angeles experienced one of the largest influxes of Central American refugees seeking asylum and legal representation especially among unaccompanied minors. As a result, many organizations described being heavily impacted, as they did not have enough attorneys who would take on cases as pro bono (no cost) or low bono (affordable cost). Jane went on to discuss how the courts began assigning cases to non-profit organizations but the need was greater.
Like most of the very few pro bono legal service providers, we can’t help everyone that needs help. We don’t have to advertise [our services] because we have a line out the door. We are on a list that the court hands out so the people know us in the community and they refer us and people also find us online as they are referred by other agencies. Similarly, Walter, who was quoted above, had the same concern as Jane about the greater need and the insufficient number of attorneys to support the cause. Walter told me, “Sadly, there is more of a need than there are personnel and resources to tend to everyone but at minimum we can provide them with legal consultations whether or not they are detained. They can come in and get legal counsel which is comprehensive and we look at other options they may have for migratory relief so it’s great.” This statement reveals that not all undocumented immigrants benefit from legal services as funding is limited which forces organizations to choose some immigration cases while refusing to work on the rest. Organizations were more likely to invest their time, energy, and funding on immigration cases that were more likely to be successful (e.g. asylum seeker), while postponing or denying immigration cases that would require more time and funding (e.g. immigrant involved in a crime). Although such conditions presented a bleak future for all undocumented immigrants in immigration proceedings, legal representation funding became available from non-governmental organizations during my fieldwork but it was restricted to Central American unaccompanied youth but excluded families with children, who unsurprisingly were targeted during immigrant raids in late 2015 and early 2016. As such, organizations prioritized some immigration cases over others due to available funding and the possibilities of winning immigration cases.

B. Restricted Funding for Legal Representation
As mentioned, immigrant rights organizations were overwhelmed with the number of Central American recent arrivals that requested legal representation for immigration proceedings. Organizations explained that both current funding and staff were not enough to fulfill this need as the threats of deportation increased. Most of the frustration came from the refusal to provide court-appointed and government paid attorneys for immigration proceedings, which placed the burden on non-profit organizations and pro bono attorneys. In addition, Central American recent arrivals could not afford the expensive private attorneys so they sought non-profit organizations to provide pro bono or low bono legal assistance. However, the City of Los Angeles and the State of California provided funding to provide legal and social services to the immigrant community for immigration proceedings. But the federal government continues to deny access for public defenders for immigration proceedings.

Due to funding restrictions, immigrant rights organizations found it challenging to represent all Central American recent arrivals even when some funding became available. Ernesto, who was quoted above, discussed the funding concerns with legal representation for immigration proceedings. Ernesto told me, “But because of funding limitations and the grants that are out there, that is really a lot of the work that we can do. It wasn’t until the unaccompanied children funding came out that we were able to dive into the defensive work and so that’s primarily what my team does is defensive work.” Not only did funding open the opportunity to represent more Central American unaccompanied children for immigration proceedings but organizations shifted their focus from affirmative to defensive work. Consequently, organizations experience a dilemma as they are forced to adjust their legal services based on funding instead of the community’s needs. As a result,
many immigrant groups who are not beneficiaries are left out and further marginalized. Jane, who was quoted above, addressed the major issues with the current immigration process.

The whole immigration court thing is just a joke and it’s a lottery of who gets a lawyer in terms of the children. This is a little different than the adults because the UAC [unaccompanied alien children] population from Central America, all these kids are experiencing so much targeted violence that we are winning more than 9 out of 10 of those cases. So it’s all about whether the kid gets a lawyer, which is absurd. It’s impossible to do it without it.

According to this statement, Central American unaccompanied minors were more likely to win their asylum court cases due to access to lawyers. Although this is beneficial to the unaccompanied minors, many without lawyers (i.e. mothers with children) were more likely to be deported. Walter, who was quoted above, similarly discussed the issues with legal representation programs in the organizations.

Yeah we have specific programs so the Unaccompanied Youth Program is specifically for youth. It mainly is for youth who come to the country unaccompanied or if they are unaccompanied where they suffer two types of harm. One is abuse, neglect, or abandonment by a parent and the conditions at home are such that it’s not in their best interest to be returned. So that’s specifically a component for youth but again it’s the youth that are supposed to fall within those criteria. Those services provided are free of cost and so it’s just that we are at a moment of capacity right now.
Although funding for Central American unaccompanied minors produced opportunities for asylum and further legalization, Central American families with children and other undocumented immigrants were excluded and more vulnerable to deportation.

C. Lack of Funding for Families with Children

Due to available governmental and non-governmental grants and funding, most of the Central American unaccompanied minors in Los Angeles were provided legal representation for immigration proceedings, which increased their opportunities for legalization and deferred deportation. But, Central American families with children were excluded and more likely to be targeted by immigration raids and deportations, which occurred nationally in 2016. One of the advocates of an immigrant rights organization named Asuzena, who was quoted above, discussed the issues with legal representation funding.

So we have legal representation funding for unaccompanied minor[s] but don’t have money to represent their mothers or families that come together. So what we have done is pro se clinics where we kind of just teach families how to represent themselves and what paperwork they need to fill out and stuff they need to do to more forward with their case. But there isn’t anything really out there for them. We have partnered with local churches who have raised money for these pro se clinics and found a few of them with pro bono attorneys to represent them but other than that there isn’t really anything.

As demonstrated, Central American mothers with children were not beneficiaries of legal representation funding but organizations were attempting to provide alternative workshops in order to educate this community on court proceedings, legal paperwork,
what to say, and methods to represent themselves. As a result, many mothers with children were forced to seek assistance from churches and clergy for funding to afford immigration attorneys. For example, Pastor Francisco, who was quoted above, discussed one of his experiences trying to get legal representation for a woman in his refugee program.

About three months ago, I wrote a check with church funds here for $1200 to an attorney to go with a woman to court the following Wednesday. She had been to court three times without an attorney because she didn’t have one. The judge told her at the third time that if she came back next month without an attorney, bring your suitcase because you are going to be deported immediately. So we paid a low bono attorney $1200 just to go with her to be there so she wouldn’t be deported and it worked, she got a court date I think for November of this year. Now we’re working to get her an attorney who will stay and plead her case but this guy charged $1200 just to go and stand there with her. Well it worked but we don’t have that kind of money. We’ve paid the same guy $500 on two other occasions to do the same thing. I don’t know why he stiffed us for $1200 but anyways it was a matter of life and death for her. If we didn’t get an attorney, we only had one available at that time, she would have been deported and she probably would have been killed when she got home.

This passage demonstrates that affordable legal representation for the Central American immigrant community was scarce, which forced many immigrants to ask for assistance elsewhere or fall into debt with hopes of permanently deferring deportation proceedings and being recognized as refugees. But it also demonstrated that having an attorney allows the merits to be stated, which in turn enables judges to grant cases. However, some private
immigration attorneys and even public notaries tended to exploit many immigrants who were in difficult situations since people were desperate and with very limited alternatives.

D. Organizational Collaborations for Legal Services

Through my fieldwork, I found that some of the immigrant rights organizations and non-profits that I collaborated with had legal representation programs, divisions, and funding. However, the remaining organizations that did not have legal services tended to collaborate and refer many of their constituents to other organizations. An advocate named Diego, age 28, who was the supervisor and advocate at a university resource center for undocumented immigrant students, shared his organization’s approach to this issue.

So one of the main things that we are trying to do is help with the need for access to legal services and representation, which is highly needed especially, services and representation that are hopefully free or low cost. So what we do is partner with non-profit legal organizations...We don’t have any attorneys on staff and legal representatives that can do that type of work but we want to make sure that students are connected to those services or better yet bring those services on campus and have clinics in person so that it’s accessible to students. So we do have those contacts, but we also have contacts with other universities that have resource centers and coordinators so we stay constantly in touch with one another to ensure that we’re just learning from one another and sharing our information.

As stated by Diego, collaboration among organizations with and without legal services helps to address the needs of the undocumented community in order to provide and make services affordable and accessible. Ultimately, the collaboration among organizations to provide legal representation programs and services to undocumented immigrants seeks to
challenge the vested interest of immigration judges, courts, and agencies in contributing to the deportation machine. In addition, there has been a general move to get both cities and states to fund representation for all such as the state of California and New York. Although legal representation was based on the available funding and staff, immigrant rights organizations attempt to provide legal and social services to the undocumented community in order to challenge the effects of migrant illegality and legal violence.

**Non-Violent Protest and Demonstrations**

The fourth and most traditional strategy used among the immigrant rights movement was non-violent protest and demonstrations in order to demonstrate the unity and solidarity among organizations, advocates, and immigrants against exclusionary immigration laws, policies, and targeted enforcement practices. Many immigrant rights organizations and advocates participated in pro-immigrant rallies, non-violent protests, and demonstrations in order to display their disapproval and grievances. Many who participated in resistance movements viewed the U.S. government and immigration agencies as oppositional groups. Pastor Francisco, age 82, who serves as the senior pastor of a Spanish-speaking church in Los Angeles and director of a refugee center, described how non-violent protests served as a method of challenging the government and expressing their grievances.

We are being as aggressive as we can in challenging the government. I have taken part in a protest down at the immigration center. I am going down again on Wednesday, the day after tomorrow to another protest in front of the ICE offices protesting their policies, there probably going to be 100-150 people in the streets out there blocking
traffic protesting and we are going to stay there until someone from ICE comes down and talks to us or the LAPD arrests us. LAPD is very good on this...They come in with violence and threatened people as I told you the one young man they stuck two shotguns in his face [when] he opened the window. We’re gonna challenge them...”

This statement indicates that there was a tendency for organizations to become violent once law enforcement did so. Most immigrant rallies discussed by advocates were peaceful with the exception of a few demonstrations where law enforcement and activists clashed. But organizers and advocates vowed to continue to fight for immigrant rights until change was achievable.

Other forms of peaceful protesting within the immigrant rights movement included boycotts, protests, and demonstrations. Galindo, who was quoted above, described his role in persuading a business owner to close his business for a day in solidarity with the immigrant rights movement.

You know I go back to 2006... I had a client that owned about 12 Mexican restaurants, a chain of tacos and he also owned a warehouse...An immigrant rights organization contacted me and they wanted me to persuade my client to close his businesses on May 1st and that they would do a media interview. They promised to send some Spanish media channel to interview them so that other people could see this business and they will be inspired to join the movement on May 1, 2006, probably the biggest boycott, one day boycott in the country... So they closed all their restaurants, 12 of them and closed their warehouse also, and gave everybody the day off but told them we are closing to stand up against HR4437, the immigration bill that was going to criminalize the undocumented community...We had channel 34 come do the interview and then it
almost caught on fire, people began to say we are tired of being blamed for everything.

So that’s how my immigrant rights advocacy started.

This statement demonstrates that businesses also supported the movement through a non-violent method, which had an influential impact as the media (as discussed earlier) broadcasted the event in order to persuade the rest of the undocumented community to join the movement. Although many of the conditions towards the undocumented community have remained the same, non-violent protests, demonstrations, and boycotts generated a symbolic gesture of solidarity.

Some immigrants and advocates, including attorneys viewed protesting and participating in pro-immigrant rallies as essential but found that attorneys’ are more effective in other areas in the movement. Rogelio, age 57, who serves as a lead immigration attorney representing Latina/o and non-Latina/o groups in immigration proceedings in Los Angeles, admitted that his role in the movement could be more effective in the legal services division, while he sometimes participated in protests to demonstrate his solidarity.

Well obviously we’re representing clients and that’s one thing to do, then I would say those of us who are workers in this division also feel conscious bound to participate in demonstrations to go be part of the movement. I’ve been doing it a long time, whether or not I go to the demonstrations it doesn’t necessarily make a difference in how things happen. But I’m willing to say yes to joining together with other people and the more people who do that then something could potentially happen and I think that’s powerful in that way and after a couple of hours of chanting on the street I feel slightly better about what happened.
Advocates and attorneys such as Rogelio believed that their contribution in the immigrant rights movement remained in their field of expertise or specialization. As a result, social movements such as the immigrant rights movement benefit from advocates who are working in different areas of the movement. But, advocates and organizations have made a commitment to continue organizing pro-immigrant rallies and demonstrations throughout the United States as long as exclusionary immigration laws and targeted enforcement practices focus on the undocumented community. In cities such as Los Angeles, pro-immigrant protests and demonstrations will most likely continue to fill the streets, government buildings, public parks, and other public and private areas in order to express solidarity for immigrant rights.

**The New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary City**

The fifth strategy included the New Sanctuary Movement and Sanctuary City Movement where both cities and religious congregations refused to cooperate or comply with certain immigration laws and practices that further targeted, criminalized, and deported undocumented immigrants. As previously mentioned, undocumented communities in the U.S. are suffering the effects of migrant illegality as they are forced to live with daily fears of deportation, family separation, and detained for indeterminate periods of time. These conditions were created and reinforced by the effects of legal violence. In response to the unbearable conditions, several religious congregations have joined in solidarity with the undocumented community in the U.S. Religious congregations from different faiths and beliefs have created networks, routes, and safe houses (i.e. church sanctuary building, leader’s homes, and member’s homes). Although sanctuary church
movements have existed in the past, the new sanctuary movement is facing new but also similar exclusionary immigration laws and targeted enforcement practices than those experienced in the past.

A. New Sanctuary Church Movement

Through my fieldwork, I found that several religious organizations and churches from different faiths and belief systems were designating themselves Sanctuary Churches. This new sanctuary movement follows similar patterns to the former sanctuary movement that occurred in several parts of the United States during the 1980s and 1990s in response to the treatment of Central American immigrants (Coutin 1993). Certain religious organizations and their congregations assume that government agencies such as immigration and law enforcement officials are restricted entrance into their religious facilities without prior approval. For example, ICE and Border Patrol agencies have issued and implemented sensitive locations policies which state “enforcement actions at sensitive locations should generally be avoided, and require either prior approval from an appropriate supervisory official or exigent circumstances necessitating immediate action. The Department of Homeland Security is committed to ensuring that people seeking to participate in activities or utilize services provided at any sensitive location are free to do so without fear or hesitation.” As a result, many religious groups have offered shelter, meals, social, legal, and health services, and much more in their sanctuaries since they are assumed to be “safe” in such places. This form of resistance challenges detention and deportation practices by immigration and other government agencies by restricting their access to sanctuaries. Based on the recent immigration raids in immigrants’ homes, many have chosen to seek shelter and safety in local churches.
I visited one of the sanctuary churches and met a few of their religious leaders who declared their churches as sanctuary churches for the undocumented community, specifically Central American recent arrivals in Los Angeles. Pastor Francisco, who was quoted above, was one such pastor to declare his church as a sanctuary church in 2014 as a form of resisting the government's increased threats of deporting refugees from Los Angeles. Pastor Francisco told me, “We’re gonna challenge them and we’re doing this, we declared ourselves a sanctuary church which doesn’t make any difference to anybody except maybe the family that is willing to come into our sanctuary but the importance of it is, it’s an in your face to the government. We’re saying it publicly, we are in opposition with what your doing and what are you going to do about it.” As a religious leader, Pastor Francisco continually mentioned he was fighting for social justice and the rights of immigrants who were forced to migrate to the U.S. as he referred to them as refugees. He was determined to do whatever it took to protect refugee children and families.

We’re challenging them to come into our church and break down the door to get a refugee family. Well they’re not going to do that because they don’t want to have Telemundo and Univision and all those taking pictures of ICE agents breaking down the doors of a church. We know that, they know that, but just the fact that we declared ourselves a sanctuary church is in your face to the government and that’s what we’re doing and this is wrong and we’re not going to just stand by and be quiet about it. This form of resistance to the government was and continues to be supported by several congregations and religious institutions. Pastor Francisco also mentioned the influence of mass media including stations such as Univision and Telemundo, which are Spanish news networks, on the potential to change public perceptions and gain support by immigrant
advocates. As a result, congregations and networks declared a symbolic war on U.S. government agencies.

As a congregation within the new sanctuary movement, they assumed responsibility for many unaccompanied youth and families as they attempted to provide and refer many to social, health, and legal services. Sanctuary churches and religious centers collaborate with immigrant rights organizations, advocates, and other non-profit organizations to provide resources.

We’re also providing as much legal assistance because that will enable them to stay here and we also are providing them with free medical care. They all have free medical care, so and as I said we know there are at least 300 of these children in the [Los Angeles area]. Probably closer to 500 but we don’t know that number, 300 is a year old [number]. But we don’t know where they are, they have to find us and word of mouth is how people are finding [us]. Well we’ve got 57, that’s amazing because I thought we wouldn’t have any cause how were we going to find them. We prepared 5000 flyers and trashed the whole area with them and that’s how we got 10, 14, 22, now 57 and they keep coming but there are so many that don’t know we are here, we are the only welcome center in this area...And we are trying to provide this kind of services to all of them just to let them know that they’re welcome.

As part of the movement’s mission, welcome centers in religious congregations do not worry so much to expand new membership but the focus remains on giving back to the undocumented communities. Consequently, not all Central American recent arrivals could take advantage of the services and opportunities since it is difficult for organizations to
locate children and families, which could be attributed to the parent’s decision to keep the child’s legal status unknown.

Similarly, another clergy and advocate named Galindo, who was quoted above, also discussed the role of the church and the interfaith community in addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors since the government has been reluctant to support.

Myself and a reverend from the Methodist Church and a father from the Catholic Church, who is with the Episcopal Diocese, were attending prayer vigils and press meetings with our allies. We said we need to do more than a prayer publicly and a vigil and things like that. So we convened a meeting on October 2014, a strategy-planning meeting around the issue to respond to the crisis of the unaccompanied minors under the age of 18. We convened local officials, legal non-profit agencies, community groups, inter-faith groups, and that meeting took place...the purpose [was] that our organization’s strategy planning session was to build a support network around these children and their families and to engage the inter-faith community to respond to this crisis.”

Such allies within the new sanctuary movement have joined in solidarity and established to support Central American recent arrivals and other refugees. Pastor Francisco also explained his vision of the sanctuary church movement although he admits it’s a difficult task to win.

Our major victory is to provide that kind of empathy and sympathy for these people. We’re not getting the government to change its policies as much as we try. We’re not able to keep all of these people from being deported. If we don’t get an attorney for them, they’re probably going to be sent back, so we are working desperately on that and I think we are going to get attorneys but we haven’t gotten them yet but then there is
the other 250 kids in [Los Angeles] that we don’t know about that don’t have an attorney. So we’re not winning but we see these glimpses of light and hope on the part of the people.

The purpose and vision of this movement is to help refugees and recent arrivals in need of assistance from others. Although government agencies and immigration officials have challenged the sanctuary movement by deporting and detaining members, Pastor Francisco finds that there are “glimpses of light and hope” for Central Americans and other immigrants through continual efforts to serve people in need. Pastor Francisco and the rest of the new sanctuary movement plan to continue to use their churches in order to produce change and challenge the government on moral and legal grounds.

Well, you know when you have a handful of churches confronting the empire, we don’t win. There is no way that we can defeat the U.S. government and its policies, we keep trying, we keep acting as though we are going to do it but we know we’re not going to defeat them. I mean they’re under Homeland Security and the Patriot Act, they can come in and arrest us all and put us in jail indefinitely...But, that power is there and we don’t have any illusions that we’re going to defeat the U.S. government, [but] we’re challenging them on moral and legal grounds.”

In this final statement, Pastor Francisco realized that their efforts to defeat the U.S. immigration system and government are difficult but they vow to continue fighting for the community on “moral and legal grounds.” As such, advocates from the new sanctuary movement have vowed to continue to find forms of resisting and protecting the undocumented community.

B. Los Angeles as a Sanctuary City
In addition to declaring religious congregations as sanctuary churches, certain government officials throughout the United States have joined the immigrant rights movement by calling entire regions as sanctuary cities. As a result, city agencies and officials refuse to cooperate and obey certain immigration laws and practices that reproduce the criminalization and deportation of undocumented immigrants. However, cities such as Los Angeles could not prevent federal agencies such as ICE and Border Patrol from fulfilling their regular duties. But, sanctuary cities are attempting to deny any form of cooperation with federal agencies. Many immigrant rights groups have used the concept of a sanctuary and are attempting to use it on public schools, colleges, and universities. Recently, a community medical center in Los Angeles declared themselves a sanctuary site (i.e. Clinica Monsenor Romero). The City of Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York City, and many others have implemented certain ordinances and policies to increase safety zones or sanctuary sites. During my fieldwork, many of the advocates discussed the symbolic role of sanctuary cities. For example, Pastor Francisco, who was quoted above, discussed the role of law enforcement within a sanctuary city.

Los Angeles has declared itself a sanctuary city so the LAPD does not cooperate with ICE, the immigration and customs enforcement agency. The Gestapo I call them because that’s the way they operate, they are like the brown shirts under Adolf Hitler. ICE comes in with violence and threaten people as I told you the one young man they stuck two shotguns in his face [when] he opened the window.

In this statement, Pastor Francisco equates ICE agents to the Gestapo who were the German secret police under Nazi rule and were responsible for identifying and arresting anyone who opposed or threatened the vision of the Nazis (e.g. European Jews and many
others). Ironically, ICE agents similarly are ordered to identify and arrest any non-citizens who “threaten” the vision of the United States. The Los Angeles Police Department has pledged to not collaborate with immigration and customs enforcement agencies due to the outcry by the immigrant rights movement and the pro-immigrant sentiment in the city of Los Angeles. However, many undocumented immigrants continue to fear them based on previous experiences. Walter, who was quoted above, explained that immigration raids were not as common in LA, which he attributes to Los Angeles declaring itself a sanctuary city.

To my knowledge, none of my clients have said I have been approached by ICE, or this is what’s going on... It helps living in Southern California which is supposedly a sanctuary city or municipality so there is an understanding of how ICE operates. I don’t know the interworking of that but I think that it helps. At the same time, that doesn’t mean that ICE is completely out. As I mentioned before, they were staking out in front of local community markets. Although Los Angeles is considered a sanctuary city, ICE continues to appear in different parts of the city.

As mentioned, the City of Los Angeles is considered a sanctuary city but immigration officials are not restricted access into the city as they continue to drive and surround certain areas to create panic, fear, and anxiety. According to advocates, immigration agencies purposely have meetings in front of restaurants, stores, and community centers that are predominantly visited by undocumented immigrants. This has led to organizations such as the ICE Out of Los Angeles groups and affiliates to demand immigration agencies and deportation forces to leave this sanctuary city. But sanctuary cities and religious
groups are determined to protect the undocumented community from the persecution, detention, and deportation of Central American and other refugees.

Get Out the Vote Campaigns

Lastly, immigrant rights organizations participated in “Get Out the Vote” campaigns. Although undocumented immigrants are disenfranchised as they are denied the opportunity to vote in local, state, and federal elections in the U.S. due to their undocumented status, many participated in educational campaigns in order to motivate eligible voters (i.e. U.S. citizens) to vote in local, state, and federal elections, specifically the 2016 general elections. These campaigns were also focused on motivating permanent legal residents to become U.S. citizens to then vote. Through educational campaigns, undocumented individuals were civically engaged by educating eligible voters on the importance of voting which would then have an impact on the greater Latina/o and undocumented community. During my fieldwork, I attended a charla or community meeting hosted by an immigrant rights organization where they assigned members, both documented and undocumented, to take an Apple IPad and register potential voters for the 2016 elections throughout their neighborhoods. They were instructed to go door to door in their neighborhood and help register U.S. citizens to vote. At the same time, they would attempt to persuade permanent legal residents to become U.S. citizens to then register to vote for the upcoming elections. During monthly charlas leading up to the elections, organizational leaders would educate the community members on each candidate and state and local propositions that would be in the 2016 ballot. Although many documented organization members were planning to vote, many undocumented Latina/o members
would instead participate in get out the vote campaigns as a form of civic engagement as they were denied the opportunity to vote. As a result, voting was considered a form of resistance against particular candidates and policies that would reproduce the effects of legal violence and migrant illegality. Through this strategy, voters had the opportunity to respond to the needs of the undocumented community in an effort to change the current immigration climate.

An advocate named Edwin, age 55, who worked for an immigrant rights organization that focused on the Mexican and greater Latina/o undocumented community, discussed the purpose of their civic engagement program.

We are advocates, our people, our culture they don’t care to go out to vote even if we are citizens of this country. They don’t care to go to vote. We have to *jalarlos de las casa* and go for them house to house, go to vote, go to vote and its called GOTV-go out to vote.

That’s another program that we have in [our organization].

Voting campaigns were held in convention centers in Los Angeles and in surrounding cities like the Long Beach Convention Center to motivate the Latina/o community to register to vote. Similarly, Analicia, age 43, who worked as an executive director of an immigrant rights organization that encouraged community and political activism, education, and civic participation, mentioned the importance of voting within the Latino community and the efforts by her organization to mobilize the community to vote.

We are trying to encourage people to vote and we understand that civic engagement is more than just voting but it’s motivating other people to make changes and for me I think that we need to understand that we have more power than what we think. The power is within our families, within our communities, and I have been seeing how
people even though they may not vote but at the end of the day they educate their entire family. They educate on how to vote and something that we have in our community is that in reality we have a lot of mixed status families in the community. For instance, the kids they are in the age to vote, the parents might not be able to vote but their kids do, including families and relatives. We need to try to work as a community and try to vote for others.”

Analicia stressed the fact that the Latina/o community must participate in voting in order to change the existing conditions harming the undocumented community. As a result, an eligible voter could vote to create a more safe and welcoming environment for the undocumented community with an eventual path to citizenship. This is especially concerning as children of immigrants who are U.S. citizens are less likely to vote in elections.

I found other immigrant rights organizations participating and implementing different versions of Get Out the Vote campaigns. Several campaigns were similar as organizations motivated eligible voters to register and motivated legal permanent residents to become U.S. citizens to then vote. An advocate by the name of Maria, age 46, who also worked as the executive director of an immigrant rights organization in Los Angeles, continually motivated U.S. permanent residents to become U.S. citizens in order to avoid deportation but also to vote.

I mean if you’re a U.S. citizen, there is some protection in that...so we do have a very aggressive campaign called Protégete y Ciudadanía Ya because the only way you can protect yourself and your family is by becoming a U.S. citizen. There are about 760,000 people in Los Angeles County that qualify to become U.S. citizens but for one reason or
another they don't apply. But now is the time to protect yourself. It’s kind of like protect yourself because nobody else will and so yeah I think we’re living in very difficult times. Maria’s statement demonstrates the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen, which includes voting, international travel, protection from deportation, opportunities for family petitions, and no longer living in fear. However, fear tends to spread on to family, friends, and colleagues who are undocumented and regularly threatened with deportation by immigration agencies and officials. But many legal permanent residents who are eligible for citizenship were unable or refused to become U.S. citizens due to finances, no time for the lengthy immigration process, disagreement with U.S. politics, etc. Although many were reluctant to become U.S. citizens or register to vote, Get Out the Vote Campaigns will continue to try to motivate U.S. citizens to vote during elections. Immigrant rights groups believe that if eligible Latina/o voters participate in voting, they will be able to produce changes that would benefit the greater Latina/o and undocumented community. However, this strategy fails to recognize that there are some Latina/os within the community that hold different perspectives and tend to vote for propositions and politicians that do not favor the undocumented community.
Chapter 4:
Discussion and Conclusion

Through interviews and observations with advocates, I identified six mobilization strategies among immigrant rights organizations in Los Angeles in an attempt to challenge exclusionary immigration laws and targeted enforcement practices of the undocumented community. Immigrant rights groups’ implemented innovative educational and awareness campaigns since advocates believed that undocumented communities were continuously experiencing confusion, uncertainty, and misinformation produced by contradicting sources. These groups used their limited resources and funding to educate the community in hopes of reducing the number of immigrants deported. Secondly, organizations participated in counter surveillance efforts through social media and mass media platforms due to targeted enforcement practices and intensified surveillance produced by exclusionary immigration laws. This strategy demonstrated that organizations participated in surveilling government agencies. Thirdly, organizations provided legal representation to some undocumented immigrants undergoing immigration proceedings who were denied public defenders because of their undocumented status. This strategy demonstrates the organizations’ constant struggle to challenge the U.S. government’s criminalization of the undocumented community. The fourth strategy focused on the organizations’ involvement in non-violent protests and demonstrations in order to publically declare disapproval of targeted enforcement practices and exclusionary immigration laws. Through this grassroots approach, they publically unite and demonstrate their grievances against the U.S. government in hopes of social change. The fifth strategy included the sanctuary movements where both cities and religious groups refuse to cooperate with government agencies
responsible for targeting and deporting undocumented immigrants. Lastly, organizations created “Get Out the Vote” campaigns in order for undocumented individuals to become civically engaged by educating eligible voters on the importance of voting, which would then have an impact on the greater undocumented community. This strategy revealed that by denying the undocumented community the opportunity to naturalize and vote, the nation could continue to benefit from an exploitable and immigrant labor force. The six strategies serve to counter the effects of migrant illegality and legal violence. The variation among these six strategies demonstrates how mobilization strategies are fluid and changing based on the challenges migrants face at a specific time and place.

Based on the present paper, several limitations exist including the focus of my study on the Southern California region, followed by the selection of immigrant rights organizations that predominantly serve the Latina/o and Central American communities. But, scholars have the opportunity to explore how these experiences and strategies compare to those of other undocumented immigrant groups in the U.S. and immigrants in other receiving countries. Based on this study, we find that legal violence tends to be coupled between particular forms of violence and resistance, while forms of mobilizing contest illegality by claiming membership. But, I plan to further analyze how legal violence and migrant illegality shape the experiences of the undocumented community in the post-2016 election. In addition, further examination could determine if these strategies and organizations could potentially be challenging or drawing on the victimization of undocumented immigrants for organizational growth and funding, increased membership, and national recognition. I would also be interested in finding new or additional mobilization strategies based on new threats towards undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
In addition, I plan to focus on how immigrant rights organizations approach issues of inclusivity and exclusivity as the effects of legal violence and migrant illegality change. Nonetheless, this paper analyzes the different mobilization strategies used by immigrant rights advocates and organizations in an attempt to protect and empower this community from being continually victimized by the effects of legal violence and migrant illegality in Los Angeles in 2016.
References


