One Step In and One Step Out

The Lived Experience of Immigrant Participants in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program

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Introduction

As we interviewed Cristina[1] at her college campus on her last day of undergraduate classes, she summed up her feelings about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program: "I don't want crumbs. I want the whole cake." Cristina's words reflect how DACA provides what Menjívar and Kanstroom (2014:11) describe as a "fuzzy" status—one in which individuals are not fully included in the United States but yet are not fully excluded either. DACAmented persons straddle this line of inclusion and exclusion. They receive some vitally important benefits (e.g., employment authorization, temporary protection from deportation) but have not been granted a pathway to legal permanent residency and U.S. citizenship. In other words, DACA recipients live in a gray area between the black-and-white categories of "legal" and "illegal," "documented" and "undocumented."

There is a growing literature on people who live in a world that is in-between statuses.[2] Our study contributes to this literature on liminal legality by examining the lived experiences of DACA recipients in a California metropolitan area (San Diego County). We show how their lives have been transformed by having DACA status, but we identify significant limits and challenges that DACA recipients continue to face. We also seek to enhance understanding of why some age-eligible persons have applied for DACA status but many more have not, nearly two years after the program was announced, and we propose new strategies for increasing participation.

[1] All names of DACA applicants quoted in this book have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

[2] Menjívar and Kanstroom (2014:11) characterize DACA (and other forms of prosecutorial discretion in deportation cases) as "a legal action that creates a separate class of individuals in society" because it provides a precarious status between inclusion and exclusion. See also Cebulko 2014 and Chávez 2014.

DACA: Program Overview

DACA emerged after more than a decade of stagnation on comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) legislation at the national level. By far the most contentious issue in this policy debate has been what to do about the 11-12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. One proposal for legalization has been the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, commonly referred to as the DREAM Act, which would provide legal permanent residency and a path to citizenship for individuals who were brought to the United States under the age of 16 and had either obtained a college degree or served in the U.S. armed services. Legislation like the DREAM Act, which solely focuses on the legalization of unauthorized young people, has received more widespread congressional support than broader legalization programs.

Despite almost annual reintroductions of DREAM Act legislation over the past decade, it has failed to gain Congressional approval. The DREAM Act was first introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives in 2001, with both Democratic and Republican co-sponsors. Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA) and Chris Cannon (R-UT) were the first co-sponsors. Bipartisan support has remained generally consistent over the years, despite varying co-sponsors. The bill has been put to a vote numerous times and passed the Senate Judiciary Committee twice, in 2003-2004 and 2006. In 2010 the DREAM Act (H.R. 5281) was narrowly approved by the House (216-198). Nevertheless, it fell five votes short of the 60 needed to advance past a Republican filibuster in the Senate (Immigration Policy Center 2011a:5). Opposition to the DREAM Act largely stems from being considered an "amnesty" for law-breakers.

In light of the Congressional impasse on CIR and the DREAM Act specifically, the Obama administration began encouraging a more targeted approach to immigration

enforcement.. A memorandum issued in June 2011 by John Morton, Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), exemplifies this approach. Morton's memo laid out loosely-defined priorities for immigration officers "to ensure that the agency's immigration enforcement resources are focused on the agency's enforcement priorities" (American Immigration Council 2011: para. 1). Morton noted that, given limited resources, immigration officers should focus on the removal of only the most serious offenders, i.e., those who pose threats to national security, public safety, or border security. Such selective enforcement practices are known as prosecutorial discretion. Not uncommon in the history of immigration law enforcement, prosecutorial discretion recognizes the ability of a law enforcement agency or officer (i.e., an ICE or Customs and Border Protection agent) to determine how to pursue a particular case (Immigration Policy Center 2011b).

Just over two years after the Morton memo was promulgated, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano released another memorandum announcing another form of prosecutorial discretion—DACA. That same day, President Barack Obama addressed the nation and explained that because of Congress' inability to pass the DREAM Act, his administration was undertaking new action to "mend our nation's immigration policy, to make it more fair, more efficient, and more just—specifically for certain young people sometimes called 'Dreamers'" (White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2012: para. 1). Thus, DACA has been referred to as "DREAM Act lite"—a nod to DACA as a response to the repeated failure of Congress to pass the DREAM Act.

While both the DREAM Act and DACA focus on relief for those immigrants who arrived in the United States during their youth, DACA only grants those whose applications are approved a temporary, two-year stay of deportation, plus employment authorization. Table 1

below provides a more detailed description of the similarities and differences in the requirements and benefits of DACA and the proposed DREAM Act.[3]

In order to qualify for deferral of deportation under DACA, applicants must meet strict age, education and continuous U.S. residency requirements. It is estimated that approximately two million young people meet at least some, if not all, of these requirements. Utilizing estimates from the Immigration Policy Center (2012)[4], researchers have reported that there were slightly more than 1.7 million potential DACA beneficiaries (Singer and Svajlenka 2013; Wong et al. 2013). Batalova et al. (2014) utilized updated estimates[5] to conclude that approximately 2.1 million young people were potentially eligible for DACA status. Importantly, these various figures are based only on current age, age of entry into the United States, and educational attainment. Because of a lack of data on certain eligibility requirements, these estimates do not take into account those who may be excluded from DACA as a result of failure to meet the continuous residency requirement or having a criminal background (Batalova et al. 2014:6; Wong et al. 2013:10). Consequently, these figures could be overestimations of the potentially eligible population. Batalova et al. (2014:6), however, noted the possibility for underestimation as well, since the figures do not account for individuals who have enrolled in adult education or training programs (and thus would meet DACA's educational requirement).

[3] The requirements and benefits are based upon information from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (2014a) "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)" and "Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act" (S.744), the most recent bill which includes the DREAM Act.

[4] Rob Paral and Associates used figures from the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2006-2010. For detailed information about this methodology, see the Immigration Policy Center's (2012:12) report, "Who and Where the DREAMers Are, Revised Estimates: A Demographic Profile of Immigrants Who Might Benefit from the Obama Administration's Deferred Action Initiative."

[5] In Batalova et al. (2014), James Bachmeier utilized the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the 2012 ACS. For his detailed methodology, see Batalova et al. (2014:25).

Table 1: Comparison of DACA and Proposed DREAM Act

	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	**Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act**
Requirements	Applicants must: - Be younger than 31 as of June 15, 2012 - Have arrived in the United States before the age of 16 - Have been physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012 - Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007 - Be at least 15 years old at the time of application (or be in removal proceedings/have a removal order if younger than 15) - Be a high school graduate (or have obtained a GED), be currently enrolled in high school (or in a GED program) or have served honorably in the military - Have not committed a felony, serious misdemeanor, three or more misdemeanors, or pose a threat to national security	DREAMers would apply for status as "registered provisional immigrants" (RPI) but would be placed on an "accelerated track" toward permanent legal residency. To qualify for RPI status, must: - Have been physically present in the United States on or before December 31, 2011 - Have continuously resided in the United States since December 31, 2011 - Be physically in the United States the date on which the individual submits the application - Have not committed a felony, an aggravated felony, three or more misdemeanors or pose a threat to national security To be considered for the "accelerated track" to residency, must: - Have arrived in the United States before the age 16 - Be a high school graduate of a U.S. high school or have obtained a GED - Have earned a college degree or have completed at least 2 years of a bachelor's degree or higher in the United States (and remains in good standing) or have served for at least four years in the military
Benefits	- Temporary (two-year) relief from deportation (can be renewed for another two years) - Employment Authorization - Social Security Number - Driver's License (in some states)	A path to legal permanent residency and eventually citizenship: - After 5 years of RPI status, can apply for Lawful Permanent Residence (a green card). - Upon receiving their green card, may apply immediately for U.S. citizenship.

As of August 2014, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (2014b), 712,064 individuals had submitted an initial application for DACA status, of which 675,476 (94.9 percent) had been accepted.[6] On their face, these statistics suggest a very low participation rate, given estimates of more than two million potential beneficiaries. However, these estimates include persons who were not *immediately* eligible at the time of DACA's commencement but could become eligible in the future. Batalova et al. (2014:7) estimated that about 1.2 million individuals were immediately eligible to apply for DACA.

Batalova et al. (2014) divided the remaining, potentially-eligible persons into two groups: children under the age of 15, and persons who did not meet the DACA education requirement. Children under 15 who could potentially be eligible must stay in school or obtain a high school degree or general education degree (GED) in order to remain eligible. Batalova et al. (2014: 7) estimated that 426,000 youths did not meet this educational requirement in 2012. For those ineligible because of low educational attainment, obtaining a high school diploma, a general education degree (GED) or other qualifying training is a significant obstacle, especially among older individuals who may be the head of household and have dependents for which they must provide.

As of June 2014, the approval rate for DACA applications was 85.9 percent (580,859 applications).[7] This does not mean that a quarter of all applicants are being denied. In fact, only 3.5 percent of DACA applications received since the beginning of the program (23,881) have been denied, while the others are still under consideration. The numbers suggest, however, that

[6] These statistics represent applications as of June 30, 2014, which USCIS published on August 19, 2014.

[7] This figure is based on accepted applications. The approval rate for all requests received is 81.6 percent.

although the daily rate of accepted applications is slowing down,[8] the denial rate is rising. USCIS (2014b) reported that 11,138 DACA applications were denied in 2013. As of this writing, 12,743 initial applications have been denied in the 2014 fiscal year. If this rate remains constant through the rest of the fiscal year, USCIS will deny approximately 17,000 DACA applications. The increase in denials could be a result of the adjudication of complicated cases that were pending in prior years. It could also signal that individuals with more complex cases chose to hold off on applying during the early stages of DACA application. Because USCIS does not release the reasons for denial, however, it is impossible to say with any certainty what is causing the increase in denials, and there is no evidence that this is discouraging potential applicants for DACA status.

On June 30, 2014, President Obama announced that he would take further executive actions on immigration reform by the end of summer 2014, pending recommendations from Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and Attorney General Eric Holder. It was widely believed that the President would expand the DACA program by making additional segments of the undocumented population eligible for "parole" or suspension of deportation. However, in early September, Obama delayed executive actions on immigration until after the November 2014 mid-term elections, reportedly fearing that such politically controversial measures would cost Democrats control of the U.S. Senate. Whether DACA remains "frozen in place" until January 2017 with no changes in eligibility criteria, or evolves into a broader legalization program, it will be recognized as the most significant innovation in U.S. immigration policy during Barack Obama's presidency.

[8] USCIS (2014) reported that in 2012 they accepted an average of 4,763 applications each day. This number steeply declined in 2013 with only 1,704 applications accepted daily. The number further dropped in the year-to-date, with an average of 510 accepted, initial applications daily in 2014.

Data and Methods

For this study we collected and analyzed five datasets: (1) a large-scale, on-line survey of 1,472 undocumented millennials (Wong and Valdivia, 2014)[9]; (2) a national-level dataset containing information on the first 146,313 applications for DACA status received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request; (3) standardized survey interviews with a random sample of 200 Mexico-born persons living in San Diego County; (4) standardized survey interviews with 465 residents of a high-emigration community in the Mexican state of Oaxaca that sends most of its migrants to San Diego County; and (5) in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with 55 undocumented youths throughout San Diego County who were recruited for our study primarily through two local, nongovernmental organizations. Among the 1,472 persons in the large-scale survey, 92.9 percent (or 1,367) had applied for DACA status. Among those who had applied, 95.3 percent (or 1,302) were approved for DACA status at the time of the survey. Among the 55 persons interviewed in the qualitative component of our study, 100 percent had applied for DACA and 98.2 percent were approved at the time of the interview.

Field interviewing was conducted in our Oaxaca research community and in San Diego County from January to May 2014. Our sample of survey respondents in Oaxaca was based on a complete census of residents of the community of San Miguel Tlacotepec, conducted by our research team. All residents aged 15-65 were eligible to be interviewed. Tlacotepec is one of three purposively-selected, rural communities with high rates of emigration to the United States, located in the states of Jalisco, Oaxaca, and Yucatan, which have been studied repeatedly by the Mexican Migration Field Research and Training Program (MMFRP) at the University of

[9] See Wong and Valdivia (2014) for more information about the survey's methodology.

California-San Diego. Previous MMFRP field studies were conducted in Tlacotepec in 2007 and 2011 (see Cornelius et al. 2009; FitzGerald et al. 2013).

Located in the remote Mixteca Baja region of Oaxaca, Tlacotepec is an indigenous town of moderate economic marginalization that has sent two generations of migrants to San Diego County, the first arriving in 1973. The town's pioneer migrants were part of a great wave of north-bound migrants from Oaxaca, which since the 1980s has become the single most important Mexican state sending migrants to California. The Tlacotepenses have formed a vibrant, transnational community, centered in the North San Diego County city of Vista, which now includes hundreds of families who maintain close ties with their home town.

In San Diego County we randomly selected 105 blocks in which 25 percent or more of residents were Mexico-born, according to U.S. Census data; ten blocks in which the Mexico-born population was between 10-24 percent; and five blocks with less than 10 percent Mexico-born residents. Our research team visited randomly selected dwellings within these 120 blocks to determine the national origins of their inhabitants. As in our Mexico research site, persons between 15-65 years of age were eligible to be interviewed. All standardized survey interviews in Oaxaca and most survey interviews in San Diego County were conducted in Spanish. All but one of our in-depth interviews with DACA recipients in San Diego County were conducted, by the respondent's choice, in English. This reflects the high level of English proficiency among persons in our sample of DACA recipients, with nine out of ten respondents reporting that they speak English well.

Our in-depth interviews with DACA recipients in San Diego County were obtained through snowball sampling. Most interviewees were contacted via two non-governmental organizations in San Diego that offered legal assistance to persons applying for DACA in 2012

and 2013. Casa Cornelia Law Center (CCLC) is a pro-bono, public interest law firm in San Diego that assists low-income undocumented immigrants. The Dreamer Assistance Network (DAN) is a consortium of San Diego County organizations that provides clinic-style legal assistance to the undocumented.[10] Elizabeth Camarena, Associate Director of Legal Programs at CCLC, estimated that her firm was able to assist roughly 200 individuals with their DACA applications. Daniel Alfaro, convener for the DAN, estimated the DAN helped 700 individuals submit their applications.[11] The majority of our in-depth interviewees were recruited through CCLC (47.2 percent) and the DAN (34.0 percent). These interviews, lasting from 30 minutes to more than two hours, were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded to facilitate analysis.

Since snowball sampling can restrict variation among respondents (see Taylor and Bodgan 1998), we supplemented our sample of CCLC and DAN clients using additional recruitment methods. At the end of each interview we asked respondents to help connect us with friends and family members who had submitted a DACA application. We also reached out to activists in the San Diego immigrant community who could help connect us with DACA recipients. In addition, we purposively attempted to vary the *types* of individuals in our sample in terms of gender, age and length of time with DACA status. We make no claim that findings from these in-depth interviews are statistically representative of larger populations of DACA recipients, even those in San Diego County. Nevertheless, these interviews provide a fine-grained portrait of the lived experiences of persons with DACA status that can serve as a point of departure for further research on the program.

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[10] The Dreamer Assistance Network (DAN) sprung up seemingly overnight in 2012 in response to the need for DACA counseling services. Holding its first informational forum just two days after President Obama announced the program in June 2012, the DAN utilized a recruitment model that had worked previously for eliciting naturalization applications.

[11] Alfaro further estimated the DAN has assessed at least 1,400 individuals for DACA eligibility and has provided information to around 10,000 individuals through their informational sessions.

Organization of the Study

Part I of this study focuses on the process through which Mexican immigrants have come to seek DACA status, at the national as well as local levels. We devote special attention to the geography of DACA applications (how place of residence influences the likelihood of participation), the role of social networks in transmitting knowledge about DACA, and the potential effects of modifying the program's current eligibility criteria. In Part II we explore the lived experience of DACA recipients who reside in San Diego County. We focus economic incorporation, educational attainment, and psycho-social integration – the sense of belonging in United States. Our analysis, drawing on both quantitative, survey data and qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews, seeks to identify the factors that help to explain the life changes one has (or has not) experienced since receiving DACA status. The qualitative analysis, in particular, helps to illuminate the barriers that DACA recipients continue to confront as a consequence of their ambiguous legal status. We conclude each part of the study with a series of policy recommendations supported by our field data, both for increasing future participation in the DACA program and for enhancing the economic, social, and psychological integration of those who benefit from it.

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Summary of Findings

Geographic and Demographic Determinants of DACA Applications

Utilizing data on the first 146,313 applications submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) between August 15, 2012 and September 30, 2012, we find that the first wave of applicants was spread widely across the country. Mapping of these applicants, however, shows that only 23 counties were home to more than 1,000 applicants. Upon examining the counties with the largest amount of early DACA applicants, we find that demography may not have been destiny during the early stages of DACA implementation. The Hispanic/Latino noncitizen percentage of the population and the Asian noncitizen percentage of the population do not neatly predict the number of early DACA applications at the county level. Economic indicators, however, do appear to have played a significant role. The prevalence of low income and poverty appears to have depressed the number of early DACA applications.

Concerns of DACA Applicants

Our qualitative interviews with DACA applicants in San Diego County revealed a variety of concerns and anxieties concerning the DACA application process. A key concern among interviewees was the risk of having their application denied, after providing personal identifying information to the government. Another common concern was the potential impact of the 2012 presidential election outcome on the DACA program. Worries ranged from the termination of the program by a Romney administration to the use of application information to identify persons for deportation. We found that persons with higher levels of education were more likely to indicate a concern over the presidential election outcome, compared to those with lower levels of education. Working with nongovernmental, immigrant-service organizations in preparing DACA applications helped to dispel rumors, calm fears, and provide reassurance. Persons who had

received DACA also played an important role in helping others to overcome their concerns and make the decision to apply.

Knowing about DACA: The Role of Social Networks

Drawing uon our 465 standardized survey interviews conducted in San Miguel Tlacotepec, Oaxaca, we find a very low level of knowledge of the DACA program. Fewer than 7 percent of our Oaxaca-based interviewees knew something about DACA. We found that attempting to migrate to the United States (at any point in time) and the ability to speak English ("well" or "somewhat") were associated with knowledge of DACA in our sample. We also found that social network connections in this high-emigration community were vital transmission belts for knowledge about DACA.

Effects of Expanding Eligibility Criteria on Program Participation

Analyzing the random sample of 200 Mexican immigrants whom we surveyed in San Diego County, we found that 50 respondents met DACA's age requirement. Of those interviewees, a majority met at least one other criterion of eligibility. When the criteria are combined, however, the number of respondents remaining eligible for DACA dropped to well below half. Our findings suggest that modifying several of the basic eligibility criteria for DACA could significantly increase the number of immigrants qualifying for the program. Removing the current education requirement would bring eligibility in our sample up from 34 percent to nearly 50 percent. Among our survey respondents the most difficult-to-meet requirement was that immigrants must have resided continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007. Removing this criterion would have raised eligibility to 64 percent.

Life after DACA

DACA recipients whom we interviewed in depth had generally experienced increased economic integration. Seventy-nine percent reported that they were earning more since receiving DACA status, which has allowed them to become more financially independent.[12] We found that those who have experienced a change in employment since receiving DACA were more likely to indicate increased financial independence than those who did not. Not all interviewees, however, experienced an increase in wages after moving into the formal sector. Another measure of economic integration is increased occupational attainment, which was reported by 70.3 percent of interviewees who were employed at the time of our fieldwork. The average change in scores on a standard scale of occupational status was 18 points, on a scale of 1 to 100.

Despite this general economic benefit, for many individuals, securing employment after receiving DACA status did not come easy. Numerous DACA recipients in our sample reported spending several months searching for a job. Some pointed to a lack of work experience as the cause of this difficulty. Before DACA, these interviewees were barred from working legally. In many cases they were also shut out of internship opportunities that could have allowed them to gain the skills and experience for future employment. As a result, when entering the job market, some felt they were not set up for success. Others felt the temporary nature of their status served as an additional obstacle to securing a job, receiving benefits, and planning for their future.

After excluding persons who had been in school prior to receiving DACA, 40.9 percent of our sample had returned to school since receiving DACA. Our research suggests that increased financial independence, age, and occupational status play a role in the decision to return to school. We also examined the likelihood that a DACA recipient would be enrolled

[12] For measures of economic integration, our sample refers to the number of individuals who were not currently in high school (*n*= 43).

currently in post-secondary education at the time of the interview. Fifty-eight percent of our interviewees were current students (excluding those currently in high school). Work authorization and increased financial independence after receiving DACA status were positively associated with educational re-entry.

Many DACA recipients who had returned to school or were currently in school reported feeling better equipped to finance their education, because of employment authorization gained through DACA. Some interviewees reported they now felt more invested in their schooling as a result of being able to put their degree to use after graduation. However, educational barriers persist for DACA recipients. DACA offers no direct educational benefit, and DACA recipients in our sample reported difficulty in financing their education because they are ineligible for federal financial aid. Numerous interviewees reported that attending a four-year university was not a realistic option.

Among our in-depth interviewees, 45 percent reported an increased sense of belonging in the United States, while roughly one-quarter felt that they fully belonged before receiving DACA status. Length of residence in the United States was positively associated with feelings of belonging. A majority of interviewees felt an increased sense of security and a sense of normalcy because of changes in their daily life, such as being able to obtain a driver's license and enjoying the freedom of movement that it provides. However, because DACA does not offer full membership, some DACA recipients continue to feel that they do not belong in the United States. They are reminded of their ambiguous status by the things they are unable to do, such as apply for certain types of (public-sector) jobs, obtain federal financial aid to finance their education, and travel outside the United States. Some interviewees reported anxiety about the legal status of immediate family members, which contributes to their own sense of insecurity.

Although DACA recipients are temporarily protected from deportation, they are acutely aware that undocumented members of their family are not.

Policy Recommendations

Our research on the DACA application process yields seven recommendations for expanding participation in the DACA program among age-eligible undocumented immigrants who have not yet applied. They include (1) modifying several of the basic DACA eligibility criteria, especially the current education and continuous U.S. residence requirements; (2) micro-targeting outreach efforts to counties and communities with lower-than-expected DACA participation rates; (3) partnering with foreign consulates to increase awareness of the program and facilitate obtaining necessary documents; (4) increasing the representation of non-Mexicans in the applicant pool by partnering with community-based organizations and consulates to provide culturally competent outreach; (5) utilizing economic and educational success stories of DACA recipients as part of outreach messaging; (6) more extensive use of social media to increase knowledge of DACA and encourage application; (7) expanding support to nongovernmental organizations to build capacity for legal screening of potential DACA applicants who may be eligible for more permanent immigration benefits.

Our research findings also support seven policy recommendations for enhancing the economic incorporation, educational attainment, and psycho-social integration of DACA recipients. They include (1) expanding industry-specific job training programs, internships, and volunteering opportunities to help DACA recipients overcome gaps in pre-DACA employment experience and improve their job-seeking skills; (2) increasing access to health care by making DACA recipients eligible to purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act; (3) extending DACA status from two to five years to facilitate educational and employment

planning; (4) making DACA recipients eligible for federal financial aid to finance post-secondary education; (5) providing in-state tuition and scholarships to DACA recipients in all states; (6) granting permission for DACA recipients to travel out of the U.S. for short periods of time without having to apply for “advanced parole”; and (7) extending deferral of deportation to immediate family members of DACA recipients to reduce feelings of family vulnerability.

Part I: Becoming "DACAmented"

"It was the most terrifying thing ever."
-César, a 32-year-old male,
on applying for DACA

Applying for DACA: The Role of Community Organizations

Research on the implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) has highlighted the importance of non-governmental organizations in facilitating the application process. González Baker (1990:57) notes that the United States sought advice from other countries who had implemented legalizations, including Canada, Australia, and France. One recommendation from the international advisers dealt with encouraging the participation of nongovernmental organizations in the legalization process as a result of their "credibility" within the immigrant community.

While many DACA recipients put together and submitted their applications on their own, a large majority either sought help and advice at a free DACA workshop or clinic or paid for legal assistance. Wong and Valdivia's (2014) large-scale survey of undocumented millenials asked a series of questions about the DACA application process. Among those who had applied for DACA at the time of the survey (n = 1,367), just under three-in-ten (29.7 percent) put together and submitted their DACA applications on their own. Just over four-in-ten (40.3 percent) paid for legal assistance and nearly one-third (32.4 percent) attended a free DACA workshop or clinic. In other words, while some chose to "go it alone" with respect to the DACA application, most received some sort of assistance.[13]

[13] The percentages do not sum to 100.0 because survey respondents could have attended a DACA workshop or clinic *and* paid for legal assistance.

In San Diego County, local community organizations not only worked to disseminate information and provide assistance to DACA-eligible youth, they also ensured that these individuals were protected and felt confident in their decision to apply. Whether it was through dispelling rumors, providing reassurance, or offering hope to DACA-eligible youth, these organizations played a pivotal role in facilitating the DACA application process among our interviewees.

We interviewed representatives from two such organizations that had been deeply involved in the DACA application process in San Diego County. One of these organizations, the Dreamer Assistance Network (DAN), emerged as a result of the need for DACA services and was able to hold its first informational session only a few days after the June 15, 2012 announcement of DACA. Daniel Alfaro, a convener for the DAN, estimated that since they started hosting events, over ten thousand individuals have attended their informational sessions.[14] In order to spread the word about these events, eligibility assessments and application workshops, they utilized a variety of outreach methods. From working with schools and churches to a presence at the local swap meet and community events all over San Diego County, the DAN utilized an extensive outreach approach to contact individuals who could benefit from DACA.

Like the DAN, Casa Cornelia Law Center (CCLC) offered informational sessions and DACA application assistance. However, CCLC does not have an exclusive focus on DACA, as they also work with asylum-seekers, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, and unaccompanied minors taken into custody by the Border Patrol. Their work with DACA applicants began in response to a flood of questions after its announcement. Despite not having any specific funding to undertake this work, they decided to provide assistance to potential

[14] Alfaro estimated through June 2014 the DAN had assessed at least 1,400 individuals for DACA eligibility and has helped around 700 to file the actual DACA application.

applicants residing primarily in City Heights, a low-income, ethnically diverse neighborhood in central San Diego. Casa Cornelia put much effort into its outreach to City Heights residents, targeting schools, churches, parent teacher associations, and even a local health clinic. In response to this outreach, Elizabeth Camarena, Associate Director of Legal Programs, estimated that approximately 300 individuals attended CCLC's informational sessions, and they were able to assist roughly 200 individuals with their applications.

Representatives from the DAN and Casa Cornelia noted many similar objectives in their DACA outreach efforts. For example, both Alfaro and Camarena mentioned that a principal aim of their DACA outreach was to protect young people from being taken advantage of by *notarios* (non-lawyers offering assistance with legal documents). Camarena noted that the mindset at Casa Cornelia was, "If we don't do it, somebody else will, and it may not be for the best interest of the immigrants." Another shared aim was to encourage individuals to actually complete the application process—something Alfaro also noted as one of the challenges of the DAN's work. Camarena noted reluctance among some persons to apply and as a result asked a representative from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to attend an informational session. She explained:

> It was because we wanted to make sure that they felt comfortable with the decision to go forward with this application, because a lot of them were very hesitant. 'What if they come and pick me up, et cetera?' So having USCIS' presence validated the whole thing.

Many of the DACA recipients interviewed for this study emphasized the role of community organizations in encouraging them to apply for DACA, Rafael described how attending a Casa Cornelia informational session helped to alleviate his skepticism—especially with regard to providing his personal identifying information. While this forum helped calm Rafael's fears, attending a DAN informational session gave Maria a sense of reassurance:

> And, that's what I felt I needed. Not so much to go to a lawyer and have him hold my hand through the process. But, I kinda wanted to show somebody, 'Okay, this is what I have. Tell me, you know, should I risk it or should I not?' I almost felt that way. And, when you go to talk to the lawyer, at least the lawyer I talked to was like, 'This is perfect. This is perfect. So just do it.'

Applicants' Concerns

Concerns about Application Denial

In our in-depth interviews with DACA recipients we asked a series of questions about specific concerns that they might have had about DACA itself. A very common concern was the risk of having their application denied, after providing personal identifying information to the government. This concern took several forms, including not being able to finish school, not being able to help the family financially, and perhaps even being deported. While the question of "what happens?" to denied DACA applicants has yet to be systematically examined, it is clear that the perceptions that undocumented youths had about the potential consequences of denial e8ighed heavily upon them during the DACA application process.

A majority of our interviewees (58.6 percent) expressed concern about letting the government know about their undocumented status. A similar percentage (58.6 percent) expressed concern about revealing information about their family members. Nearly six-in-ten (59.7 percent) agreed with the statement, "I was concerned that the information I revealed in my application would be used to put me or my family in detention and/or deportation proceedings."[15] Despite efforts by USCIS to communicate to prospective DACA applicants that the information they disclosed would not be used for enforcement purposes, nearly one-third of our interviewees (32.4 percent) agreed with this statement: "I heard that the government was not

[15] Since we did not select our in-depth interviewees randomly, the findings from these interviews are not necessarily generalizable to broader populations of DACA applicants. However, we believe that these findings are strongly suggestive of how undocumented immigrants approached the opportunity to apply for DACA.

going to use the information in the DACA application for enforcement purposes (e.g., detention or deportation)." A large majority (79.2 percent) also agreed with the statement: "I was concerned about what would happen if DACA ended."

Many of the DACA recipients whom we interviewed reported that they had sought assistance from community organizations specifically because of their concerns about the potential consequences of applying for DACA. Quantitative analysis allows us to see if any demographic differences exist among those with concerns about denial. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis. Importantly, with the exception of a variable measuring if one has an undocumented immediate family member, these demographic indicators are a core set of variables that will be used throughout the analyses of this report. We included the variable of having an immediate family member who is undocumented (indicated as "Mixed Status Family Immediate" below) because some individuals in our sample mentioned that putting undocumented family members at risk played a role in their application concerns. As Table 2 shows, there is no significant relationship between any of our key demographic variables and concerns about denial.

It is possible that our results were inconclusive because of the small size of our San Diego County sample. However, quantitative analysis did reveal one relationship of borderline significance—that of having an undocumented immediate family member. Among those who indicated concern over being denied, 68.2 percent had an undocumented immediate family member, while among those who did not indicate a concern over denial, 83.9 percent had a close relative who is undocumented ($p = .179$). It could be that individuals who are the only member of their family with an irregular status feel an additional pressure to receive DACA and

consequently have greater concerns about denial. Future studies with larger samples are needed in order to further explore this and other potential relationships.

Table 2: Denial Concerns: Difference-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Concern about Denial (Yes=1)				.4	55	.494	0	1
Gender (Male=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.364 .273	.475	.309	55	.466	0	1
Age	Yes=1 No=0	22.7 21.5	.310	22.0	55	4.2	16	32
Age at Arrival	Yes=1 No=0	5.7 6.0	.812	5.9	55	3.9	.25	15
Years in the US	Yes=1 No=0	17.0 15.6	.287	16.2	55	4.9	6	27
Education Level	Yes=1 No=0	1.636 1.515	.668	1.564	55	1.014	0	4
Mixed Status Family Immediate (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.682 .839	.179	.774	53	.423	0	1

Concerns about Election Outcomes

As DACA reaches its two-year anniversary, it is important to remember that the November 2012 presidential election loomed over the application process during the first months of program implementation. Since DACA was created through an executive order by President Obama, the question on the minds of many potential DACA applicants had was what would happen to the program under a Mitt Romney administration, taking office in January 2013. Among the DACA recipients whom we interviewed in depth, nearly six-in-ten (58.8 percent) had been concerned about a potential Romney administration's actions regarding DACA. Worries ranged from the termination of the program, to a Romney administration's using the information on their DACA application as a way to deport them. As Rafael put it, "Me and my family felt that if Obama didn't win, DACA was gonna be used against those who were applying for it."

While interviewees like Rafael cited deportation as a possible consequence of a change in administration, the most commonly feared consequence was the termination of the program. But even among those concerned about a premature end to DACA, some stated they still wanted to apply because they would be able to have DACA at least for a short period of time. For these interviewees, the chance to have work authorization, a driver's license, or a Social Security number -- even if just for a few months -- was worth the risk of applying. As Lupita put it: "I was afraid because didn't know if Obama was going to be re-elected and they would have my information, and maybe would lead to a deportation or something. But I just took a chance -- maybe it would work."

We performed a quantitative analysis of our in-depth interview data to determine if there were any demographic patterns among those who indicated concerns regarding the upcoming presidential election. The results are reported in Table 3. While we found no significant

relationship between many of our core demographic variables and the likelihood that an interviewee had an election-related concern, we did find that educational level was significantly associated with this concern. The average educational level of those indicating a concern was 1.733 compared to 1.095 for those who did not (p = .019).[16] It could be that individuals with higher levels of education were more knowledgeable regarding the potential consequences of a change in administration.

Table 3: Election Concerns: Difference-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Concern about Election (Yes=1)				.588	51	.497	0	1
Gender (Male=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.333 .286	.718	.309	55	.466	0	1
Age	Yes=1 No=0	21.7 21.9	.888	22.0	55	4.2	16	32
Age at Arrival	Yes=1 No=0	5.4 5.7	.836	5.9	55	3.9	.25	15
Years in the US	Yes=1 No=0	16.3 16.2	.970	16.2	55	4.9	6	27
Education Level	Yes=1 No=0	1.733 1.095	**.019**	1.564	55	1.014	0	4
Mixed Status Immediate Family (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.793 .810	.886	.774	53	.423	0	1

[16] For our analysis, educational level was measured on a scale where 0 = less than high school graduate, 1 = high school graduate, 2 = some college, 3 = college graduate and 4 = some graduate school.

Other Applicant Concerns

Although all interviewees in our sample met the DACA eligibility requirements, many expressed concerns about denial given the nuances and complexities of their own immigration experiences. For example, Marisol had lived in the U.S., returned to Mexico when she was thirteen, but then came back to the U.S. two months before turning sixteen. This situation caused her to worry about being able to prove that she had arrived in the United States before her sixteenth birthday. For her, hiring a lawyer felt like a necessity.

Other interviewees reported general anxiety about making a mistake on the application. Jaime noted, "I had to pay the DACA application fee twice due to an error in how my name was spelled on the first application." Others cited concerns related to proof of continuous residence in the U.S., inconsistencies on documents , previous interactions with law enforcement, proof of entry before the age of sixteen, and proof of presence in the U.S. on June 15, 2012.

Inconsistencies across documents were a common challenge for individuals applying for DACA, especially with regard to their names. Upon enrolling in school, it was common for individuals with two last names to drop the second last name. When applying for DACA this proved to be an obstacle, as the name on transcripts or other documents often did not match the applicant's birth certificate. In fact, one respondent described name discrepancies as the hardest part to get corrected, throughout the DACA process. Many individuals in our sample recounted making multiple trips to their school district or to the Mexican Consulate to help correct these issues.

Consistent with Wong et al.'s (2013) findings, our research suggests that another way that concerns about participating in the DACA program can be alleviated is through the personal experience of successful DACA applicants. Numerous interviewees for this study reported

sharing their personal story in hopes that it would encourage others to apply for DACA.[17] For example, Cristina, although eligible for DACA at the time the program was announced, waited until September of 2013 to apply. As she witnessed the success of her friend Lupita and others, she finally decided to apply and was approved just three months later. Another interviewee, Alma, noted the influence of her own story on others who had not applied for DACA:

> They kind of didn't believe it until they saw me working and getting paid legally. Like, they don't believe it until they've seen it. Until they see someone who's not getting in trouble or something, that's when they try it.

Summary

Community-based organizations played a crucial role in generating applications to DACA in San Diego County, conducting large-scale outreach efforts and assisting with the actual application. Our interviewees reported that working with these organizations helped to dispel rumors, calm fears, and provide reassurance as they went through the stressful process of applying for DACA. Much of the anxiety among potential DACA recipients stemmed from the possibility of having their application denied, even if they met all the eligibility requirements. The perceived consequences of denial—whether it was deportation or being unable to complete one's education—factored into applicants' decision-making. Other concerns included the possibility that DACA might be terminated as a consequence of the 2012 presidential election outcome, and the complexities of meeting DACA's documentation requirements. Finally, our interviews revealed that persons who had received DACA status and had a positive experience played an important role in helping others to overcome their concerns and make the decision to apply.

[17] Our analysis indicates that 50 percent of respondents indicated shared their personal story before DACA while 72.2 percent have done so after receiving DACA status .

The Geography and Demography of DACA

This section uses data obtained for our project from a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to analyze the nationwide implementation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program during its first months. The FOIA data analyzed here are the first 146,313 applications submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) from August 15, 2012 to September 30, 2012 and are the only data that the authors are aware of that provide individual-level information on the place of residence of DACA applicants at the zip code level. This analysis thus complements a report released last year by one of the authors that examines the nationwide implementation of DACA at the state-level, including the over- and under-representation of national origin groups, as well as facilitating (the role of community-based organizations) and inhibiting (hostile state-level immigration policies) factors to DACA implementation (see Wong et al., 2013; Wong and Garcia, forthcoming).

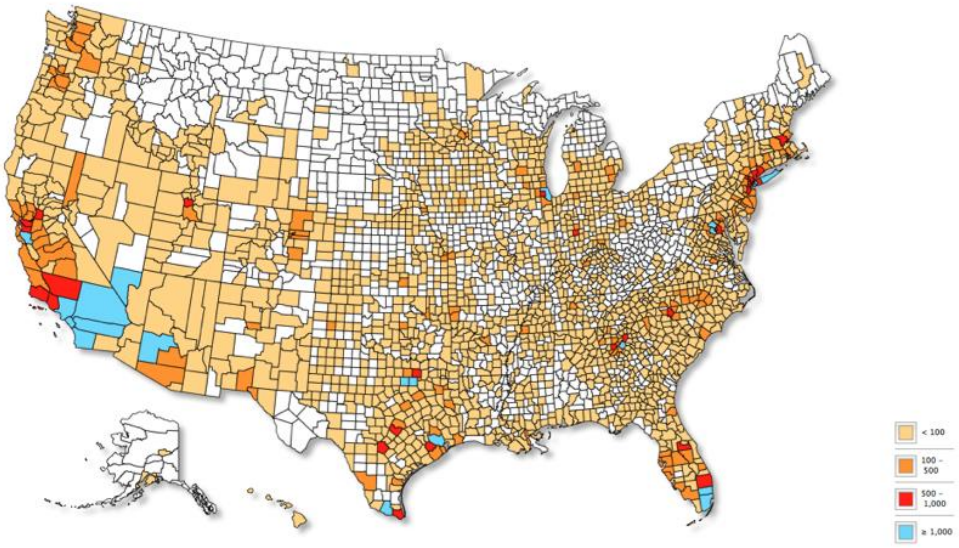
While it has been two years since USCIS began accepting applications, nearly one-quarter of all DACA applications submitted to date were submitted during the period under study. Moreover, trends in DACA applications during the first months of the program, with some exceptions, largely mirror current trends. Thus, not only can the data speak to the first wave of DACA applications, but the data can also speak to the first wave of DACA renewals. We begin by mapping the nationwide implementation of DACA in its first months, at the national, state, county, and zip code levels. This is followed by an analysis of the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the counties that are home to the largest numbers of DACA applicants who applied between August 15 and September 30, 2012.

As Figure 1 below illustrates, the first wave of DACA applicants was spread widely across the country. 10,678 zip codes and 1,922 counties are represented in the first 146,313

applications alone. However, there are only 148 counties that are home to between 100 and 499 applicants among the first 146,313 applicants, twenty-eight counties that are home to between 500 and 999 applicants, and twenty-three counties that are home to more than 1,000 applicants.

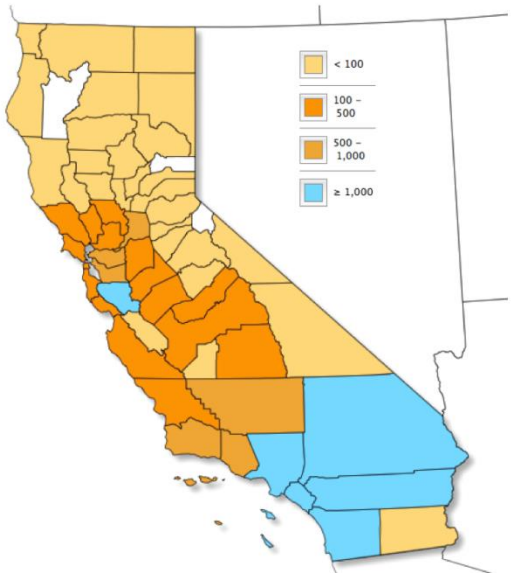
Before turning to the analysis, Figures 2-6 provide county-level maps for California, Texas, New York, Florida, and New Jersey, which represent the top five states of residence for DACA applicants during the initial months of the program. Figures 7-11 provide zip code level maps for the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the New York metropolitan area, the greater Houston area, the greater Chicago area, and the Riverside-San Bernardino area. These places represent the top five metropolitan areas of residence for DACA applicants during the initial months of the program.

Figure 1: Number of DACA Applicants by County for All Counties, 8/15/12-9/30/12



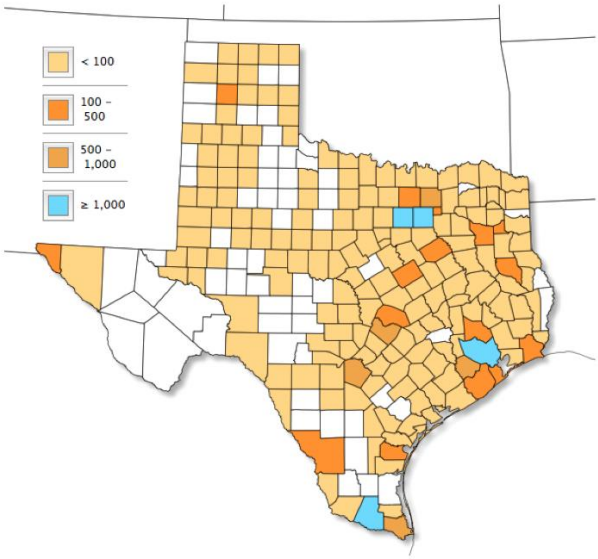
Notes: The twenty-three counties with more than 1,000 DACA applicants during the period under study are: Los Angeles, CA: 16,134. Harris, TX: 6,432. Maricopa, AZ: 4,669. Orange, CA: 4,142. Dallas, TX: 3,908. Queens, NY: 3,885. Cook, IL: 3,766. San Bernardino, CA: 2,722. Riverside, CA: 2,491. Miami-Dade, FL: 2,299. San Diego, CA: 1,973. Kings, NY: 1,820. Tarrant, TX: 1,671. Clark, NV: 1,585. Broward, FL: 1,400. Santa Clara, CA: 1,361. Hidalgo, TX: 1,279. Fairfax, VA: 1,239. Suffolk, NY: 1,204. Gwinnett, GA: 1,193. Bronx, NY: 1,165. Nassau, NY: 1,108. Hudson, NJ: 1,049.

Figure 2: DACA Applications by County, California (37,709 applications), 8/15/12-9/30/12



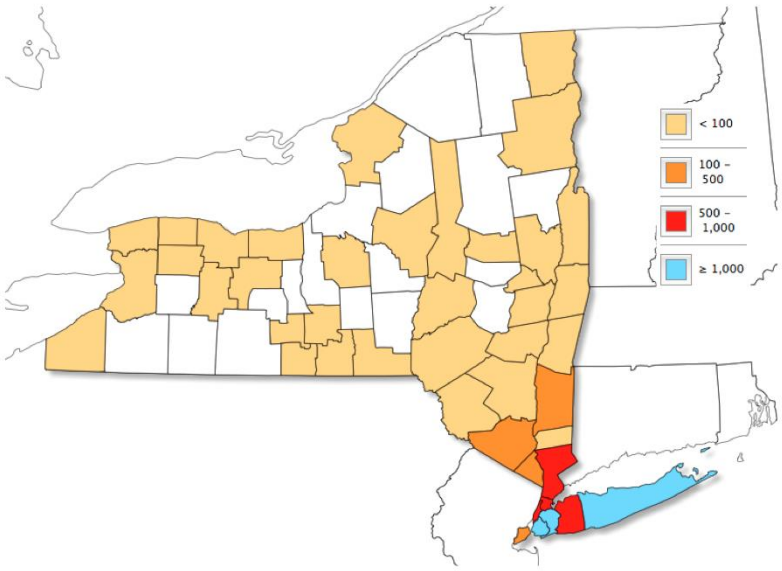
Notes: The top five counties in California are: Los Angeles County, 16,134. Orange County, 4,142. San Bernardino County, CA: 2,722. Riverside County, CA: 2,491. San Diego County, CA: 1,973.

Figure 3: DACA Applications by County, Texas (22,278 applications), 8/15/12-9/30/12



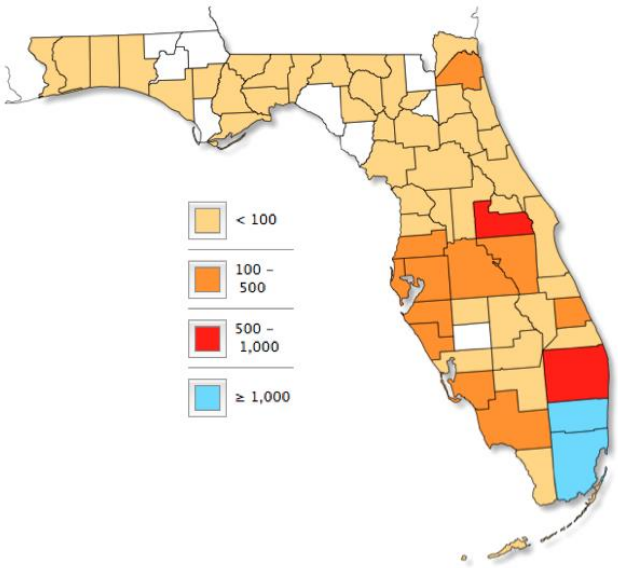
Notes: The top five counties in Texas are: Harris County, 6,432. Dallas County, 3,908. Tarrant, County, 1,671. Hidalgo County, 1,279. Fort Bend County, 717.

Figure 4: DACA Applications by County, New York (11,554 applications), 8/15/12-9/30/12



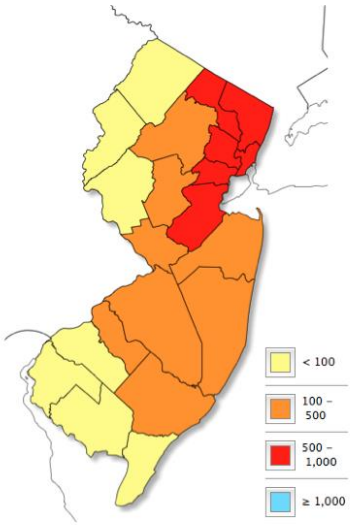
Notes: The top five counties in New York are: Queens County, 3,885. Kings County, 1,820. Suffolk County, 1,204. Bronx County, 1,165. Nassau County, 1,108.

Figure 5: DACA Applications by County, Florida (9,012 applications), 8/15/12-9/30/12



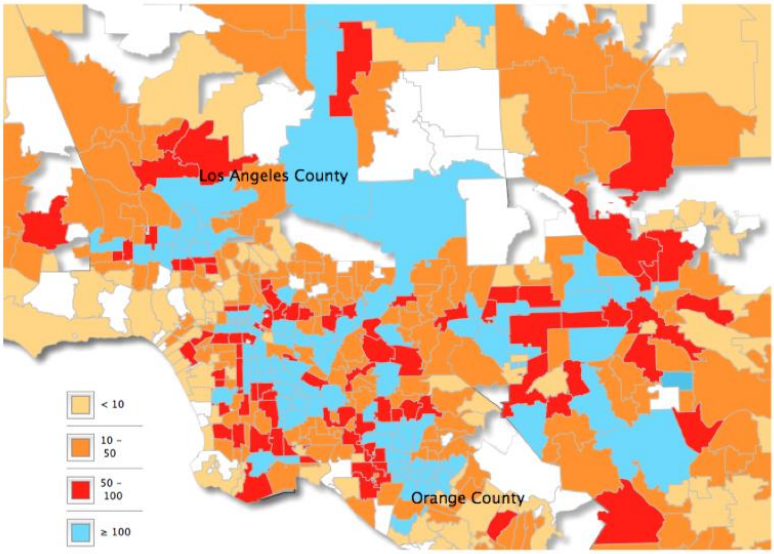
Notes: The top five counties in Florida are: Miami-Dade County, 2,299. Broward County, 1,400. Palm Beach County, 909. Lee County, 513. Hillsborough County, 488.

Figure 6: DACA Applications by County, New Jersey (6,483 applications), 8/15/12-9/30/12



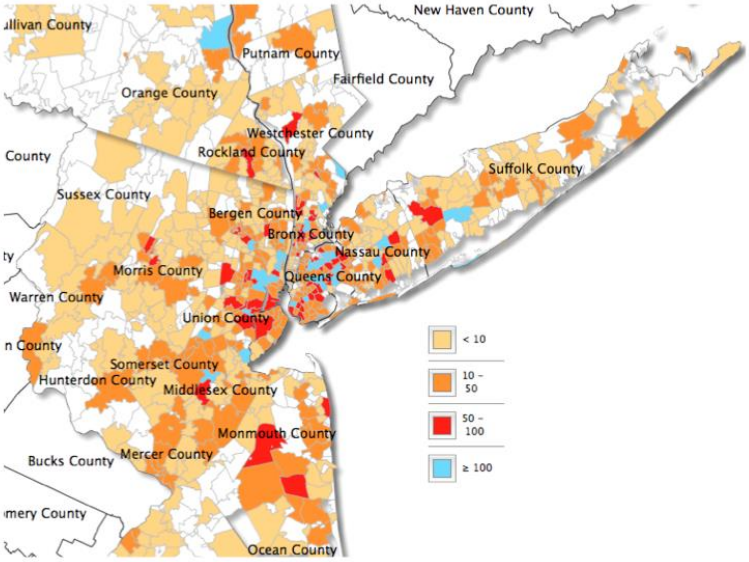
Notes: The top five counties in New Jersey are: Hudson County, 1,049. Bergen County, 830. Essex County, 803. Union County, 780. Middlesex County, 733.

Figure 7: DACA Applications by Zip Code, Greater Los Angeles Area



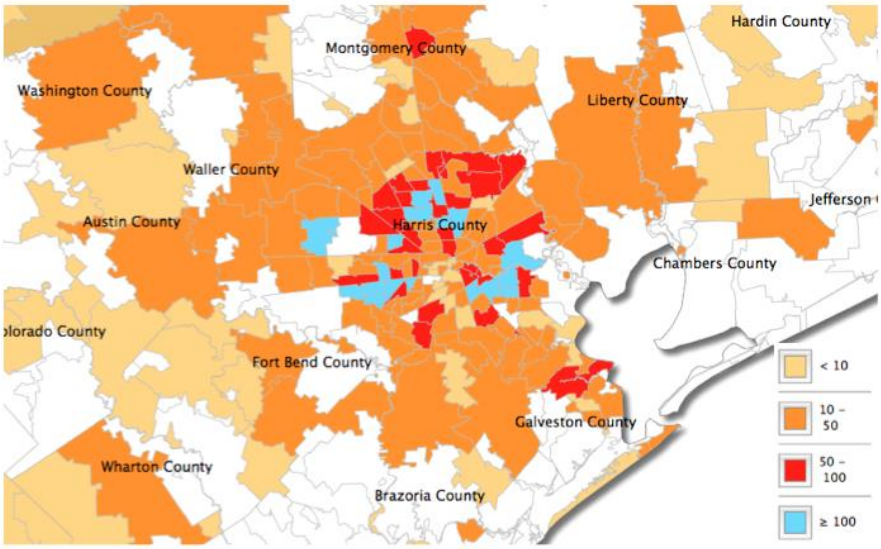
Notes: Contact authors for zip code tabulations. Withheld for privacy reasons.

Figure 8: DACA Applications by Zip Code, New York Metro Area



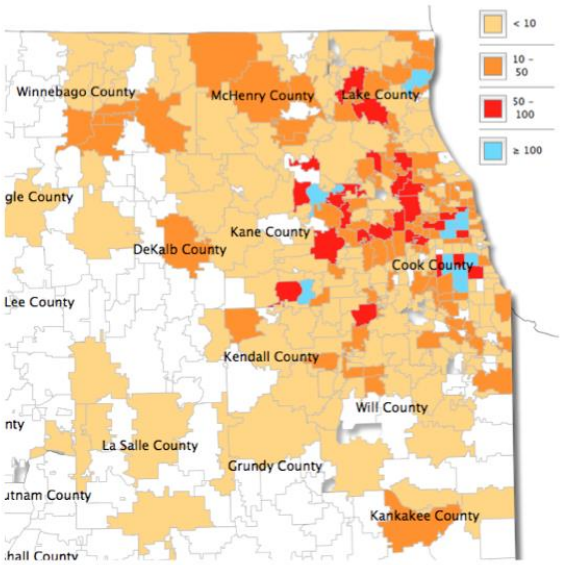
Notes: Contact authors for zip code tabulations. Withheld for privacy reasons.

Figure 9: DACA Applications by Zip Code, Greater Houston Area



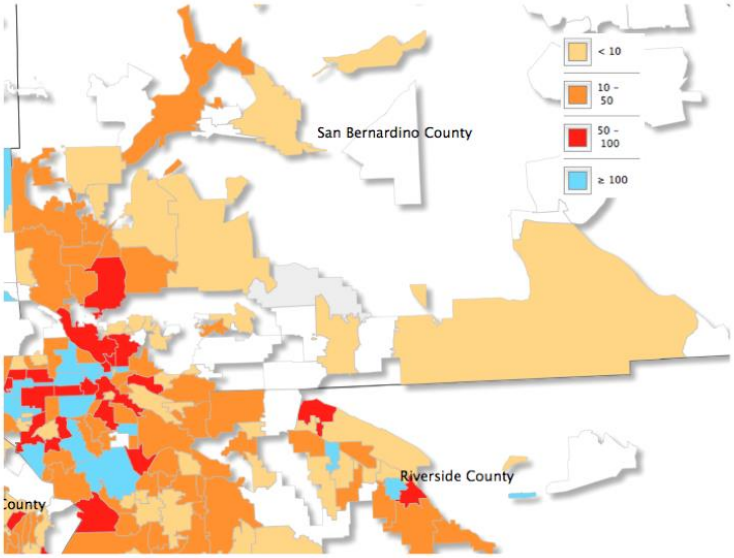
Notes: Contact authors for zip code tabulations. Withheld for privacy reasons.

Figure 10: DACA Applications by Zip Code, Greater Chicago Area



Notes: Contact authors for zip code tabulations. Withheld for privacy reasons.

Figure 11: DACA Applications by Zip Code, Riverside-San Bernardino MSA



Notes: Contact authors for zip code tabulations. Withheld for privacy reasons.

DACA Implementation at the County Level

What are the contextual determinants of DACA implementation at the county level? Wong et al. (2013) analyze this question at the state-level using data at the one-year anniversary of DACA. Their analysis finds that community-based organizations facilitate the implementation of DACA, depressed socio-economic conditions correlate with lower DACA implementation rates, and hostile state-level immigration policies have no detectable effect. At the county level, however, because analyzing the implementation of DACA requires knowing the number of estimated DACA-eligible youth by county (the denominator), and because existing estimates of these figures focus on the state level, a quantitative analysis of the early implementation of DACA modeled on Wong et al. (2013) at the level of counties is currently not possible. Forthcoming estimates by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) of the DACA-eligible population at the county level will soon eliminate this data limitation.

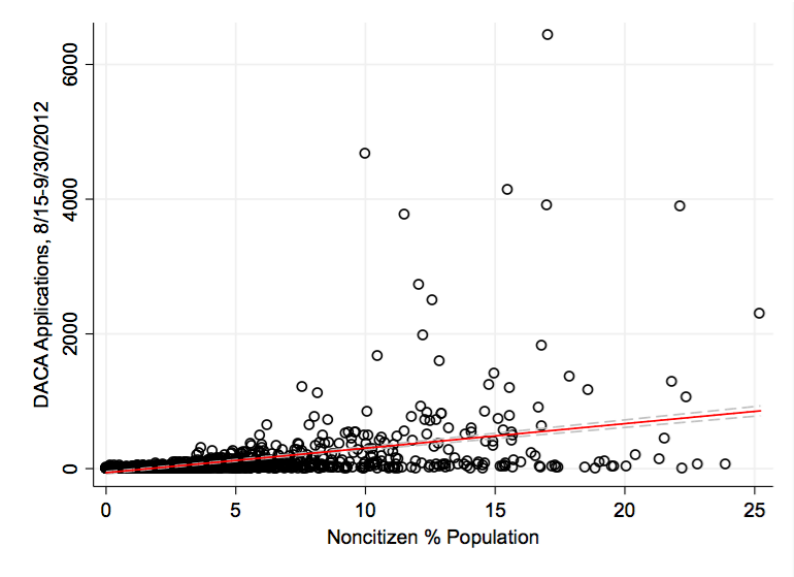
Data limitations notwithstanding, the following describes the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the counties that are home to the largest numbers of DACA applicants who applied during the first months of the program. As new estimates become available on the DACA-eligible population by county, this preliminary analysis will inform a more rigorous analysis of the over- and under-representation of particular counties with respect to DACA.

Demographic Correlates

The data analyzed here on DACA applications come from the FOIA request described above. Demographic, social, and economic variables come from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2012 five-year estimates. Figure 12 shows the bivariate relationship between the noncitizen percentage of the total population in a county and the number of DACA applications

submitted during the first months of the program for all counties with populations of greater than 10,000 (n = 1,928). As expected, since DACA applies only to noncitizens, there is a statistically significant bivariate relationship between the size of the noncitizen population in a county and the number of early DACA applications submitted. Even excluding Los Angeles County, California as an outlier, *the data show that for every 1 percent increase in the noncitizen percentage of the total population in a county the number of early DACA applications (submitted from 8/15-9/30/2012) increases by about 36 ($p < .001$).*[18] Figure 12 graphically shows that not all counties with large noncitizen populations are *also* home to a large number of early DACA applicants. In other words, demography may not have been destiny with respect to the early implementation of DACA. Figures 12 and 13 below add further evidence to support this claim. It is important to note here that given the various data limitations described above these results should only be taken as suggestive.

Figure 12: Bivariate Relationship Between Noncitizen Population and DACA



[18] The effect is stronger if Los Angeles County is included in the bivariate regression.

Figure 13 shows the bivariate relationship between the Hispanic/Latino noncitizen percentage of the total population in a county and the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program for all counties with Hispanic/Latino noncitizen populations of greater than 1,000 (n = 769). As the figure shows, the relationship is essentially a flat line (p = .866), as larger Hispanic/Latino noncitizen populations do not neatly predict the number of early DACA applications at the county level.[19]

Figure 13: Bivariate Relationship Between Hispanic/Latino Noncitizen Population and DACA

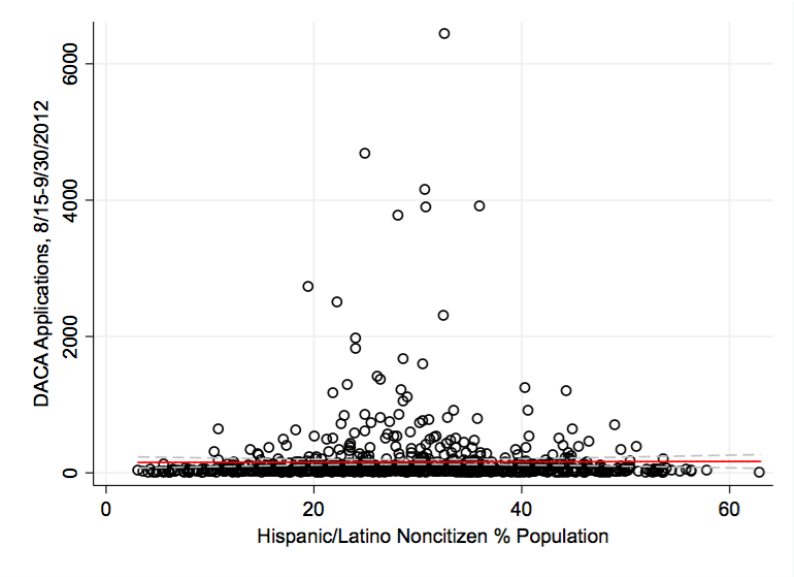
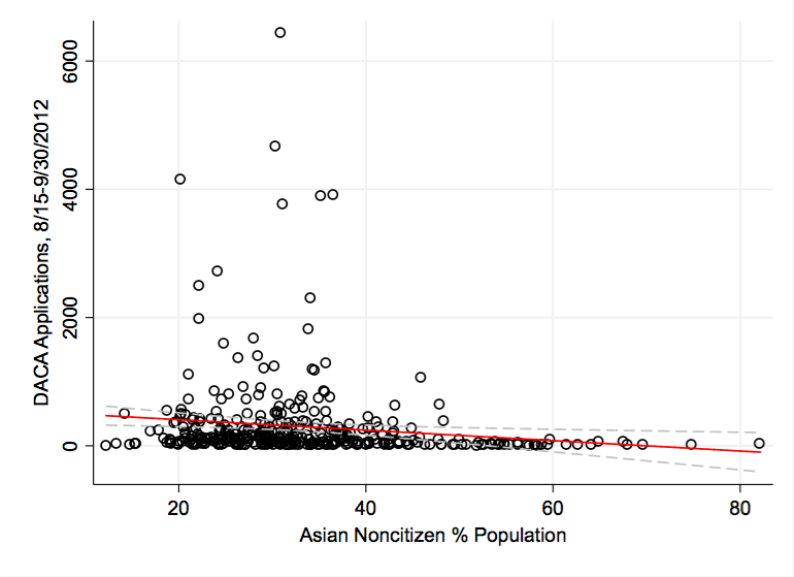


Figure 14 shows the bivariate relationship between the Asian noncitizen percentage of the total population in a county and the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program for all counties with Asian noncitizen populations of greater than 1,000 (*n*

[19] This figure also excludes Los Angeles County as an outlier. The inclusion of Los Angeles County does not change the significance of the result. In fact, it makes the relationship weaker (p = .984). Running the analysis using all counties with Hispanic/Latino noncitizen populations of over 100 (25th percentile for all counties) does not change the substantive (in)significance of the results.

= 363). Reflecting the generally low participation of Asians in DACA (Wong et al. 2013), the data show a statistically significant negative relationship (p = .010).[20]

Figure 14: Bivariate Relationship Between Asian Noncitizen Population and DACA



Data were also obtained from the American Community Survey on the median age of the noncitizen population by county. A look at the bivariate relationship between the median age of the noncitizen population and the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program for all counties with populations greater than 10,000 shows a positive, but statistically insignificant relationship, which holds whether Los Angeles County is excluded (p = .382) or not (p = .306).

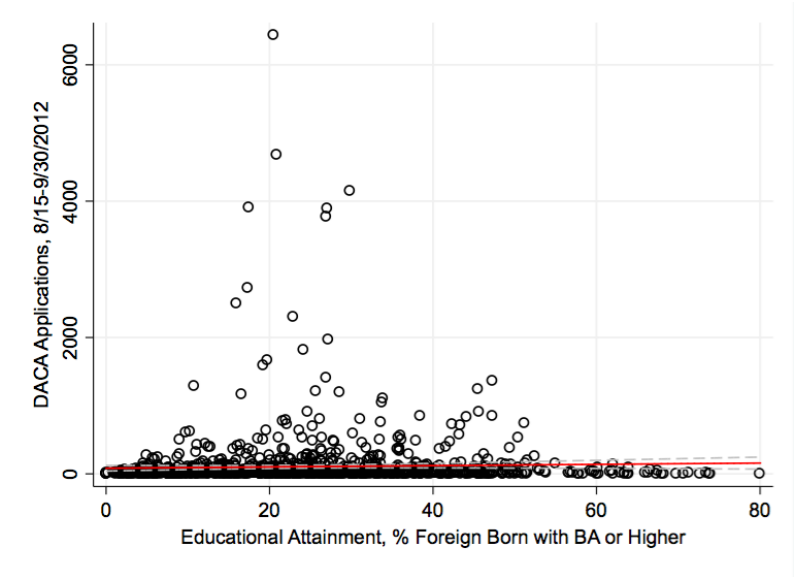
Social Correlates

Educational attainment and language use are also important contextual determinants to explore with respect to DACA. Looking at educational attainment first, and focusing on counties

[20] This negative relationship holds whether Los Angeles County is included (p = .031) or not. This negative relationship also holds if all counties with Asian noncitizen populations of greater than 10 (n = 1,661) are included (p = .028)

with foreign-born populations greater than 1,000 (*n* = 1,202), the data show that as the percentage of the foreign-born population in a county with a bachelor's degree or higher increases, so too does the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program (see Figure 15). However, this relationship is not statistically significant (p = 219). Moreover, when the educational attainment threshold is moved lower to high-school degree or equivalent, which is among DACA's main requirements, the relationship remains statistically insignificant (*p* = .442).

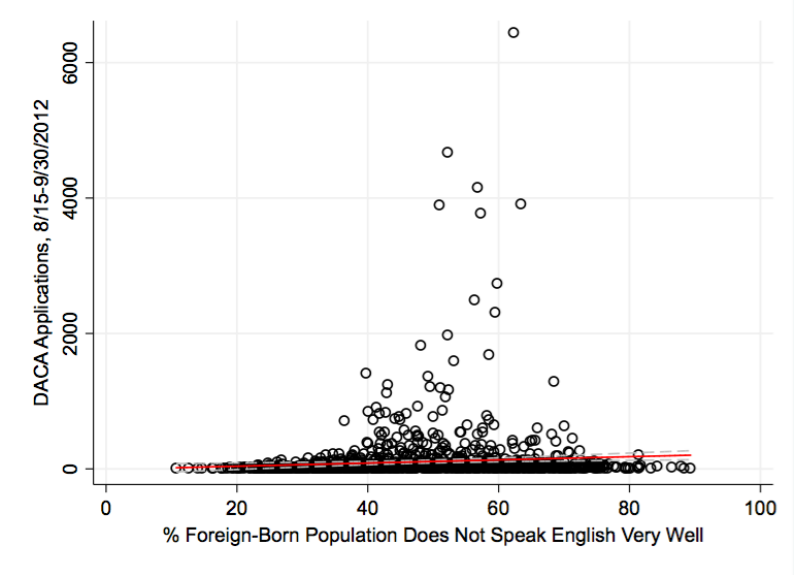
Figure 15: Bivariate Relationship Between Educational Attainment and DACA Application



On the other hand, there is a statistically significant relationship between English language use and early DACA applications, though the direction of this relationship is somewhat unexpected. Figure 16 shows the bivariate relationship between the percentage of the foreign-born population in a county that does not speak English "very well" and the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program for all counties with foreign-born populations greater than 1,000 (*n* = 1,202). The data show that as the percentage of the foreign-

born population in a county that does not speak English "very well" increases, so too does the number of early DACA applications. The data show that a 5 percent increase in the proportion of the foreign-born population in a county that does not speak English "very well" corresponds to an increase in the number of early DACA applications (those submitted from 8/15-9/30/2012) by about 12 (p = .003). This result is not sensitive to the inclusion of Los Angeles County.

Figure 16: Bivariate Relationship Between English Language Use and DACA

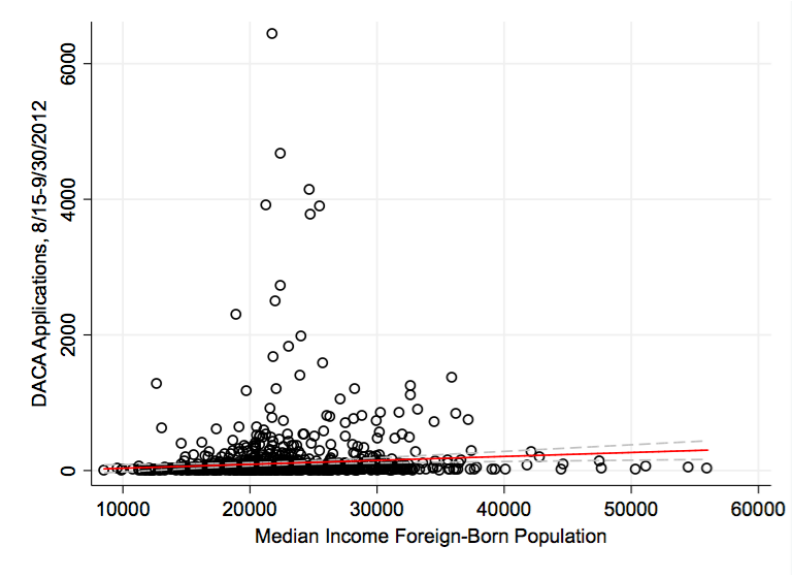


Economic Correlates

Income and poverty are important contextual economic determinants to explore with respect to DACA. Looking at the average median income among the foreign-born population, and again focusing on counties with foreign-born populations greater than 1,000 (n = 1,202), the data show that as median income increases so too does the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program. Figure 17 illustrates this relationship. The data show that a $10,000 increase in the average median income of the foreign-born population in a

county corresponds to an increase in the number of early DACA applications (submitted from 8/15-9/30/2012) by about 58 (p = .005).[21]

Figure 17: Bivariate Relationship Between Median Income and DACA

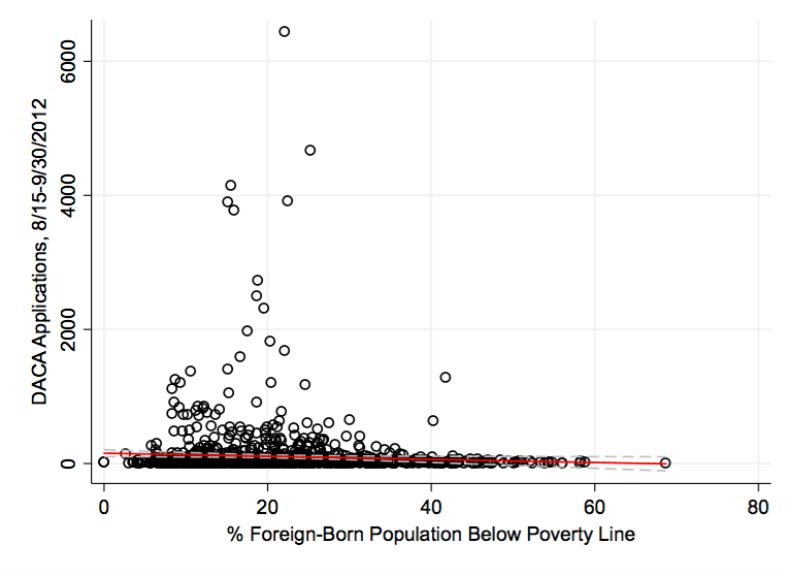


Lastly, looking at the percentage of the foreign-born population in a county below the poverty line, and again focusing on counties with foreign-born populations greater than 1,000 (n = 1,202), the data show that as poverty increases the number of DACA applications submitted during the first months of the program decreases. Figure 18 illustrates this relationship. The data show that a 5 percent increase in the proportion of foreign-born persons who live below the poverty line corresponds to a decrease in the number of early DACA applications (submitted from 8/15-9/30/2012) by about 12 (p = .025).[22]

[21] The significance of the relationship holds whether Los Angeles County is included or not.

[22] The negative relationship holds when including Los Angeles County.

Figure 18:



Summary

This set of quantitative analyses suggests that demography may not have been destiny during the early stages of DACA implementation, since the Hispanic/Latino noncitizen percentage of the population and the Asian noncitizen percentage of the population do not neatly predict the number of early DACA applications at the county level. Economic indicators, however, do appear to play a significant role, wherein low income and poverty appear to depress the number of early DACA applications. To reiterate, given the data limitations described above these results should only be taken as suggestive. However, these insights do point the way forward for more systematic research on the determinants of DACA implementation at the county level.

Knowing about DACA: The Role of Social Networks

What role do the social networks of migrants play in coming to know about DACA? We collected data relevant to this topic in the 465 standardized survey interviews that we conducted for this project in San Miguel Tlacotepec, a high-emigration rural community in the

Mexican state of Oaxaca which sends most of its U.S.-bound migrants to San Diego County. In this section, we first assess baseline awareness of the DACA program among "Tlacotepenses." Then, we identify the factors that are associated with knowledge of the program.

We measured knowledge of DACA by asking survey participants directly if they were familiar with the policy. Specifically, we asked (in Spanish): *"Do you know the program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals? It is also known by the English letters DACA."* Very few subjects responded that they were familiar with DACA as described in this question. Of 465 interviewees, 18 (about 4 percent) responded that they knew something about DACA. We anticipated that knowledge of the DACA program *by name* might be low, and so for interviewees who responded "No" to this first knowledge-based question, we followed up by describing the program and then asking if they were familiar with a program that matched that description. Specifically, we read the following statement to subjects that did not recognize DACA by name: "*No problem. Deferred Action is a type of suspension of deportation that applies to migrants living in the United States. Only those who are less than 33 years old can qualify for the program, and they must meet several other requirements."* Of the 442 subjects who did not know of DACA by name (and therefore were asked the follow-up question), 13 of the subjects (about 3 percent) responded that after the description, they were familiar with DACA. Combining responses to the two questions, just 6.6 percent of our Oaxaca-based interviewees knew something about DACA.

Correlates of DACA Knowledge

What is associated with knowledge of DACA, despite the relatively low incidence? We use regressions to measure the relationship between knowledge of DACA and individual and social-network level factors that might be associated with such knowledge. Throughout this

analysis, we will use a positive, "*Yes*", answer to either the outright knowledge question or the prompted-knowledge question as the dependent variable.

We first assess the individual-level characteristics that are associated with DACA knowledge, using a dichotomous regression with a logit link function. The results are reported in Table 4. We found two factors associated with knowledge of DACA: ever having attempted to cross from Mexico into the United States increases the probability that an interviewee is familiar with DACA, as does the ability to speak English ("well" or "somewhat"). To provide a sense for the substantive impact of these variables, we can hold all of the independent variables at central values (for dichotomous variables, the modal observation; for continuous variables, the median observation), and change the two factors associated with knowledge of DACA from values that predict low knowledge of DACA to high knowledge of DACA. This effectively creates an "average" survey respondent who differs only in the characteristics that predict knowledge of DACA.

The baseline hypothetical person is a 37-year old woman who has at some point in her life has lived outside her hometown. If this hypothetical person has never lived nor worked in the United States, and knows no English, there is a scant 4.8 percent chance that she is familiar with DACA. If this same hypothetical woman was the same on all of these traits, but instead had lived in the United States for a time and learned at least some English, then she has an 11.1 percent chance of being familiar with DACA.

Table 4: Individual-level Analysis of DACA Knowledge

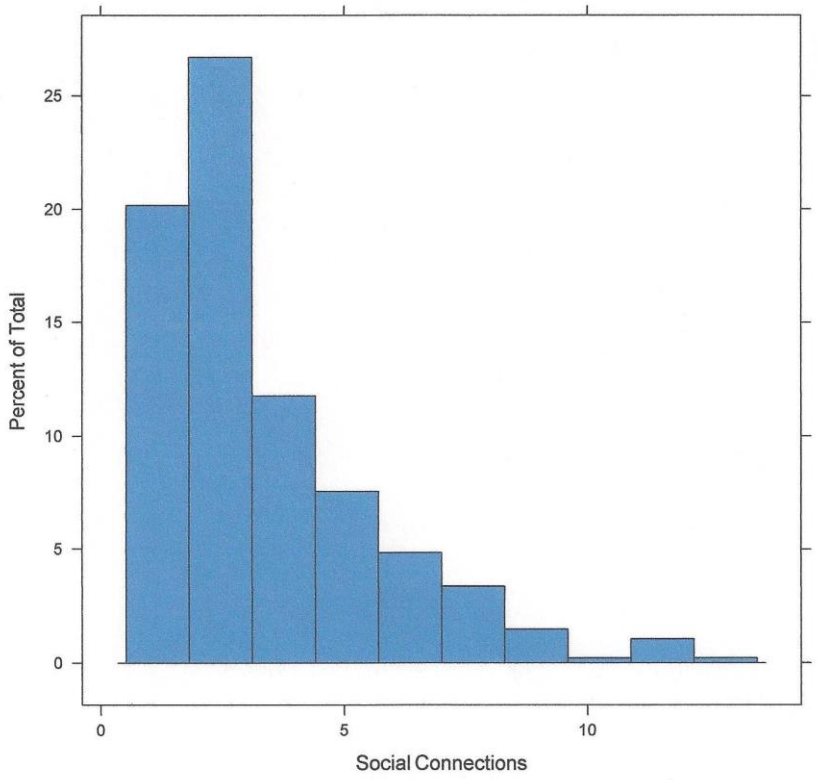
	Dependent variable: Knows About DACA	
	Coef.	*SE*
Male?	0.056	0.449
Lived outside Tlaco?	0.178	0.438
Tried to go to US?	0.84	0.473*
Age	0.823	3.972
Age Squared	0.002	0.001
Speak English?	1.111	0.433**
Constant	-842.386	4,082
Observations	445	
Log Likelihood	-105	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	224	
Sig. level: *p<0.1; **p<0.05		

Effects of Social Network Connections

We wanted to know what role, if any, social network connections play in the understanding of DACA. In this section, we estimate the same regressions as in previous section, but include information about the number of social ties survey respondents hold within their community. We asked a set of our survey respondents a battery of questions about their social relationships. We asked these respondents if they had any brothers or sisters who also lived in the town, the name of their partner if they were married or living together as a couple, and the names of their close friends who also lived in the town. We took these names and counted the total number of social ties for each community member. In addition, we asked survey respondents if there was anyone who lived in the community that they trusted or thought they could speak to in confidence. In the regressions that follow, relying on counts of these social connections, we operationalize the social network as including siblings, spouses and friends. Figure 19 shows the distribution of these social network connections. These network show characteristic traits –

there are a large number of people who have a small number of social connections and a small number of people with a large number of social connections.

Figure 19: Histogram of Social Connections in San Miguel Tlacotepec

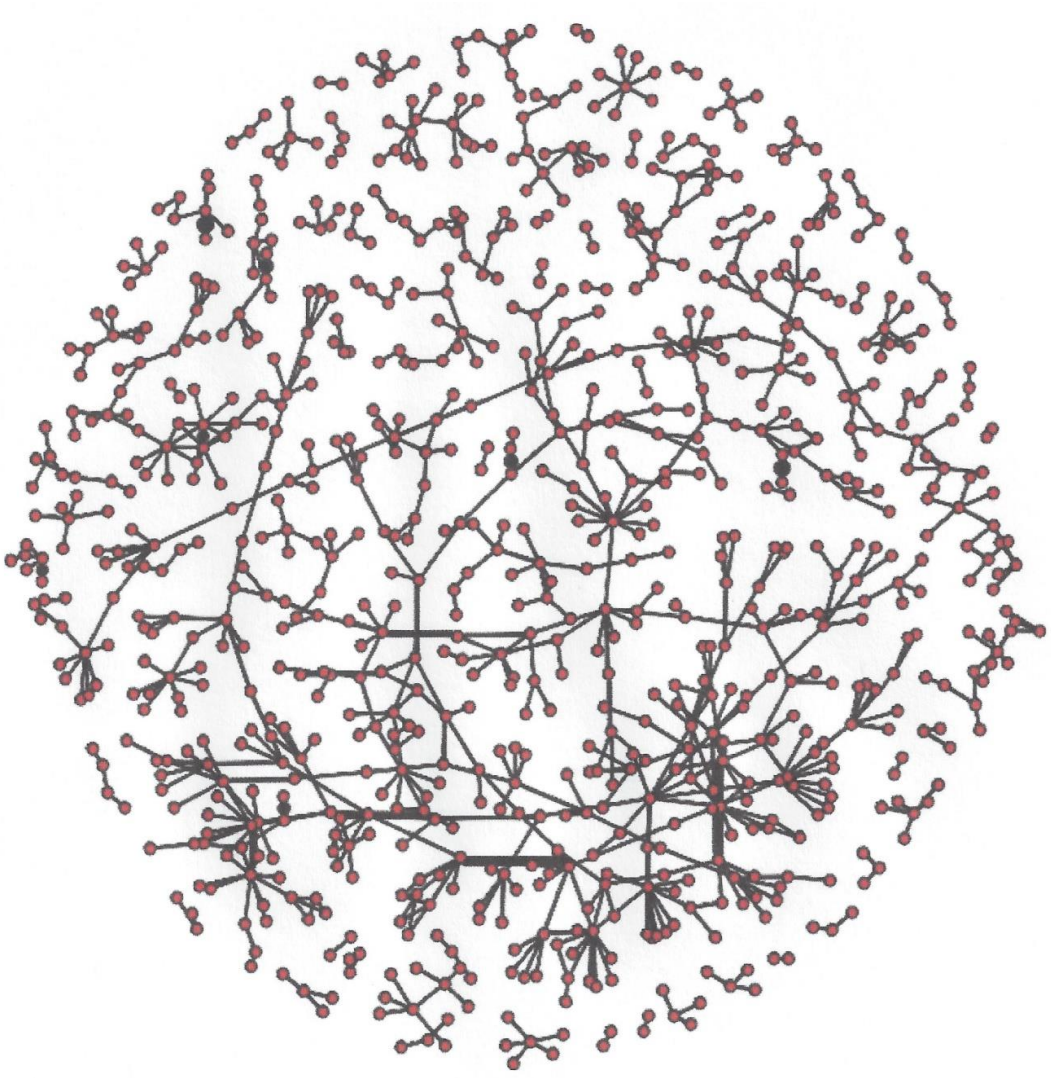


Note: Outward and inward social connections are combined, and are generated between siblings, spouses, and close friends.

The social network functioning in San Miguel Tlacotepec is visualized in Figure 20. We use this network because it reasonably represents a conceptualization of a social network that looks at broad ties within the community. In regressions that follow, where we specifically examine the role of information transfer via social network ties, we use a smaller set of ties, specifically those between friends and people in the community who are trusted confidants. This more limited conceptualization does not have the desirable quality of characterizing

individuals' social connectedness broadly in the community, but instead these questions characterize the specific relationships across which information about DACA is likely to flow.

Figure 20: The "Strong Tie" Social Network of San Miguel Tlacotepec



Note: Red circles represent individuals who live in the community, and the black lines between the circles represent a social connection (sibling, friend, or spouse) between two individuals. Not represented in this plot are individuals who, according to our sampling procedure, did not have any social connections.

Social Connectedness and DACA Knowledge

In the first set of models that we estimate below, we examine how social connectedness in the broad community is associated with DACA knowledge. We rely on the sibling, friend, spouse social network described in the previous section. We will compare the model fit with social network information against the model without social network information, to assess the change in model fit as a result of including social network information. These models are estimated in the same manner as the model presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Model with and Without Social Network Information

	Dependent variable: Knows About DACA			
	No Network Info		*Network Info*	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Degree	--	--	0.143	0.078*
Male?	0.888	0.534*	0.767	0.537
Lived outside Tlaco?	-0.205	0.532	-0.18	0.534
Tried to go to US?	0.577	0.568	0.565	0.555
Age	-0.601	4.786	0.28	4.842
Age Squared	-0.0002	0.001	0.0001	0.001
Constant	613.174	4,918	-289.357	4,956.44
Observations	362		362	
Log Likelihood	-76		-74	
Akaike Inf. Crit	164		163	

Sig. level: *p<0.1; **p<0.05

To make the comparison between models "fair" we fit each model to the subset of the data that has social network information. This reduces the number of observations from 445 in Table 4 to 362 in Table 5. In Model 1 of Table 5 we estimate the association between DACA knowledge and individual characteristics, but do not include social network connectedness. In

this model the only predictor that is associated with DACA knowledge is whether a respondent is male.

The social connectedness variable (*Degree*) in the model is significantly, positively associated with DACA knowledge. In addition, including this predictor absorbs some of the effect of the "Male" variable, rendering the association between this indicator and DACA knowledge insignificant. Imagine the same hypothetical woman from the first prediction exercise, now, holding all factors at their same levels, but hypothetically changing her social connectedness from being relatively poorly socially connected to relatively well socially connected. Thus, shifting her social connectedness from the 5 percent quantile to the 95 percent quantile is associated with a 262 percent increase in the probability of being familiar with DACA. This change is from a baseline of 2.2 percent probability of being familiar with DACA to a 5.9 percent chance. Stated another way, the effects of this change in the social connectedness of the hypothetical woman causes a larger relative increase in the probability that she is familiar with DACA than having lived in the United States and having some knowledge of English – impressive evidence of the power of social networks to increase awareness of DACA.

Transmission of Knowledge Across Social Networks

If socially connected individuals are more likely to be familiar with DACA, what is the mechanism that underlies this increased knowledge? In this section, we use the social network of trusted confidants and friends to assess whether a survey respondent is more likely to know about DACA when one of their good friends knows about DACA. If this result occurs, it might suggest that information about DACA is being spread through the social network of residents of the community.

First, we use a method that measures the correlation of behavior at different distances across the social network. This measure, used previously in research drawing on the Framingham Heart Study, assesses whether there is clustering of a behavior that is large enough that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The trust and friend social network is much less dense than the "strong tie" social network – there are relatively fewer connections per node, because we ask questions that generate fewer social connections. Next, we return to the regression framework used above, but estimate dyadic-level regressions using not only the information of the individual but also information about the *individuals' social connections* to predict knowledge of DACA. To briefly preview our results, we find that there are clusters of individuals who claim knowledge of DACA, and that having a social connection who knows about DACA raises the probability that one knows about DACA himself/herself.

Table 6 presents the results of the uncontrolled comparison of DACA knowledge through the social network. "Observed"is the observed correlation in knowledge behavior; "Lower CI" is the 5 percent quantile of the empirical distribution, under the null hypothesis that there is no behavioral clustering in the social network; "Upper CI" is the 95 percent quantile of the empirical distribution under the null hypothesis that there is no behavioral clustering in the social network; and "Pairs" is the number of nodes that are *k* degrees separated. There is evidence, at the $\alpha = 0.1$ level, of a clustering of knowledge. That is, if my friend knows about DACA, I am more likely than chance to also know about DACA, and vice-versa.

Table 6: Degree of Separation among Interviewees in San Miguel Tlacotepec

Degree	Observed	Lower CI	Upper CI	Pairs
1	0.15	-0.08	0.15	1102
2	0.07	-0.08	0.12	1864

To further refine our estimates of the peer-effect of DACA knowledge, we estimate a series of models that include information about survey respondents and their social connections. In the rest of this section, following convention, we will refer to survey respondents as ego and the survey respondents' social connections as alter. In these regression models we potentially have repeated observations of egos, since those egos might have more than one social connection; as such, we cluster errors at the individual-level using Huber-White robust standard errors. The model results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Peer Effects on DACA Knowledge

	Dependent variable: Knows About DACA					
	Model 1:			*Model 2:*		
	Coef.	SE		Coef	SE	
Alter Knows DACA?	--	--		1.677	0.829	**
Degree	0.276	0.105	***	0.25	0.109	**
Male?	1.382	0.757		1.452	0.781	*
Lived outside Tlaco?	-0.113	0.499		-0.222	0.612	
Tried to go to US?	-0.531	0.669		-0.716	0.63	
Age	14.353	7.242	**	16.186	7.819	**
Age Squared	-0.004	0.003	**	-0.004	0.002	**
Constant	-14,144	7,153	**	-15,951	7,716	**
Observations	214			214		
Akaike Inf. Crit	88.228			85.958		

Sig. level: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In these models, we estimate that peer knowledge of DACA is a strong predictor that a survey respondent will also be familiar with DACA, and that social connections are positively associated with DACA knowledge. Other predictors are being male, and being older (but only up to a certain point).

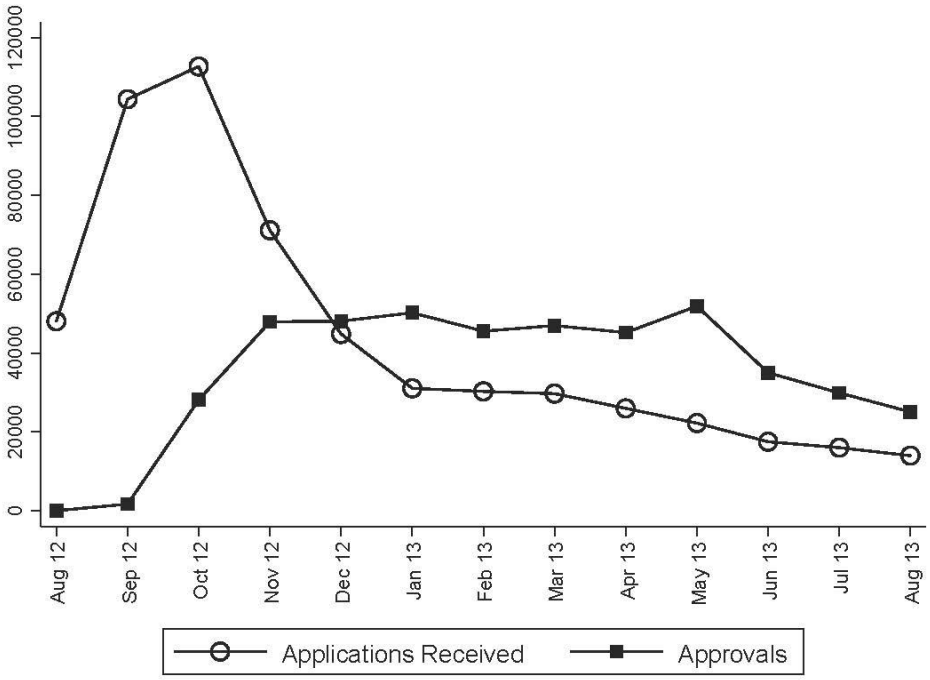
Summary

We conclude the social network connections in a high-emigration community like San Miguel Tlacotepec are vital transmission belts for knowledge about DACA. We did not collect similar data in our survey of San Diego County-based immigrants. However, we would hypothesize that such ties are even more important in the U.S. receiving context, among other reasons because tapping such networks through the social media is more intensive there.

Changing DACA's Eligibility Criteria: Potential Impacts on Program Participation

What effect would expanding current DACA eligibility criteria have on participation in the program? Since the program's inception and through June 30, 2014, 712,064 persons had filed applications for DACA status. However, estimates suggest that as many as 2.1 million undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children might eventually be eligible for DACA status under existing criteria (Batalova and Mittelstadt 2012). This suggests that two-thirds of potentially eligible immigrants have not yet applied. Moreover, there has been a sharp drop in new applications since October 2012, as shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: DACA Applications Received and Approved



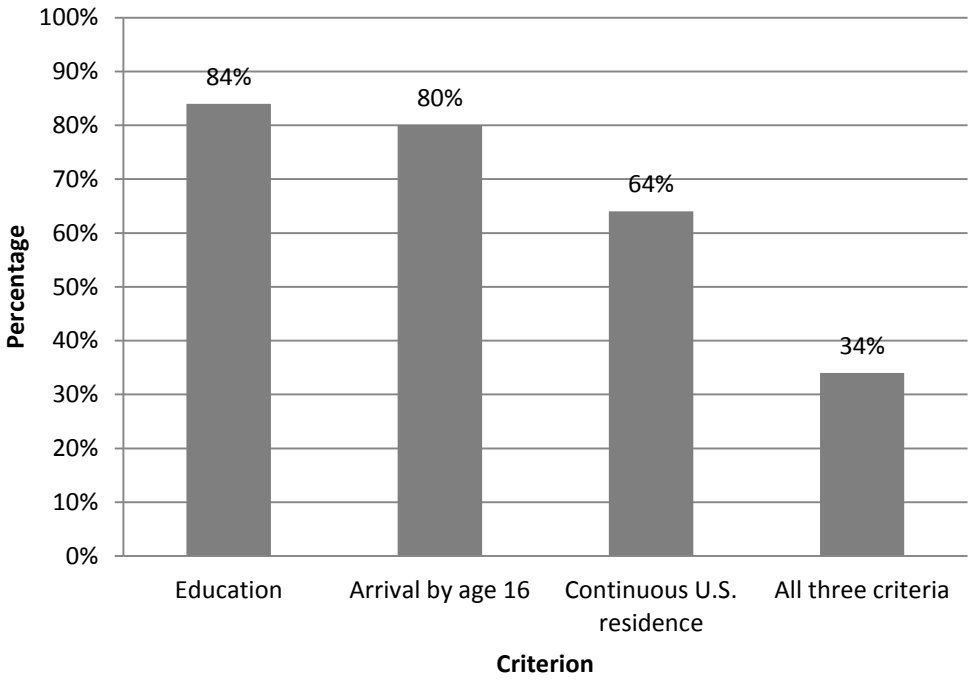
Data source:
http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca-13-9-11.pdf.

Some analysts have suggested that slight changes in the program's eligibility criteria could significantly increase the number of participants. In this section we explore how changing the criteria could impact eligibility, using our random sample of 200 Mexican immigrants surveyed in San Diego County. Of the respondents in this sample, 50 met the basic age requirement for DACA (being born after June 15, 1981) and provided complete data to assess their ability to meet other DACA criteria.

Figure 22 shows, for these 50 interviewees, the proportion meeting the three additional criteria asked about in our survey: (1) having arrived in the United States before one's sixteenth birthday; (2) having resided continuously in the United States since June 15, 2007; and (3) being enrolled in high school, or having graduated, or having completed a GED program. The criterion

allowing immigrants to meet the education requirement through U.S. military service did not apply, since none of the respondents in our sample had served in the military. One other criterion, lack of a criminal record, was not explored in depth in our survey, due to the sensitivity of this question. As Figure 22 indicates, the majority of our respondents met each criterion separately. When the criteria are combined, however, the number of persons remaining eligible drops to 34 percent.[23]

Figure 22: Age-Eligible Interviewees in San Diego County Who Met Additional DACA Eligibility Criteria



How might changes in DACA's eligibility criteria increase participation in the program? We consider a few simple modifications to the criteria, some of which have received attention elsewhere (see, for example, Batalova, Hooker, and Capps 2014). Table 8 shows that, according to our survey data, removing any of the three main DACA criteria examined in our survey would

[23] This figure overestimates actual DACA eligibility in our sample, since we did not collect data on one criterion: lack of a criminal record.

result in a significant increase in eligibility. Removing the current education requirement would bring eligibility in our sample up from 34 percent to nearly 50 percent. In our sample, the most difficult-to-meet requirement is that immigrants must have resided continuously in the United States since June 15 2007. Removing this criterion would raise eligibility to 64 percent.

Table 8: Consequences of Alternative Criteria for DACA Eligibility

	Education	**Arrival by age 16**
Arrival by age 16	0.64	–
Continuous Residence	0.44	0.48

We find that expanding the criteria so that individuals who arrived in the United States before their nineteenth birthday, rather than their sixteenth as currently required, does not impact eligibility in our sample. All of our survey interviewees who arrived between their sixteenth and nineteenth birthdays were disqualified due to failure to meet other criteria.

Summary

Survey data from our random sample of Mexican immigrants in San Diego County suggest that modifying several of the basic eligibility criteria for DACA could significantly increase the number of immigrants qualifying for the program. In addition to the education requirement, whose removal could nearly double the number of DACA-eligible immigrants, the existing continuous residence requirement is also a significant barrier to participation in the program.

Policy Recommendations for Increasing Program Participation

Our findings on the DACA application process support seven policy recommendations, which taken together would significantly increase participation in the program among the many age-eligible undocumented immigrants who have not yet applied. They include:

Recommendation 1: Modify DACA Eligibility Criteria

Our findings suggest that modifying several of the basic eligibility criteria for DACA could significantly increase the number of immigrants qualifying for the program. Specifically, removing the current education requirement would bring eligibility from 34 percent to nearly 50 percent, in our sample of interviewees. We found that the most difficult-to-meet requirement is continuous residence in the United States since June 15, 2007. Removing this criterion would raise eligibility to 64 percent in our sample. We recommend that any future effort to provide suspension of deportation to a larger population of undocumented immigrants should include modifications of the original eligibility criteria along these lines.

Recommendation 2: Micro-target Outreach Efforts to Underrepresented States and Counties

The geographical unevenness of participation in DACA to date is striking. Wong et al. (2013:13) found that 13 states and the District of Columbia have significantly lower application rates than expected. Among these states are California, Texas and Florida—the three states with the largest numbers of potential DACA beneficiaries. Figures 1-11 presented above demonstrate that within a given state there is wide variation in the number of DACA applicants by county. Future outreach efforts should be micro-targeted to communities with lower-than-expected DACA participation rates, including rural areas. Such a targeted outreach approach could yield significant increases in program participation.

Recommendation 3: Partner with Foreign Consulates to Increase Awareness and Facilitate Documentation

USCIS should partner with foreign consulates to inform and engage their respective nationals in the United States. As part of the DACA application process, individuals must establish foreign identity, usually through a birth certificate, passport, or consular identification card, all of which can be obtained through a home-country consulate. Mexican consulates in the United States took various steps to meet the needs of prospective DACA applicants, including extending their hours and hiring additional staff. The success of this effort is reflected in the over-representation of Mexico-origin persons in the DACA applicant pool, as well as Mexican applicants' lower rate of denial compared to other national origins groups. A majority of our in-depth interviewees reported going to the Mexican consulate in San Diego at least once to obtain documentation needed for their applications. They reported that obtaining documents through their consulate was a relatively easy process. Mexican consulates in San Diego and other cities also have helped to raise awareness of DACA and partnered with DACA application clinics conducted by nongovernmental organizations. This is a model that could be replicated to reach potential applicants in other national origins groups (see below).

Recommendation 4: Partner with Community-based Organizations to Reach Non-Mexicans

Mexico-born applicants continue to be overrepresented in the pool of DACA applicants. In the analysis reported in Wong et al. (2013) they constituted 74.9 percent of applicants. In the most recent USCIS data, 76.9 percent of accepted applications were from Mexico-born persons. USCIS should partner with community-based organizations with links to underrepresented national origins groups to engage in culturally competent outreach. Partnerships with foreign consulates to inform and motivate their nationals living in the United States could also be an effective approach, following the successful Mexican consular network described above (see also

Wong et al. (2013: 5).

Recommendation 5: Highlight DACA Recipients' Success Stories in Outreach Messaging

USCIS should utilize the economic and educational success stories of DACA recipients as part of its outreach messaging. Although DACA has been in place for over two years, fear and skepticism still exist among potential beneficiaries, discouraging applications. Our field interviews found that those who have received DACA have been instrumental in encouraging those who are reluctant to apply—either by sharing their personal story or serving as a concrete example of the benefits of having DACA status. Given the effectiveness of this type of informal outreach, USCIS could reduce anxiety regarding the program and incentivize application by promoting the success stories of DACAmented youth on a national level.

Recommendation 6: Make Greater Use of Social Networks and Social Media in Outreach

Our research suggests that outreach efforts to increase knowledge of DACA and encourage applications should make far greater use of social media. In our survey interviews in Mexico we found that social network connections are vital transmission belts for knowledge about DACA. We did not collect similar data in our survey of U.S.-based immigrants, but it is reasonable to expect that such ties are even more important in U.S. receiving communities, because tapping such networks through social media is more intensive there. If information about DACA is being spread most effectively through the social networks of potential applicants, social media should be utilized more systematically and creatively for DACA outreach.

Recommendation 7: Expand Support for Legal Screening of Potential DACA Applicants

USCIS should expand support for legal screening of undocumented immigrants who may be candidates for DACA status as well as other immigration benefits. A recent survey of legal service providers examined persons who sought DACA-related assistance. About 14 percent of

those eligible for DACA also were found to be eligible for additional immigration benefits, including a path to legal permanent residency in some cases.[24] Preliminary evidence suggests that organizations with greater capacity (i.e., paid staff) were more likely to identify those individuals who were eligible for a benefit in addition to DACA. By increasing the capacity of nongovernmental organizations to screen DACA-eligible young people for additional legal benefits, more of them could be put on a path toward more permanent immigration options.

[24] Preliminary results of the survey were presented at: http://cmsny.org/events/sept29legalizationconf/. Detailed findings are reported in an article by Tom K. Wong forthcoming in the *Journal on Migration and Human Security* (Center for Migration Studies, New York).

Part II: Life after DACA

And now, after I graduated, I was just like, 'I can't work. I can't do anything.' Most of my friends were like, you know, getting jobs and all of those things. So, I kind of felt like I was on pause. I jumped on [DACA] right away and it's crazy how it transformed my life. Like the first job that I applied for I got it….Now the only fear that I have is that I know I have an expiration date. And I know I have a really good job and that's just like always in the back of my head.

-Luz, a 29-year-old female,
on securing her dream job since receiving DACA status

Abrego (2006:226) has argued that "segmented assimilation theory predicts that without … legitimate structural paths, undocumented youth will remain in the lower segments of the economy…. A more positive context of reception, through legalization, must be established to increase their life chances in this country." Although DACA is not a legalization program, it has provided employment authorization—albeit temporary—to almost 600,000 applicants since beginning to accept applications in August of 2012. In other words, DACA recipients are now likely experiencing a more positive context of reception compared to their previous status.[25] Despite a more positive context of reception, this does not necessarily mean that each individual is benefitting from DACA in the same way. Abrego (2011:340) asserted that there is not a "monolithic undocumented experience." We argue there is not a uniform DACAmented experience. In the remainder of this report we seek to identify the factors that affect a young immigrant's economic incorporation, educational trajectory, and sense of belonging in the United States since receiving DACA status.

Economic Incorporation

In this section we consider changes in financial independence and occupational attainment after receiving DACA status. First, we use quantitative analysis to test hypotheses

[25] Abrego (2006:226) argued "…undocumented immigrants face the worst possible context of reception because their status keeps them from incorporating legally, if not socially, into the institutions of this country. The lack of legitimate paths toward higher education and professionalization establishes bleak futures for undocumented youth."

generated from our qualitative analysis and from prior research in the field of economic integration. Then we use qualitative analysis to provide a more nuanced description of DACA recipients' economic integration paths and the continued economic challenges they confront.

Financial Independence

One measure of economic integration is increased earnings, or what we call, increased financial independence. It is intuitive that as a result of having work authorization for the first time, DACA recipients will likely experience this increased financial independence through being brought into the formal economy. But, one must ask: *What factors predict increased financial independence among individuals with DACA?* Based on qualitative interviews, our main hypothesis is that *individuals who indicated they have gotten their first job or moved jobs since receiving DACA are more likely to report increased financial independence*. This hypothesis is consistent with prior research on wage growth. For example, Topel and Ward (1992:474) found that in the first ten years of labor market participation, one third of wage growth could be attributed to changing one's job. Topel and Ward's research focused generally on "young men" and not immigrants or newly legalized immigrants, but considering the information gained from our qualitative interviews, we postulate that job changing activity will be an important predictor of increased financial independence among DACA recipients.

Human capital theory predicts that employers seek out those who are most qualified for a given job (Becker 1975). Commonly, human capital is measured by educational attainment. In their study of the effects of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark (2002:613) noted that a legalization program gave people who were previously unauthorized—and thus effectively barred from formal employment—the opportunity to maximize the returns to their human capital for the first time. For example, in her exploration of

another legalization program, the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA), Kaushal (2006:645) found that persons with at least a high school degree benefited more in terms of earnings compared to those without a diploma. As a result, the first alternate hypothesis is that *individuals with higher educational attainment will be more likely to report increased financial independence*.

While it is intuitive that individuals with higher levels of education may earn more money, we do not expect to find a significant relationship between education and increased financial independence because the dependent variable is binary.[26] Simply gaining work authorization probably increases the financial independence of persons with all levels of education, as they are brought out of the shadows of the informal economy. Previous research consistently supports the assertion that wages among authorized workers are higher than those without employment authorization (Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark 2002; Rivera-Batiz 1999).

Another factor that prior research has found to be predictive of an increase in wages is previous work experience. Phillips and Massey (1999) found that for undocumented immigrants after IRCA prior labor market experience in Mexico was positively associated with wage level. Although Phillips and Massey (1999) considered prior work experience a form of social capital, Hall, Greenman and Farkas (2010) included work experience as a measure of human capital in their modeling of wages, finding that both educational level and work experience positively influenced starting wages. Specifically, the starting wages for undocumented Mexican males increased by .9 percent with each year of experience in the labor market and by 1.1 percent for documented Mexican males (Hall et al. 2010:503). It follows that a second alternate hypothesis is that *individuals with labor market experience before receiving DACA are more likely to*

[26] To measure financial independence we asked our interviewees: "Have you earned more money that allowed you to become more financially independent {since receiving DACA status]?"

indicate increased financial independence since receiving DACA. However, given the binary nature of the outcome variable, we again predict that those with and without prior labor market experience will experience increased financial independence simply as a result of the work authorization DACA provides.

At the same time, we must account for the effects of a core set of demographic variables that previous research has determined to be related to increased economic integration, such as age (Bohon 2001), years of residence in the United States (Bohon 2005; 2001), age at a arrival (Hall et al. 2010) and gender (Aguilera 2004; Amuedo-Dorantes, Bansak and Raphael 2007; Cobb-Clark and Kossoudji 1999; Hall et al. 2010). We will also include a measure of perceived belonging in the United States as a predictor of economic integration.

Bivariate Analysis

Generally, individuals in our sample reported overall economic gains after receiving DACA status. Among our sample of 54 DACA recipients living in San Diego County, 72.2 percent indicated they received their first job or a new job since receiving DACA, while 69.4 percent reported an increase in financial independence. This proportion was much lower among persons currently in high school, with 36.3 percent indicating a change in employment and the same percentage indicating increased financial independence. Because individuals in high school are unique in that they are often dependents of their parents, we excluded them from our sample as we examined financial independence. Among this modified sample, 81.4 percent indicated a change in employment and 78.9 percent indicated increased financial independence. Table 9 reports the difference-in-means by financial independence and the summary statistics for the sample.

Table 9: Financial Independence Difference-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
More Financially Independent (Yes=1)				.789	38	.413	0	1
First Job/Moved Jobs (Yes=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.9 .5	**.010**	.814	43	.394	0	1
Educational Level	Yes=1 No=0	1.933 1.750	.485	1.977	43	.707	0	4
Worked before DACA (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.423 .5	.702	.436	39	.502	0	1
Gender (Male=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.3 .375	.685	.302	43	.465	0	1
Age	Yes=1 No=0	23.1 22.3	.580	23.2	43	3.9	18	32
Age at Arrival	Yes=1 No=0	6.0 6.5	.845	6.2	43	4.1	.25	15
Years in US	Yes=1 No=0	17.1 15.9	.571	17.0	43	5.2	6	27
Sense of Belonging	Yes=1 No=0	.767 .750	.922	.744	43	.441	0	1

Our variable of interest is “first job moved jobs, because we hypothesize that persons who have experienced a change in employment will be more likely to indicate increased financial independence. Indeed, 90 percent of interviewees who reported increased financial independence had gotten their first job, compared to 50 percent of individuals who did not experience this financial independence. Thus we find a significant bivariate relationship between

job changing activity and increased financial independence after receiving DACA among our interviewees (p = .010). In fact, change in employment was the only variable to have a significant bivariate relationship with our dependent variable of financial independence.

To test the alternate hypotheses that educational attainment and prior work experience are key factors in predicting financial independence, we examined the bivariate relationships between these variables and financial independence. The average educational level of individuals reporting increased financial independence was 1.933 compared to 1.750 among those who did not.[27] Thus, there is no significant bivariate relationship between educational level and financial independence (p = .485). Similarly, we found no statistically significant relationship between prior work experience and financial independence (p = .702).

Through our examination of demographic variables such as gender, age, age at arrival and years in the United States, we found no significant relationships with increased financial independence. Again, having more formal economic opportunities because of work authorization is likely to increase financial independence across all sectors of individuals, irrespective of demographic differences. However, because we lack a comparison group we cannot definitively say that work authorization trumps all other characteristics that may influence financial independence. As with the demographic variables, there was no significant relationship between sense of belonging in the United States and increased financial independence (p = .922). Those who experienced increased financial independence and those who have not reported roughly similar levels of perceived belonging (76.7 percent and 75.0 percent, respectively).

Multivariate Analysis

[27] Educational level is an ordinal variable where 0=Less than High School Graduate, 1=High School Graduate, 2=Some College, 3=College Graduate, 4=Some Graduate School.

Although there was a significant relationship between job changing activity and financial independence at a bivariate level, we conducted a multivariate analysis to determine if this relationship continues to exist when controlling for other factors. Table 10 presents the correlation matrix used as a preliminary check for potential multicollinearity between the independent variables. Given that years in the United States is the difference between age and age at arrival, it is intuitive that they are highly correlated and need to be analyzed separately in order to prevent multicollinearity.

Table 10: Financial Independence Correlation Matrix

	Gender	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Ed. Level	First Job/ Moved Jobs	Work Before DACA	Sense of Belonging
Gender	1.00							
Age	-0.04	1.00						
Age at Arrival	0.02	0.15	1.0					
Years in US	-0.05	**0.63**	**-0.68**	1.0				
Ed. Level	-0.12	0.03	0.10	-0.06	1.0			
First Job/ Moved Jobs	-0.08	-0.28	-0.19	-0.06	0.24	1.0		
Work Before DACA	0.25	**0.42**	-0.00	0.34	-0.07	-0.32	1.0	
Sense of Belong-ing	-0.08	0.05	-0.30	0.28	-0.10	-0.14	-0.13	1.00

Table 10 below presents the results of the multivariate analyses. Models 1 and 2 look at the relationship between a core set of demographic variables and financial independence. Model 3 looks at the relationship between an increased sense of belonging and financial independence. Finally, Model 4 looks at the relationship between our variable of interest (change in employment) and the alternate hypothesis (work experience before DACA).

Table 10: Multivariate Analysis of Financial Independence

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Gender (Male =1)	-.264 (.851)	-.262 (.851)	---	---
Age	.068 (.109)	---	---	---
Age at Arrival	-.032 (.098)	---	---	---
Years in US	---	.048 (.077)	---	---
Education Level	.460 (.632)	.463 (.630)	---	---
Sense of Belonging	---	---	.091 (.924)	---
First Job/ Moved Jobs	---	---	---	**2.15 ** (1.015)**
Worked Before DACA	---	---	---	.304 (.962)
Constant	-.779	-.238	1.253	-.506

	(2.79)	(1.88)	(.802)	(1.035)
N	38	38	38	34

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
***significant at the .01 level. **significant at the .05 level. *significant at the .10 level.

The results of Model 4 are consistent with our hypothesis that individuals who have gotten their first job or moved jobs are more likely to indicate increased financial independence. The multivariate analysis shows there is a statistically significant positive relationship between change in employment and our dependent variable (p = .034). Change in employment is the only significant predictor of financial independence—a finding foreshadowed in our bivariate analysis. We found no support for the alternate hypotheses concerning the influence of human capital (i.e., educational attainment) and prior work experience.

Occupational Attainment

To measure the impact of DACA on another key dimension of economic integration, occupational attainment, we examined changes in our interviewees' scores on a standard scale of occupational status: Nam-Powers-Boyd (N-P-B) scores. These scores are based on the 2000 census and range from 1-100.[28] Bohon (2005:254) has utilized N-P-B scores as a measure of a "general level of living." We do the same, since other measures of socioeconomic status (e.g., 2013 income) are inadequate for the DACA recipients in our sample.[29]

Because DACA recipients now have work authorization, it is to be expected that their economic status will be greatly enhanced. Examining the effects of IRCA, Kossoudji and Cobb-

[28] A score of a 1 corresponds to employment as counter attendants in cafeterias, concession stands and coffee shops, while a 100 corresponds to occupations like dentists, physician, and surgeons (Nam & Boyd, 2004).

[29] We asked respondents about their income in 2013. Many respondents indicated receiving little income in 2013, attributing this to the short length of time for which they had DACA status. For example, some interviewees had worked in their current job for only one or two months in 2013.

Clark (2000:95) found that "Legal status, itself, creates a whole new set of opportunities and, on average, these workers are employed in occupations that are higher up the occupational ladder." In this section we seek to identify the factors that matter most with regard to the occupational attainment of DACA recipients. Consistent with human capital theory, our hypothesis is that *higher educational attainment is positively related to occupational attainment after receiving DACA status.* Accordingly, we posit that persons with more education will now be employed in jobs with higher N-P-B scores compared to those with less education. An alternate hypothesis is that *measures of social capital like marital status and prior work experience are significantly related to occupational attainment* (see, for example, Phillips and Massey 1999).

Bivariate Analysis

We coded DACA recipients' occupations on the N-P-B status scale. After excluding individuals in high school and those not currently working, the average N-P-B score among DACA recipients in our sample was 30.4. [30] This is an increase from a pre-DACA average of 20.6, among those who were employed at the time of interview. We then conducted a simple regression analysis to identify the factors that influence a DACA recipient's occupational attainment.

Our variable of interest, educational level, was measured on an ordinal scale from 0 to 4, representing did not graduate high school[31], high school graduate, some college, college graduate and some graduate school. Drawing on human capital theory, we hypothesized that those with higher educational attainment would have higher occupational attainment because they are able to seek out jobs in the formal sector that "require or reward education credentials" as a

[30] Eleven interviewees were currently in high school and four were not working at that time of our interviews, resulting in a sample size of 36 DACA recipients.

[31] Our analysis did not include persons who are currently in high school, but did include those who failed to finish.

consequence of gaining work authorization (Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark 2002:618). To test the hypothesis that social capital is influential in one's occupational attainment, we examined the effects of marital status and prior work experience on one's N-P-B score after receiving DACA. Table 12 below presents the results of the bivariate regression analysis.

Table 12: Bivariate Regression Analysis of Occupational Attainment

	Coefficient		*Coefficient*
Gender (Male =1)	4.858 (8.670)	Education Level	8.881 (5.844)
Age	**1.992** (.971)**	Married (Yes=1)	**23.639** (10.871)**
Age at Arrival	-1.348 (.963)	Worked Before DACA (Yes=1)	7.762 (8.626)
Years in US	**1.960*** (.700)**	Sense of Belonging (Yes=1)	-.492 (8.958)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
***significant at the .01 level. **significant at the .05 level. *significant at the .10 level.

These results do not offer support for our hypothesized relationship between educational level and a DACA recipient's occupational status score. We also did not find that prior work experience was a significant predictor of occupational status in our sample. However, age (p = .048), years in the United States (p = .008), and being married (p = .037) all serve as significant, positive predictors of one's N-P-B score after receiving DACA.

Multivariate Analysis

It is necessary to conduct multivariate analysis to determine if these relationships continue to exist when controlling for other factors. Table 13 presents the correlation matrix between the independent variables to be used in this analysis. As noted previously, years in the

US—a function of age and age at arrival—must be analyzed separately because of potential multicollinearity.

Table 13: Occupational Attainment Correlation Matrix

	Gender	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Ed. Level	Marital Status	Work Before DACA	Sense of Belonging
Gender	1.00							
Age	-0.02	1.00						
Age at Arrival	0.08	0.14	1.00					
Years in US	-0.08	**0.65**	**-0.67**	1.00				
Ed. Level	-0.08	-0.01	0.08	-0.07	1.00			
Marital Status	0.02	**0.48**	-0.03	0.38	**-0.40**	1.00		
Work Before DACA	0.35	**0.46**	0.06	0.32	-0.11	0.07	1.00	
Sense of Belong-ing	-0.08	0.09	-0.34	0.33	-0.08	0.27	-0.15	1.00

Table 14 presents the results of our multivariate analysis of occupational attainment. Models 1 and 2 examine the relationship between a core set of demographic variables and one's N-P-B score after receiving DACA status. As was hinted by the bivariate analysis, these models suggest that age and years in the United States are significant, positive predictors of a DACA recipient's occupational attainment. Age at arrival and educational level are also significant predictors of occupational attainment in these models. Although the temporal variables remain significant with the inclusion of sense of belonging in Models 3 and 4, educational level no

longer serves as a statistically significant predictor of occupational attainment. Nevertheless, it remains of borderline significance in these models (p = .112 and p = .105). It is probable that a relationship between education and occupational attainment exists but that our small sample size is influencing the ability of the model to detect the relationship.

Table 14: Multivariate Analysis of Occupational Attainment

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Gender (Male =1)	8.662 (7.832)	8.825 (7.712)	---	---	---	---
Age	**2.263** (.922)**	---	**2.383** (.936)**	---	1.085 (1.466)	---
Age at Arrival	**-1.831** (.892)**	---	**-2.109** (.966)**	---	-1.360 (1.084)	---
Years in US	---	**2.039*** (.680)**	---	**2.251*** (.725)**	---	1.278 (.962)
Education Level	**9.871* (5.409)**	**9.960* (5.330)**	8.793 (5.368)	8.829 (5.286)	---	---
Sense of Belonging	---	---	-8.737 (8.665)	-9.115 (8.378)	---	---
Married (Yes = 1)	---	---	---	---	17.134 (13.561)	16.151 (12.156)
Worked Before DACA	---	---	---	---	2.417 (9.714)	1.706 (8.689)
Constant	-34.411 (24.547)	-28.076 (17.184)	-24.340 (24.916)	-20.161 (16.609)	10.191 (30.305)	5.639 (15.713)
R-squared	.286	.283	.282	.280	.193	.192
N	36	36	36	36	32	32

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis.
***significant at the .01 level. **significant at the .05 level. *significant at the .10 level.

Models 5 and 6 include measures of marital status and prior work experience. Although these variables are correlated with age, we included them in Model 5 for theoretical purposes. As a result, multicollinearity may be an issue. This could help to explain why we found no statistically significant relationships between any of our independent variables and occupational attainment in this model. Similarly, none of the independent variables in Model 6 significantly predicted occupational attainment. Again, it could be that our small sample size (n = 32) is influencing the statistical power of the model.

Summary

The results reported in this section support the idea that, generally speaking, DACA has increased the economic integration of its recipients. After excluding individuals still in high school, a majority of our sample reported increased economic incorporation, with 78.9 percent reporting increased financial independence and the average N-P-B score increasing to 30.4 among employed DACA recipients, compared to a pre-DACA average score of 20.6. After controlling for a variety of demographic variables, job changing activity was the only significant predictor of increased financial independence after receiving DACA. This finding supports the idea that individuals across the board are experiencing the benefits of DACA in terms of economic incorporation. Our multivariate analyses suggest that temporal variables like age, years in the United States, and age at arrival play a role in predicting a DACA recipient's occupational attainment. Individuals who are older, have spent more years in the United States, and migrated at an earlier age tend to have higher N-P-B scores. Our multivariate analysis also offers preliminary evidence that educational level has a positive relationship with occupational attainment after receiving DACA status.

Qualitative Analysis

While quantitative analysis provides support for a general sense of economic benefit, further exploration using our qualitative interview data provides an additional layer to understanding the economic experiences of DACA recipients. Among individuals who are not currently in high school, a large majority (81.4 percent) of our sample reported a change in employment—either securing their first job or moving to a new job. Given the importance of job switching activity in one's financial independence (as we noted in the previous section), one must ask, *what explains why others have not experienced a change in employment?*

For some individuals the need to maintain a flexible schedule either because of school or familial constraints was an important consideration in maintaining previous employment. David, a 25-year-old male who planned to enroll in a master's program in the fall 2014, described his situation as follows: "Now, here's the thing, the reason why I'm still there, and I told myself I was gonna get out as soon as I got DACA, is because they accommodated my schedule for school." Given the store where he works is open seven days a week, he is able to work on the weekends and still go to school on weekdays. At the same time, David has experienced an increase in his wages which he directly attributes to receiving DACA:

> This year I made more money than any other actually…I think it's just my outlook in life, you know…when you're a commission salesman you have to be happy and feel kinda, you know, like feel good about yourself and feel good about what you're doing so like I started kinda seeing myself as equal to everybody else—like clients and stuff like that.

Consequently, DACA has influenced his economic incorporation in terms of financial independence despite not seeking new employment.

Interestingly, this increased financial independence after receiving DACA could also influence one's decision to maintain previous employment. For example, Rosa, a 31-year-old female, attends school full-time and also works full-time cleaning houses. Although she plans to

transition to a new job by the end of the year, the ability to earn more money had led her not to pursue different employment at the time of our interview. She attributed her ability to get more work to having employment authorization through DACA. Like David, Rosa has experienced increased economic mobility as a result of DACA, despite not changing jobs.

While our interviewee David explains that flexibility in employment was a necessity due to school, Daniela described how being a mother to two young children influenced her decision to keep her previous job in janitorial services. Early in the interview she expressed the need for flexibility in her schedule so she can stay at home and care for her young son given the expensive cost of daycare. Her work schedule facilitates being able to watch her son during the day while her husband is at work. Despite not switching jobs, Daniela credited DACA with being able to keep her job because the company she worked for began using E-Verify, an Internet platform that allows employers to determine the employment authorization of their employees. Again, although she has not changed jobs, DACA has influenced Daniela's employment by providing the work authorization necessary to maintain her previous job.

At first blush, given the large majority of individuals in our sample experiencing positive economic outcomes, quantitative analysis may mask the difficulties that DACA recipients face in the labor market. Many interviewees who had experienced a change in employment described waiting months before being able to find a job. For example, Julia noted it took her seven months to secure a job after receiving DACA. César experienced a similar situation and after the inability to find a job for many months, he decided to enroll in courses to earn his real estate license. Elia described that it took her nine months to obtain a job after receiving DACA, which she credited to lack of experience, "I was 20 years old with no experience with jobs and they were like, 'Well, what have you been doing for five years?'" Like Elia, some of our respondents

related to us that they were unable to even gain experience through volunteer positions before receiving DACA because some organizations require a Social Security number to volunteer.

Considering these respondents' retrospective reflections, it is likely that time with DACA indeed has an influence on one's economic integration. However, in our sample, we only interviewed six individuals who had DACA for less than a year. As a result, based on qualitative evidence, it is likely that among a larger sample with more variation, the amount of time with DACA would be a statistically significant predictor of an individual's job changing activity and subsequent increase in financial independence.

At the same time, the aforementioned difficulties in obtaining employment highlight the liminally legal position in which individuals with DACA still find themselves. Despite now having authorization to work, vestiges of their past undocumented status continue to play a role in their present situation. As was previously mentioned, many individuals with DACA were legally barred from gaining the experience necessary to set them up for success in the job market. This is not to say that DACAmented individuals cannot be successful. However, those with DACA face an additional layer of challenges in their job search that others with permanent status do not confront.

Additionally, this intuitively hints at a difference in the way that individuals who receive DACA when they are younger (i.e., still in high school) will experience the benefits of DACA compared to those who are older. For many undocumented individuals the limitations of their undocumented status become salient in high school—for example, when they turn 16 and are unable to get a driver's license or find employment in the formal sector. As a result, they do not necessarily gain certain types of skills or experience. Their inability to find what they deem to be meaningful work after college graduation also can deter them from pursuing higher education.

Those who have received DACA during this formative period in their lives, however, will face a markedly different context—they can work and therefore build their skillset for future employment. With the possibility of meaningful employment in the future because of work authorization, they do not face the same deterrents in their pursuit of higher education. The same line of thinking was postulated in Abrego (2006:222), noting that immigration status "can play a crucial role in the lives of students if they are not able to regularize prior to high school or soon after." Longitudinal research is needed to explore the differences in experiences of those who received DACA status prior to high school graduation compared to those who received DACA years after graduation.

While our quantitative analysis focused on individuals experiencing upward occupational mobility and increased financial independence, it is important to note that this was not everyone's experience in our sample. Jaime, a 21-year-old male studying criminology at a local four-year university, falls into the latter category. After receiving DACA in the summer of 2013, Jaime was able to secure employment in retail by December. Despite now having work authorization, Jaime noted that his income actually has decreased. Before working in retail, Jaime worked in construction and was paid under the table. This decrease in wages is particularly difficult for him as there was an issue with his name on his DACA application which caused him to have to pay the $465 application fee twice. Despite using some of his scholarship money to help him pay the fee, Jaime described that even at the time of our interview (more than six months after receiving DACA) he has not been able to recover financially. Consequently, the wage decrease he is experiencing is particularly troublesome.

Nevertheless, given Jaime's future aspirations to work with a government agency, the ability to work legally helped to relieve the tension he felt previously with regard to working

with fake documentation. Jaime felt securing employment in this manner could negatively affect his future job prospects. He considered being authorized to work as one of the biggest changes in his life since receiving DACA and one that he hopes to maintain through renewal. When asked the most important factor in his decision to renew his DACA status, Jaime stated:

> Because if I don't [renew] then I'll just be just like before. And I don't want to destroy my possibilities… if by not getting [DACA] and then working at some job and then getting caught. I prefer getting DACA and keeping it safe.

As can be noted, Jaime's decision to renew is not based on immediate economic mobility but rather on his long-term economic opportunities.

Like Jaime, Eva expressed that her expectations for employment after DACA were not met. A senior in high school with plans to study business, Eva was working in janitorial services and at a local spa before receiving DACA. Now, working in food service, Eva noted that she earned a higher wage per hour at her prior jobs. Despite not making as much money as she had previously, Eva noted that the biggest change to her life has been securing an "official job," explaining: "It was a pretty good feeling when I was filling out the W-2 forms. It was a good feeling signing my name." Both Eva and Jaime's cases demonstrate that although some DACA recipients are not experiencing increased wages, they still see the benefit in work authorization, which allows them to feel that they are doing things "the right way"—a consistent theme expressed by our interviewees.

At the same time it is important to note that limited occupational mobility, in terms of a new job or increased wages, can influence an individual's intent to renew a temporary status. Given that the first wave of DACA renewals has just begun, there is no prior research examining the renewal decision-making process. However, countries like Spain and Italy have implemented temporary legalizations from which we can draw comparisons. The OECD Secretariat (2000:63) found that despite obtaining legal status as a result of amnesties in Spain and Italy in the 1990s,

some migrants were "slip[ping] back into illegality." For example, in 1994 roughly three-fourths of those who benefited from Spain's amnesty in 1991 maintained a valid permit. Similarly, the OECD Secretariat (2000:63-64) reported that in Italy more than 300,000 migrants were either unable or chose not to renew their permits between 1991 and 1994.

The literature notes the importance of various factors in an individual's decision-making about renewing his/her permit, including the complexity of procedures related to renewal. However, the OECD Secretariat (2000) highlighted the role of limited occupational mobility and wages as central in the decision to renew. Many newly-legalized migrants in Spain and Italy had obtained a new or different job, but they did not always experience upward mobility, since they continued to lack certain education and job skills. Some migrants saw greater benefits in the underground economy, prompting them to fall back into the shadows by choosing not to renew their status.

There is some cause for concern about DACA recipients, since some of our interviewees emphasized that they had struggled to find employment, given their lack of experience and certain skills. Nevertheless, interviewees like Eva, Jaime, David, Rosa, Daniela, Julia, and César provide evidence that factors beyond immediate economic mobility could weigh more heavily in their decision to seek renewal. While this area is beyond the scope of our current study, future research on DACA renewal should consider the importance of economic mobility in the renewal decision-making process.

As noted above, some DACA recipients have had difficulty in obtaining a job due to limited work experience or have chosen to maintain previous employment because of personal circumstances. Some, however, described confronting employment obstacles precisely because of the legally limited nature of DACA. One limitation for individuals with DACA is that they are

generally barred from applying to jobs with certain government agencies. According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2013: para. 1), "Only United States citizens and nationals may be appointed in the competitive civil service." However, certain non-citizens may be employed through specific exemptions. On its face, this may seem like an insignificant limitation. Nevertheless, to someone whose educational trajectory leads him/her to this sector, it is a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Such is the case with Jaime, our interviewee who is studying criminology. In his third year of undergraduate study, Jaime hopes to work for a government agency after graduation. However, these hopes are tempered by the limitations of his immigration status:

> I can't [work for a government agency] because most of the jobs require you to be a [legal permanent] resident….It's going to be difficult once I apply. I tried to volunteer or intern for juvenile hall, but one of the requirements is that you have to be a [legal permanent] resident.

Another obstacle highlighted by DACA recipients in our sample was employers' negative responses to the temporariness of the program. While, by law, employers are not allowed to treat job applicants differently because of their immigration status,[32] this is not always borne out in practice. Elia, who previously described her difficulty in finding working because of her limited experience, also indicated that DACA's temporary nature was an obstacle to employment:

> It was a struggle when I was applying for jobs because it was something like, 'Well, that's cool and all that you can work now, but what happens in two years? What if you advance in the company and then you just have to leave? What if you can't renew your permit? What's going to happen then?' That was a struggle, having to explain to people and to be like, 'Well, I can work right now. I'm willing to give it all my effort…'

Elia worried that employers viewed her differently because of the tentativeness of her legal status.

[32] There is an anti-discrimination provision in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that protects individuals from citizenship status discrimination. The INA includes those who are granted temporary residence in the category of protected individuals (United States Department of Justice, n.d.).

This concern is common among individuals with DACA status, as evidenced by its inclusion in a *Frequently Asked Questions* report published by Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC). In this report, Berger et al. (2014:13) provided an answer to a question about the necessity to disclose the temporary nature of DACA to employers during the application process. They advised: "You only need to show that you are authorized to work. You do not need to disclose your immigration status." However, when asked if she had to reveal that she had DACA status in the job application process, Elia explained that there is a section on the employment form in which you must classify yourself as either a citizen or if you have some type of work authorization.[33] It was here that she felt she had to disclose her DACA status to employers, "That's when I had to be like, 'Oh, well, it's a two-year program; I do have to renew. However, I can promise you that I'll stay until 2015. You know that you have me until then.'"

Elia noted that her previous employer had been fine with the temporary nature of her work authorization because of her part-time status. But she has faced challenges with her current employer, especially terms of health insurance and the potential for a transfer to be near her fiancé, who lives in Washington, DC. Regarding health insurance she explained that her employer was not willing to "make the investment," telling her, "Maybe we should wait to see if you're going to be able to renew it and see what's going on with that because what would be the point?" Elia's situation illustrates that since DACA is a temporary program, participants may face unfair treatment from employers in terms of hiring and providing benefits.

[33] In the most recent version of the federal government's I-9 Form for Employment Eligibility Verification (updated March 8, 2013), an individual must classify him/herself as a citizen, a noncitizen national, a lawful permanent resident or as "an alien authorized to work." Persons in this category are then asked to write down their employment authorization expiration date, if applicable. For a copy of the form, go to: http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/i-9.pdf

Access to Health Insurance

Our analysis of the qualitative interview data also suggests that obtaining health insurance is another financial challenge for DACA recipients. Although individuals with DACA are eligible for health insurance through their employers in some cases, they are ineligible to purchase insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). According to the National Immigration Law Center (2013), a revision to the ACA by the Obama administration in August 2012 barred DACA recipients from certain health insurance options. Importantly, this revision only affected individuals with DACA, as persons with other types of deferred action have more affordable insurance options available to them. In other words, "[DACA recipients] will be treated as though they are undocumented, even though they are otherwise considered lawfully present and are eligible for a work permit and a Social Security number" (National Immigration Law Center 2013:1-2).

Among our sample less than half (35.8 percent)[34] currently had health insurance, reflecting the lack of affordable options. Of those with health insurance, employment was the most common way to obtain health insurance (36.8 percent), with Medi-Cal as the second most common form of insurance (26.3 percent).[35] Given limited access to health insurance, some interviewees described having to make difficult decisions about health care. For example, although David is eligible to purchase health insurance through his employer, he explained the tension between paying for insurance and paying for his education, "I need the extra cash to pay

[34] 58.5 percent of individuals in the sample did not have health insurance and 5.7 percent were unsure.
[35] Some individuals clarified that they only had a type of restricted Medi-Cal. Restricted Medi-Cal provides some coverage for pregnancy-related care and emergency situations. Consequently, this type of insurance is woefully inadequate for most health needs. Additionally, individuals who have this restricted Medi-Cal and have experienced emergencies related to us that they still have ended up with thousands of dollars of medical debt despite this "coverage".

for school….I feel like, as bad as it sounds, I can kinda like waive health [insurance] for now, just a little bit, for like a couple years, and pay [for] school."

The limited availability of health insurance puts DACA recipients in a vulnerable position in which they are forced to confront illnesses and injuries with little or no access to health care coverage (see Brindis et al. 2014). Roughly one-third of the DACA recipients in our study indicated they have been unable to obtain treatment when they needed it within the last twelve months, and another ten percent reported not getting the care they needed at some other point in the past. Our interviewees reported not seeking immediate or continued treatment for seizures, stomach ulcers, back pain, migraines, asthma, gall bladder problems, and food allergies, among other medical problems.

DACA recipients who *have* been able to obtain health insurance emphasized its importance in their lives. Elisa, a 19-year-old female, described how before receiving health insurance through her university she suffered from severe abdominal pain. She explained, "I had to suck it up because we're broke. I didn't have money to go to another clinic that was like $100 just to see you and $100 for the tests." After receiving health insurance, Elisa was able to see a doctor who diagnosed her symptoms as an issue with her gall bladder and worked with her to help decrease the pain. Even individuals like Rodrigo, who did not have a previous illness or injury, explained the relief he feels from having health insurance through his employer, "Now I feel safe. I mean, before I didn't have any insurance so I'm like, 'Oh, if I get sick I will have to pay a big amount of money.' But, now I feel protected."

Luz, who also obtained health insurance from her employer, emphasized that health insurance is one of the main considerations in her decision to renew her DACA status. Luz was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis almost ten years ago. Before receiving DACA, she employed

a variety of strategies to help get the care she needed for her illness, including enrolling in experimental trials in order to get her prescriptions. Now, with her health insurance, she is able to get her biweekly treatments at an affordable price. Given the emotional relief and well-being that health insurance has provided DACA recipients like Elisa, Rodrigo and Luz, it is unfortunate that not all participants in the program have access to such insurance.

Summary

While our quantitative analysis painted a relatively positive picture of the upward mobility of individuals with DACA, qualitative analysis provides more nuanced insights. Time constraints due to educational and familial responsibilities may explain why some persons have not sought different employment since receiving DACA. At the same time, the ability to earn higher wages could also play a role in the decision to maintain previous employment. Qualitative analysis also suggests that many DACA recipients struggled to find a job, frequently taking several months to secure employment. Some interviewees attributed this to a lack of experience. Many persons with DACA status were previously barred from obtaining internships and volunteer work that would have given them the experience necessary for success in the job market. Even with DACA status, they may not be eligible for certain internship opportunities vital to their career path. For example, DACA does not give them the authorization necessary to gain experience in government work.

Qualitative analysis reveals that even when a person is not barred from applying to a specific job, the temporary nature of his/her DACA status may serve as a hurdle to securing employment or benefits once hired. Because persons with DACA are excluded from the Affordable Care Act, often their only option is to obtain health insurance through an employer.

Thus, restricted access to health insurance is another financial challenge that DACA recipients face.

Finally, evidence from our in-depth interviews suggests that while the majority of our interviewees have experienced an increase in income since receiving DACA, some actually have experienced a decrease. Research in other countries that have enacted similarly time-limited legalizations has found that a lack of upward mobility frequently resulted in decisions not to renew a temporary permit. But DACA recipients in our study who had not yet experienced upward economic mobility still expressed an intention to renew their status. Future research is needed to determine if the economic integration of individuals with DACA will influence their decision-making with regard to renewal.

Education after DACA

Before I got DACA, I felt like a few windows would open…Now I feel that it's not just one; it's almost like having all the doors opened.

-Rosa, a 31-year-old student,
on the way her belief in accomplishing
her educational goals changed after DACA

DACA recipients have experienced a unique educational context. A landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982, 30 years to the day of the announcement of DACA, gave undocumented persons the right to tuition-free public education in grades K-12. In the case of *Plyler v. Doe*, the Court found a 1975 Texas law permitting schools to deny the enrollment of undocumented students to be unconstitutional. Referring to the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the Court asserted that the protections afforded to "persons within [the State's] jurisdiction" included more than just citizens and that without the opportunity for education, undocumented youth would be permanently disadvantaged (*Plyler v. Doe* 1982). As a result,

undocumented youth have grown up with the same rights and access to education as their citizen peers—until they reach college. Abrego (2006:220-21) explained, "Up until [high school graduation], their social and economic experiences—and therefore their incorporation processes—have been very similar to those of their documented peers in both their neighborhoods and their schools."

However, it is upon high school graduation that undocumented youths are faced with having to overcome the high cost of higher education and confronting the reality that despite attaining this education they will be barred from certain types of employment upon graduation. It is precisely these circumstances that are reflected in the low rates of higher educational attainment for undocumented youth (Frum 2007). Passel and Cohn (2009) found that among undocumented high school graduates aged 18 to 24, 49 percent were attending college or had attended college compared to 71 percent of their U.S.-born peers. This percentage has likely increased as more states have adopted in-state tuition and scholarship policies for undocumented students, resulting in greater educational accessibility.

Greater access to higher education for undocumented students in California was facilitated by the passage of the California Dream Act in 2011. This legislation (Assembly Bill 130 and Assembly Bill 131) built upon the foundation of Assembly Bill 540 (AB540), which allowed certain residents of California to qualify for in-state tuition, irrespective of their immigration status (Abrego 2008).[36] Nevertheless, given that students were not eligible for any additional aid under AB540, Abrego (2008) found that the cost of attending a four-year university was prohibitive for many undocumented students. According to the California Student Aid Commission (n.d.), the California Dream Act expands AB540 by extending state-level

[36] In her study of Mexican noncitizen young adults, Kaushal (2008:789) found that in states with in-state tuition policies for undocumented students, there is a 31 percent increase in college enrollment, a 37 percent increase in the number of individuals with some level of higher education, and a 33 percent increase in completion of a college degree.

financial aid and scholarship eligibility to undocumented residents of California who wish to attend a private or public university in California. It is likely that with these additional resources for financing a college education, there is increased access to higher education for DACA recipients in California.

In contrast to work authorization's direct influence on economic integration, at first glance DACA does not offer any immediate educational benefits. Individuals with DACA are still ineligible for federal financial aid. Nevertheless, education was a prevalent theme throughout our in-depth interviews. Consequently, DACA's influence on education-related decisions and experiences merits exploration. The following section seeks to identify the factors that affect a person's decision to return to school after receiving DACA and the likelihood that they will currently be in school. First, we utilize quantitative analysis to test hypotheses generated from our qualitative interviews and from previous research on educational re-entry and attainment. We supplement this with qualitative analysis to provide a more fine-grained exploration of the factors that go into a DACA recipient's educational decision-making.

Returning to School

The first question to be answered is: *What factors influence a DACA recipient to return to school?* As mentioned above, the financial accessibility of higher education has been a long-standing challenge for undocumented youth. More than one-quarter of our interviewees indicated that DACA has benefited them educationally because they are now able to get a job that will help them to finance further education. Our main hypothesis is that *individuals who have experienced an increase in financial independence are more likely to have returned to school compared to those who have not experienced economic gains.* This increased financial

independence will increase DACA recipients' ability to overcome the traditional, economic obstacles to higher education.

At the same time, upward economic mobility could have the exact opposite effect. In her study of women who return to school after time in the work force, Felmlee (1988:34) found: "Women have higher rates of quitting a job to attend school full time when the wages in the jobs at which they are working are low….In addition, for white women, but not for black women, the lower the prestige of the job, the greater the likelihood that these women will leave employment for schooling." By extension, individuals who earn higher wages and have more "prestigious" jobs would be less likely to return to school. Although the Nam-Powers-Boyd (N-P-B) occupational status scores do not measure prestige, these scores can be used as a proxy. Accordingly, an alternate hypothesis is that *individuals with higher occupational status scores after receiving DACA will be less likely to have returned to school*. Thus, financial independence may make higher education more affordable, but securing a job with greater economic benefits may dissuade individuals from taking advantage of further study.

Previous research also suggests a temporal dimension to enrolling in higher education. In her study of the effect of in-state tuition policies on higher education enrollment and educational attainment, Kaushal (2008) found that increased exposure to the policy was positively related to college enrollment and higher levels of educational attainment.[37] Accordingly, a second alternate hypothesis is that *individuals who have had DACA for a longer period of time are more likely to have returned to school*. As noted in the preceding section on economic integration, securing employment after receiving DACA often took months. Consistent with our hypothesis regarding

[37] Kashual (2008:783) documented "A one-year increase in exposure to the policy increased enrollment by 0.7 percentage points, the proportion with at least a high school diploma by 1.8 percentage points, the proportion with at least some college education by 1.2 percentage points, and the proportion with an associate or higher degree by 0.4 percentage points. All the four coefficients are statistically significant."

the impact of increased financial independence on the decision to return to school, it could be that the length of time before returning to school is related to the length of time that an individual spends looking for a job in order to finance higher education.

Pursuant to our goal of identifying the differences in experiences of DACA recipients, we will account for the same core set of demographic variables that we utilized in the previous section. A large body of educational research has determined the following variables to be influential in either educational attainment or re-entry: gender (Felmlee 1988), age (Felmlee 1988), years in the United States (Hirschman 1996), and age upon arrival in the United States (Landale, Oropesa and Llanes 1998). In addition, we will examine the effect of a sense of belonging in the United States as a predictor of returning to school.

Bivariate Analysis

Among our sample of DACA recipients almost 60 percent were attending school before receiving DACA status. To examine the factors that go into a DACAmented individual's decision to return to school, we excluded these individuals from our sample, resulting in 22 interviewees who were not attending school before receiving DACA. Roughly 40 percent of these individuals reported returning to school after receiving DACA.[38] This relatively high rate of return is not necessarily generalizable due to our small sample size, or it could be because students in California have greater access to higher education after enactment of the California Dream Act compared to students living in states that do not offer any support to undocumented youth pursuing higher education. At the same time, we should ask what factors help to explain educational re-entry among the DACA recipients in our sample who experience the same state-

[38] This proportion is slightly higher than Wong and Valdivia's (2014) finding that about 23 percent DACA recipients have returned to school.

level educational context of reception. Table 15 presents the results of our bivariate analysis aimed at determining these factors.

Our variable of interest was increased financial independence, as we hypothesized that individuals who have experienced increased income would be able to overcome some of the financial barriers that have plagued undocumented youth in their pursuit of higher education. We found that among persons who have returned to school, all have experienced an increase in financial independence, while 81.8 percent who have not returned to school reported increased financial independence (p = .202).

Table 15: Returned to School: Difference-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Returned to School				.409	22	.503	0	1
Gender (Male =1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.222 .462	.251	.364	22	.492	0	1
Age	Yes = 1 No = 0	23.9 24.4	.788	24.2	22	4.1	18	32
Age at Arrival	Yes = 1 No = 0	6.2 5.1	.551	5.6	22	3.9	.25	15
Years in US	Yes = 1 No = 0	17.7 19.3	.556	18.6	22	5.8	6	27
Financially Independent (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	1 .818	.202	.895	19	.315	0	1
Occupational Status Score	Yes=1 No=0	30.1 38.5	.498	35.3	21	26.5	0	92
Time with DACA	Yes = 1 No = 0	15.9 16.0	.942	16.0	21	3.7	6	19
Sense of Belonging (Yes=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.889 .846	.774	.864	22	.351	0	1

Although we do not have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that financial independence has no influence on one's decision to return to school, it is possible that our small sample size is masking the effect of this variable.

To test our alternate hypotheses regarding the influence of occupational attainment and time with DACA status on educational re-entry, we examined the bivariate relationships between these variables and whether one chose to return to school. We find that interviewees who did not return to school had a higher occupational status score compared to those who had returned to school, 38.5 and 30.1, respectively. This difference, however, is not statistically significant (p = .498). Moreover, we found no statistically significant relationship between time with DACA status and returning to school, perhaps due to small sample size (we interviewed only six persons who had DACA for less than a year). Moreover, we found no significant bivariate relationships between any of our core demographic variables and the decision to return to school.

Further examination of the data reveals that among those who did not return to school (13 individuals), five had concrete plans to return to school within a few months. For example, Lupita and Isabel have already applied to return to school, while Isela just took the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) with plans to apply to medical school in the near future. By including them in the group of those who have not returned to school, we lose valuable information because these individuals *have* made the decision to return. With this in mind, 63.6 percent of interviewees not in school before DACA had made the decision to return to school—evidenced by actually returning to school or indicating concrete plans to return. We repeated our bivariate analysis, including respondents who have made the decision to return to school *and*

those who have taken steps to return. Table 16 presents a side-by-side comparison of the bivariate analyses for the two groups.

Importantly, while in our first returned to school analysis, financial independence was of borderline significance (p = .202), when we included individuals who have taken steps to return to school as well, this significance level dropped considerably (p = .683). Two other differences are worth noting. First, our second analysis provides some evidence that age may be negatively associated with the decision to return to school. For example, the average age of a person who has not returned to school is 25.6 years old compared to 23.4 years old among those who have returned to school (p = .220). This finding is consistent with previous research that found age to be a negative predictor of educational re-entry (Felmlee 1988).

The second salient difference is with regard to the occupational attainment. Among DACA recipients who have not yet made the decision to return to school, their average occupational status score is 44.5. Those who have made the decision to return have an occupational status score of 29.6—a difference of roughly 15 points (p = .219). Although we do not have sufficient statistical significance to reject the null hypothesis, this is likely due to our small sample size. Consequently, this finding merits continued exploration in future research on the educational decision-making of individuals with DACA status.

Table 16: Comparison of Bivariate Analyses of Return to School

		Difference in Means: Returned to School		***Difference in Means: Decision to Return***	
		Mean	***p*-value**	**Mean**	***p*-value**
Gender (Male =1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.222 .462	.251	.285 .5	.315
Age	Yes = 1 No = 0	23.9 24.4	.788	23.4 25.6	.220
Age at Arrival	Yes = 1 No = 0	6.2 5.1	.551	4.9 6.7	.297
Years in US	Yes = 1 No = 0	17.7 19.3	.556	18.5 18.9	.868
Financially Independent (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	1 .818	.202	.917 .857	.683
Occupational Status Score	Yes=1 No=0	30.1 38.5	.498	29.6 44.5	.219
Time with DACA	Yes = 1 No = 0	15.9 16.0	.942	15.4 16.9	.381
Sense of Belonging (Yes=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.889 .846	.774	.857 .875	.907

Currently in School

While it is important to consider those who were out of school before DACA and made the decision to return, it is also important to examine the experiences DACA recipients who are currently in college—irrespective of their previous enrollment. Our hypotheses about the factors that explain whether a DACA recipient is currently in school largely mirror our hypotheses about returning to school. As in our exploration of educational re-entry, our central hypothesis is that *individuals who indicated increased financial independence will be more likely to be currently in school*. Given that individuals with DACA are still ineligible to receive federal financial aid, it is often up to them to finance their education. Consequently, increased financial independence may allow them to do so.

While we believe that increased financial independence after DACA helps to facilitate enrollment in higher education, this increased financial independence also could serve as a reason why a DACA recipient does not continue with his/her education. One interviewee expressed to us that given DACA's "expiration date", she finds it more important to work instead of attending school in order to save up money, in case she is unable to renew her DACA status. Accordingly, an alternate hypothesis could be that *individuals with a higher occupational status score may be less likely to indicate they are currently in school*. Since N-P-B scores represent a "general level of living" (Bohon 2005:254), it could be that those with a higher level of living wish to maintain that level instead of going back to school, considering the uncertainty about DACA's future.

Finally, consistent with our returned-to-school model, we include a variable accounting for an individual's time with DACA to test the hypothesis that *persons who have had DACA for*

a longer period of time are more likely to be currently in school. We will also account for the effects of our core set of demographic variables and sense of belonging in the United States.

Bivariate Analysis

Excluding those who are currently in high school, 58.1 percent of our interviewees are currently attending post-secondary school. Educational interests vary widely, with interviewees reporting majors in sociology, political science, social work, engineering, computer science and criminal justice, among others. Table 17 presents the results of our bivariate analysis. Our variable of interest here is financial independence, as we hypothesized that increased financial independence would facilitate continuing or beginning to finance educational expenses. The bivariate analysis does not support our hypothesis, however, since a larger proportion of individuals not in school reported increased financial independence compared to those who are currently enrolled, 87.5 percent and 72.7 percent, respectively (p = .270). It could be that individuals who were in school before receiving DACA are less likely to have experienced increased financial independence due to school-related time constraints.

Variables representing our alternate hypotheses—occupational attainment and time with DACA—are both of borderline significance. DACA recipients not currently in school indicated a higher N-P-B score compared to those who are in school, 34.3 and 22.2, respectively (p = .125). This seems to support the hypothesis that individuals in jobs that represent a higher socioeconomic status may choose to forgo schooling or leave schooling once they started. However, it is also likely, given the previously demonstrated relationship between occupational status score and education, that persons who have graduated have higher occupational status

scores[39] and are less likely to be in school currently because they already have completed an undergraduate degree. Further supporting this idea, of the seven college graduates in our sample, only one is currently in school. Contrary to our alternate hypothesis regarding the influence of time with DACA status, those who are currently enrolled in school have had DACA status for a shorter period of time (14.2 months) compared to those who are not enrolled (16.2 months) (p = .112).

Table 17: College Enrollment--Difference-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Currently in School (Yes=1)				.581	43	.499	0	1
Gender (Male =1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.240 .389	.294	.302	43	.465	0	1
Age	Yes = 1 No = 0	22 24.8	**.018**	23.2	43	3.9	18	32
Age at Arrival	Yes = 1 No = 0	6.3 6.0	.853	6.2	43	4.1	.25	15
Years in US	Yes = 1 No = 0	15.7 18.7	**.059**	17.0	43	5.2	6	27
Financially Independent (Yes=1)	Yes=1 No=0	.727 .875	.270	.789	38	.413	0	1
Occupational Status Score	Yes=1 No=0	22.3 34.3	.125	27.4	40	24.3	0	92
Time with DACA	Yes = 1 No = 0	14.2 16.2	.112	15.1	40	4.0	3	20
Sense of Belonging (Yes=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.680 .833	.256	.744	43	.441	0	1

[39] The average N-P-B score of college graduates in our sample is 50.9 compared to 22.4 for individuals with some college education (p = .004).

We did find a significant bivariate relationship between two of our core demographic variables and college enrollment. Both age and years in the United States are negatively associated with current college enrollment. With regard to age, the average age of individuals currently in school was 22 years, compared to almost 25 years for those out of school (p = .018). Again, it could be that individuals who are older have already graduated, making it less likely for them to be enrolled at the time of our interviews. Alternatively, older individuals may have additional familial responsibilities that hinder enrollment.

Given previous research which has found educational attainment to be positively related to years of residence in the United States (Landale, Oropesa and Llanes 1998), it may seem surprising that those in our sample who are enrolled in school average 15.7 years in the United States compared to 18.7 years for those not in school (p = .059). Nevertheless, because length of time in the United States is a function of age, the same explanation could be possible. Those who are older, and thus potentially have spent more time in the United States, could have graduated already or have added family responsibilities that discourage college enrollment.

Multivariate Analysis

To determine if the significant bivariate relationships noted above hold when we account for the effects of other variables, we conducted a multivariate analysis. Table 18 presents the correlation matrix between the independent variables used, as a preliminary check for multicollinearity. As noted in the section on economic incorporation, given that years in the United States is calculated from age and age at arrival, they are highly correlated and will be analyzed in two separate models. Moreover, the variable of occupational status score (represented by “OSS” in Table 19) is also positively correlated with years in the United States.

Table 18: College Enrollment Correlation Matrix

	Gender	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Financial Indepen-dent	OSS	Time with DACA	Sense of Belonging
Gender	1.00							
Age	-0.04	1.00						
Age at Arrival	0.02	0.15	1.0					
Years in US	-0.05	**0.63**	**-0.68**	1.0				
Finan-cial Inde-pendent	-0.07	0.09	-0.03	0.09	1.0			
OSS	0.09	0.37	-0.22	**0.45**	0.37	1.0		
Time with DACA	0.22	0.12	-0.12	0.19	0.17	0.25	1.0	
Sense of Belong-ing	-0.08	0.05	-0.30	0.28	-0.02	-0.08	0.05	1.00

Table 19 reports the results of our multivariate analysis. Models 1 and 2 examine the relationship between demographic variables and the likelihood an individual is currently enrolled in school. Because age and years in the United States were both significant predictors of being currently in school in our first models, Models 3 and 4 look at the relationship between a sense of belonging in the United States and school enrollment, while accounting for these temporal variables Finally, Models 5 and 6 examine the relationship between our variable of interest (increased financial independence) and the alternate hypotheses (occupational status score and

time with DACA). Because age is correlated with occupational status score, we conducted separate analyses to prevent multicollinearity.

Table 19: Multivariate Analysis of College Enrollment

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*
Gender (Male =1)	-.940 (.740)	-.846 (.718)	---	---	---
Age	**-.232** (.099)**	---	**-.205** (.094)**	---	-.131 (.107)
Age at Arrival	.051 (.084)	---	---	---	---
Years in US	---	**-.131* (.069)**	---	-.113 (.069)	---
Sense of Belonging (Yes=1)	---	---	-.818 (.794)	-.542 (.803)	---
Financial Independence (Yes=1)	---	---	---	---	-.054 (1.263)
Occupational Status Score	---	---	---	---	-.014 (.019)
Time with DACA	---	---	---	---	-.208 (.144)
Constant	**5.723** (2.366)**	**2.841** (1.288)**	**5.707** (2.302)**	**2.681** (1.281)**	**6.958* (3.620)**
N	43	43	43	43	32

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
***significant at the .01 level. **significant at the .05 level. *significant at the .10 level.

While years in the United States was a significant negative predictor in Model 2, the relationship disappeared when we accounted for sense of belonging in Model 4. Age was a significant negative predictor of current college enrollment in Models 1 and 3 but not remain significant in Model 5. We did not find a statistically significant relationship between current enrollment and our variable of interest (financial independence), nor the variables for our alternate hypotheses (occupational status scores and time with DACA). As mentioned above, older persons may be less likely to be currently enrolled in school for a variety of reasons. They are more likely to have completed their degree, and if they have not yet completed their studies they may have additional responsibilities that constrain their ability to return to school. Such is the case of Daniela, a 31-year-old DACA recipient in our sample, who plans to return to school to earn a teaching credential as soon as her young son is old enough to go to school.

Summary

In this section we explored the factors related to DACA recipients' decisions to return to school or to be currently enrolled in college. With regard to educational re-entry, we excluded individuals enrolled in school prior to DACA. Among these interviewees, 40.9 percent returned to school after receiving DACA. Likely due to small sample size, we did not find any significant bivariate relationships among our independent variables and the dependent variable of returning to school. There is some evidence to support our hypothesis that increased financial independence will increase the likelihood that a DACA recipient will have returned to school (p = .202). Our results also suggest that age may be a significant, negative predictor of current enrollment in school. It could be that older individuals are more likely to have completed their post-secondary schooling and as a result are less likely to be in school. At the same time, older

individuals may have additional responsibilities that serve as a barrier to continuing their education.

Qualitative Analysis

Although DACA does not provide any direct educational benefit, two education-related themes emerged from the qualitative interviews: DACA has helped its recipients to be able to afford college, and it has increased their investment in their education. Nevertheless, DACA recipients whom we interviewed emphasized the limitations on their education and life prospects stemming from the legal ambiguity of DACA status, such as ineligibility for financial aid and uncertainty over the future of the program.

For individuals who were not in school before DACA and returned after receiving DACA status, many reported that work authorization gave them the resources needed to finance their college education. Carmen explained this indirect relationship when she recounted the most important reason in her decision to apply for DACA: "Because I really wanted to continue my education and to do that I knew I wanted to get a job and a lot of the jobs now actually require E-verify and things like that, so that was my motivation." Carmen now works as an office manager at a church in addition to studying for her Master's of Divinity. She plans to continue her education and obtain a doctorate in clinical psychology. Despite her belief that she could reach these educational goals without DACA, the ability to secure employment because of her work authorization through DACA facilitates this process.

Soledad echoed Carmen's experience in her pursuit of a degree in business management. A 28-year-old wife and mother, Soledad had been out of the classroom for many years, waiting roughly ten years for the processing of a change-of-legal-status petition filed through a relative. With the work permit she obtained through DACA, she has been able to finance her return to

school. Like Carmen, Soledad explained that DACA has helped to speed up the process of working toward the goals and dreams she has always had. Alejandra, also a 28-year-old DACA recipient, emphasized that DACA status has allowed her not only to return to school but also to change her perspective on her future prospects. She explained that employment allows her to finance an education—an education that, without DACA, she could not afford.

While slightly over one-quarter of our interviewees told us that the ability to get a job helped them finance their education, a similar percentage also mentioned the ability to get financial aid. Nevertheless, respondents in our sample evidenced confusion over the connection between DACA status and financial aid. A few respondents confounded DACA and the California Dream Act. Ana, a junior in high school, mentioned that the ability to receive in-state tuition was one of the principal reasons she applied for DACA. Rafael, a computer science student, when asked if DACA has changed the way he perceives his future opportunities, responded:

> Yes, because I feel like if I didn't have any financial help from my state grant I might not have been able to like keep going with school. I might have just dropped out and tried to do something, like under the table.

The state grant to which Rafael referred is the Cal Grant. Applicants do not have to be recipients of DACA, but they must meet the eligibility requirements for the California Dream Act.[40] Brisa, a psychology student, showed similar confusion when she mentioned that DACA helped her to be able to attend a four-year university because of the Cal Grant. When asked if she needed to have DACA to be eligible for the grant, she responded, "Kind of. It kind of all like snowballed together."

[40] Requirements include: attended a high school in California for a minimum of three years, graduated from a high school in California (or the equivalent) and are/will be attending a California college or university. Individuals also must meet other Cal Grant eligibility criteria not related to legal status (California Student Aid Commission n.d.).

Other interviewees explained that with a Social Security number they were eligible for more scholarships. With regard to these scholarships—and not state grants or in-state tuition—it could be that a Social Security number obtained through DACA is, in fact, increasing the number of scholarships for which these youth are eligible. At the same time, this could also be a source of confusion, since the California Dream Act also allows certain undocumented youths to be eligible for private scholarships.[41]

Some interviewees demonstrated evidenced a clear understanding of the differences between the California Dream Act and DACA. For example, when asked if DACA would help meet his educational expectations, Felipe, a current junior in college with plans to pursue a PhD., stated, "No, because DACA doesn't do anything as far as education. What *does* do something is the California Dream Act, which came before [DACA]." Expanded outreach by nongovernmental organizations (as well as colleges and universities) would likely help to clear up DACA recipients' misconceptions about the myriad of higher education laws and policies in California that affect them.

In addition to helping to finance higher education, nearly one out five of our interviewees indicated that work authorization positively influenced their investment in their education. Before receiving DACA and the work authorization it provides, undocumented immigrants were ineligible for formal employment whatever their level of educational attainment. Even those who had worked tirelessly to get through college were barred from employment in the formal economy because of their immigration status. This reality led some of our interviewees to drop out of higher education. For example, Elias withdrew before he had completed his first year of college because of concerns regarding his future opportunities. Now, with DACA status, he

[41] A comparison chart of the educational benefits that persons with different immigration statuses may receive shows no differences between a California DACA recipient and an undocumented immigrant who did not receive DACA in California (Educators for Fair Consideration 2014).

planned to return to college in fall 2014 to study social work. Maria, a 29-year-old who had completed two years of fashion design school before abandoning her studies, explained how the ability to work with DACA has changed her perceptions of pursuing higher education:

> I could major in something and actually feel like I would be able to get a job afterwards. That's why I stopped going to college, because I was like, 'Why am I going to finish this? I can't get a job.'

Coupled with the financial obstacles to attending school in the first place, the lack of future employment prospects drove individuals like Elias and Maria not to continue their education.

Even those interviewees who did not withdraw from school mentioned that work authorization through DACA has increased their educational motivation and focus on school. Rafael, the computer science major, explained his feelings about education before and after DACA:

> My attitude towards getting my education before [DACA] was that 'Oh, without immigration reform I'm not gonna be able to do anything with my life.' With DACA I guess my attitude has changed. I wasn't too thrilled to go to college [before DACA].

David expressed a similar view. Believing that he would be unable to find employment after graduation, he used to feel that he was just going to school "to have something to do." Since receiving DACA, however, he will have completed his undergraduate degree in sociology and planned to pursue a master's program in applied sociology.

The prospect of future employment also positively influenced those pursuing higher education for the first time. Carla, an 18-year-old DACA recipient who has been in the United States since she was three years old, is a freshman at a local, four-year university. Before receiving DACA status she feared that she would have to move away from her family and return to Mexico to be able to accomplish her educational goals:

> [DACA's] made it easier for me to get into college. Hopefully if it continues, I'll be able to accomplish my goals and be able to work after I graduate so yes, it has really impacted

> the way I see myself in the future. Before DACA, I was kind of like, 'Oh, I kind of want to go back to Mexico just so I can study and actually work there.' Because I was like, 'Okay, what if I go to college and graduate, I'm not even going to be able to work?' But I got DACA, I can work and that's motivating me to continue here and study here …. If DACA continues, I'll be able to work, which is the ultimate goal.

Carla stressed that without DACA status and the employment authorization it provides, graduating from college would be "useless."

Sal, an 18-year-old high school senior with plans for a health care career, noted that DACA led him to believe that he actually could meet his educational goals. Sal emphasized that when he was younger he was not aware of the limitations to his future stemming from his undocumented status, but as he grew up he realized that the lack of work authorization would be an insurmountable obstacle, even with a college degree. He explained that this realization, "kinda brought me down. Now that I have DACA that's motivating me to like do good in school and actually get a good job." Like Carla and Sal, many of our interviewees reported feeling depressed or worried about their future educational options as a result of being barred from (legal) employment. The work authorization provided through DACA has helped to ease these concerns, enhancing the motivation and investment of DACAmented youth in their education, whether they were already in college, out of college, or prospective college students at the time they received DACA status.

Despite employment authorization through DACA, financing higher education is still difficult. DACAmented youth remain ineligible for federal financial aid. Nina, a junior at a local, four-year university, pointed out that while education is now more financially accessible, it is still not affordable for her. Soledad, mentioned above, was unable to qualify for the California Dream Act because she did not meet the requirement of attending a California high school for three years. As a result, she pays non-resident tuition at a local community college—almost $900

for one class, the equivalent of one month's rent for her family. To deal with this financial burden, Soledad only takes one class a semester.

Another strategy followed by some of our interviewees was to alternate between full-time work and going to school. For example, Elia, who eventually stopped attending a local community college due to the cost, would work as much as she could for a full semester, saving the money to be able to take a few classes the next semester. However, this educational stopping and starting became too much, and she decided to leave her degree program. Nevertheless, she planned to enroll at a different community college in fall 2014. To Tomás, a 19-year-old business major, his ineligibility for more financial aid is an indicator of his continued difference from others around him. He mentioned that his expectations for education after receiving DACA were not completely met, because compared to what peers with full legal status are receiving, he receives a minimal amount of financial aid.

A further indicator of the continued financial inaccessibility of higher education among many DACAmented youths is the fact that more DACA recipients whom we interviewed have enrolled in a community college rather than a four-year university. Seven of the nine interviewees who have returned to school since receiving DACA have gone to a local community college, and four of the five individuals with plans to return are planning to enroll (or have enrolled) in a community college. Prior research on educational attainment of undocumented youth has found that even with supportive policies like California's AB540, "attendance at a four-year college is rarely an option" due to the high cost of tuition (Abrego 2008:719; Abrego 2006; Abrego and Gonzales 2010). Our interviews suggest that financial considerations not only play a large role in going to school or returning to school but also in where one enrolls.

While increased financial resources helped to facilitate many of our interviewees' educational attainment, because DACA is a temporary program some chose to focus on building their savings instead. Luz, a 29-year-old interviewee who graduated with a B.A. in business management from a local four-year university, mentioned that she would eventually like to return to school to further her goals. At the moment, however, due to the cost of education *and* the temporary nature of DACA, she wants to focus on working full-time and saving as much money as possible. When asked if there were any barriers that she continues to face, Luz replied:

> One of the barriers would be like planning for my future….The whole purpose [of DACA] is so you can go to school and all that, but at the same time because you have an expiration date, you want to save up as much money as you can now.

Bernardo, a 21-year-old business owner and high school graduate, also pointed to his focus on work as the reason he has not continued his education despite his desire to do so. Since receiving DACA status, he has started a landscaping company to which he devotes his time.

Work considerations were not the only factor DACA recipients had to weigh when making their decision to return to school. Some interviewees reported familial constraints that led them not to pursue additional education at this point in time. Pedro, a 23-year-old interviewee, explained that the reason he applied for DACA initially was that he wanted to continue his education. The school he wished to attend did not accept students lacking a Social Security number and directed him to a local community college that did not have the major he sought. Pedro saw DACA as the opportunity for which he had been waiting. Nevertheless, since receiving DACA he feels that he cannot return to school because he needs to focus on work in order to provide for his sister and parents. He noted that although his expectations for education have not yet been met, he believes they will be in the future.

The temporariness of DACA also prompted several of our interviewees to cite continued concerns about being able to complete their studies. For example, Isela, the 23-year-old college graduate who had just taken the MCAT, reported that DACA has changed her belief that she will be able to attend medical school. Nevertheless, when she thinks about her future, she continues to be worried:

> It's still a little burdensome just because it [must be renewed] every two years. Maybe I'll be halfway through medical school when there are no more renewals. There's still that stress…. it becomes a 'live by the moment' kind of life.

It is precisely in the context of planning for higher education that the idea of an expiration date becomes salient.

For Belén, who received DACA only three months before our interview, her expiration date was already on her mind. Although she has the goal of continuing her education to get a bachelor's degree in social work, she indicated that she is only 50 percent confident that she can achieve this goal. When asked to explain the reasoning behind this concern she emphasized her uncertainty over what would happen in two years. Much research (see, for example, Kaushal 2008:774) has demonstrated that decisions to invest in human capital, like pursuing a college education, depend on the perceived net returns from such investments. Although we encountered this perspective among only a few of our interviewees, it is possible that uncertainty over the returns to their investment in higher education because of their temporary status will dissuade more individuals with DACA status from seeking or continuing higher education.

Summary

Several important themes emerged from our in-depth interviews regarding DACA and education. First, our interviewees expressed that DACA has provided them with increased resources to finance higher education. Many individuals indicated they were now able to work,

which has provided them with the additional funds needed to overcome the financial barriers to higher education. At the same time, some interviewees had chosen to focus on working rather than on returning to school (or going to school in the first place) in order to fully take advantage of their employment authorization and save for their future. Numerous interviewees also believed they are now eligible for more financial aid with DACA. Confusion surrounding the specific benefits that DACA recipients could receive for educational advancement was a major theme in our interviews—highlighting the need for more community outreach in this area.

In addition to increased financial resources that DACA recipients could use to finance their education, DACA also influenced our respondents' willingness to invest more of their income in educational advancement. Before DACA, even if an individual graduated from college, they were barred from "legal" employment. This barrier negatively impacted those in school as well as those who planned to attend. However, with the ability to work in one's field of interest after graduation, many of our interviewees reported increased investment, motivation, and focus on their education.

Another theme that surfaced in our qualitative interviews was the persisting difficulty that DACAmented youth faced with regard to financial aid. Because they remain ineligible for federal financial aid, many DACA recipients believe that a four-year university is not a realistic option for them. Their ineligibility for federal aid also distinguishes them from their fully documented peers—making them aware that despite the benefits of DACA, the playing field is still unequal.

A final educational limitation for DACA recipients is the difficulty of planning for their future, given the uncertainty surrounding the DACA renewal process and the continuance of the

program itself, which has been under constant partisan attack since it was first unveiled by the Obama administration.

Sense of Belonging after DACA

[DACA] makes me fit in more. All my friends got a driver's license. Now I can get a driver's license, too. I could get a job with no problem.

-Cristián, a 19-year-old high school graduate, on the biggest change in his life since receiving DACA

In this section we explore how having DACA status shapes the recipient's sense of belonging in the United States. Examining the political incorporation of immigrants, Bloemraad (2013:196) observes that public policies offer material and symbolic resources which influence an immigrant's political integration. She notes that "by targeting some groups over others, governments generate symbolic resources and create normative boundaries around the type of people we help—the insiders—and those outside the community of care." Being considered an "insider" helps to communicate a sense of belonging and membership. By extension, one could postulate that DACA communicates to eligible individuals an enhanced sense of belonging in the United States. Nevertheless, in her analysis of the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act (S.744), Enchautegui (2013) argued that temporary legal status is detrimental to one's sense of belonging. Our in-depth interviews with DACA recipients offer support for both of these views.

What factors are associated with an increased sense of belonging among DACA recipients? Like Cristián (quoted above), many of our interviewees explained their enhanced sense of belonging since receiving DACA status by referring to the day-to-day things that they can now do. Abrego and Gonzáles (2010:145) found that for undocumented youth, "routine tasks and social events, such as buying cell phones, establishing credit, applying for library or movie

rental cards, and even going to R-rated movies or bars, become extremely complicated." Similarly, Mendoza (2013:437) has emphasized the importance of routine activities in forging one's sense of belonging in the host country, explaining that in contrast to the emotional ties of an immigrant to his/her home country, one's sense of belonging in the host country is instrumental rather than emotional. Accordingly, from getting a driver's license to obtaining a credit card for the first time, the benefits individuals receive through DACA allow them to feel more at ease.

For Cristián, the ability to perform routine activities (e.g., getting a driver's license like his friends) allows him to feel that he fits in. He reported that the biggest change to his life since receiving DACA status was feeling a sense of normalcy. Thus, our main hypothesis is that *individuals who have experienced more changes in their daily life since receiving DACA are more likely to indicate an increased sense of belonging.* Through getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, or obtaining a first credit card, the differences between individuals with DACA and their peers are reduced, prompting them to feel a greater sense of belonging. At the same time, it is important to consider alternate hypotheses suggested by previous research on belonging, such as the effects of employment and age upon arrival in the United States.

Previous research has noted the importance of immigrants' employment in constructing their identities and sense of belonging (see, for example, Roberman 2013). Before receiving DACA status, interviewees in our study were forced into nonstandard employment because they lacked work authorization. Roberman (2013:16) found that nonstandard work causes an "ongoing unsettledness" which "impedes the development of an immigrant's sense of belonging in the host state and society." Consistent with Roberman's finding, an alternate hypothesis is that *individuals who have received their first job or moved jobs since receiving DACA will be more*

likely to report that they have experienced an increase in their sense of belonging. It could also be that persons with DACA feel that they are now able to contribute more to the United States, given their work authorization.

Age at arrival also has been found to explain differences in immigrants' sense of belonging. In examining the claims-making activities of undocumented individuals, Abrego (2008) found a marked difference between the sense of belonging of first generation immigrants and those belonging to the 1.5 generation. Although all of our interviewees are considered part of the 1.5 generation, the variation in their ages upon migration to the United States also could lead to differences in their sense of belonging because of prior experiences in Mexico. As mentioned above, Mendoza (2013) found that first generation immigrants experience emotional ties to their homeland as a result of time spent there before migrating. For someone who came to the United States at a very young age, it is likely that the same emotional connection to the homeland is not present. Thus, a second alternate hypothesis emerges: *Individuals who arrived in the United States at a younger age will be more likely to indicate an increased sense of belonging after receiving DACA.* At the same time, it could be that persons who arrived at a very young age are more likely to feel that they *already* belonged in the United States, before DACA, and therefore will not experience any increase in their sense of belonging.

Bivariate Analysis

Among the DACA recipients whom we interviewed, almost one-quarter reported that they felt like they fully belonged before DACA. On average, individuals reporting prior belonging immigrated around the age of five and had spent almost seventeen years in the United States. To determine the effects of an increased sense of belonging among DACA recipients, we excluded these individuals from our analysis. Among the remaining interviewees, 60 percent

indicated an increased sense of belonging from their baseline level before DACA. Table 20 reports the difference-in-means by increased sense of belonging.

Table 20: Sense of Belonging: Differences-in-Means and Summary Statistics

		Difference in Means		*Summary Statistics*				
		Mean	*p*-value	Mean	# Obs	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Sense of Belonging (Increase=1)				.6	40	.496	0	1
Gender (Male=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.333 .313	.890	.341	41	.480	0	1
Age	Yes = 1 No = 0	22.9 21.3	.258	22.1	41	4.4	16	32
Age at Arrival	Yes = 1 No = 0	5.4 7.2	.203	6.1	41	4.1	1	15
Years in US	Yes = 1 No = 0	17.4 14.1	**.038**	16	41	5	6	27
Education Level	Yes = 1 No = 0	1.583 1.438	.661	1.487	41	1.028	0	4
Day-to-Day Index (0-3)	Yes = 1 No = 0	1.833 1.625	.480	1.731	41	.895	0	3
First Job/ Moved Jobs (Yes=1)	Yes = 1 No = 0	.625 .75	.408	.659	41	.480	0	1

To measure sense of belonging, we asked our interviewees: "Some persons say that since receiving DACA they feel like they belong more in the United States. Others say their feeling of belonging hasn't changed. How do you feel? Why?" Our variable of interest, changes in daily life, was measured by what we call a "day-to-day index" constructed from the interviewee's responses on three items: if he/she had (1) gotten a driver's license or state identification card, (2) opened a bank account, and (3) obtained a credit card. Although we hypothesized that more

changes in one's daily life would be positively associated with an increased sense of belonging, the average score on the day-to-day index was 1.833 among those who reported an increased sense of belonging since receiving DACA compared to 1.625 among those who did not. We find no significant bivariate relationship between changes in one's daily life and an increased sense of belonging after DACA among our interviewees (p = .480).

To test the alternate hypotheses that employment and age at arrival are key factors in predicting an enhanced sense of belonging, we examined the relationship between these variables and one's sense of belonging. Among interviewees who felt an increased sense of belonging, 62.5 percent indicated a change in employment since receiving DACA, while 75 percent of interviewees who did not report an increased sense of belonging had secured new employment. Again, there is no significant bivariate relationship between change in employment and increased feelings of belonging (p = .408). We also found no statistically significant support for the hypothesis that those who arrived in the United States at an earlier age were more likely to indicate increased sense of belonging. Nevertheless, our bivariate analysis hints that age at arrival may play a role at predicting increased belonging among a larger sample of DACA recipients. The average age at arrival for those reporting an increase in belonging is 5.4 years compared to 7.2 who indicated no change in their feelings of belonging (p = .203).

We also examined the effects of our core set of demographic variables on sense of belonging. A significant pattern emerges in terms of years spent in the United States. Those who indicated an increased sense of belonging after receiving DACA have spent on average 17.4 years in the United States—approximately three years greater than interviewees who reported no increase in belonging (p = .038). This finding suggests that it may not necessarily be the age at which one arrives in the United States that influences belonging but rather continued life

experience in the United States that matters. Because we lack a comparison group of persons without DACA in our study, it could be that an increase in belonging is solely a function of more years in the United States and is not related to receiving DACA. However, among those who indicated a pre-DACA sense of belonging, there was no significant relationship between years in the United States and reporting a prior sense of belonging (p = .630). Continued research beyond the scope of our study is needed to further tease out the exact relationship between years in the United States, receiving DACA status, and an increase in one's sense of belonging.

Multivariate Analysis

Although there was no significant bivariate relationship between our variable of interest, changes in daily life, and an increased sense of belonging, we conducted a multivariate analysis to determine if a relationship exists when controlling for other factors. Table 21 presents the correlation matrix between the independent variables used in this analysis. Given that years in the United States is a function of age and age at arrival, these variables need to be analyzed in separate models to prevent multicollinearity.

Table 21: Sense of Belonging: Correlation Matrix

	Gender	Age	Age at Arrival	Years in US	Ed. Level	Day-to-Day Index	First Job/ Moved Jobs
Gender	1.00						
Age	-0.09	1.00					
Age at Arrival	0.07	0.31	1.00				
Years in US	-0.14	**0.63**	**-0.55**	1.00			
Ed. Level	-0.24	**0.41**	0.22	0.18	1.00		
Day-to-Day Index	-0.07	0.27	-0.08	0.30	0.04	1.00	
First Job/ Moved Jobs	-.13	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.40	0.31	1.00

Table 22 presents the results of the multivariate analysis. Models 1 and 2 examine the relationship between demographic variables and an increase in one's sense of belonging. Models 3 and 4 account for our variable of interest (day-to-day changes) and the alternate hypothesis (change in employment) while also controlling for statistically significant variables from the demographic analyses (Models 1 and 2).

Table 22: Sense of Belonging: Multivariate Analysis

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
Gender (Male=1)	.309 (.742)	.331 (.754)	---	---
Age	.156 (.095)	---	---	---
Age at Arrival	**-.164*** **(.094)**	---	-.097 (.082)	---
Years in US	---	**.158**** **(.081)**	---	**.150** **(.082)**
Education Level	---	.054 (.342)	---	---
Day-to-Day Index	---	---	.368 (.410)	.210 (.432)
First Job/Moved Jobs	---	---	-.802 (.782)	-.789 (.816)
Constant	-2.078 (1.932)	**-2.261*** **(1.375)**	.929 (.977)	-1.762 (1.375)
N	40	40	40	40

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

In Model 1 we see that when the effects of gender and age are controlled, age-at-arrival is a significant predictor of sense of belonging. This finding supports our hypothesis that persons arriving in the United States at a younger age are more likely to indicate an increased sense of belonging. However, this relationship disappears in Model 3 (p = .238). It could be that a relationship does exist but our small sample size is reducing the statistical power of our model to detect the relationship. As foreshadowed in our bivariate analysis, years in the United States was

positively related to an increased sense of belonging in Models 2 and 4.[42] Length of residence in the United States is the only consistently significant predictor of an increased sense of belonging. This provides additional support for a temporal dimension to a DACA recipient's sense of belonging.

Summary

Just as DACA recipients have experienced different educational and economic outcomes after receiving DACA, they have varying levels of perceived belonging. About one in four of our interviewees reported that they already felt a complete sense of belonging before DACA. In contrast to Enchautegui's (2013) hypothesis that a temporary legal status will have negative effects on one's sense of belonging, a majority of our interviewees (60 percent)[43] indicated that since receiving DACA they have experienced an increase in their sense of belonging. To explain these findings we tested the hypothesis that changes in one's daily life (i.e., getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, and obtaining a credit card) would be positively associated with an increased sense of belonging. However, we found no significant bivariate or multivariate relationship between changes in daily life and an increased sense of belonging. Indeed, the only positive predictor of increased belonging among our interviewees was length of residence in the United States. Again, small sample size could have impaired our ability to detect additional significant relationships.

[42]A series of likelihood ratio tests confirms that in Model 4 the model is only statistically different when years in the United States is removed ($p = .048$).

[43] Individuals already expressing feelings of complete belonging were excluded from the sample. Only 45 percent of the total sample indicated an increased feeling of belonging.

Qualitative Analysis

In terms of sense of belonging, our interviewees fall into three broad categories: (1) those who indicated an increased sense of belonging since receiving DACA, (2) those who reported that they felt like they had belonged fully in the United States prior to receiving DACA, and (3) those who indicated no post-DACA change in their sense of belonging. Among those reporting an increase in their sense of belonging, two explanatory factors emerged: diminished fear, and a sense of normalcy in relation to their documented peers.

Given that people living without legal status face a constant threat of deportation, it is not surprising that all of our interviewees reported that DACA had decreased their fear—with the exception of a handful of persons who felt no fear before or after receiving DACA. Many interviewees recounted the fear they felt before receiving DACA. César, who has lived in the United States for 27 years, vividly described this fear:

> I felt like somebody had a gun to my head all the time. Any little thing, it was that fear. I remember when I was driving, I had to take my sister to work and I remember coming home and my hands would be shaking. That fear was just constant. Something could happen and *snap* -- everything you know, your family, everything is gone.

Since receiving DACA his sense of fear has dissipated. He recounted how he even waves to law enforcement officers now—a drastic shift from his pre-DACA behavior. Some interviewees, like Carla, reported that their decreased fear has allowed them to open up more to others, which has enhanced their sense of belonging. Carla recalled how her parents always reminded her not to reveal her immigration status for fear of deportation. Now, with DACA, she feels a sense of security and does not feel that she must hide her immigration status.

In addition to providing a greater sense of security, interviewees who reported an increased sense of belonging emphasized the changes in their daily life because of receiving DACA, like obtaining a driver's license and a Social Security number. For many, a driver's

license not only provided them with a sense of security while driving but also a sense of freedom derived from the ability to travel. Eva explained that although she felt like she belonged before DACA, this feeling increased after DACA because she could explore more of the United States, "I couldn't really go out anywhere. San Diego was like, you know, my only home. Now, I feel like everything, all over is my home." Bernardo echoed this sentiment, describing the freedom he felt in being able to travel to Chicago to visit relatives that he had not seen in a long time: "I felt more free because I was able to get out of just San Diego and California! It was a nice experience. It kind of made me feel better, feel like I can fit in anywhere." Thus, DACA recipients experience a degree of freedom that they did not experience before. The freedom to travel allows them to feel differently about the world around them and their place in it.

Like Bernardo, many of our respondents indicating an increased sense of belonging emphasized that they fit in more with those around them since receiving DACA. For most of their lives, DACA recipients had watched those with whom they have grown up have more rights and the ability to do more things. Abrego and Gonzales (2010:147) noted that because undocumented youth have been socialized with their documented peers, when they begin to see that others are able to do certain things (e.g., go to college or find meaningful employment) from which they are restricted, they experience disillusionment. In a review of social comparison in school, Dijkstra et al. (2008:865) found that social comparison within a classroom can be "a two-edged sword: Although upward comparison may lead students to do better, it makes them feel and think worse about themselves." For undocumented youths, comparing themselves to their documented peers may initially prompt them to "do better," but the structural limitations of their immigration status effectively bar them from upward mobility and lead to disillusionment.

Because of DACA, our interviewees reported being able to take part in various activities that they had watched others engage in. Seemingly ordinary activities like having an identification card to show at a bar, or filling out a tax return, positively influenced interviewees' feeling of belonging in the United States. Maria explained how DACA increased her sense of belonging:

> It wasn't until, you know, you're 16 and you wanna get a driver's license and you realize you can't. When I got DACA it was really a dream come true. I was able to get a driver's license. I got excited to pay taxes! I got excited to do everything that I had seen everybody else do and I couldn't.

Other interviewees mentioned being able to participate in life events like permanent legal residents or citizens do, allowing them to feel more a part of the United States.

For DACA recipients who already felt like they belonged, many pointed to being raised in the United States and having little to no recollection of life in Mexico. Sara came to the United States when she was six years old and still has some memories of Mexico. Nevertheless, she explained that if she were to go to Mexico today she would be entirely lost. Similarly, Carolina, who came to the United States when she was three years old, describes San Diego as the only home she has ever known. This sense of the United States as home seemed to be stronger among those who reported a lack of social ties to Mexico. This is consistent with previous research on transnationalism among first-generation immigrants. For example, Mouw et al. (2014:331) have described the "tendency of immigrants to maintain long-term ties and contacts with friends and family members in their origin communities, whether through visits, phone conversations, homeland politics, economic activities, or remittances." It follows that, if there are no contacts to maintain, the immigrant will feel less "transnational" -- less connected to his/her country of origin.

Further support for the idea that length of residence in the United States plays an important role in one's sense of belonging in the United States comes from interviewees who reported no increase in their feelings of belonging. For example, Marisol first came to the United States when she was two years old. However, at the age of thirteen her parents decided to return to Mexico. After only spending a short time there, the family made the decision to return to the United States for economic reasons, when Marisol was 15. She cited that experience, and her parents' continued ties to the country, as the reasons why she feels she does not belong in the United States: "For me, [living in Mexico for two years] was a really good experience because I got to learn a lot from my culture. So, I feel very connected. Yeah, I'm aware I'm here but my identity is Mexican, a hundred percent."

Marisol's time spent in Mexico as a young teenager allowed her to learn about her culture and develop a connection to it that individuals immigrating at much younger ages may not experience. Irene, who came to the United States at the age of twelve, also pointed to living in Mexico as a reason for her lack of perceived belonging: "Since we were older, it's always like that sense of belonging doesn't feel like it's here or there." She explained that although she resides in California, it does not feel like home. But Mexico does not feel like home either, because the country has changed since she emigrated.

Other interviewees reported that their sense of belonging in the United States is not connected to what DACA has offered them—whether it is a driver's license or employment authorization. For example, Brisa stated that the only thing that has changed is her ability to get a driver's license. Similarly, Andrea explained that her employment status does not determine her sense of belonging. At the same time, interviewees' perceptions of what DACA has *not* offered them *have* influenced their level of belonging. To some of DACA recipients, the limits of DACA

status further reinforced that they do not belong in the United States. For example, Jaime listed the things he still cannot, do despite his DACA status: applying to certain jobs, joining the military, voting, or traveling abroad—something his friends are doing.

DACA recipients continue to make comparisons between themselves and those around them, which sometimes elicit negative feelings. Beatriz brought up the limitations of DACA in this way: "I feel the same [level of belonging] because either way, it's not like we can go out of the country and come back; it's just within here. It's good, but it still means that we aren't from here." In other words, the constraints placed on DACA recipients continue to make the differences between them and those who fully belong in the United States more salient.

DACA recipients also experience anxiety about immediate relatives living in the United States as unauthorized immigrants. Boehm (2012) has noted that, while U.S. immigration policy ostensibly promotes family reunification, it actually plays a role in creating mixed-legal-status families because of its focus on the individual. DACA is no exception. Although DACA recipients get a two-year reprieve from deportation, they are part of a larger social network that includes undocumented family members and friends.[44] As a result, although personal fear has decreased, fear regarding the security of family members has not. Asked if there are any barriers he continues to face, Felipe observed that he does not have family stability: "Because my parents don't have DACA, you know, they can be deported at any time. Our families could be deported; our communities could be deported."

At the same time, DACA recipients themselves are in a vulnerable position because the program from which they have benefited was created by President Obama through an executive

[44] Among our interviewees, roughly eight out of ten reported that someone in their family could benefit from the expansion of DACA to include those who were not originally eligible. Of those who indicated someone in their family could benefit, 84.8 percent indicated that one or both of their parents were undocumented, along with 23.9 percent indicating that at least one sibling remains undocumented.

order—not legislation passed by the U.S. Congress—and a future president could terminate it, with or without a mandate to end it from Congress.[45] Marisol brought up this source of uncertainty when asked about changes in her sense of belonging after receiving DACA:

> Why can't they just give us a full residency or citizenship? We've been here, like, all of our lives. I definitely don't feel that I belong here. Who assures me that, in two years, they're still gonna extend the [program], or whatever?

Even some interviewees who had experienced a greater sense of belonging since receiving DACA status continue to feel the weight of their tentative legal status. Tomás put it this way: "Well, it's kind of like in-between, because now I'm not undocumented so I'm not illegally here, but I still feel kind of out of the loop." He specifically attributed this feeling to not being a permanent legal resident or U.S. citizen. In fact, nearly half of our interviewees mentioned the ambiguity of DACA status at some point in their interviews, highlighting how the constraints and limits of DACA enter centrally into their lived experience.

Summary

Our in-depth interviews revealed three broad categories of DACA recipients: those who report an increased sense of belonging since receiving DACA status, those who had already felt like they belonged fully in the United States before DACA, and those who indicated no change in their sense of belonging. Among those reported enhanced belonging, being less fearful of deportation and having gained a sense of normalcy in their daily lives were key motivators. After years of watching their peers get drivers' licenses or use a Social Security number to secure meaningful employment, DACAmented individuals are now able to take part in these important life events, leading them to have an enhanced sense of belonging in the United States.

[45] The precariousness of DACA recipients' situation is highlighted by a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives on August 1, 2014, in which 216 members (212 Republicans, 4 Democrats) voted to end the DACA program, despite the threat of a presidential veto.

Those who had a sense of belonging before DACA often emphasized being raised in the United States and having little connection with Mexico. In contrast, those who did not experience an increase in perceived belonging stressed their continued connection to Mexico—whether it is supported by family members still living there or by their own memories. Interviewees with a stronger bond to Mexico tend to have been older when they arrived in the United States. Among those experiencing no increase in their sense of belonging, interviewees emphasized the practical and temporal limits of DACA. Even among those with a stronger sense of belonging, the legal ambiguity of DACA status continues to have negative effects.

Policy Recommendations for Enhancing Economic and Psycho-social Integration of DACA Recipients

This study has documented a variety of challenges that young people with DACA status continue to confront in their daily lives. Our findings support seven specific policy recommendations for enhancing the economic incorporation, educational attainment, and psycho-social integration of DACA recipients:

Recommendation 1: Facilitate Job Training and Acquisition of Job-seeking Skills for DACA Recipients

Community-based, immigrant-serving organizations should facilitate job training programs for DACA recipients to help overcome any gaps in prior employment experience. In addition to training in specific industries, local organizations also can provide application assistance, including resume preparation, and interviewing tips. Expanding job internship and volunteering opportunities for DACA recipients (as well as young undocumented immigrants who do not meet the requirements for DACA status) would serve the same end. As mentioned Some of our interviewees reported that it took them several months to find jobs after receiving DACA status, citing a lack of experience compared to their fully documented peers. Without a

way to gain the experience necessary for desired employment, some DACA recipients will continue to face obstacles to deeper economic integration. Training programs and internships would provide DACA recipients with the experience and skills necessary to be competitive in the job market.

Recommendation 2: Make DACA Recipients Eligible for Health Insurance via the Affordable Care Act

DACA recipients should be eligible to purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Revisions to the ACA in August of 2012 barred individuals with DACA from certain health insurance options. Importantly, they are the only group of individuals who receive deferral of deportation who are excluded from the ACA. This restriction severely limits the affordable options that are available to them, since many employers do not offer affordable health insurance options. This forces DACA recipients to make difficult choices or sacrifices with regard to their health care. Despite serious illnesses or injuries, DACA recipients instead may choose to focus on paying for school, housing, or other expenses. By offering more affordable health insurance options through the ACA, individuals with DACA will be better able to access needed care.

Recommendation 3: Extend DACA Status from Two to Five Years

DACA status should be extended from a two-year period to a five-year period to allow recipients to feel more confident in their educational and employment planning. Currently, given DACA's two-year "expiration date," as some described it, many DACA recipients feel a tension between going to school and finding employment. While some would like to return to school, they instead are choosing to work full-time in order to save as much as they can, as they face what they see as an uncertain future. Others doubt they can meet occupational and educational goals because of the uncertainty surrounding continuation of the DACA program. By extending

DACA status to five years, recipients would feel less restricted in terms of their options and future planning. A longer timeframe would also provide more time to realize specific educational and economic goals. Moreover, employers might be less hesitant to hire DACA recipients if their work authorization was extended to five years.

Recommendation 4: Make DACA Recipients Eligible for Federal Aid to Finance Higher Education

Individuals with DACA status should be eligible for federal financial aid in order to finance post-secondary education. Although a majority of DACA recipients interviewed for our study had experienced an increase in financial independence since receiving DACA, and California has relatively generous policies for undocumented students, numerous interviewees reported that the costs of higher education are prohibitive—especially at four-year universities. Furthermore, ineligibility for federal financial aid serves as a reminder to DACA recipients that they are different from those who are fully documented. By providing access to federal financial aid, this difference will be reduced and more DACA recipients will be able to achieve their educational goals.

Recommendation 5: Provide In-state Tuition and Access to Scholarships for DACA Recipients in All States

All states should provide in-state tuition and access to scholarships for DACA recipients. Currently fewer than half of the 50 states offer in-state tuition for undocumented youth. Even in a state like California that provides in-state tuition for the undocumented and access to scholarship opportunities, the cost of higher education often is often prohibitive for DACA recipients. In a state that does not offer in-state tuition nor scholarships for undocumented students, the obstacles to higher education are far more formidable. Given the relationship between educational attainment and employment opportunities, DACA recipients in these states

could be relegated to low-skill, low-wage segments of the labor market. With in-state tuition and scholarship access in every state, DACA recipients across the nation would have greater post-secondary educational access and the opportunities this level of education can provide.

Recommendation 6: Allow DACA Recipients to Travel Abroad for Short Periods

DACA recipients should be granted permission to travel out of the country for short periods of time. Currently, those with DACA status are able to travel abroad for certain humanitarian, educational or employment purposes if they apply for "advanced parole" (for an additional $360 fee). For those who simply want to visit family members whom they have not seen in many years (or, in some cases, have never met), there are no options for legally traveling abroad. While most DACA recipients interviewed for this study mentioned the desire to visit extended family members, some are living in the United States without any immediate family. Prolonged family separations can have serious emotional consequences for DACA recipients. The ability to travel to visit a family member for a short period of time would provide significant psychological benefits. Travel authorization would also serve to minimize another difference between DACA recipients and those with more permanent status, thus enhancing their sense of belonging in the United States.

Recommendation 7: Expand DACA Eligibility to Immediate Family Members of DACA Recipients

Deferred action should be extended to immediate family members of DACA recipients. Although DACA recipients receive a two-year suspension of deportation, their undocumented family members are not afforded the same protection. As a result, despite the sense of security that DACA recipients may feel, interviewees in our study reported continued concern about the security of family members. By extending DACA status to the immediate relatives of DACA

recipients who are living in the United States, the family's general sense of vulnerability can be greatly reduced.

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