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The Bureaucratic Encounter and Shifting Social Constructions Among Migrant Youth During the DACA Application Process

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This article examines shifting social constructions of the self among undocumented Latino college and university student applicants for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, in the United States. A 2012 memo issued by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security deferred deportation action on undocumented youth who were current or former students or military veterans, and who met certain other age, length of residence, and criminal record criteria. Using qualitative data from interviews with 20 DACA applicants, this article explores how bureaucratic encounters that occur through the DACA application process inform ideas about citizenship and identity that are held by the undocumented Latino student population, and how these youth understand their relationship to the U.S. The data show that college and university students undergo a shift in their self-perception and behavior, with their social construction of themselves changing from deviant to deserving as they move through the DACA application process. We believe the analysis is relevant to the current political environment as the portrayal of immigrants is being rapidly reshaped under the Trump administration. Our analysis suggests that these changing portrayals will generate changes in the self-perception and behavior of undocumented Latino students vis-à-vis the state. Our article makes an important contribution to the public administration literature, which at present gives only limited attention to migrants and processes of "administering migration."

INTRODUCTION

Schneider and Ingram (1997) argue that 'policies are lessons in democracy' (p. 79). Government affects the daily lives of individuals in hundreds of ways, and policy uses language and symbols to send individuals messages about 'what kind of people count as important, whose interests are likely to be taken seriously and whose problems will probably be ignored,' (Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 79). Processes of interacting with state institutions and applying to government programs can shape individuals' political perceptions, and their participation in politics and

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institutions more broadly (Brayne, 2014; Campbell, 2005; Soss, 1999b, 2002; Weaver & Lerman, 2010). This article examines shifts in political self-perception among undocumented, primarily Latino, college and university student applicants for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. In 2012 the United States Department of Homeland Security issued a memo that re-prioritized deportations, known as DACA. This memo deferred deportation action on undocumented individuals who arrived to the country before age 16, were under age 31, had lived continuously in the United States during the prior 5 years, had not been convicted of serious crimes, and met certain student status or military service criteria. Using qualitative data from interviews with 20 undocumented college and university student DACA applicants in 2014 and 2015, this article explores how the DACA application process informs ideas about citizenship and identity that are held by undocumented students through a process of political learning similar to that described by Soss (1999a, 1999b, 2002) and others (Brayne, 2014; Campbell, 2005; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Weaver & Lerman, 2010).

In 2012, President Obama gave a speech about the motivation behind the change in policy towards undocumented immigrants that arrived as children. President Obama reframed the social construction of undocumented youth from deviant to a favorable and deserving target population. Qualitative data show that as Obama's narrative on immigration began to take primacy over competing narratives (Miller, 2012), youth experienced shifts in their social construction of themselves as they moved through the DACA application process. Youth reported undergoing changes in their self-perception during this bureaucratic encounter. These changes mirrored differences between the social constructions of deviant target populations and more positively constructed target populations (such as dependent and advantage populations) as the categories are described by Schneider and Ingram (1993). Central to this now-classic theoretical framework (Pierce et al., 2014) is an assertion that advantaged and dependent target populations are characterized by positive social constructions that include deservingness, intelligence, honesty and public-spiritedness, whereas deviant and contender target populations are characterized by negative social constructions such as undeservingness, stupidity, dishonesty, and selfishness. Among positively and negatively constructed groups, differences in political power are taken into account, with advantaged and contender groups having high amounts of political power, and dependent and deviant groups being politically weak (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

We focus on the DACA application process as a specific moment of interaction, or bureaucratic encounter, between undocumented youth and the state. We focus on the bureaucratic encounter because research shows program participation, program application processes, and other interactions with the state are sites of political learning (Brayne, 2014; Campbell, 2005; Soss, 1999b, 2002; Weaver & Lerman, 2010). While policy design and application processes can sometimes lead to increased political participation and self-regard, Campbell (2005) and others (Soss, 1999b, 2002) note that some disadvantaged groups participate at lower rates than would be predicted by socioeconomics due to demeaning processes of demonstrating eligibility (Campbell, 2005), or experiences of being overly surveilled/incarcerated by the state (Brayne, 2014; Weaver & Lerman, 2010). Social construction influences policy design; however, this article focuses on the feed-forward effects of social construction (Pierce et al., 2014). Feed-forward effects, sometimes called feedback effects (Pierce et al., 2014), refer to the ways in which policy design and resulting programs influence the political orientation of target populations (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007),

and is a substantial subfield of social construction research (Campbell, 2005, 2007; Mettler, 2002; Mettler & Soss, 2004; Schneider, 2006; Soss, 1999b, 2002). In this study, we examine shifting social construction of oneself as a feed-forward effect that takes place during the bureaucratic encounter of the DACA application process.

Our interview participants articulate a contrast between their new construction (as deserving, intelligent, innocent child migrants), and their former construction that applies to other undocumented migrants (as undeserving, potentially dangerous individuals who dishonestly entered the country through unsanctioned channels.) While other groups in society might portray undocumented youth as threatening contenders (negatively constructed but politically powerful), our interview participants consistently portray themselves as formerly deviant, referencing their low political power as evidenced by an inability to vote and a continuous need to avoid government interaction. This is in spite of the fact that our interview participants, and other researchers, acknowledge a rich activist movement among the undocumented youth population that ultimately led to policy changes such as DACA (see for example Nicholls, 2013, 2014). Scholars indicate that "organizing and mobilizing to advocate for change" (Pierce et al., 2014, p. 19) is one of several factors internal to target populations that shift groups' social construction. However, our interview participants focused their attention on the administrative process of collecting and submitting documents for their DACA application, characterizing this bureaucratic encounter as an opportunity to demonstrate their new deserving status. This is more illustrative of factors external to target populations that shift their social construction (Pierce et al., 2014), such a feed-forward effects of policy design.

Literature Review

Scholarship on undocumented immigrants' interactions with the state is a growing field of academic inquiry. This work investigates how policies defining irregular immigrants are created (Hamlin, 2015, 2016; Hamlin & Wolgin, 2012; Hasselberg, 2015), and the consequences policies have on immigrants' lives (De Genova, 2013; Kubal, 2013). Many studies focus on access to higher education, and differences that arise in state policies aimed at granting or denying access (Abrego, 2008; Bozick & Miller, 2014; Hamlin, 2016; Harmon, Carne, Lizardy-Hajbi, & Wilkerson, 2010; Ruge & Iza, 2004; Zota, 2009). Here we examine literature on immigration policy, the undocumented population, and experiences of policy targets, considering the experiences of those living outside the legal framework of a nation while physically residing within its boundaries.

Policy Encounters and Social Inclusion

In the U.S. citizenship is understood primarily as a legal relationship between the individual and the state, constructed and regulated by immigration law. This relationship is created the moment an individual is born or enters the country, and policy specifies what obligations an individual must fulfill to be considered a full, legal member of the U.S. (DeSipio & De la Garza, 1998). However, contemporary scholars of citizenship contend that a binary conception of citizenship does not account for multiple allegiances, or variations in the ways individuals understand themselves (Boehm, 2012; Cebulko, 2014; Chavez, 1991; Getrich, 2008;

McNevin, 2011; Menjívar, 2006). An individual's incorporation into national society is influenced not only by legal belonging, but by social belonging (Golash-Boza, 2016). Additionally, lines of inclusion can be drawn by public programs providing access to certain aspects of membership such as identification cards, healthcare and education (De Graauw, 2014; Gleeson, 2014; Marrow, 2009, 2012). Numerous undocumented youth arrive to the U.S. at a young age and have strong social and emotional ties to the country. Membership is not questioned before age 18 because federal policies give minors access to public education regardless of immigration status. This acceptance in the education system provides some protection from scrutiny. An ability to blend into the mainstream American population allows undocumented youth to keep their status hidden. However, relative invisibility and social acceptance does not negate important structural hurdles that limit life outcomes for undocumented youth. Structural circumstances that lower the likelihood of upward social and economic mobility make assimilation an insufficient pathway to social inclusion (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2005; Portes & Zhou, 1993).

The political and social context for undocumented youth shifts as they reach adulthood and encounter restrictive policies (Gonzales, 2011). During interactions with the state they increasingly confront their outsider status, such as when seeking driver's licenses, or experiencing deportation of family members (Dreby, 2012; Hasselberg, 2016). Undocumented youth's early experiences of acceptance are interrupted when, in their adult lives, they receive contradictory messages in their encounters with the state through immigration policies (Chavez, 1998). Membership is further complicated by the fact that much of undocumented youth's social and cultural influences come from the U.S. Many undocumented parents do not inform children of their immigration status; thus, often undocumented youth do not realize they fall outside of the state's formal boundaries of belonging until adulthood (Abrego, 2008). In these cases, undocumented youth are socially indistinguishable from a legal citizen until they come into direct contact with policies that define their exclusion.

Perspectives of Target Populations

Policy analysis is often oriented toward discussing processes and outcomes from the perspective of the state. When discussing immigration, migrants typically are not considered active members of society; they hold limited rights and political power, and are considered passive actors (Coutin, 1998). However, scholars have noted the many ways that migrants' decisions and political activities demonstrate an exercise of agency (Agustín, 2003; Bloch, 2013; Drotbohm & Hasselberg, 2015; Hasselberg, 2015). Undocumented immigrants have found numerous avenues for political participation (Bloemraad, Sarabia, & Fillingim, 2016; Bloemraad & Terriquez, 2016; Nicholls, 2014; Terriquez, 2011, 2012, 2015). Undocumented migrants contest meanings of identity, citizenship and membership because they provide challenges to assumed social structures (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Bhuyan, 2012; Larrison & Edlins, 2017; Patler & Gonzales, 2015). DACA exacerbated the duality of physical presence and lack of legal status because it provided a legal identity without creating a true role for undocumented youth in society (Abrego, 2008; Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Examining DACA as a transition point, other scholars find that this lack of legal identity has negative impacts

on health and well-being (Patler & Laster Pirtle, 2018) as well as other measures of success (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Wong & García, 2016).

Scholars argue that society's views of a particular social group are one factor shaping policies that target that group (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2005; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Schneider and Ingram (1993) argue that powerful groups in society that are viewed as positive and deserving will be targeted by a higher number of beneficial policies than groups that are powerless and viewed either negatively or as undeserving. The ways in which targets are socially constructed influence which problems reach the public policy agenda, legitimate the tools that are used to address those problems, and determine how policy is rationalized to the public. Social constructions are based on widely held beliefs about the target population and may not accurately reflect the challenges a target population faces (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

The creation of policy also teaches members of a target population about their role in society, confirming beliefs about power or lack thereof. Policy informs target populations how government is likely to treat them, or how they deserve to be treated. This process bolsters the political access of groups that are powerful and/or 'deserving', and discourages full democratic participation from those target populations that are powerless and/or constructed as undeserving. Particularly through the process of participating in programs or otherwise directly interacting with the state, policy design has the ability to reinforce the advantages and disadvantages that exist throughout society (Brayne, 2014; Bruch, Ferree, & Soss, 2010; Campbell, 2005; Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 1997; Soss, 1999b, 2002; Weaver & Lerman, 2010).

These concepts parallel Ong and colleagues' argument that immigrant groups within society are socialized through the policies that structure their immigration to the U.S. (Ong et al., 1996). Ong and colleagues' (1996) hypothesis on cultural subject-making implies that the social construction of immigrant groups influences the opportunities available to them. Newton (2005) examines the language used in policy hearings to understand how immigrants are portrayed during different eras of policy creation. As different narratives around immigrants dominate in public policy (Miller, 2012), the image of who may be included in American society shifts. Newton (2005) compares policies toward migrants in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 to those in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 to show how ideas about who might be considered eligible for citizenship change over time. The change in social construction of undocumented immigrants between these two policies illustrates the shifting constructs of "good" and "bad" immigrants. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 provided a limited path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants that had lived and worked in the United States and had arrived at least 4 years prior, and suggested that through work, there was an opportunity to earn one's citizenship. In contrast, 10 years later the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 centered on an assumption that undocumented migrants were criminals, expanding the definition of deportable crimes and creating increasingly punitive measures based on the amount of time one had lived in the U.S. By the time the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) Act was brought before Congress in 2010, the argument of deservingness was applied to the children of these same immigrants, due to their innocence and lack of active choice in their migration. The DREAMer population that was the target of the 2010 DREAM Act has come to be portrayed

as high-achieving, hardworking kids, or as innocent bystanders (Lauby, 2016; Nicholls, 2013). As a result, the DREAMers are considered more deserving than other undocumented migrants.

From this perspective, policy has the ability to create and sustain identities. Misconceptions of a group can lead to misallocation of resources to the target population, which also informs the way the public thinks about the population. This public perception then shapes the experiences of the target population during their interactions with society. These interactions with society and the state then inform the ways that members of target populations understand themselves and their belonging. Assumptions about a group can reproduce and reinforce ideologies, which permit actions that do not adequately address policy problems (McDonald, 2009).

Undocumented Youth, Policy Implementation, and the Bureaucratic Encounter

President Obama's 2012 speech regarding the Department of Homeland Security's memo on DACA outlined the attributes of DACA recipients that make them deserving of the ability to obtain a work permit, social security number, and protection from deportation. This announcement redefined a target population typically considered deviant and criminal as youth deserving of membership in the U.S. Schneider and Ingram argue that the discourse surrounding a target population creates a bridge to their status as members (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The reconstruction of certain undocumented youth into a favorable and deserving target population allowed for a shift in the way that these youth were treated by the state. Further, it informed and framed how undocumented youth in this study understood the requirements to gain membership to the nation.

Social construction is not the sole factor shaping policy design (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2005), nor is public policy the only driver of social construction. Changes in the social construction of a target population also are due to shifts in economic trends, public opinion, and popular culture; in fact, public policy is far from the most important factor in social construction (Lieberman, 1998; Schneider & Ingram, 1997). We do not claim that the changes in perception that our interview participants experience occur in a vacuum from these other cultural forces. However, we cannot ignore the important role that governments play in changing and legitimizing social constructions through public policy, and the ways that government can support or undermine dominant constructions through policy tools (Ingram et al., 2007).

Our study specifically interrogates the DACA application process, and the nature of the bureaucratic encounter during that process, in an effort to speak to, if not isolate, the influence of government policy on our interview participants' perspectives. As part of the implementation of DACA, undocumented immigrant youth were required to submit an application in order to determine eligibility. Applicants perceived this bureaucratic encounter as an opportunity to reinforce their emerging positive social construction of deservingness to the unseen public employees reviewing their files. There are variations in who clients view as being in control of outcomes during bureaucratic encounters (Barnes & Henly, 2018), and in our study, migrant youth viewed the locus of control as resting with the official who would read their application. Scholars studying bureaucratic encounters indicate that individuals

petitioning the state make distinctions among bureaucrats (Adams, Snyder, & Sandfort, 2002; Soss, 1999a; Watkins-Hayes, 2011), and that their perception of who controls the quality of a bureaucratic encounter matters greatly for their perceptions of their political rights and their likelihood of claiming benefits (Barnes & Henly, 2018; Soss, 2005). After assessing "attributions of control" (Barnes & Henly, 2018, p. 166), and deciding that immigration workers, through their discretion, have "high controllability" (Barnes & Henly, 2018, p. 168) over the outcome, DACA applicants pursued a claiming strategy of supplying supplemental information to bolster the likelihood that the bureaucrat would view their file as deserving of approval.

This article provides insight into how the DACA application process shaped undocumented youth's relationship with the U.S. government and their sense of belonging in society. When undocumented youth reach adulthood and observe delineations in their legal status, they develop their own interpretations of the law. This period when youth are on the threshold of adulthood presents a unique opportunity for researchers to examine what undocumented youth learn about government as they straddle these dividing lines. This article also contributes to the public administration literature on migrants and processes of "administering migration", which at present is given quite limited attention in premier public administration journals (some exceptions being Chand, Schreckhise, & Bowers, 2017; Garrett, 2010; Hansen, 2009; Lewis, Provine, Varsanyi, & Decker, 2013; O'Rourke, 2014; Staniševski, 2011; Williams, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This article draws upon qualitative data from interviews with 20 undocumented college and university students who applied for DACA. Because members of this population cannot be identified unless they choose to disclose their immigration status, a snowball sampling methodology was used. Recruitment of respondents relied on a variety of sources including initial contacts through personal introductions, university student organizations, participant introductions, and researcher attendance at community events designed for the undocumented population. In spite of also recruiting in non-educational settings, only students selected to participate in the study, and several students were recruited in community settings. This is likely driven by the fact that the Department of Homeland Security's 2012 memo selectively offers deferred action on deportation only to current and former students and military veterans, making college and university students a suitable population for examining the experiences of DACA applicants. Individuals were interviewed in the Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco metropolitan areas.

Of the 20 participants, 18 were eligible for DACA. One additional respondent was in the initial stages of applying, and did not yet have Deferred Action status. A small qualitative study such as this cannot claim to be broadly representative and generalizable, but rather seeks to deeply probe the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Nonetheless, the characteristics of the study population reflected the national estimates available for the undocumented youth population on age and country of origin. The age range of the participants was from 19 to 32 years old, with an average age of 23.75. The length of the

participants' residence in the U.S. ranged from 10 to 24 years, with the average length of residence being just over 17 years and an average age of arrival to the U.S. of 6.5 years. The country of origin of participants in the sample mirrored the national rate of DACA applications, with the majority of the sample (17) being of Mexican origin.

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The goal of the interview process was to gain a more detailed understanding of how participants learned about DACA, how participants experienced the application and approval process, how the process shaped their views of American government, and their resulting perceptions of their social location in the U.S. political context. The interview protocol was adapted from Soss's research on bureaucratic interactions of welfare participants (Soss, 1999b, 2002), integrating issues that are directly relevant to the application procedures and program outcomes of DACA. The questions intended to follow the trajectory of participants' experience from their initial learning about DACA, their decision to apply, the application process, and their reaction once it was complete.

Interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 60 and 90 min. The level of comfort of the participants affected the type of data that they provided. Those interviewees that were more comfortable and perceived less risk talked freely about a wider range of topics. Others who were more fearful held to the interview questions and provided less detail, examples, elaboration, or narrative from their personal lives, though many became more comfortable and expressive after the interview concluded.

As with all research, this study has limitations. The research is not longitudinal at present, though there is a goal of re-interviewing individuals during the Trump presidency, since competing narratives (Miller, 2012) on immigration are generating quickly shifting constructions of migrants. As a result of conducting one-time interviews, it was not possible to interview individuals at different points in the application process, nor to capture outcomes that may occur as a result of the long term opportunities or consequences provided to DACA applicants. The participants in this study were all residents of California, and there would likely be variation in the findings if the study sample had included undocumented youth nationwide. However, because California is the nation's most populated state and is home to a large percentage of the undocumented population nationwide, the experiences of the youth that reside in the state provide insight. The sample population of this study held a comparatively high level of education due to their student status, as students are one of two populations targeted by DACA. Finally, although the sample size is acceptable when compared to other qualitative research studies (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), it is too small to be generalizable to the wider undocumented population and their experiences.

Analysis: Shifting Social Constructions

The undocumented youth that participated in this study reported learning about the nature of their membership in the U.S. through their interactions with the state. The DACA applicants described facing different levels of inclusion throughout their lives. Respondents reported fitting characterizations of a deviant population throughout their youth: one with little political power, and negatively perceived by the community (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). The introduction of DACA and changing narratives (Miller, 2012) around undocumented immigrant youth initiated a shift in which the lessons they learned as "deviants" began to move toward the

characteristics of a deserving population: one perhaps with little political power, but perceived in a positive light by the community (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). As the undocumented youth in this study transitioned into adulthood, the limitations that their undocumented status presented were inescapable. Youth experienced an initial shift from a child, who was unaware of the implications of their undocumented status, to an adult who understood the ways they were regarded by the state. Once they were approved for DACA, our interview participants described a further shift in their social construction, and by extension, a shift in the ways they reacted to their new social positioning. These shifts suggest that respondents' awareness of their social construction as target populations shifted with policy changes that affected how they would be treated by the state. Undocumented youth in this sample learned new lessons about membership through their encounter with the state during the DACA application process.

Learning a Deviant Construction

Immigration policies regulate inclusion by defining the ways that interview respondents interact with the state. Before DACA was created, legal and social boundaries in the relationship of undocumented youth to the state were based on a social construction of the undocumented as negative or deviant.

As younger children in school, undocumented youth excel alongside their peers with little differentiation from other children. However, our interviews suggest that once undocumented youth's immigration status became visible in later childhood or adulthood, it shifted the way youth understood their membership. As youth learned they were undocumented, they reported interpreting their presence as causing damage to those that had legal status. They questioned their own deservingness. Though schools do not differentiate between students based on immigration status, once a student learned of his/her undocumented status, our respondents reported experiencing a shift in their feeling of membership and identity. As one respondent illustrated, realizing that she was undocumented affected the way that she understood her role in society. She explained:

> When I found out in middle school, I felt that I was in the wrong. That I had done something wrong. Because I was undocumented, I felt guilty like I was taking someone else's spot. I did pretty well in school, I got really good grades, I was in the orchestra, I was always first chair, I had leadership positions in clubs, so I felt like by being here- when I am not supposed to be- I felt that I was taking someone else's spot. Someone else could be that leader.

Respondents discussed how, as their restricted status became apparent to them, there was a change in the way that they understood their place in society. Because of negative social constructions of undocumented immigrants, the undocumented youth in this sample questioned their deservingness and their belonging. They became aware that they should stay hidden and undetected by the state in order to remain in the U.S. and avoid punishment.

The message of illegality that the state sent was internalized due to the efforts that undocumented immigrants must make to avoid detection. The need to avoid contact with authorities reinforced the public discourse surrounding undocumented immigrants, causing some respondents to view the negative constructions as true. As one respondent explained,

A lot of the negative feedback I get are online, reading through articles. I look at the comments, just to see what people think. A lot of the time it's negative. I remember when DACA first came out I was doing the same thing, reading through articles. Some of it was so harsh. Like it just hurt. I think part of it was because I agreed with them. Because I was feeling very guilty, I shouldn't be here, I'm not deserving of this. Because I secretly thought those things in my head, someone else saying them made it feel more real and made me feel like, oh I am in the wrong.

Undocumented youth must live under different rules than members of groups that are positively viewed by society, engaging in a process of system avoidance (Brayne, 2014) outside of educational institutions. If they do not remain hidden, undocumented youth are threatened with the punitive consequence of deportation. As undocumented individuals, respondents explained that their efforts to avoid detection reinforced a deviant social construction of themselves.

Deviant Perspectives on the State

For many DACA applicants, a program that offered stability seemed unrealistic after the defeat of the DREAM Act in 2010. Nineteen of the 20 youth had a vivid memory of President Obama's announcement that they would be allowed to apply for a social security number and work permit under DACA. Many interviewees described the program as an 'answered prayer' and 'what they had been waiting for', but even then, respondents' excitement was tempered by the distrust and fear they held of the government. The announcement was accompanied by skepticism that government would provide a beneficial policy to undocumented immigrants, and fear of the unknown consequences DACA might bring. By providing personal details to the state through the bureaucratic encounter of the DACA application process, undocumented interviewees had to violate one of their primary protective strategies: remaining invisible.

Respondents touched on the vulnerability that they felt in the initial stages of the application process. As a result of hiding from the state for much of their lives, it was a hurdle for respondents to accept that they must present themselves to the state in order to receive the benefits offered through DACA. Many respondents worried that unexpected consequences had the potential to be worse than the challenges they faced as undocumented immigrants. Some respondents initially did not want to apply for DACA:

To apply, I actually didn't want to do it. I was scared that it was a scam. I wasn't very hopeful. I feel like at this point I was just like this is my status and this is how it's going to be. I was really scared that because they would essentially have all of my information, where I lived, where I went to school, high school, where I grew up. So I was just really scared that this was, they were just going to track me down and have me deported.

Another respondent described his belief that it would be a negative experience to apply for DACA:

I was very skeptical moving forward. I don't want to, if it means I am going to get hurt and have to deal with more stress than I have already dealt with.

This illuminates the instability and fear that undocumented youth in this study experienced, and their expectation that this bureaucratic encounter with the government would produce punishment. Respondents interpreted DACA through the lens of one

constructed as deviant, because they had come to expect punitive treatment from the state. However, as undocumented immigrants, interview participants felt they had few options other than to apply to the program.

There were several strategies that undocumented youth employed to reduce the potential risk of the bureaucratic encounter of the DACA application. The first was gathering as much information as possible about DACA from sources such as forums on social media, and information sessions at schools or local churches. Applicants initially found it challenging to access information about the requirements of DACA. It became necessary to 'scratch around' to get details about who might be able to assist in the application process.

The second strategy was to wait. Several respondents waited to compile their applications until DACA information was officially published on a government website. Other applicants chose to wait several months while other youth applied so they could observe any potential problems, such as DACA being used to identify and deport undocumented immigrants.

The final strategy was to hire legal counsel to assist in the application process. Only two respondents applied for DACA without any type of legal counsel. The support of a lawyer was viewed as a source of security that provided extra assurance both psychologically and legally. Some respondents commented that though the forms were simple and they could have completed them on their own, they believed hiring a lawyer increased the possibility of approval. As one respondent explained:

> We were kind of afraid that if we filled out something wrong our chances of getting accepted were going to be very bleak, and then we couldn't really advocate for ourselves. We couldn't tell anybody 'I didn't know how to do it', so in that case it was more for reliability issues. The application itself was very simple.

Lack of confidence in dealing with immigration officials indicates undocumented youth did not feel powerful enough to interact directly with government. This mirrors theory on the social construction of target populations, which predicts that deviant populations do not have the tools to effectively advocate for their needs vis-à-vis the state. Youth experienced constant fear of direct contact with the government, and hiring a lawyer provided additional assurance during this high-risk encounter. Youth did not expect reliable, consistent decisions from the state, instead expressing a fear that the decisions of the bureaucrats handling their files could be random and unpredictable. Despite an ability to assess their personal eligibility for DACA using self-evaluation tools provided by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, respondents expressed a feeling of vulnerability in the application process and believed that their approval was up to chance. As one respondent noted:

> It's just all up to them, and to how merciful they are feeling the day they are checking yours. Because you don't know, you don't know who is deciding, you don't know who is looking at it, if they just randomly pick them or what.

Undocumented Immigrants as Americans

The youth in this study were aware of President Obama's 2012 speech and accorded it great regard. Obama's explanation of DACA eligibility relied on the idea of innocence, which

separated undocumented youth from other immigrants viewed as intentionally committing a crime by not entering the country through legal channels. President Obama explained that it would be unjust, 'To expel these young people ... simply because of the actions of their parents' (Obama, 2012). Additionally, Obama argued that the immigration system was broken and DACA helped to correct its unfairness:

> Imagine you've done everything right your entire life- studied hard, worked hard, maybe even graduated at the top your class- only to suddenly face deportation to a country that you know nothing about, with a language that you may not even speak (Obama, 2012).

Obama's rationale constructed these young students as hard working and therefore deserving of membership in U.S. society. He stressed their membership in the U.S. by highlighting an idealized image of a hard working American immigrant that is making clear contributions to the nation. His speech created a sympathetic image of undocumented youth as Americans who understand themselves as part of the country despite their lack of legal membership. Undocumented student youth are described as, 'talented young people, who, for all intents and purposes are American- they've been raised as Americans; and understand themselves to be part of the country' (Obama, 2012). By emphasizing the qualities that make undocumented youth, particularly students, deserving of more beneficial policies, President Obama's speech encouraged a shift in the way that undocumented youth were seen by the public. Finally, Obama's speech created normative expectations by assigning value to activities that are considered to be American. Calling attention to their idealized American characteristics, DACA offered youth permission to embrace an American identity.

The President's speech offered justification for why this group of undocumented youth-young students and veterans- were deserving of treatment that differed from that accorded to the rest of the undocumented population. The youth in this study frequently referenced Obama's speech. As one respondent noted:

> I am assuming that Obama understands this, that he had a concept of us individuals brought here from childhood, we are Americans. But we aren't legal, so we aren't Americans, but we aren't Peruvians, Nicaraguans, Brazilians, Argentineans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, whatever it is the nationality that they came from. We aren't that because we weren't raised in that community.

Another respondent confirmed this characterization when expressing his own commitment and connection to the U.S. during his interview:

> When you pledge allegiance to the flag every day for ten years, it has to tell you something! I'm not doing the Mexican anthem; I don't even know it. (Recites the Pledge of Allegiance). We all went through 9/11, we all went through Katrina, we were not born here, but we went through the American life.

Through the creation of a new role with a positive social construction, President Obama provided the framework for undocumented youth to shed the image of the immigrant as a criminal and enter a new space deserving of membership.

A transition from Deviant to Deserving

As Schneider and Ingram (1993) predict, the types of policies awarded to less powerful populations are often temporary and rely on the applicant to present themselves to an agency to gain benefits. DACA encouraged undocumented youth to apply for the program through promised protection from deportation, a social security number and a temporary work permit. These policy tools were specific in that they directly addressed the instability that undocumented youth faced, but also provided an incentive to overcome reluctance engage in direct contact with government. No outreach or recruitment was provided to possible DACA applicants; the state instead relied on local organizations and the media to spread the information about how and where to apply. As Schneider and Ingram explain, the members of less powerful target populations are not sought out, but government 'Rel(ies) on those who are eligible to make their case to the agency itself' (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 339).

Demonstrating Worth During the Bureaucratic Encounter

A desire to become a 'deserving' DACA recipient instead of an 'undeserving' undocumented immigrant was apparent in respondents' efforts to demonstrate their worth to the U.S. government in their applications. Because of the delineation between 'good' and 'bad' members of the undocumented population, during the DACA application process one of the applicants' primary concerns was to demonstrate that they were deserving of the program. They did this by confirming their new social construction as hard-working individuals that were making contributions to the country. Undocumented youth approached the DACA application process as an effort to demonstrate that they were socially worthy of approval, in addition to technically qualifying for the program.

This dynamic became evident in respondents' reflections on the application itself. The questions on the application were impersonal, consisting of information such as transcripts, places of residence, birth date, and dates of entry into the country. A small box, intended for elaboration on their financial need for a work permit, was seen as the only opportunity to offer the reviewer insight into who they were as individuals. In order to challenge the impersonal nature of the application, participants consistently included more information and documentation than necessary when submitting the application. This practice stemmed from a desire to be seen in a positive light when their applications were reviewed. Applicants tried to illustrate their positive qualities by including evidence of their accomplishments, ranging from academic and volunteer positions to black belts in karate. These extra documents were intended to demonstrate their value and confirm that they were worthy of the benefits of DACA and, by extension, permanent membership to the U.S. As one respondent explained, when he submitted his application he, 'wanted to overwhelm them with diplomas and stuff, just to make sure.' DACA applicants attempted to challenge the constructs of unauthorized immigrants as criminals and deviants by displaying their 'American' accomplishments. One applicant pointed to the variety of ways that she tried to demonstrate her worth:

> I got letters of recommendations from places that I volunteered. Letters from places I did community service, and my pastor. To show my good moral character. It wasn't necessary but I wanted them to look at my application and be like, 'I would like this person to be my

neighbor.' I wanted them to get insight as to who I am. I wanted them to look at me and say, 'Here is this undocumented person who has done more than what a lot of people who were born here have done', you know? I definitely wanted to show them that I was a good citizen. Why would they not want me here?

Respondents' strived to demonstrate that they had something to offer the nation, and wanted this to be taken into consideration when they were evaluated for DACA. When considered in the context of Obama's announcement about the program, these behaviors can be understood as a process of aligning themselves with the social construction of hard-working students that deserve relief from their situations because they are legitimate members of the country.

Respondents understood that the submission of additional documents was not required, and some who volunteered at DACA application clinics suspected that the barrage of unrequested documents might even be irritating or burdensome to the reviewer. Nonetheless, because of the impersonal nature of the bureaucratic encounter, undocumented youth employed a strategy of personalization in an effort to improve their chances of acceptance.

Adopting a Deserving Construction

A new narrative around undocumented students justified providing youth with beneficial policies. With a shift in social construction, youth approved for DACA moved from a hidden place outside the bounds of membership to recognition by the government, and deservingness. By extension, respondents' understandings of themselves began to change. This was evident in the narratives of the interviewees, and supports the theory that interaction with the state informs citizens' understandings of their membership in society (Soss, 2002). One respondent expressed a new sense of belonging in the U.S.:

At first I was embarrassed, but now that I know that there are many students, I'm not embarrassed. And also I am not embarrassed because I got DACA because I want to become a better person. I want to do something with my life, continue college and get a job, so since it is helping me I am not really embarrassed anymore.

The shifting social construction of undocumented youth was further reinforced because DACA provided a new label of identification for them to use, which differentiated them from other undocumented individuals. Participants in this study recognized the importance of this re-assignment. As one respondent illustrated, DACA status allowed her to shift her identity:

Now that we are DACAmented, it's different. But when you are undocumented a lot of people see you really badly. They see you really badly. They think that you come here to steal their jobs, but it doesn't always work that way.

One respondent spoke directly to the impact that Obama's announcement had on perceptions of the undocumented youth population. When she heard President Obama's speech, the respondent remembered her reaction:

Overall, it was validation. Seeing that we weren't necessarily in the shadows anymore. It was the President of the United States, the highest here in America, saying that, "We know that you

are here, we are acknowledging you, this is how we are going to help you." For everyone else to see that now.

The requirements and selectivity of the DACA application process created a separation between those immigrants that are deserving and those that are not. Respondents received a new message from the state that altered the way they viewed themselves. One respondent described the acceptance he felt from the state:

> When I got accepted I was so happy. I almost cried, this is a big dream, a big step, the U.S. is granting you permission to stay, you should feel honored for that. I do feel like it's personal, because I sent them all of my achievements.

As government modified its treatment of DACA recipients, the respondents' narratives around their identities showed a process of self-reassignment into new categories of membership in the country.

Differentiating Between 'Deserving' Immigrants and 'Undeserving' Immigrants

While DACA confirmed what respondents believed about their membership as Americans, they faced a conflict because many of the respondents had family members with different classifications under immigration law. Respondents found the negative and deviant social construction to be in conflict with how they viewed their families and friends, who continued to be treated as deviants by public policy. DACA applicants in the study were aware of individuals who they believed were similar to themselves and deserving of DACA, but excluded from the program. A respondent described her reaction when she found out that she was not eligible for the program, 'I had this illusion that I would get DACA, but when I didn't, I had this feeling, 'I haven't done anything bad. Why am I still getting this different?' The state's dividing lines reinforced dependence on what seemed like arbitrary government decisions, and created categories of immigrants that were viewed as more deserving than others. The suggestion that some undocumented immigrants were more deserving than others served to reinforce the binary of membership between insiders and outsiders, and those who remained on the outside had no way to penetrate the dividing line.

Other undocumented youth believed denial of DACA was an indication that unsuccessful applicants were 'bad immigrants' who were not deserving. Receiving DACA distanced one from immigrants that continued to embody a deviant social construction. Three respondents indicated that youth who were denied DACA were personally responsible for their ineligibility. As one respondent explained:

> If something opens up, we want to be clean. A lot of people probably went the sketchy way of doing stuff, which now, after DACA it was an open door, but a lot of people couldn't do it because their parents or they did sketchy things in the past.

DACA recipients in this study attempted to distance themselves from the image of the undocumented immigrant as a criminal that cheats the system. Approval for DACA became an affirmation of the youth's worth to U.S. society. One respondent explained the importance of immigrants bringing value to the U.S.:

If you have nothing to contribute, you might as well go back. You are actually not moving forward here, you are not working on something, why are you going to take advantage of free programs that only U.S. citizens can get? Why don't you just go back? Save yourself the trouble and stop making us look bad.

By becoming approved for DACA, undocumented youth saw themselves as following the rules, which in their minds was the opposite of an 'illegal immigrant'. Respondents could shed their association with the deviant, undocumented population and move to closer to becoming accepted members of society.

CONCLUSION

Policies can shape target populations' self-perception, as their interactions with the government become lessons about citizenship. In this study, we found that undocumented migrant youth learned political lessons during their bureaucratic encounter with the state, and experienced clear shifts in their self-perception as the social construction of their target population shifted in broader society. Respondents provided reflections on the ways in which messages of deservingness and deviance affected their lives after DACA. While it was evident that a transition from deviant to deserving had taken place, many of the youth were able to identify spaces where the legacy of their deviant construction continued to follow them. One respondent explained this confusion:

There are changes and there are still some things that are the same. Some of the changes are, like, they say that you are safer out on the street with a license and stuff, ID and no deportation. But that doesn't take away the fear if you see a Border Patrol Agent; then you are like 'Wait, oh no, they can't do anything anymore'. But you are still living with fear sometimes, you just forget about it. They pretty much teach you to be afraid, and you kind of have to protect yourself out there.

Undocumented youth in this study found that DACA approval assisted them in moving away from the deviant social construction of their childhood. However, DACA applicants' continued fear of encountering the state and belief that its actions are unpredictable show the power of the lessons of deviance from their youth. While a shift to deservingness occurred as respondents found more spaces in society where they were treated positively by the state, they continued to carry threads of their past identification as deviant.

In addition to being shaped by a long history of fear of deportation, our respondents' continued reluctance to interact with the state may stem from the fact that even U.S. citizens from vulnerable populations often feel uneasy about encountering the state. Disadvantaged and minority communities have disproportionately high levels of encounters with government, and the staff who work in these bureaucracies have disproportionate influence on the lives of the vulnerable (Lipsky, 1980). Public bureaucracies impose penalties for noncompliance with program requirements, and engage in regular and at times highly invasive forms of monitoring (Abramovitz, 1988; Gordon, 1994; Keiser & Soss, 1998; Korteweg, 2003; Mead, 1997, 1998; Schram, Fording, & Soss, 2011; Soss, 2002). Research finds that communities of color are inordinately affected by the monitoring, compliance, and punishment activities of the state (Goldberg, 2007; Lieberman, 1998; Schram, 2005; Schram et al., 2011;

Schram, Soss, Fording, & Houser, 2009; Wacquant, 2009). Our respondents are correct that bureaucrats do behave in ways that may seem arbitrary, as their treatment of clients and decisions on benefits are shaped by constructions of deservingness (Altreiter & Leibetseder, 2015; Djuve & Kavli, 2015; Riccucci, 2005). Informal practices and procedural discretion can make bureaucratic encounters particularly complex, confusing, and difficult to navigate, especially for the vulnerable (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2010). With this knowledge, it would be unreasonable to expect a complete absence of fear of the bureaucratic encounter, even in light of one's newly forming positive social construction of the self.

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