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Walden University

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

The Effect of Federal and State-Level Policy on Undocumented Childhood Arrivals

by

Kim Kaczmarowski

MSW, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1999

BA, St. Norbert College, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Social Work

Walden University

February 2023

Abstract

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) provides a 2-year reprieve from deportation and a work permit for eligible undocumented childhood arrivals. It does not provide a pathway to citizenship or confer rights or protections enjoyed by those with permanent legal status leaving recipients in a constant state of legal limbo. State-level policy can mitigate or exacerbate obstacles faced by this population. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore how federal and state-level policy in a conservative location shaped experiences of membership or exclusion. Responses were examined using segmented assimilation theory to identify layered contexts of reception. The central research question was "how has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?" Phone interviews were conducted with five DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals with thematic coding for data analysis. Results revealed a combination of positive and negative nested contexts among federal, state, and local levels. DACA removed barriers to employment and a driver's license, while state policy increased obstacles in higher education through higher tuition costs and lack of state financial aid. Institutional and local contexts were instrumental in alleviating the cost of higher education and fostering a sense of belonging. There is a social change opportunity for advocacy at the state and national levels for more inclusive policy and creation of a pathway to permanent legal status for undocumented childhood arrivals.

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Dedication

To my children, Aiden, and Aria. You are my soulmates. I love you more than you will ever know. May you always have the courage and determination to follow your dreams.

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First, I want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Walker, my committee chair. I truly appreciate the time you invested in my dissertation journey and your dedication to my success. Your guidance has been invaluable. Thank you to my second committee member Dr. Mary Larscheid and URR Dr. Alice Yick for all your help and support. I also want to thank the researchers and colleagues who generously offered their time and expertise to help develop my interview guide: Dr. Cheryl Carpenter-Siegel, Dr. Benjamin Roth, Dr. Lisa Martinez, Dr. Kara Cebulko and Dr. Alexis Silver.

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Lastly, thank you to the participants in this study for giving me a glimpse into your lives. This work would not be possible without you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The plight of immigrants in the United States has gained greater attention over the past several years. It is estimated that the United States was home to approximately 44.9 million foreign-born individuals in 2019, or 13.7% of the total population (Esterline & Batalova, 2022). Though most of these individuals were legal permanent residents, approximately 11-12 million people were unauthorized immigrants (Ortega et al., 2019). Undocumented immigrants are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation including low wages, dangerous working conditions, poor housing, and lack of access to basic services due to their legal status (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Coutin, 2013; Hardina, 2014; Jansson, 2014). Undocumented childhood arrivals, children who immigrated to the United States before the age of 18, are exposed to the same inequities as adult undocumented immigrants and encounter various structural barriers when planning for their future. Upon entering adulthood, undocumented childhood arrivals face obstacles to employment since they cannot legally work without work authorization (Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). Undocumented youths are often unable to pursue a higher education due to state residency requirements and financial barriers (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Martinez, 2014; National Immigration Law Center [NILC], n.d.-a; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). The health and wellbeing of undocumented youths are compromised. Undocumented childhood arrivals encounter challenges accessing health care since they are excluded from Medicaid and health

exchanges through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and are unable to obtain health insurance through an employer (Marrow & Joseph, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). Researchers have described a myriad of negative psychological symptoms that stem from undocumented status including, but not limited to fear of deportation and feelings of uncertainty regarding the future (Alif et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017; Stewart, 2014). Despite growing up in the United States, undocumented youths reported they found it difficult to identify as an American due to the exclusion their legal status produced (Abrego, 2018; Aranda et al., 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014). As a result, undocumented childhood arrivals had greater difficulty than their citizen peers planning for their future and establishing a life in adulthood (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Rosenberg et al., 2020).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, is a federal program that was created to aid children who immigrated to the United States by providing a temporary work permit and legal presence for 2 years (Benuto et al., 2018; Hardina, 2014; Napolitano, 2012; NILC, n.d.-b; Schmid, 2013). Since implementation, approximately 793,000 unauthorized immigrants received DACA status (Benuto et al., 2018; Esterline & Batalova, 2022; Zong et al., 2017). DACA provided some benefits and security, but recipients remained in a state of limbo with the omnipresent possibility of losing DACA status or the program being terminated (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016;

Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). The tenuousness of legal liminality prevents recipients from fully accessing the rights, services, and protections enjoyed by those with citizenship or other permanent legal statuses that only a pathway to permanent legal status would provide (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Cebulko, 2014; Coutin, 2013; Menjívar, 2006). At the state level, various states passed policies to alleviate challenges not addressed by DACA in the form of in-state tuition, financial aid for higher education, and the ability to apply for a vocational license (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Mathema, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2021; NILC, n.d.-a). Not all states provide this relief; hence, not all undocumented childhood arrivals have equal access to higher education, employment, and other rights that depend upon the state context in which they reside.

In this study I focused on one state that is representative of a less inclusive state toward immigrants, Wisconsin, to examine the effects of DACA and related state-level policy on perceptions of social exclusion. My aim was to understand the perceived central issues for undocumented childhood arrivals as a subgroup of those in similar circumstances and contexts through exploration of participant experiences and views regarding several indicators of social exclusion: educational access, employment opportunities, and belonging. I wanted to understand how inhospitable state climates increased or reduced the effects of exclusion and the extent this contributed to the social exclusion experienced by legally liminal youths. Researchers have explored challenges

faced by undocumented childhood arrivals prior to DACA and the success of DACA in alleviating these challenges since its implementation; however, this research largely focused on populations in states with supportive state-level policies for undocumented childhood arrivals (e.g., Aranda et al., 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016; Schmid, 2013). There are few studies that explored these issues in conservative/hostile locations. Furthermore, DACA is a relatively recent program and additional research is necessary to determine longer-term effects of the program. This study is particularly relevant due to the fluctuating social and political support for DACA and the ever-evolving contexts of reception at the state level. There is a social change opportunity to inform social workers of the predominant issues facing undocumented childhood arrivals, to potentially improve the quality of life for this population through social work services, and to influence how future policy is developed and implemented.

This chapter begins with a background describing the challenges faced by undocumented childhood arrivals and the implementation of DACA and related policy. Subsequently, I describe the problem, purpose, and central research question that was the focus of this study. I also introduce the theoretical framework that I used as a lens to analyze the results followed by a description of the research methods employed. I provide a list of important definitions with a subsequent discussion on assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of this study. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on the significance and social change implications of this research and a final summary.

Background

To understand the circumstances surrounding undocumented childhood arrivals and the DACA program, a background on the challenges faced by this population and the evolution of DACA and related policy is provided. Current immigration laws base undocumented children's status on parent's immigration status; hence, if their parents are undocumented, immigrant children do not have a pathway to obtain legal status even though they may have lived most of their lives in the United States (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Mallet et al., 2017; Schmid, 2013; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). These children are often unaware of their legal status until they reach milestones requiring identification or a Social Security number such as wanting to apply for a job, obtain a driver's license, or apply for college (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020). The discovery of undocumented status is often accompanied by shock and a myriad of negative emotions including anxiety, confusion, frustration, anger, despair, fears of being detained by authorities or deported and insecurity about their future (Aranda et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Siemons et al., 2017; Stewart, 2014). Once undocumented youths realize the exclusions of

undocumented status, some develop ambivalence toward their identity as an American (Abrego, 2018; Aranda et al., 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014).

Undocumented status also creates structural barriers in education, employment, and access to public benefits. There are approximately 98,000 undocumented students who graduate high school each year in the United States but less than 10% attend college because of ineligibility for state and federal financial aid and state residency requirements barring entry to some colleges (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2015; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Martinez, 2014; NCSL, 2021; NILC, n.d.-a; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016; Zong & Batalova, 2019). Since not all states allow undocumented students to pay lower in-state tuition rates, cost is often prohibitive to enrollment (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Silver, 2012; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). Immigrants without documentation cannot legally obtain employment so even if an undocumented child attends college, opportunities for economic advancement are limited (Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Martinez, 2014; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). Legal status is also required to access many public programs. Medicaid disallows undocumented immigrants from accessing benefits and the recently created health exchanges through the ACA also exclude undocumented individuals (Marrow & Joseph, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Since undocumented youths cannot legally obtain employment, they are unable to access health insurance through an employer and most cannot afford the excessive cost of purchasing private health insurance (Marrow & Joseph, 2015). As a

result, many undocumented youths go without health insurance coverage, and consequently without regular health care.

Between 2001 and 2017, Congress considered various proposals of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act, which would have provided undocumented children with a conditional path to legal status (American Immigration Council [AIC], 2021). The DREAM Act included the following criteria for prospective applicants: they must have entered the United States prior to the age of 16; maintained continuous residency in the United States for 5 years; had been admitted to a technical college or institution of higher education, had graduated from high school or completed a high school equivalent degree (GED certificate), or was enrolled in secondary school or GED program; and did not have a criminal history including any significant misdemeanor or felony convictions, nor were considered a threat to national security or public safety (AIC, 2021; Kim. 2013; Schmid, 2013). Qualified individuals would have been granted conditional permanent residence (CPR) status and provided the opportunity to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status through completion of 2 years of higher education or technical college, 2 years of military service with an honorable discharge, or employment over a period of 3 years (AIC, 2021; Kim, 2013; Schmid, 2013). After 5 years of LPR status and completion of the aforementioned criteria, an individual would have been eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process (AIC, 2021). It is estimated that 1.76 million unauthorized immigrants who were brought to the United States as children would have been eligible for the benefits under the DREAM Act (Hipsman et al., 2016). Despite widespread support, none of the DREAM Act proposals

were enacted, which came closest to passing in 2010 where it fell five votes short of the 60 needed in the Senate (AIC, 2021). Since then, several versions of legislation like the DREAM Act have been introduced into Congress including a recent policy proposal from the Biden administration; however, Congress did not address the issue (AIC, 2021; The White House, 2021).

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced an executive order that would create a new program that would be implemented by his administration (Obama, 2012). In this announcement he described the failure of Congress to pass legislation providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented childhood arrivals; hence, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would create a temporary program that would defer deportation for eligible undocumented childhood arrivals who did not pose a threat to national security or public safety (Obama, 2012). President Obama referred to this as "a temporary stopgap measure that lets us focus our resources wisely while giving a degree of relief and hope to talented, driven, patriotic young people" (Obama, 2012, para. 9). On the same day, Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano issued a memorandum to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding the new process for enforcing immigration laws for undocumented childhood arrivals, a program that would be referred to as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) that would defer deportation proceedings for 2 years and provide work authorization for qualified individuals and could be renewed every 2-year period (Napolitano,2012; NILC, n.d.-b).

This program took effect on August 15, 2012 (Napolitano,2012). Undocumented immigrants could apply for DACA benefits if they met the following criteria:

- came to the United States under the age of 16
- has continuously resided in the United States for a least 5 years preceding the date of this memorandum [August 15, 2012] and is present in the United States on the date of this memorandum
- is currently in school, has graduated from high school, has obtained a general education development certificate, or is an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States
- has not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor offense, multiple misdemeanor offenses, or otherwise poses a threat to national security or public safety
- is not above the age of 30 (Napolitano, 2012, para. 2)

The memorandum noted that the requirement that applicants be 15 years old at the time of their application would be waived if they were in removal proceedings or had received a final removal or voluntary departure order but would be excluded from eligibility if they were in immigration detention (Napolitano, 2012). Since the DACA program was created through executive action, it remained vulnerable to amendment or termination in shifting political climates, as evidenced by the attempted dissolution of the program by the Trump administration and subsequent court challenges (McEvoy, 2020; NILC, n.d.-b). A recent ruling in the Texas U.S. District Court on July 16, 2021, stopped new DACA applications from being processed (USCIS, n.d.-a). The Biden administration and the DHS announced

a DACA final rule that essentially replaced the original program with new DACA policy guidance that went into effect October 31, 2022, and maintained the existing eligibility criteria and application processes for DACA benefits (Napolitano, 2012; NILC, n.d.-b; USCIS, n.d.-a; DHS, 2022). Despite this change, the 2021 injunction remained in effect and new DACA applications were not being processed (NILC, n.d.-b; USCIS, n.d.-a; DHS, 2022), leaving those who were undocumented stuck without an avenue to legalize their status. It is expected that the legality of the DACA final rule will be challenged in court (Garcia, 2022). The continued vacillation of the program highlights the liminality of DACA status and the tenuousness of its benefits. Without a permanent legal solution, undocumented childhood arrivals will continue to live in legal limbo with the risk of the program being terminated.

Since DACA's implementation, researchers have investigated the impact of the program. Results from these studies indicated that DACA increased access to higher education (Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Pérez, 2014), expanded and increased employment opportunities (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Jones, 2020; Liu & Song, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pérez, 2014; Pope, 2016), provided greater access to health care (Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Patler et al., 2015a; Pérez, 2014; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014), improved psychological well-

being (Alif et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2019; Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Panjwani, 2019; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017; Venkataramani et al., 2017), led to an increased sense of belonging (Abrego, 2018; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016), and resulted in greater participation in political and civic activities by undocumented youths and DACA recipients (Dao, 2017; Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Pérez, 2014; Williams, 2016). While DACA provided some temporary protections and benefits to eligible applicants, it did not provide permanent legal status or a pathway to citizenship (Napolitano, 2012). Hence, the program is limited in that it creates a status of legal liminality. Furthermore, there are barriers to social inclusion that remain, such as the cost of college enrollment (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). Other measures beyond DACA are necessary to support greater inclusion for undocumented childhood arrivals.

At the state level, states cannot provide legal status to undocumented immigrants, but they may pass legislation to address collateral issues that result from undocumented status. Some states enacted policies that provided benefits to DACA-eligible populations including access to drivers' licenses, in-state college tuition, reduced tuition in state public universities, and access to professional licenses (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Mathema, 2018; NCSL, 2021, 2022; NILC, n.d.-a; Pérez, 2014; Sahay et al., 2016), while others remained inhospitable to undocumented childhood arrivals. The state of Wisconsin does not provide state financial aid for undocumented students, including

DACA recipients, charges out of state tuition for these groups in public colleges and universities, requires a Social Security number for those applying for a driver's license and for many professional licenses, and has contracts between local law enforcement and ICE in several counties throughout the state (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.; Olivas, 2017; State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation [DOT], n.d.-b; ICE, n.d.). Hence, Wisconsin is representative of a conservative/hostile state with its lack of supportive policy for undocumented childhood arrivals and anti-immigrant legislation. Policy variation among inclusive/hospitable states and those that are conservative/hostile toward undocumented immigrants can have major effects on an individual's experience of membership or exclusion. Undocumented childhood arrivals in states with more inclusive policy encountered less barriers and felt more optimistic in their ability to control their life path (Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Sahay et al., 2016). Individuals in more hostile state environments continued to feel systematically excluded despite DACA benefits (Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Macías, 2018; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). DACA alone did not alleviate participants' feelings of legal liminality, nor did it provide them a sense of valid presence in the United States, but state-level policy was instrumental in fostering a sense of legitimacy (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Sahay et al. (2016) described the condition of "legally, illegal" (p.55) whereby DACA status further stigmatized immigrant youths in inhospitable/hostile states. Roth (2019) noted that the social exclusion and legal liminality of DACA in hostile locations constituted a form of legal violence against undocumented childhood arrivals. Though DACA promoted greater social inclusion overall, recipients were acutely aware of

their tenuous legal status in hostile states where their presence and benefits were contested (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Roth, 2019). Perceptions of belonging depended upon the level of receptiveness of the state climate in which they resided (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). The uncertainty associated with legally liminal status might have been muted in more welcoming states (Abrego, 2018), and intensified in states with harsh, anti-immigrant policies (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Consequently, state policy was a crucial component in addressing exclusion and vulnerability experienced by undocumented youths and DACA recipients.

While there is a considerable body of research on undocumented childhood arrivals receiving DACA in states with supportive state-level policy, there were only a few studies I located that explored the experiences of DACA recipients in inhospitable, conservative states (see Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Macías, 2018; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Three of these studies focused on higher education in their respective states. Sahay et al. (2016) examined the perceptions of the influence of DACA status on aspirations for higher education in North Carolina, Macías (2018) investigated DACA students' understanding of their financial barriers to higher education and the methods they employed in attempt to finance their education in Ohio, while Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2020) studied the experiences of Latina female college students with DACA status in Georgia. Two studies, Cebulko and Silver (2016) and Roth (2019), examined membership, belonging, and social exclusion as it pertained to DACA and state policy. Notably, Cebulko and Silver compared two state contexts, one hostile and one welcoming, to determine the extent state policy mitigated or exacerbated exclusion. Given

the limited research in inhospitable states, research is necessary in these locations to ascertain if undocumented childhood arrivals continue to experience barriers to social and economic integration and how state-level policy interacts with federal policy to influence this process. I sought to fill this gap by investigating how DACA and lack of supportive policy in Wisconsin affected undocumented childhood arrivals' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging.

Problem Statement

In the United States there is an estimated 1.15 million individuals that meet the eligibility criteria for DACA, with 611,270 DACA recipients as of March 2022 (Migration Policy Institute [MPI], n.d.). DACA represents a temporary solution to undocumented status for those who immigrated to the United States as a child. DACA provides a work permit and legal presence for 2 years for eligible applicants but does not provide a means toward permanent status, leaving members of this population in limbo and subject to the continuation or potential termination of the program (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014; Napolitano, 2012; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016; Schmid, 2013). Undocumented childhood arrivals have, in many ways, fully integrated into United States society as children, yet they are excluded from certain rights available to citizens or those with permanent status as they enter adolescence and adulthood (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Mallet et al., 2017; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Stewart, 2014). Though DACA allows for partial integration,

recipients remain in a prolonged state of legal liminality (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Coutin, 2013; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Menjívar, 2006; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Sahay et al., 2016; Stewart, 2014). Considering the limitations of DACA, some states advanced policies to provide additional benefits to undocumented childhood arrivals to allow greater educational access and social integration, but there are many states that remain hostile toward immigrants either through exclusionary policy or lack of supportive policy (Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Jones, 2020; Macías, 2018; NCSL, 2021, 2022; NILC, n.d.-a; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Hence, the experiences of DACA recipients can vary widely depending upon the state in which they reside. While many studies investigated the effects of DACA in supportive/hospitable states, few have been conducted in inhospitable locations. To address this gap, a qualitative study using a generic approach can yield greater understanding into how federal and state-level policy intersect in a conservative state in shaping the perceptions of inclusion or exclusion among undocumented childhood arrivals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy on undocumented childhood arrivals' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin. A generic qualitative approach was used with qualitative interviews for data collection and thematic coding for data analysis. Results from this study provide increased understanding of how federal and state policy in

conservative and/or hostile locations shape undocumented childhood arrivals' experience of membership or exclusion.

Research Question

How has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?

Theoretical Framework

I framed this study using contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory (see Portes & Zhou, 1993) to assess how temporary policy and layered contexts of reception shaped social exclusion of DACA recipients. Portes and Zhou (1993) asserted that not all immigrant groups follow the same pattern of integration into a host society and described several distinct pathways of incorporation. Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 2006) expanded segmented assimilation theory by delineating social factors such as individual human capital, family socioeconomic status, and modes of incorporation by the host society that create incongruent outcomes within and among immigrant groups. Of particular importance in segmented assimilation theory is the social context, or context of reception, by a host country in shaping outcomes of incorporation (Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Luthra et al., 2018; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Wong & Garcia, 2015; Xie & Greenman, 2011; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Immigration policy, social reception by the native population, and the institutions in which immigrants participate were instrumental in creating positive or negative outcomes for immigrant groups (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Luthra et al., 2018; Portes &

Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Notably, contexts of reception can vary across and within geographies. Distinct combinations of favorable and unfavorable circumstances create what Golash-Boza and Valdez (2018) described as “nested contexts of reception” (p. 536) that are characterized by layers of federal, state, local, and institutional policies and environments. DACA recipients experience a myriad of contexts at the state, local, and institutional levels that aid in incorporation or contribute to social exclusion. The use of contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory provided an opportunity to determine if nested contexts of reception existed within a less-welcoming state and to ascertain what contextual factors led to lesser or greater social inclusion for DACA recipients. Hence, this theory adequately framed the focus of this study and provided a lens through which participant experiences could be analyzed.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a generic qualitative approach using qualitative interviews to collect data. A generic qualitative design allows for a researcher to discover and understand the perspectives and worldview of participants (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Individual interviews can highlight participants’ experiences, understand how they make sense of and construct reality in relation to a phenomenon, and explore how individuals’ experiences and perspectives relate to and differ from other participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach allowed for an intent focus on perceptions of inclusion or exclusion among undocumented childhood arrivals. The population consisted of individuals who arrived in the United States as children, did not have permanent legal status, were recipients of DACA or DACA-eligible, were between the ages of 18 and 38

at the time of the study and resided in the state of Wisconsin. I used nonprobability, homogenous purposive sampling to generate a sample of participants who met the specific characteristics outlined above (see Patton, 2015). I used snowball sampling to increase sample size by asking participants for additional relevant contacts (see Patton, 2015). The final sample size of this study was five participants. To collect data, I conducted in-depth semi structured interviews over the phone. I transcribed data from interviews and analyzed this data using thematic coding which involved a process of identifying and labeling concepts, themes, events, and examples within the interview transcripts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). I followed a multistep process of coding beginning with an initial coding cycle where I labeled key participant responses, followed by the creation of categories under which I grouped initial codes across participant interviews, and I conducted a final analysis that identified the nature of emerging themes common among data sources.

Definitions

1.5 Generation: A term used to describe individuals who immigrated to the United States prior to the age of 18 but have integrated into most aspects of U.S. society, also referred to as undocumented childhood arrivals (Gonzales, 2009; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012).

Asylee: An individual who meets the definition of a refugee (see Refugee definition) and is either seeking admission to the United States through a port of entry or is already present in the United States (DHS, n.d.-a).

Citizenship: A legal status conferred through birth or granted through the naturalization process that provides basic rights and privileges in a country (Coutin, 2013; Menjívar, 2006).

Crimmigration: The convergence of criminal and immigration law that substantively and procedurally applies criminal law to immigration infractions (Stumpf, 2006).

Contexts of Reception: A combination of contextual factors that comprise of governmental policy, attitudes of reception by a native population, the size of a migrant group and its relationship to the dominant cultural group, and the institutions in which immigrants participate that affect outcomes of incorporation (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): A federal program for immigrants who arrived in the United States prior to the age of 16 that grants temporary deferment of deportation and work authorization for a period of 2 years, subject to renewal (USCIS, n.d.-c).

Deferred Enforced Departure (DED): A temporary relief from removal allowing foreign nationals to remain in the United States for a specified period; implemented by the President for individuals from designated countries and regions with political or civic conflict or natural disaster (USCIS, n.d.-d).

Documented Status: The state of a foreign-born individual in the United States with temporary or permanent legal authorization from the DHS to live and work in the United States, such as a temporary visa, Green Card, Temporary Protected Status (TPS),

DACA authorization, or other temporary or permanent authorization (USCIS, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-e, n.d.-f, n.d.-g, n.d.-h).

Employment Authorization: A term used to describe a card, referred to as the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) that is provided to an immigrant that gives them legal permission to work in the United States (USCIS, n.d.-e). To receive an EAD, individuals must fit within a specified category, including temporary or permanent workers, students and exchange visitors, and temporary visitors for business, and meet eligibility criteria within these categories (USCIS, n.d.-e). Employers within the United States are required to verify the validity of an EAD prior to hiring a new employee through an I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form (USCIS, n.d.-e).

Hospitable State: States in the United States with inclusive immigrant policies such as granting driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, providing access to college financial aid, and granting in-state college tuition to noncitizens (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Sahay et al., 2016).

Hostile State: States in the United States without state-level policy supportive toward immigrants or exclusionary immigrant policies as reflected by anti-immigrant views within that state (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Sahay et al., 2016).

Immigrant: A person who has departed his or her country of birth to permanently reside in a new country (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a).

Lawful Permanent Resident: An immigrant who is authorized to reside in the United States permanently through provision of a Green Card (USCIS, n.d.-f). Immigrants are eligible to receive a Green Card through family members that are U.S.

citizens, employment, refugee/asylee status, or through a variety of other special categories (USCIS, n.d.-g).

Limbo: A transitional state of uncertainty that may restrain or confine an individual (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

Legal Liminality: A state of legal limbo where an immigrant is granted some form of temporary legal status that is either renewed or the individual returns to a state of illegality (Menjívar, 2006). In some cases, this limbo can go on indefinitely when the temporary status is continually renewed, and no means of permanent legal status is obtained (Menjívar, 2006). This status is only valid if the policy granting temporary status remains in place.

Legal violence: The process by which social and structural inequities are codified into law which sanctions and justifies harmful treatment of immigrants (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

Naturalization: The process by which a foreign citizen or national can obtain U.S. citizenship after fulfillment of requirements established in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) (USCIS, n.d.-b).

Refugee: A person living in a host country that is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of origin due to fears of persecution for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, race, religion, nationality, or political affiliation (DHS, n.d.-a).

Segmented Assimilation Theory: A theory describing several distinct and segmented patterns of immigrant incorporation by which immigrant groups integrate into a host society (Portes & Zhou 1993).

Social Exclusion: The process where individuals are denied rights and access to opportunities and resources typically available to other members of society and creates barriers to full participation in society (Allman, 2013; Bellani & Fusco, 2018; Silver, 2015; Silver & Miller, 2003; Todman et al., 2009).

Temporary Protected Status (TPS): A status granted to foreign nationals who are already in the United States who originate from a foreign country designated for TPS by the secretary of Homeland Security due to an environmental disaster, ongoing armed conflict (such as civil war) or other extraordinary and temporary condition (USCIS, n.d.-h). Individuals granted TPS status are not removable from the United States for a period of 6 to 18 months, may obtain EAD, and may be granted travel authorization (USCIS, n.d.-h).

Undocumented Status: The state of a foreign-born individual living in the United States without authorization, either by entering without inspection or approval or remaining in the United States after authorization has expired or been revoked (DHS, n.d.-b).

Undocumented Childhood Arrival: An immigrant that entered the United States prior to the age of 18 and does not have legal documented status (Gonzales, 2009).

Assumptions

I used a generic qualitative approach with in-depth semi structured interviews to gather data on participants' perceptions, meanings, and interpretations (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In qualitative interviewing, a researcher relies on the information provided by participants. Therefore, I assumed that participants were reliable narrators of their

personal experiences and that they truthfully and accurately described past events to the best of their recollection. I assumed participants were knowledgeable about DACA and other state-level policies and articulated their personal experiences and opinions related to these policies. Additionally, I assumed participants were forthcoming and provided a thorough and detailed account of their experiences, and that these accounts were a valid means of understanding participants' reality. It is possible that, due to the topic of this study (immigration) and the characteristics of the target population (DACA recipients or undocumented childhood arrivals), participants were hesitant to be completely open and truthful. I assumed participants might have concerns about sharing personal information related to their immigration status. To mitigate these concerns, participant interviews were anonymous. I did not collect any identifying information beyond a phone number or email. Therefore, it was not possible for interview responses to be connected to any specific person. I used a consent process to inform participants that their interviews were confidential, that I would not gather names so participants could remain anonymous, I would keep participant contact information private, and my goal was solely to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences surrounding DACA and related state-level policy. I assumed that participants fully understood the ethical procedures as explained and that their concerns were minimal if they chose to participate. Finally, I assumed that participants were truthful when indicating they met the inclusion criteria to participate in this study, as there was no method to verify accuracy of this claim.

Scope and Delimitations

My focus in this study resulted from the need to understand the perceptions of inclusion or exclusion for undocumented childhood arrivals in conservative states. Since its implementation, DACA has helped numerous undocumented childhood arrivals by providing a temporary reprieve from deportation and legal access to employment (Napolitano, 2012). However, much of the research on DACA has been conducted in locations where additional government support has been provided at the state level. Focusing specifically on this population in inhospitable locations sheds some light on the human impact of federal policy at the local level, as well as how state-level policy interacts to enhance or hinder federal programs. The perceptions of those directly affected by DACA provide valuable insight into the current policy context and the larger immigration picture.

The participants of this study were individuals who arrived in the United States as children, did not have permanent legal status, were recipients of DACA or DACA-eligible, were between the ages of 18 and 38 at the time of the study and resided in the state of Wisconsin. I included both DACA recipients and DACA-eligible recipients in the scope of this study as both groups provided relevant insight into their perceptions of inclusion or exclusion related to federal and state-level policy. I limited the scope by state (Wisconsin) to focus on perceptions of participants who resided in a state considered inhospitable to immigrants. Immigrants with permanent legal status or those who arrived as an adult were excluded, as the scope of this study was limited to DACA recipients or DACA-eligible individuals. I did not exclude undocumented childhood arrivals by

country of origin or gender to account for diverse experiences of both men and women with various cultural backgrounds within the state of Wisconsin.

I selected segmented assimilation theory and contexts of reception as the framework for this study based upon previous research related to the social exclusion of undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients and the role that context has played in shaping their incorporation patterns (e.g., Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Coutin, 2013; Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Menjívar, 2006; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Roth, 2019; Stewart, 2014; Williams, 2016; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). I considered using other theories related to immigrant assimilation and acculturation; however, these perspectives failed to account for the unique contextual factors experienced by undocumented childhood arrivals that are unique from other generations of immigrants. In contrast to first- and second-generation immigrants, members of the 1.5 generation have largely assimilated into United States culture as they have lived most of their lives in the United States, speak English fluently, and have attended K-12 education (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Mallet et al., 2017; Schmid, 2013; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014), but are unable to access higher education (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Martinez, 2014; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016) and employment (Hardina, 2014; Kim, 2013; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b) due to lack of documentation. Other assimilation theories might be more appropriate for a study with

other generations of immigrants, whereas segmented assimilation theory and contexts of reception aligned well with the purpose of this study.

The potential for transferability refers to the degree to which results of this study are applicable to the general population and in other similar situations (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Thick description aids in transferability, which requires a researcher to describe the research study in abundant detail so that others can evaluate whether conclusions apply to other people, contexts, circumstances, and times (Amankwaa, 2016). To increase transferability, I provided information about the research process including the setting, participants, personal reflections on my role as researcher, and other relevant details. Although the results of this study are limited to undocumented childhood arrivals in Wisconsin and cannot be generalized to all members of this population, I aimed to incorporate variation in the participant pool that included both men and women of differing ages who were DACA recipients or DACA-eligible. The use of these strategies increased the potential for transferability to others in similar environments with similar immigration statuses.

Limitations

In generic qualitative research, limitations in transferability and dependability must be considered. Participants consisted of undocumented childhood arrivals who were current recipients of DACA or DACA-eligible living in Wisconsin. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), Wisconsin had a population of 5.89 million people in 2021. Approximately 5% of the population within the state was foreign-born; of those, 6,540 received DACA as of March 2020 (AIC, 2020). The population and demographics within

the state limited the availability of participants and may have affected the overall sample size. The final sample size of this was five participants. Due to the small sample size, there was not a wide variation in participant demographics, particularly in the areas of cultural/ethnic background, gender, geographical area of participants, and educational background. Transferability of results may be limited to other undocumented childhood arrivals with similar immigration statuses, similar demographic characteristics, in similar state contexts, and perhaps solely to those living in Wisconsin. I described characteristics of the sample participants and contextual factors in detail to allow readers to consider transferability of results (see Patton, 2015). Initial sampling involved nonprobability purposive sampling with snowball sampling to increase sample size as much as possible (see Patton, 2015). I intended to continue sampling until it was determined that no new information or themes were emerging from the data and that data saturation had been achieved, with a target sample of 15 participants. I conducted participant recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many organizations and businesses were shut down, operating with limited hours, or conducting business virtually or over the phone. I distributed flyers to organizations, but with limited organizations in operation and less walk-through traffic within organizations, there were less opportunities to reach potential participants. Furthermore, there were less community events to distribute flyers. I attempted to obtain additional participants via snowball sampling but did not secure additional participants in this way. Despite these challenges, I was able to obtain quality data from the sample of participants interviewed and obtained saturation in much of the data. Dependability refers to the consistency and accuracy in data collection,

analysis, and reporting (Amankwaa, 2016; Burkholder et al., 2016). To maximize dependability, I provided detailed descriptions of the research design and implementation processes, data collection procedures, data analysis processes, and reflexive processes for transparency (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004); however, as previously noted, the contextual factors of this study and limited availability of sample participants within the state may have affected dependability.

Another potential limitation is researcher bias. Qualitative research by nature is subjective. A researcher adopts an interpretive role and must be mindful of his/her identity in relationship to the context and setting of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My position as instructor requires me to be knowledgeable on most immigration topics and use this knowledge to educate students about these issues. This position has also allowed me to work with students who disclosed they were DACA recipients or had family members who were undocumented. In addition, I have personal relationships with individuals who emigrated from a foreign country that have experienced various phases of immigration status: from having a temporary work visa, to being a Green Card holder, to a naturalized citizen. It is reasonable to assume that these experiences might have skewed my perspective on immigration policy and DACA and led to bias in data reporting; however, I attempted to continually explore these potential biases in reflexive processes throughout this study to limit infiltration of bias into the study findings. Researchers also assume a position of authority and must pay close attention to interpersonal dynamics and broader issues of power that may shape the research process and influence data and results (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Participants and their families had

varying immigration statuses, and some did not have current legal documentation to reside in the United States. This may have limited the responses of participants who might have been wary of potential consequences of full disclosure. I assured participants of confidentiality through the informed consent process. I also informed participants that my sole interest in their immigration status and related experiences were for research purposes which hopefully increased participants' willingness to respond fully to all interview questions.

Significance

This research provides greater understanding into the effect of federal and state policy in shaping the lives of undocumented childhood arrivals. Due to their lack of legal status, undocumented childhood arrivals are a vulnerable population subject to social abuses and numerous forms of oppression with little support from social and political entities (Jansson, 2014; Kim, 2013; Schmid, 2013). Qualitative research can illuminate the true human impact of this issue by highlighting the obstacles experienced by this population because of their legally liminal status in hostile locations. This study is unique in that few studies have investigated the experiences of DACA recipients in conservative/hostile locations that do not have supportive state-level policy for undocumented childhood arrivals (see Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Macías, 2018; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Furthermore, the theoretical framework used in this study is unique in its application to DACA recipients. Segmented assimilation theory has largely been applied to first- and second-generation immigrants. The studies by Gonzales and Burciaga (2018), Zhou and Gonzales (2019), and Golash-

Boza and Valdez (2018) are the only studies I was able to locate that applied segmented assimilation theory and contexts of reception to the 1.5 generation and DACA recipients. Notably, Golash-Boza and Valdez focused specifically on state and local contextual factors (nested contexts) on educational incorporation in California, which is considered a welcoming and hospitable state for immigrants. I was unable to locate any studies that used this theoretical framework to examine the experiences of DACA recipients in a hostile and less-welcoming location. Finally, the results of this study are timely considering the recent rescission and reinstatement of DACA and continued vacillation of the program in the federal courts.

The results of this study have numerous implications for the social work profession. Social workers engage in direct practice with undocumented immigrants, often to address barriers in employment, housing, medical services, and other needs (Stewart, 2014). For social workers whose clients are undocumented childhood arrivals, this research can provide insight into specific areas of need for this population and provide direction for targeted services and intervention, such as assistance with college admissions, financial aid, employment, legal issues, and counseling and support (Kim, 2013). Furthermore, social work has a history of advocating for social justice on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed populations. The National Association of Social Workers (2021) Code of Ethics stated that social workers need to be aware of inequities in access to resources and opportunities and “should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice” (“Social and Political Action,” para. 1). Results from this study could inform

advocacy efforts toward policy change to obtain needed benefits, rights, and opportunities for undocumented childhood arrivals at the state and federal levels (see Jansson, 2014). Accordingly, positive social change can occur in the form of increased benefits at the state level, support for the continuation of DACA, and perhaps a permanent policy solution for undocumented childhood arrivals to obtain and maintain legal presence in the United States.

Summary

In 2012, DACA was created to assist undocumented childhood arrivals in overcoming barriers to social and economic integration due to their lack of legal immigration status (Benuto et al., 2018; Hardina, 2014; Napolitano, 2012; NILC, n.d.-b; Schmid, 2013). The program successfully allowed members of this population to obtain employment while alleviating fears of deportation. Despite these benefits, there remained many areas in which DACA recipients continued to face obstacles. In addition, recipients did not benefit equally across the nation. Undocumented childhood arrivals that resided in states that provided additional benefits reported greater success in achieving their goals, while those in states without state-level support continued to experience challenges. Wisconsin is representative of a conservative/hostile state in its policies toward immigrants as it does not provide state-level benefits to undocumented childhood arrivals beyond DACA (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.; Olivas, 2017; DOT, n.d.-b; ICE, n.d.). A focus on the challenges facing this population in a hostile location can determine if the benefits of DACA successfully mitigate social exclusion, or if state-level support is needed.

This chapter contained a background on undocumented childhood arrivals and the DACA program. Also provided was an outline of the problem statement, purpose of the study, research approach, and the theoretical framework that I used as the lens to examine the effects of DACA and state-level policy on undocumented childhood arrivals. I also included a discussion on additional considerations including assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth analysis of recent literature related to DACA and undocumented childhood arrivals in the United States within the past 5 years and since the implementation of DACA. Other studies in the literature review represent seminal works related to the topic of study. In Chapter 2 I also describe major themes from previous research and consider those that merit further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

DACA represents a temporary solution for undocumented childhood arrivals by providing a work permit and legal presence for 2 years, but it does not provide a means toward permanent status leaving members of this population in a state of limbo (Abrego & Lakhani 2015; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Roth, 2019; Swan & Clark-Ibáñez, 2017). Though undocumented childhood arrivals are integrated into United States society as children, they remain excluded from many rights and opportunities when they transition into adolescence and adulthood. DACA allows for partial integration, but recipients remain in a prolonged state of legal liminality that can affect their future potential and opportunities. Many states passed policies to provide additional benefits to DACA recipients; however, there are many states that remained hostile toward immigrants either through exclusionary policy or lack of supportive policy. Thus, the experiences of DACA recipients can vary widely depending upon the state in which they reside. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore undocumented childhood arrivals' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin. My aim was to gain a greater understanding of the intersection of DACA and state policy in a conservative location and its effect on recipients' experiences of membership or exclusion.

In this chapter, I provide the theoretical framework for this study and review relevant literature within the past 5 years and since the inception of DACA along with seminal works related to the topic of study. The literature is described in the context of contemporary immigration policy in the United States with a focus on the generation of

immigrants known as the 1.5 generation, also referred to as undocumented childhood arrivals. The themes that are prominent in the literature regarding legal liminality and the effects of DACA are discussed, along with the conceptual framework that was used to guide this study. There is also a discussion on relevant state policies and a focus on Wisconsin state policy as it pertains to undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients.

The chapter begins with a focus on segmented assimilation theory and contexts of reception which served as the lens for exploring the effects of legally liminal status on perceptions of social exclusion for undocumented childhood arrivals in the state of Wisconsin. The subsequent section is a review of the role of the convergence of criminal and immigration law on contemporary immigration policy in the United States, followed by a discussion on the 1.5 generation of immigrants, the DACA program, and legal liminality as it pertains to immigration status. The section that follows explores the prominent themes from prior research on the effects of DACA, namely economics and employment, education, health and wellbeing, belonging/identity, and civic engagement. The final section is a discussion on the variation of policy among state contexts related to undocumented youths and DACA recipients and a review of the policies in the state of Wisconsin.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review included peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, dissertations, research reports, and trusted websites, including reports from the AIC, MPI, DHS, the National Association of Social Workers, NILC, Higher Ed Immigration Portal,

and the USCIS. The following search engines and databases were used: Walden University's Library, Academic Search Complete, Complementary Index, EBSCO Discovery Service, Education Source, Gale Academic OneFile Select, ProjectMUSE, ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, ScienceDirect, Social Sciences Citation Index, SocINDEX with Full Text, Google, and Google Scholar. The following is a list of key terms I used (alone and in combination) to identify relevant literature: *1.5 generation, DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, undocumented childhood arrivals, undocumented youths, DREAM Act, social exclusion, social inclusion, belonging, undocumented immigrant, undocumented status, Wisconsin, immigration policy, immigration, social work, green card, visa, naturalization, employment authorization, temporary protected status, deferred enforced departure, American Dream and Promise Act, immigration limbo, legal limbo, liminal legality, segmented assimilation theory* and other key words related to the topic. I also used reference lists of reviewed articles to search for specific authors and article titles that were relevant to my research. I aimed at finding articles within a 5-year timeframe of my study. However, since the DACA program was implemented in 2012, I also reviewed seminal research dating back to the beginning of the program.

I used an iterative search process to review literature that began with an initial search of key terms. I reviewed these sources to evaluate their relevance to the topic of study. Articles that were considered relevant were downloaded, labeled by author, date, and title, and saved into folders labeled by subtopic for easy identification. As I reviewed each article, significant material was highlighted for future reference. When applicable,

additional sources were noted in text, located in the reference list, and later researched as additional sources of information. I continued this process until no apparent new sources were identified. I then created a matrix to record article citations, main ideas and themes present in the article, and any other pertinent information. As themes become more apparent, I created an outline of themes with relevant articles and included them in the literature review.

Theoretical Framework

Segmented Assimilation Theory

Segmented assimilation theory was originally proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993) to describe incorporation patterns of post 1965 immigrants that did not align with previous assimilation theories. Their theory was built on the idea that not all immigrants followed similar paths of incorporation but, rather, because the United States is highly stratified, stratification by race and class intersected to produce segmented pathways of incorporation (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Portes & Zhou 1993; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Portes and Zhou proposed several pathways of assimilation by which immigrants might have integrated into a host society. The first pathway was a straight-line assimilation pattern where an immigrant was increasingly integrated and acculturated into society and achieved upward mobility by adapting to White-middle class culture; the second pathway involved a trajectory of downward assimilation into society's underclass; the third pathway involved a combination of economic upward mobility through socioeconomic incorporation into a host country's mainstream with selective acculturation where an immigrant community deliberately preserved their culture, values, norms, and community

institutions from their country of origin (Portes et al. 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1994; Xie & Greenman, 2011; Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 2006) expanded segmented assimilation theory by delineating social factors including individual human capital, family socioeconomic status, and modes of incorporation by the host society that created disparate outcomes for immigrant groups. Since it was proposed, segmented assimilation theory was used to assess incorporation patterns of a variety of immigrant groups, mainly first- and second-generation immigrants, and more recently, undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients.

Contexts of Reception

One major aspect emphasized by segmented assimilation theory was the social context, or context of reception, by a host country that shaped outcomes of incorporation (Luthra et al., 2018; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Xie & Greenman, 2011; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Relevant governmental policies, the size of the migrant group and its relationship to the dominant cultural group, and the institutions in which immigrants participated, such as the labor market or educational system, were instrumental in determining settlement processes (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Luthra et al., 2018). Positive modes of incorporation enhanced individual-level resources while negative contexts overrode individual-level resources or magnified deficits in this area (Luthra et al., 2018). According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 2006) the most influential mode of incorporation was marked by a hostile government and negative societal reception that yielded a negative outcome for immigrant adults and their children. Immigration law was instrumental in shaping contexts of reception for

immigrants. Recent changes in U.S. immigration policy created progressively harsh contexts characterized by a myriad of limitations and intense enforcement toward undocumented immigrants (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Menjívar, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Laws increasingly associated *immigrant* with *criminal* through the convergence of civil immigration policy with criminal law for the purpose of border and interior social control (Chacón 2012; Furman et al., 2012; Leyro & Stageman, 2018; Menjívar, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Stumpf, 2006). Menjívar and Abrego (2012) argued that this legal restructuring promoted a negative perception that both enabled dehumanizing acts to be perpetrated against immigrants and inherently justified this mistreatment because immigrants broke the law.

As immigration law and criminal law increasingly intertwined, overall immigration policy became more restrictive. Immigrants were left with fewer opportunities to legalize their status and often trapped in a liminal legal state indefinitely (Coutin, 2013; Menjívar, 2006; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Though many programs (DED, TPS, DACA) were created for humanitarian reasons, the limitations to their benefits created structural and symbolic barriers for immigrants leaving them vulnerable to cumulative, long-term damage (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Menjívar, 2006; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Abrego and Lakhani (2015) found that immigrants under these programs experienced “blocked mobility, persistent fear of deportation, and instability, confusion, and self-blame” (p. 287) which shaped immigrants’ incorporation in the United States. Their findings suggested that even when immigrants were lawfully present in the United States, they experienced the harsh consequences and dehumanizing effects of

immigration policy. Furthermore, there were associated rewards or penalties depending upon level of legal status (citizen, LPR, TPS, or undocumented) (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Coutin, 2013). Results from several studies indicated that people in categories with greater legal protection (citizen) tended to fare better than those who were undocumented or in tenuous states; they earned greater income, worked in safer jobs, and were able to apply for and obtain various forms of educational and housing aid (Coutin, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Hence, an immigrant's "ascribed legal standing determines their level of access to civic, social, and political rights in the country and to resources tied to those rights" (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015, p. 286). Despite better outcomes, even documented immigrants progressively lost rights, were subject to more restrictive policies, and were increasingly at risk of deportation (Cebulko, 2014; Leyro & Stageman, 2018; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

Undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients were also exposed to the same hostile contexts. Barriers stemming from immigration status blocked mobility in a variety of ways that, for undocumented childhood arrivals, surfaced in adolescence and were magnified as they graduated high school and entered adulthood. Swan and Clark-Ibáñez (2017) described the process in which undocumented childhood arrivals grew up unaware of their illegal (undocumented) status and had to modify their social routines, behavioral patterns, and relationships to prevent discovery and legal punishment once they learned of their status. The authors stated that undocumented childhood arrivals were targets of law enforcement for minor infractions (e.g., driving without a license or working without a permit) and were at risk of detention and deportation (Swan & Clark-

Ibáñez, 2017). Though DACA represented temporary respite from the constant vigilance of avoiding potential interactions with law enforcement and may have partially ameliorated some of the negative contextual factors associated with undocumented status, it only allowed beneficiaries to lawfully remain in the country for 2 years and access limited opportunities, leaving recipients in a prolonged state of ambiguity and instability with incomplete, temporary membership in society (Abrego & Lakhani 2015; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Roth, 2019; Swan & Clark-Ibáñez, 2017).

Contexts of reception also varied across geographies. Undocumented individuals lived within a complex web of policies at the federal, state, county, and municipal levels (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Silver, 2018; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Many undocumented childhood arrivals resided in states with more inclusive policies where they could access driver's licenses, in-state college tuition, and had decreased fear of deportation. In contrast, those that lived in places with more restrictive policies often experienced increased surveillance and exclusion from higher education (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Gonzales & Burciaga 2018; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Silver, 2012; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). At the local level, rural communities typically lacked governmental or institutional resources and networks of support beyond the ethnic community that would have promoted social mobility for undocumented immigrants and their children (Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Silver, 2012; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Even within social geographies, contexts of reception varied. Golash-Boza and Valdez (2018) argued that contexts of reception were not uniform but, rather, individuals encountered distinct combinations of favorable and unfavorable circumstances along the

dimensions of government, society, and institutions at the federal, state, and local levels creating what they referred to as "nested contexts of reception" (p. 536). In other words, nested within the federal and state-level contexts are a myriad of community and institutional environments that either provided support and a place of belonging, or further alienated and excluded undocumented childhood arrivals (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018).

Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion originated in France in the 1960s referencing the social bond between individuals and society (Silver, 2015). This definition focused on the rupture of this social bond either at the societal level where individual members were inadequately integrated into society, or at the individual level where people lacked the capacity to participate in expected social activities and build full and meaningful social ties (Silver, 2015). Beginning in the 1970s, many European countries used the idea of social exclusion to evaluate poverty by comparing the relative experiences of the poor to those in higher socioeconomic statuses (Silver & Miller, 2003; Todman et al., 2009). While absolute measures of poverty estimated a fixed level of income and resources needed for survival, relative poverty measures accounted for the low standard of living and income garnered by the poor that manifested into a lack of access to goods and services enjoyed by those with greater economic resources (Barusch, 2018; Nolan & Whelan, 2010). Thus, the term social exclusion described the ways in which the poor were excluded from the welfare system or unable to access a minimum standard of living in their country of residence compared to the rest of society (Bellani & Fusco, 2018;

Silver, 2015). As a result of this exclusion, people in poverty experienced a lack of economic and physical security, did not have access to adequate and affordable housing, were at an educational disadvantage, experienced poor health outcomes with limited access to adequate healthcare, and ultimately had little to no influence in the political realm due to their lack of economic and social capital (Barusch, 2018; Nolan & Whelan, 2010; Williams, 2016). By this measure, social exclusion not only described economic marginalization, but also the exclusion that was experienced when those in poverty did not have the resources to participate in a variety of social, political, and economic institutions, thus creating and perpetuating a system of social stratification (Bellani & Fusco, 2018; Silver, 2015). Although social exclusion and poverty are intertwined with poverty often leading to social exclusion and vice versa, exclusion is not simply an outcome of insufficient material resources, but "an issue of being in or out, rather than up or down" (Silver, 2015, p. 4419). Hence, the meaning of social exclusion expanded over time to include additional social problems and marginalized groups. The definition broadened to refer to a general social disadvantage characterized by a combination of multiple, interrelated disadvantages by which people may be excluded, with exclusion in one area increasing the likelihood of exclusion in another (Richmond, 2002; Silver, 2015).

Social Exclusion and Immigration

As it pertains to migrants, social exclusion is typically linked to legal status; thus, the indicators of social exclusion that often receive the most attention involve disadvantages stemming from rights given or denied by a host country (Bellani & Fusco,

2018; Silver, 2015). Researchers have explored numerous indicators of social exclusion experienced by immigrants including income, employment, education, and health, as well as social and political dimensions of exclusion such as social isolation, social support, and civic engagement (Silver, 2015). It has been reported that compared to citizens and documented immigrants, undocumented immigrants were more likely to experience poverty. Undocumented immigrants had more than twice the poverty rates of documented immigrants and citizens and an overall lower median household income, earning approximately 70% income compared to native-born citizens (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Additionally, undocumented immigrants earned less income over time compared to other immigrants (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Passel & Cohn, 2009). Without documentation, immigrants were limited in the types of employment they could pursue. Undocumented immigrants were often restricted to jobs in an underground economy through employers that did not require employment authorization or in areas of industry, such as agriculture, which accepted false documents (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Pérez, 2009). These positions typically had lower pay, poorer working conditions, no benefits, and no opportunities for advancement (Massey & Sánchez, 2010). Undocumented immigrants had less opportunity to pursue higher education which would have allowed for career advancement and higher income (Abrego, 2006; Cebulko, 2014). In many states, evidence of residence and a Social Security number were prerequisites to admission to an institution of higher education, as well as access to lower in-state tuition rates and state financial aid that would have made college more affordable (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2015; Pérez, 2009; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-

Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). As a result, undocumented immigrants were less likely to attend college than documented immigrants and citizens (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012).

Social exclusion of immigrants extended beyond material resources and educational access. Laws often denied undocumented immigrants' access to welfare programs, medical services, driver's licenses, and other privileges enjoyed by citizens (Marrow & Joseph, 2015; Mathema, 2018; NCSL, 2022; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Richmond, 2002; Stewart, 2014). Undocumented immigrants were excluded from participation in the political process and unable to represent their own interests or voice their own experiences (Stewart, 2014). Negative political discourse and anti-immigrant attitudes led many undocumented immigrants to hide their status and limit their social interactions out of fear of detection and deportation (Williams, 2016). Undocumented immigrants described fears of walking outside or driving, afraid they may encounter police, and avoided institutions associated with government including schools and medical facilities (Leyro & Stageman, 2018; Williams, 2016). Many immigrants, regardless of legal status, avoided contact with public services or institutions because of deportation fears (Leyro & Stageman, 2018). As a result, many undocumented immigrants lived in the shadows of society, isolated and excluded from mainstream life, which created and exacerbated their perceptions of not belonging in society and further discouraged social and civic engagement (Leyro & Stageman, 2018). The multitude of disadvantages experienced by undocumented immigrants illustrated the processes of social exclusion by which people were systematically denied rights, access to opportunities, and resources that were available to citizens and other individuals in

society (Allman, 2013; Williams, 2016). These mechanisms created barriers to, and essentially prevented immigrants from membership, belonging, and full participation in society.

Social Exclusion and Undocumented Childhood Arrivals

Immigrants who were brought to the United States as children experienced social exclusion similarly to those who immigrated as an adult; however, undocumented childhood arrivals were typically unaware of the hostile social climate in which they lived (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Stewart, 2014). In childhood they attended school, learned to speak English, and were integrated into United States culture with their peers; however, as they transitioned into adolescence and adulthood, they experienced a shift from believing they belonged to feeling alienated when they learned of their undocumented status and the reality that they were not legally or socially accepted (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Mallet et al., 2017; Stewart, 2014). This revelation often resulted from their exclusion from any number of coming-of-age events that most children experienced, such as obtaining a driver’s license, applying for a job, or going to college (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Martinez, 2014). Once they transitioned into adulthood, undocumented childhood arrivals faced the same barriers their parents experienced in employment, education, and other areas of social inclusion (Gonzales, 2009; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). They reported a range of negative emotions once they realized the extent of their exclusion and the reality

that only full legal status could overcome these barriers (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Stewart, 2014).

It is unusual that an individual or group is wholly excluded. In other words, it is more likely that a person will experience social exclusion in some respects, but not all aspects at once (Silver, 2015). This is particularly relevant for undocumented childhood arrivals. DACA, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter, provided the opportunity for many undocumented childhood arrivals to pursue academic and employment ambitions and live without fear of deportation or social stigma if only temporarily (Cebulko, 2014; NILC, n.d.-b; Siemons et al., 2017; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017; Williams, 2016). Undocumented childhood arrivals were fully integrated and accepted at institutions of higher education where they were granted admission, not only by the institution, but university personnel and school peers (Williams, 2016). States that offered financial aid and in-state tuition to undocumented students and DACA recipients supported inclusion by removing economic barriers to higher education (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Martinez, 2014; NCSL, 2021; NILC, n.d.-a; Pérez, 2014). Since DACA also provided a temporary work permit, undocumented childhood arrivals had unfettered access to employment opportunities from which they were previously excluded (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; NILC, n.d.-b). However, both undocumented and liminally legal youths faced the similar educational barriers and increased risk of poverty and social exclusion (Cebulko, 2014). Many of these students engaged in civic and political activities to advocate for policy changes that would provide increased rights (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Martinez &

Salazar, 2018; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Valdivia & Valdivia, 2014). Undocumented childhood arrivals used their personal stories and declared their legal status to engage the public and emphasize the myriad of ways they had been excluded from contemporary United States society (Galindo, 2012; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Williams, 2016). Despite increased inclusion from the benefits of DACA, undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients continued to experience social exclusion in several domains, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Contexts of Reception and Social Exclusion

Contexts of reception and social exclusion are inextricably linked. Social exclusion can be considered a product of harsh and unwelcoming contexts where immigration laws restrict opportunities and create social exclusion. Social exclusion, when codified into law, can create harsh contexts of reception. The systematic social exclusion of immigrants through lawful denial of rights and opportunities represents the embodiment of harsh contexts of reception. Legally liminal statuses, including DACA, are particularly suspect. DACA may provide work authorization and temporary reprieve from deportation, but there are inherent limitations that coincide with partial legal status. Although DACA may temporarily abate some factors of social exclusion, these gains are fragile, impermanent, and there are barriers that remain. Roth (2019) noted that while DACA recipients were partially shielded from the social exclusion that accompanied undocumented status, this did not necessarily translate into social inclusion. Instead of providing access to resources that would encourage inclusion, legal liminality imparted instability, fear, and exclusion (Roth, 2019).

The effects of DACA are further shaped by the state policy contexts in which recipients reside. The use of contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory provided an opportunity to determine if nested contexts existed within a less-welcoming state and to ascertain what contextual factors led to lesser or greater social inclusion for DACA recipients. Furthermore, given the myriad of disadvantages experienced by undocumented childhood arrivals and the varied contexts of reception that shape incorporation, I aimed at determining the extent to which perceptions of inclusion or exclusion were mitigated by DACA, how state-level policy contributed to this process, and whether states with inhospitable policy climates contained nested contexts of reception for legally liminal youths. To this end, I focused on several indicators of social exclusion including employment, higher education, and feelings of belonging for current DACA recipients and those that were DACA-eligible in the state of Wisconsin.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Crimmigration

Over time, criminal and immigration laws have increasingly converged, a trend that has been coined *crimmigration* (Stumpf, 2006). While immigration policy has historically been unwelcoming to immigrants, the events of 9/11 fueled public and lawmaker perception that immigrants posed a threat to national security and were potential terrorist threats (Furman et al., 2012; Stewart, 2014). Immigrants without documentation were often referred to as *illegal immigrant*, *illegal alien*, and *criminal alien* in public and political discourse, categorizing all undocumented immigrants as

criminals (Leyro & Stageman, 2018). This attitude has been reflected in recent federal and state immigration policy.

Historically, only those who were criminal aliens, i.e., those who had committed criminal acts while in the United States or who had lied about their criminal history upon entry into the United States, were incarcerated and deported (Furman et al., 2012). In the 1980s several policy changes increased the rate of incarceration and deportation for undocumented immigrants. In a qualitative systematic review by Furman et al. (2012) and a systematic law review by Chacón (2012), the authors described how imprisonment became mandatory for all refugees entering the United States without authorization and at the same time, the threshold for mandatory deportation was lowered to include less serious crimes. In 1996, two major policies, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), were passed that together reclassified several misdemeanor and minor offenses as aggravated felonies including "prostitution, undocumented entry after removal, drug addiction, shoplifting, failure to appear in court, filing a false tax return," among others (Abrego et al., 2017, p. 698; see also Chacón, 2012). Abrego et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study by reviewing post deportation surveys of Mexican migrants along Mexico's northern border between 2007 and 2012 (N=415; N=1109) and several qualitative projects involving interviews with Latino migrants in L.A., Phoenix, Raleigh-Durham, and Atlanta. The authors indicated that, not only did these policies increase the number of offenses that would be deportable crimes, but they also restricted due process for those charged in effort to expedite removal proceedings (Abrego et al., 2017).

In the wake of 9/11, a shift occurred that changed the perception of immigrants from economic and social threats to potential terrorist threats (Furman et al., 2012; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Thus, to safeguard the country, strict measures were employed to locate, detain, and deport immigrants. The Patriot Act was signed into law with the stated purpose of stopping terrorism (Furman et al., 2012; Sekhon, 2003); however, this law along with others passed in the post 9/11 era had farther reaching consequences for both undocumented and documented immigrants. Suspicion and antagonism extended to all immigrant groups regardless of whether they had a history of terrorist activity (Furman et al., 2012). Border security became a priority in immigration enforcement, with more intense scrutiny and police presence monitoring the border, as well as more extensive investigations of those already in the United States resulting in an all-time high of detentions and deportations (Furman et al., 2012). In 2005, Operation Streamline changed the way immigrants who crossed the border without authorization were processed, reclassifying this as a criminal rather than a civil offense (Chacón, 2012; Furman et al., 2012). Hence, border crossers were detained, prosecuted in criminal court, and subsequently incarcerated and deported (Furman et al., 2012). At the state level, Arizona Senate Bill 1070 required immigrants to always have proper documents or be charged with a misdemeanor offense (Furman et al., 2012; Menjívar, 2013; Stewart, 2014). These are only a few examples in a series of legislative actions at the federal and state level that criminalized and further marginalized undocumented immigrants.

The categorization of immigrants as criminals created numerous challenges for those without documentation (Chacón, 2012; Furman, et al., 2012; Leyro & Stageman,

2018; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Stumpf, 2006). In particular, the risks of detention and deportation had profound effects on immigrants' daily lives. Leyro and Stageman (2018) conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with 80 immigrants in the New York City area, while Menjívar (2013) and Menjívar and Abrego (2012) completed over a decade of qualitative work through a combination of ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews with 78 Latin American immigrants in Phoenix, and over 200 immigrants in Los Angeles and Phoenix, respectively. These studies highlighted how deportation fears influenced immigrants' choices to endure labor exploitation, restrict social participation, avoid visiting public places or institutions, and to avoid utilization of needed public services (Leyro & Stageman, 2018; Menjívar, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Not only did the law exert influence over the behavior of undocumented immigrants, but it also created structural barriers that obstructed immigrants' paths to integration. For instance, undocumented immigrants were barred from legally accessing employment, welfare programs, medical services, higher education, and socioeconomic resources necessary for social and economic mobility and full integration into United States society (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Stewart, 2014). Undocumented immigrants were excluded from ongoing political debates over immigration policy and unable to represent their own interests leaving them vulnerable to erratic immigration policy that ultimately shaped their level of membership or exclusion from society.

The 1.5 Generation

The landscape of undocumented immigrants has changed drastically over the past several decades. Until the 1980s, most undocumented immigrants were seasonal migrant

workers; however, the past three decades have seen an increase in migrant families (Gonzales, 2009). According to a report by Gonzales (2009) derived from previous research, undocumented childhood arrivals consisted of those children born in a foreign country and brought to live the United States without authorization by their parents. They are often referred to as the 1.5 generation; not part of the first generation of immigrants (their parents) who chose to immigrate, and not part of the second generation of immigrants born in the United States, rather, somewhere in between (Gonzales, 2009). The 1982 Supreme Court ruling *Plyer v Doe* granted all children access to K-12 education regardless of immigration status (Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Silver, 2012). As a result, immigrant children attended school alongside United States citizen children, participated in school activities, and learned English through their educational and social experiences (Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Silver, 2012; Stewart, 2014). In a mixed-methods study that included telephone surveys of 805 Latinos and 396 whites in Orange County, CA and 80 in-depth interviews of 1.5-generation adults who were predominantly Mexican in origin, Gonzales and Chavez (2012) noted that, in contrast to first-generation older migrants, members of the 1.5 generation received most of their social and cultural development in their host country in tandem with their education. Hence, because the 1.5 generation spent their formative years in the United States, they had more similarities with the second generation of immigrants born in the United States than with members of the first generation who chose to migrate (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012).

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 prohibited the disclosure of private student information including the release of immigration status to the authorities, which essentially protected children from the legal risks associated with undocumented status during childhood (Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017). In a qualitative systematic review, Gonzales (2011) indicated that childhood and early adolescence represented a buffer stage where children were legally integrated, and their activities were rarely limited by immigration status. Many immigrant youths were unaware of their undocumented status; however, as these children entered adolescence and approached adulthood, they inevitably discovered their unauthorized presence. At an age when their peers were getting part-time jobs, a driver's license, and applying for college, undocumented youths were unable to participate in these same rites of passage that required legal status, typically a Social Security number (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020). As they transitioned to illegality, undocumented youths faced the same restrictions as their parents in employment, voting, and driving and were at risk of deportation to countries that were unfamiliar (Gonzales, 2009; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Rosenberg et al. (2020) conducted seven interviews with DACA recipients between the ages of 19 and 29 from Latin America residing in New York, noting that a period of blissful ignorance was more likely for children who immigrated at a younger age since they had less memories of their country of origin and immigration experience; however, they may have faced a more difficult transition into adulthood because they were completely unprepared for the limitations they would face as an undocumented

adult. Those who came to the United States at an older age were already aware on some level that their legal status was questionable, though they may not have fully understood what that meant; hence, their transition into adulthood may have been less difficult (Rosenberg et al., 2020). During this transition from legal to illegal, undocumented youths adapted new patterns of behavior and learned to be illegal to participate in United States society (Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Rosenberg et al., 2020). Their legal limitations had implications in a myriad of life domains discussed later in this chapter.

Many of the aforementioned studies on the 1.5 generation used qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews (see Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Silver, 2012). As a result, most had relatively small sample sizes under 20 participants (see Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020); though Mallet et al. (2017) had a slightly larger sample size with 32 participants, and Silver (2012) and Gonzales (2011) had a much larger samples with 75 and 150 participants, respectively. Silver also incorporated participant observation in addition to individual interviews. Though these studies were conducted in a variety of locations including Southern California, Colorado, North Carolina, Boston, and New York, there was limited demographic variability as all study participants identified as having a Hispanic/Latino(a) background (see Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020); however, Silver included a wider variety of demographic variability. In contrast, the research by Gonzales and Chavez (2012) (previously noted) and Gonzales, Ellis et al. (2018) were unique in their methodology. The study by Gonzales, Ellis et al. was part of

a larger mixed-methods project referred to as the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP) that used both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with participants from a variety of locations and of numerous ethnic backgrounds. The authors in this specific study employed data gathered from 408 in-depth interviews with DACA beneficiaries who resided in Arizona, California, Gorgia, Illinois, South Carolina, and New York (Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018). These two studies represented the few that incorporated quantitative measures into their research.

Legal Liminality

The implementation of DACA provided some temporary protections to eligible undocumented childhood arrivals, bud it did not provide a permanent solution to illegal immigration status. Deferred action was the use of prosecutorial discretion by DHS to delay deportation in the cases of certain immigrants that were subject to removal from the United States (Napolitano, 2012). DACA halted the deportation process only for 2 years (subject to renewal) but did not grant legal immigration status nor did it provide a pathway to citizenship or grant public benefits to recipients, thus DACA created a status of legal liminality.

The concept of legal liminality was originally described by Menjívar (2006) who conducted ethnographic fieldwork to examine the effects of uncertain legal status on the lives of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Phoenix from 1989 to 2001. According to Menjívar, legal liminality "is characterized by its ambiguity, as it is neither an undocumented status nor a documented one but may have the characteristics of both" (p. 1008). It is a state of legal

limbo where an immigrant is granted some form of temporary legal status that is either renewed or the individual returns to a state of illegality. In some cases, this limbo can go on indefinitely when the temporary status is continually renewed and no means of permanent legal status is obtained (Menjívar, 2006). In Menjívar's study, individuals in these statuses looked for ways to become a permanent legal resident or citizen through marriage, work, or other means, but these avenues were not often successful. With limited options for permanent status, many immigrants remained in a legally liminal state (Menjívar, 2006). Menjívar suggested that legal liminality shaped the social and cultural lives of immigrants and impeded their ability to assimilate because they were denied rights and excluded from opportunities. Ultimately, temporary legal status marginalized immigrants by keeping them on the fringes of society.

Subsequent research investigated the experiences of immigrants with various forms of legally liminal statuses. Kubal (2013) interviewed 360 migrants in four European countries including The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Portugal. The author described legal liminality as more than a legal-illegal dichotomy, but somewhere in between depending upon legal category and individual circumstance (Kubal, 2013; see also Gonzales, 2011). Coutin (2013) and Abrego and Lakhani (2015) examined membership and integration prospects of immigrants with TPS, DED, political asylees, U Visa holders, and VAWA deferred action. Abrego and Lakhani conducted 108 semi structured interviews with immigrants who had temporary legal status living in the Los Angeles area, while Coutin interviewed Salvadoran youths between 2006-2010 in Los Angeles, interviewed 41 El Salvadorans in 2008 who were living in El Salvador and

had been deported, and observed appointments between legal staff and clients in a nonprofit organization in Los Angeles in 2011. The experiences reported by participants in these studies highlighted the temporary and revokable state of each of these liminal statuses. Though they had authorization to live and work in the United States, each status only provided limited legal rights (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Coutin, 2013). In some instances, participants were denied access to resources and opportunities due to misunderstanding by caseworkers, employers, and others who did not understand that these statuses granted eligibility to employment or other public benefits; in other instances, their legal status rendered them ineligible (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015). Participants also experienced persistent fears of deportation since their temporary status did not guarantee protection from removal (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Coutin, 2013). Recipients were at risk of falling out of status during reregistration or being denied an extension to their temporary status (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015). Some participants were eligible to apply for permanent residency but lingered in a state of limbo while they awaited a decision on their application (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015). For many, full membership was unattainable, leaving them indefinitely in legal limbo (Coutin, 2013). Those with prolonged liminal legal status were unable to fully access rights, services, and protections that ultimately prevented their ability to settle and thrive (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015).

Other studies investigated the effect of legal liminality on immigrant youths. Cebulko (2014) interviewed 42 Brazilian immigrants in the 1.5 generation that had a range of legal statuses including undocumented, temporary status, and naturalized

citizens living in the Boston area, while Torres and Wicks-Asbun (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study with 44 surveys and 15 semi structured interviews (separate from those surveyed) with undocumented Latino/a high school students in rural North Carolina. These studies revealed that undocumented youths experienced liminal legality when transitioning from high school to adulthood. Their presence was legitimized while they were a student in the K-12 system, but they were excluded from higher education and other social structures upon graduation (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). Those who received DACA transitioned into another form of legal liminality. In addition to Cebulko, Roth (2019) and Sahay et al. (2016) conducted qualitative research with DACA recipients. Roth used a sample of 39 in-depth interviews that were part of the larger mixed-methods NURP study with participants who resided in South Carolina. Sahay et al. used a form of community-based participatory research called photovoice with participants. The authors noted that DACA provided "valid government issued documents that confer legal rights (e.g., work authorization) and partial security from deportation" (Cebulko, 2014 p. 144) but recipients were not eligible to apply for LPR or citizenship and did not have access to the rights these permanent statuses provided (Martinez, 2014; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Cebulko described a status hierarchy within various classifications of legal status, from undocumented to legally liminal (DACA) to LPR to citizen. Within this hierarchy, legal documentation and rights increased as the threat of deportability and uncertainty decreased (Cebulko, 2014). Like undocumented youths, those with legal liminal statuses faced barriers in higher education and reported being the target of anti-immigrant

attitudes; however, immigrants with legal liminality had better labor market opportunities, access to some state benefits for higher education, and reported overall fewer encounters with stigma than undocumented youths (Cebulko, 2014; Roth, 2014). Though DACA provided some increased benefits and level of security, it did not provide recipients with feelings of safety because DACA status must be renewed every 2 years and there is the possibility of losing DACA status or the program being terminated (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Coutin et al., 2017; Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Thus, the tenuousness of a legally liminal status kept recipients in a state of limbo. Cebulko noted that undocumented youths who do not attain some form of permanent legal status or citizenship before the age of 18 progressively become more distant from their peers during the transition from adolescence to adulthood because of the structural and social limits placed on immigrants with liminal statuses.

In addition to the studies noted above, the predominant methodology of the remaining research on legal liminality was qualitative. Benuto et al. (2018) had a small sample of eight interviews with DACA recipients that were students at the University of Nevada-Reno who were of Mexican origin. In contrast, Ellis et al. (2019) had a sample of 408 in-depth interviews with DACA recipients from AZ, CA, GA, Il, NY, SC and included a wider demographic range of participants, which were gathered as part of the mixed-methods NURP study (see Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018). Cebulko and Silver (2016) incorporated qualitative data from two separate studies, one consisted of semi structured interviews with Brazilian 1.5 generation young adults in the Boston area between 2006-

2014, and the second included 38 interviews in North Carolina with documented and undocumented youths and young adults and 16 adults who worked with youths in the community. Finally, Coutin et al. (2017) combined a variety of qualitive methods including observations at nonprofit organization that worked with immigrants, document analysis, and interviews between 2014-2017 of 40 advocates from immigration services, 52 clients of these organization, and 11 former ICE or DHS officials.

Effects of DACA

Economics and Employment

With the provision of a work permit and the ability to apply for a Social Security number, DACA afforded undocumented childhood arrivals employment opportunities previously not accessible. DACA increased labor force participation as most participants became employed who were unemployed prior to receiving DACA (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Liu & Song, 2020; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pope, 2016). Many recipients were able to work at an internship that provided career training and experience not usually available to young adults with a limited employment background (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014). Results in several studies indicated that DACA both expanded and improved employment prospects for recipients, with many respondents reporting they obtained a new job with increased wages, better working conditions, and better working hours (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Jones, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al.,

2015a, 2015b; Pérez, 2014; Pope, 2016). DACA beneficiaries' overall income doubled or nearly doubled in the first 4 years of program implementation with an increase in professional job acquisition (Jones, 2020). Many recipients also found jobs that provided health benefits and other employment benefits such as paid sick time and paid vacation not offered by their previous employers (Luna & Montoya, 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). As a result, these individuals were better able to support themselves and their family and reported fewer financial difficulties (Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). With a Social Security number, recipients were legally able to open bank accounts and credit cards which provided greater financial freedom (Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Pérez, 2014; Pope, 2016). Overall, DACA recipients were in a better economic position than their undocumented counterparts in early adulthood because of increased labor market options and other economic benefits they were excluded from prior to DACA (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018). Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk (2014) noted that participants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and who attained higher levels of education benefited the most economically from DACA.

Though DACA provided increased employment opportunities and allowed greater financial security, not all recipients benefitted equally. DACA improved the economic and employment circumstances for some through higher pay, benefits, and better working conditions; however, many respondents with DACA remained in low-paying jobs and experienced financial instability (Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). Some recipients reported difficulties in securing employment due to lack of work experience or in finding jobs

commensurate with their level of education (Martinez, 2014). In addition, researchers could not conclude that DACA led to overall upward mobility in the labor market. Since much of this research was conducted when DACA was new, the long-term employment and economic effects of the program are unknown.

The research on economics and employment largely used quantitative methodology. Jones (2020), Ortega et al. (2019), and Pope (2016) used data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to determine the impact of DACA on education, employment, and overall economics. However, the ACS does not gather information on documented status, so Jones and Pope used eligibility criteria of DACA to assume DACA status to select their samples. Ortega et al. used a special excerpt of the ACS in 2012 from the Center for Migration Studies that included information on documented status. This information was gathered prior to the implementation of DACA and was used as a baseline measure. The authors identified individuals who met DACA eligibility criteria based upon a statistical model that was created to simulate the effects of DACA status on wages (Ortega et al., 2019). Similarly, Amuedo-Dorantes and Antman (2017) and Liu and Song (2020) used data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to determine the impact of DACA on education and employment. Like the ACS, the CPS did not gather information on documented status; hence, a major weakness of the research using either of these data sources was sample contamination by participants without DACA. To mitigate this, Liu and Song compared their CPS sample to data from the USCIS on DACA applications; however, their sample was also unverified for DACA status. In contrast, Gonzales and Bautista-Chavez (2014), Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk (2014),

and Patler et al. (2015a) each used quantitative surveys of DACA recipients. Gonzales and Bautista-Chavez and Gonzales, Terriquez and Ruszczyk used data from the NURP survey using a sample of 2381 DACA recipients from a variety of locations across the United States, while Patler et al. surveyed 502 total young adults, 452 DACA recipients and 50 undocumented youths who had not received DACA in 2014 in Southern California. These studies provided a more accurate picture of short-term outcomes of DACA. The remaining studies discussed in this section involved qualitative methodology. In addition to qualitative studies described previously in this chapter (see Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014), Luna and Montoya (2019) conducted a document analysis of 23 letters submitted from 2013-2015 to a nonprofit foundation in the United States Southwest that provides financial assistance to pay for DACA application fees. Though this study adds to the narrative of the aspirations of undocumented childhood arrivals, it was limited in that the sample participants may not have received DACA.

Education

Though DACA did not include provisions related to higher education, it was expected that the policy would lead to increased motivation for recipients to pursue a college education. Prior research had mixed evidence whether DACA increased the likelihood of college attendance. Undocumented youths described similar aspirations for higher education as citizen youths, but many reported they did not believe it was a realistic goal (Luna & Montoya, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). Hsin and Ortega (2018) conducted a quantitative study using an anonymous data source

they referred to as Urban College System (UCS) that contained over 10 years of administrative data on student educational outcomes that also included self-report data on documented status of students. The authors used datasets for two entering cohorts from Fall 2009 and Fall 2012 data sets (Hsin and Ortega, 2018). In their qualitative study, Nienhusser and Oshio (2020) interviewed both undocumented/DACA recipients and their families with a total of 32 interviews with 12 families in Michigan. The authors in these two studies indicated that since DACA benefits were temporary, recipients were hesitant to invest in higher education when they were uncertain if they would finish (Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). Additionally, Gonzales, Roth et al. (2016) used data from the mixed-methods NURP study, reporting on both data from 2684 surveys from 46 states and DC of DACA-eligible individuals and information from 467 NURP interviews consisting of 87.5% DACA recipients. Along with Nienhusser and Oshio, Gonzales, Roth et al. indicated that DACA improved access to public universities and trade schools and increased scholarship opportunities overall. Despite increased access, the greatest barrier to higher education was cost. Many undocumented youths came from low-income families and did not have the resources to afford college tuition (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). With tuition costs being high, most students required financial aid in the form of state and federal grants, scholarships, and loans to pay for college. While many states passed legislation allowing DACA recipients to pay lower in-state tuition rates and access state financial aid (Martinez, 2014; Pérez, 2014), undocumented students were ineligible for federal student aid and many states disallowed undocumented students from accessing

state aid (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cervantes et al., 2015; Martinez, 2014; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). Many states also required undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition, which was considerably higher than in-state rates, making tuition prohibitive to college attendance (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Silver, 2012; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). In states with financial support and lower tuition costs, there were higher rates of college enrollment and increased educational attainment compared to states that were more restrictive (Dennis, 2020a; 2020b; Jones, 2020; Liu & Song, 2020). Even when undocumented childhood arrivals enrolled in college, they were at greater risk of attrition. Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk (2014, p. 7) referred to higher education as a revolving door for this population due to large numbers of students that were unable to complete their degree within their planned timeframe due to limited financial resources. The financial strain of fully or partially self-funding education led to delayed or discontinued degree completion for many (Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Macías, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). Dennis (2020a; 2020b) conducted a quantitative analysis using data from the ACS and CPS in seven focus states (CA, FL, IN, MO, NJ, TX, WA) and like other studies using these datasets, speculated on DACA recipiency based on responses to the surveys. However, this research also relied on data from the Institute for Education Sciences and Integrated Postsecondary data system data sets on educational data, enrollment, status, and graduation rates using the identifiers *nonresident alien* and *Hispanic classification*

(Dennis, 2020a; 2020b). Though other studies indicated tuition rates were a substantial factor in student retention, this study noted that tuition cost was not the sole consideration in students' decisions to remain in college (Dennis, 2020b). Since each state had different regulations regarding college admission, tuition cost, and financial aid eligibility, the ability to attend and afford higher education varied widely for undocumented childhood arrivals depending upon state of residence.

Other financial considerations beyond tuition cost may have factored into the decision to attend college. Families with undocumented parents may have relied on working-age children to contribute to the family income, making fulltime employment under DACA a more attractive option than college (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). Some studies suggested that undocumented college students may have dropped out of school or deferred college entirely in favor of employment (e.g., Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman, 2017; Gonzales, 2011; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Liu & Song, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Amuedo-Dorantes and Antman (2017) proposed that individuals ineligible for DACA enrolled in school in lieu of working because working was not an option; however, the opportunity cost of attending higher education increased when an individual was DACA-eligible. This may have indicated that the provisions of DACA incentivized work over education. In contrast, Pope (2016) used a larger sample size than previous studies and found no evidence that DACA had any impact on college enrollment, while Jones (2020) argued that state context contributed to decisions regarding higher education indicating recipients in states with supportive policy

allowed DACA recipients to simultaneously work and attend postsecondary education rather than choosing between the two.

Policies among educational institutions may have also played a role in decisions to pursue higher education. Colleges and universities that were better able to accommodate working students with flexible or part-time enrollment options may have allowed for DACA recipients to remain in college while also working rather than choosing between the two (Hsin & Ortega, 2018). College-enrolled DACA students were better able to meet tuition expenses and balance school and work responsibilities (Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). In addition, extending work authorization to undocumented childhood arrivals may have increased returns on a college degree in the long-term, providing greater incentive for recipients to remain in school and attain a job commensurate with a higher level of education with higher wages (Abrego, 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Jones, 2020). In a qualitative study comprising of five focus groups with 35 undocumented students who were enrolled at the University of California-Central, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS), Golash-Boza and Valdez (2018) asserted that the university's progressive policies aimed at providing support and resources for undocumented students allowed these students not only to survive but thrive. Overall, the body of research in this area provided short-term insights, thus the long-term effects of DACA on educational attainment are yet unknown.

In addition to the studies noted above, the predominant methodology of the remaining research on education was qualitative. Cervantes et al. (2015), Macías (2018),

Monico and Duncan (2020), Rodriguez and Rodriquez (2020), and Williams (2016) all conducted interviews with college students in a variety of locations including Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, and Southern California with samples ranging from three to 33 participants. Most of these studies had a sample of Latino/a participants except for Macías which had a wider variety of demographics and included one focus group consisting of college students. Abrego (2018) also used qualitative methodology with Latino/a participants; however, interviews were conducted with a combination of undocumented/DACA recipients and their families for a total of 100 interviews with DACA recipients (43) and their relatives (57) in the Los Angeles area. Though these studies offered insight into the experiences of Latino/a college students, educational challenges of noncollege students were not represented apart from Abrego, and there was limited representation of ethnic groups.

Health and Wellbeing

Undocumented immigrants were ineligible to participate in federal health exchanges established under the ACA, and they continued to be excluded from regular Medicaid and the Medicaid expansion under the ACA (Marrow & Joseph, 2015; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Marrow and Joseph (2015) incorporated research from two qualitative studies, one study consisted of interviews with 36 safety-net health care providers and staff working in an outpatient clinic in San Francisco, and a second that included interviews with 31 adult Brazilian and Dominican immigrants, a range of 19 health care professionals, and 20 immigrant and health organization employees in Boston. The authors reported that unauthorized immigrants could obtain health insurance

coverage by purchasing private insurance, which few immigrants were able to afford, or through a spouse's or parent's employer (Marrow & Joseph, 2015). Without health insurance, undocumented individuals could only access health care in hospital emergency rooms, which were required to serve any patient regardless of health insurance coverage or ability to pay (Marrow & Joseph, 2015). There was also a system of federally qualified health care centers that served uninsured and undocumented patients (Marrow & Joseph, 2015). Raymond-Flesch et al. (2014) and Sudhinaraset et al. (2017) focused on the health concerns of DACA-eligible recipients in qualitative studies in California; Raymond-Flesch et al. met with 61 DACA-eligible young adult Latinos in nine focus groups, while Sudhinaraset et al. met with 32 young adult Asian Pacific Islander participants through 24 in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions. Prior to DACA, undocumented childhood arrivals reported challenges in access to health care, describing gaps in primary care, avoidance of mainstream medicine, or ignoring health issues (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). The main reported barrier to access was cost, but recipients also indicated they were afraid of being discovered as undocumented and deported if they used formal healthcare facilities (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). DACA was found to directly improve access to healthcare, as many recipients were eligible for health insurance through their place of employment and others became eligible for state-sponsored programs (Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Patler et al., 2015a; Pérez, 2014; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Despite increased access, Patler et al. (2015a) reported that most of their research participants remained uninsured regardless of

DACA status. Indirectly, DACA status helped reduce reluctance to use health care facilities by alleviating concerns of legal repercussions associated with undocumented status, as well as reduced stressors related to healthcare costs (Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). However, for some participants, their fear of utilizing medical services persisted even after they gained DACA status (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014).

An emerging body of research investigated the psychological impacts of legal status, particularly how transitions from illegal to legal (undocumented to documented) status altered psychological wellbeing. Siemons et al. (2017) conducted nine focus groups with 61 DACA-eligible young adult Latinos in California. Results indicated that while growing up undocumented, children experienced mental health distress related to reduced social integration and had overall lower reported self-esteem (Siemons et al., 2017). In a quantitative study consisting of surveys of 487 Latino immigrant young adults residing in California who applied or considered applying for DACA, Patler and Pirtle (2018) indicated that, prior to DACA, socioeconomic status appeared to play the largest role in psychological wellbeing. As undocumented youths transitioned into adolescence and adulthood and became aware of their legal status, negative psychological and corresponding physiological symptoms manifested. The discovery of undocumented status was accompanied by shock and a myriad of intense negative emotions including anxiety, confusion, frustration, anger, despair, and stress (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Silver, 2012; Stewart, 2014) and fear of racial profiling by authorities and being detained or deported (Aranda et

al., 2015; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Patler & Pirtle, 2018). Undocumented adolescents' inability to participate in the same rites of passage as their peers (obtaining a driver's license) or plan for their future (education and career) created a sense of dislocation and social isolation (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Rosenberg et al., 2020). Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco (2013) incorporated research from several studies that included fieldwork and 150 semi structured interviews with 1.5 generation Mexican-origin young adults in Los Angeles and 40 interviews in Washington state with the same population, and a study of 60 foreign and native-born Latino and Asian young adults in the Boston and New York areas. The authors described a process of progressive internalization of external experiences of stigmatization, discrimination, and exclusion into the identity of undocumented youths (Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013). A reformation of identity into an illegal immigrant had numerous negative effects on respondents' emotional and psychological wellbeing. Alif et al. (2020) conducted a survey of 150 New York Community college students with several immigration statuses including stable status (citizen), temporary status (DACA and visa) and undocumented. In this study, and in other related studies, respondents had lower self-esteem and motivation, with some developing chronic psychological and psychosomatic issues including anxiety, sadness, depression, stress, over or undereating, insomnia, physical self-harm, substance abuse, and aggravation of underlying health issues (Alif et al., 2020; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). The myriad of mental health issues that developed became normalized and were largely

unrecognized and untreated (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). Participants described a sense of trauma within their communities stemming from constant daily challenges (i.e., long work hours) and loss of familial support either due to leaving family behind in a home country or family members being deported (Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014). This trauma was largely accepted by the community as a normal part of life and typically was not treated.

After receiving DACA, recipients' psychological wellness improved in many ways. Giuntella and Lonsky (2020) and Venkataramani et al. (2017) each conducted quantitative research with Giuntella and Lonsky using the ACS dataset and while Venkataramani et al. used data from the U.S. National Health Interview Study (NHIS), both using DACA eligibility criteria for sample identification. From this research, DACA was found to have produced clinically significant reductions in symptoms of psychological distress as well as reduced the likelihood of recipients reporting moderate or worsening negative psychological symptoms (Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Venkataramani et al., 2017). DACA participants stated that greater financial stability, increased access to resources such as higher education and driver's licenses, decreased anxiety over legal status, decreased fear of deportation, and an increased sense of freedom were some of the main factors that improved their emotional wellbeing (Alif et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2019; Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). Other findings indicated DACA allowed recipients to engage in richer social lives. Positive social support through connections with family, friends, and community organizations mitigated negative emotions and ongoing stress

related to temporary legal status (Ellis et al., 2019; Panjwani, 2019; Siemons et al., 2017). DACA also alleviated the stigma associated with being an undocumented immigrant since DACA allowed recipients to transition from undocumented to lawful status. Recipients reported reduced feelings of shame and a newfound sense of peace they did not have prior to DACA (Siemons et al., 2017; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017). Thus, DACA had numerous positive psychological effects by providing recipients with legal status.

Despite the benefits reported, DACA had several unintended negative consequences. Though DACA provided temporary protected status to individuals, family members did not have these same protections. DACA recipients reported shifting concerns from personal deportation risk to worry over the risk of deportation of family members (Alif et al., 2020; Benuto et al., 2018; Cervantes et al., 2015; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). Some DACA beneficiaries had increased familial responsibilities especially when other family members remained undocumented (Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). The necessity to renew DACA status every 2 years kept recipients in a tenuous state; hence, the positive emotional benefits that resulted from DACA may have also been temporary (Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017). Recipients expressed numerous negative psychological and physiological symptoms including depression, stress, anxiety, concentration difficulties, chest pains, weight gain, and social withdrawal over concerns of losing DACA status (Monico & Duncan, 2020; Panjwani, 2019). Hence, the constant threat of losing legal status may have led to the reemergence of negative psychological symptoms.

Belonging and Identity

DACA was shown to impact recipients' identity and sense of belonging. Because undocumented youths were included in K-12 schools, they were afforded the opportunity to grow up in American culture, were integrated into their communities, and developed a sense of belonging in United States society (Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Silver, 2012). As they entered adolescence and faced discrimination from their peers or witnessed aggression toward their families, these forces along with the myriad of structural limitations imposed by legal status reshaped their identities (Rosenberg et al., 2020). Undocumented youths viewed their future selves as being unsuccessful and marginalized however, despite these challenges, were able to successfully integrate their immigration status into their identity (Rosenberg et al., 2020). When undocumented youths transitioned into adulthood and began to experience various forms of exclusion, feelings of nonbelonging or being un-American surfaced (Aranda et al., 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Silver, 2012). Despite adapting American values and feeling Americanized, some undocumented and legally liminal youths found it difficult to identify as American due to a lack of legal paperwork (Aranda et al., 2015; Cebulko, 2014). Aranda et al. (2015) conducted 41 in-depth interviews with undocumented young adults from the 1.5 generation and described how the personal and cultural traumas experienced through exclusionary laws, policies, and social structures shaped the identities of undocumented youths and ultimately led to an ambivalence in adopting an American identity. DACA provided recipients with optimism about their place in United States society by providing access to opportunities previously unattainable and increased feelings of belonging for

many (Abrego, 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Other youths indicated DACA only temporarily abated feelings of nonbelonging that returned once the limitations of DACA were realized (Benuto et al., 2018). Cebulko and Silver (2016) noted that state context influenced perceptions of belonging depending upon hostility of state policy; however, restrictive policies from state-to-state increased feelings of exclusion everywhere. Gonzales, Brant & Roth (2020) used a sample of 408 in-depth interviews with DACA beneficiaries that were gathered as part of the larger mixed-methods NURP study with participants from six states (AZ, CA, GA, IL, SC, NY). The authors reported that in the absence of larger contexts of belonging, many DACA youths developed a sense of belonging through personal and social relationships (Gonzales, Brant & Roth, 2020). DACA was found to expand these personal and social spaces but were also amplified or muted by local, state, and national contexts (Gonzales, Brant & Roth, 2020). Liminal status became a defining characteristic of DACA recipients' identity because of its widespread effects in all areas of life despite it being only one aspect of their identity (Roth, 2019). In other words, recipients were DACA youths first and all other characteristics were secondary. Other researchers explored the specific identity labels DACA recipients used to describe themselves. Cornejo and Kam (2020) completed 40 semi structured interviews with DACA students at 2 or 4-year universities in California. Respondents indicated some identity labels were imposed upon them, which most participants perceived as negative descriptors; hence, many chose their own personal descriptors in accordance with their self-perspective (Cornejo & Kam, 2020). Most recipients used the term *undocumented* as their chosen identity but due to small sample

and limited context of the study, the authors could not conclude that this was consistent for all DACA recipients, or that it was a preferred identifier outside of the college setting (Cornejo & Kam, 2020).

Civic Engagement

Undocumented youths have been politically active prior to and since the implementation of DACA. Several qualitative studies investigated these activities including Martinez and Salazar (2018) who interviewed 40 Latino/a youths and young adults in Colorado who received DACA; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif (2014) who engaged in participant observation at 70 Immigrant Youths Justice League (IYJL) meetings and a variety of civil disobedience and other similar events, conducted group and individual interviews with nine IYJL organizers between December 2010 and March 2012, and analysis of IYJL documents; and a participant narrative by Valdivia & Valdivia (2014). These researchers noted that, since the early 2000s, undocumented youths focused their activities on supporting comprehensive immigration reform, opposing deportation policies, and advocating for state-level legislation for in-state tuition and driver's licenses, and more recently, opposing the rescission of DACA (Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Valdivia & Valdivia, 2014). One of the most notable campaigns involved a group of students who engaged in a series of civil disobedience events in support of the DREAM Act. Through document reviews of four letters written by student advocates, press media articles and interviews, and student advocacy blogs, Galindo (2012) described how these students, known as the DREAM 5, led marches, demonstrations, and coming-out events declaring their undocumented status.

These acts of civil disobedience were particularly risky because those arrested could be deported. These events inspired other groups of students who also publicly declared their undocumented status under the *Undocumented and Unafraid* and *National Coming-Out of the Shadows* campaigns (Galindo, 2012; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Williams, 2016). Dao (2017), in a qualitative study consisting of 12 semi structured interviews with current or former undocumented Asian American and Pacific Islanders residing in four East Coast cities, found that the act of coming-out as undocumented enhanced political participation for undocumented youths. The DREAM 5 events led to the creation of numerous advocacy groups on college campuses and social media platforms nationwide and inspired others to testify in front of legislators in support of policy reform (Galindo, 2012; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014). While many undocumented youths were politically active prior to DACA, since its implementation their activism increased to a level where this group was more civically active than the general population (Pérez, 2014). However, not all DACA recipients engaged in political activism. Some studies reported that DACA recipients with social spaces that supported political activism led increased civic engagement, but personal circumstances may have kept some DACA recipients in the shadows (Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Williams, 2016). Dao also noted that much of the political discourse surrounding immigration policy was dominated by the Latinx community, and that issues for other ethnic groups have been largely invisible and merit further study.

State Contexts

In the absence of Congressional immigration reform, states, counties, and local municipalities created their own laws affecting undocumented immigrant residents. In a qualitative meta-analysis, Gonzales and Burciaga (2018) indicated that while some states provided legal access to a variety of institutions and services, others attempted to wholly exclude undocumented immigrants and criminalize their presence. Though DACA provided benefits to undocumented youths across the country, it did not address issues of institutional incorporation; hence state legislators determined state level applications (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). States could not alter DACA directly, but they could determine eligibility for state-level benefits. As a result, state policy reflected the political climate within the state and created a vast array of welcoming and unwelcoming settings for DACA recipients (Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Many states passed laws granting access to a variety of state resources not available to undocumented immigrants, while other states either prohibited access or did not specify policies for certain institutions (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). The wide variance of legal geography across the United States dramatically shaped experiences based upon local opportunities or impediments, with the advantages of DACA being contingent upon state and local ordinances (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). For undocumented youths, this meant the ability to apply for a driver’s license, attend a public university, pay in-state tuition, receive state financial aid, and obtain a professional license if they resided in an inclusive state, or being prohibited from such benefits in a more hostile location.

Rules regarding eligibility for driver's licenses varied by state. As of 2022, eighteen states including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico enacted state legislation allowing unauthorized immigrants to obtain a driver's license (Mathema, 2018; NCSL, 2022). DACA recipients with work authorization and a Social Security number could apply for a driver's license in all 50 states (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Mathema, 2018). The procurement of a driver's license increased feelings of security and allowed recipients to travel safely beyond their neighborhoods without fear of the consequences of driving without a license (Abrego, 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). Recipients also reported greater spatial mobility with the ability to travel freely to school, work, and longer distances including to other states (Abrego, 2018; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). In their quantitative analyses of the NURP survey, Gonzales and Bautista-Chavez (2014) and Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk (2014) speculated that a driver's license likely broadened employment, educational, and other opportunities for DACA recipients due to the increased mobility a driver's license afforded.

State tuition rates for undocumented youths with DACA were also impacted. According to the NILC (n.d.-a), as of 2022, 22 states including "California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Virginia. and Washington" (para. 1), as well as the District of

Columbia had tuition equity laws granting in-state tuition rates at public universities to anyone who graduated from secondary schools within the state regardless of immigration status. The University of Michigan Board of Regents enacted a similar policy for all its institutions state-wide (NILC, n.d.-a). Martinez (2014) investigated the effects of the ASSET (Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow) bill passed in 2013 in Colorado which lowered tuition rates for undocumented students in state public colleges and universities. In this qualitative study, undocumented youths who received benefits from DACA and ASSET indicated that these programs removed most of the obstacles to attending college; however, the barrier of paying for college was still present due to the lack of financial aid opportunities (Martinez, 2014). Participants suggested that these measures were limited in that they only benefitted those who were college-bound (Martinez, 2014). As of 2021, six states including Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, and South Carolina passed legislation that prohibited undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition, while other states not listed above were unspecified in terms of state-wide tuition regulations (NCSL, 2021). Prospective students in states such as Georgia and North Carolina where in-state tuition was not guaranteed found it to be a deterrent to college attendance (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Silver, 2012). Since DACA beneficiaries could pay in-state tuition rates in many states that undocumented students could not, DACA benefitted students nationwide (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018).

Though reduced tuition helped many DACA recipients enroll in college, the largest obstacle remained the ability to pay for tuition. Undocumented students, as well as

DACA recipients, were not eligible for federal financial aid. DACA recipients could apply for state financial aid in their state of residence, through their university, or from private funders; however, not all states extended financial aid to undocumented students or DACA recipients. Of the states that provided in-state tuition benefits, at least 13 extended state financial aid to undocumented students and DACA recipients – California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia (NILC, n.d.-a). Several states, including California, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Utah, allowed public universities to accept private sources of funding for undocumented immigrant students (NILC, n.d.-a). States with unspecified regulations may have allowed individual institutions to extend scholarships or other forms of institutional financial aid to undocumented students or DACA recipients. In the absence of subsidies, some DACA recipients chose less expensive options over traditional universities due to the expense (Sahay et al., 2016). Those who attended college without financial aid had increased attrition rates, lengthened the duration of their degree program due to inability to pay, or delayed enrollment in college to save for tuition (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Macías, 2018). While in college, DACA students attempted to find a variety of ways to finance their education. In a qualitative study with individual interviews and focus groups, Macías (2018) described a "scheme game" (p. 611) that DACA students in Ohio used to afford higher education. Though Ohio DACA students were granted in-state tuition at the time of the study, they could not receive state financial aid (Macías, 2018). In states without financial assistance, students found it extremely

difficult to afford college tuition and living expenses (Macías, 2018; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020). Most participants worked a full-time job or several part-time jobs, in addition to supplementing their income through miscellaneous jobs for cash and borrowing money from friends or family (Macías, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020). Beyond these strategies, participants described various schemes they used as a last resort to circumvent policies that would delay or prevent their graduation (Macías, 2018). Despite their efforts, many DACA recipients had difficulty affording and completing a college degree.

The DACA program assisted college enrolled DACA recipients in other ways. States that banned undocumented immigrants from enrolling in public higher education permitted DACA beneficiaries to enroll (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Many institutions of higher education offered scholarships to DACA recipients that were not extended to undocumented students (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Graduate school also became possible for DACA recipients. Many graduate programs offered fellowships and university employment in the form of research or teaching assistantships for students with DACA (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Since university employment and participation in residency programs, such as for medical school, necessitated the ability to legally work, these programs would have been unavailable without the work authorization provided by DACA (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018).

For those who chose to pursue training in a specialized occupation, there were other important considerations. A professional license was requisite to practice in many vocations. According to Gonzales and Burciaga (2018), 30% of jobs required a license to

work including teachers, attorneys, social workers, and employees in the beauty industry; at least 190 professions required licensure in some states and 93 required licensures in all states. Federal law prohibited unauthorized immigrants from receiving a professional license unless a state enacted legislation granting eligibility; this law also prevented several categories of documented noncitizens including DACA recipients from receiving a professional license (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Mathema, 2018). Since each state can determine licensure requirements, some states chose to extend licensure eligibility only to citizens and legal permanent residents, while others passed laws permitting anyone with work authorization, including DACA recipients, to pursue licensure in certain professions (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Mathema, 2018; NCSL, 2020; Olivas, 2017). For instance, Texas allowed DACA recipients to obtain a beverage, law, or security license; Washington allowed medical licenses; Florida permitted law licenses; and Nevada granted teaching licenses to DACA recipients (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Mathema, 2018). California and Texas have also passed laws allowing anyone regardless of immigration status, documented or undocumented, to apply for a professional license in their respective states (Mathema, 2018).

The variations in state policy had other effects. In their qualitative study, Cebulko and Silver (2016) compared two state contexts, Massachusetts (considered a welcoming state) and North Carolina (considered a restrictive state), to investigate the intersection of federal and state policy on feelings of membership or exclusion. Roth (2019) also conducted a qualitative study on social inclusion in a hostile state climate (South Carolina); however, the focus of this study was on the transition from undocumented to a

legally liminal status (DACA). Cebulko and Silver noted that “immigrants can simultaneously experience movements toward inclusion at the federal level while they face exclusionary policies at the state level, or vice versa” (p. 1557). Prior to DACA, recipients in Massachusetts and North Carolina experienced different contexts of reception at the local level and after DACA, state-level responses were vital in shifting their sense of membership and belonging (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Though DACA promoted greater social inclusion, recipients were acutely aware of their tenuous legal status, particularly in hostile states where their presence and benefits were contested (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Roth, 2019). Their perceptions of belonging depended upon the level of receptiveness of the state climate in which they resided (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). Hence, any positive effects of DACA were enhanced or diminished by state context consequently shaping perceptions of social exclusion or inclusion (Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Roth, 2019). This was further exacerbated for those who resided in rural areas. In a qualitative study by Gonzales and Ruiz (2014) that gathered 53 life history interviews from 2009-2011 of undocumented Latino (mostly Mexican) high school and university students in Washington state and a quantitative study by Wong and Garcia (2015) using USCIS data on DACA applications along with numerical data on the number of state-level immigrant serving organizations, restrictive state policies, and ACS data on state-level socioeconomic factors, the authors indicated that undocumented youths in rural communities faced the same challenges as those in urban locations, but also experienced a myriad of rural disadvantages such as increased immigration enforcement, poor community infrastructure, limited opportunities, and lack of

educational support. In the qualitative study by Silver (2012), the author noted, however, that rural communities with safe neighborhoods and positive social support helped mitigate some of the roadblocks for undocumented youths and led to greater feelings of integration in a small-town context.

In Wisconsin, approximately 5% of the state's population was foreign-born with roughly 6200 active DACA recipients as of March 2022, though DACA benefits were granted to 8205 individuals in Wisconsin since it was implemented in 2012 (AIC, 2020; MPI, n.d.). Policies regarding undocumented youths have varied but more recently took a hostile turn. From 2009 through 2011, undocumented students qualified for in-state tuition in Wisconsin public colleges and universities (New American Economy Research Fund, 2019). On June 18, 2011, AB 40 was passed which disqualified undocumented students from in-state classification for public higher education and revoked any previous legislation that allowed undocumented students to be classified as in-state residents for tuition purposes (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.). This bill also effectively revoked previous legislation that allowed access to state financial aid for undocumented students leaving it up to individual institutions to address their financial needs (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.). Regarding driver's licenses in Wisconsin, AB 69 was passed in 2007 which required any person applying for a driver's license or ID card (or renewing these documents) provide evidence of U.S. citizenship or lawful immigration status; typically, a valid Social Security number must be presented (DOT, n.d.-b; Higher Ed Immigration Portal, n.d.). In his 2019-2021 budget proposal to the state legislature, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers included measures to allow expansion of state-issued

driver's licenses and ID cards to include undocumented immigrants and extend in-state tuition to undocumented students; however, the state legislature did not support these measures (Petrovic, 2019). When DACA was implemented, DACA recipients gained access to driver's licenses in all states. According to the State of Wisconsin DOT (n.d.-a), the Wisconsin Attorney General approved DACA as sufficient evidence of legal presence as required by Wisconsin law; hence, the Wisconsin DOT began issuing driver's licenses to those with DACA status. A systematic law review by Olivas (2017) noted that qualifications for professional licenses within Wisconsin varied, but many licensure applications required a valid Social Security number and verification of citizenship or evidence of lawful presence for immigrant applicants. This allowed DACA recipients to apply for a myriad of professional licenses within Wisconsin, but undocumented individuals were excluded. At the local level, there were eight counties in Wisconsin that had 287(g) contracts with ICE which granted immigration enforcement authority to state and local law enforcement (ICE, n.d.). Considering Wisconsin overturned in-state tuition and state-level financial aid benefits for undocumented students, rejected proposals to provide benefits for undocumented immigrants and students, and had agreements with ICE to enforce federal immigration laws at the local level, Wisconsin could be considered unwelcoming toward undocumented immigrants.

Summary and Conclusions

A review of the recent literature related to DACA provided useful insights for this study. DACA was created to provide temporary legal status and work authorization for undocumented childhood arrivals (Napolitano, 2012). Since its implementation,

researchers have attempted to determine the effects of the program. Studies on program impact found increased access to higher education (Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Pérez, 2014), expanded and increased employment (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Hardina, 2014; Jones, 2020; Liu & Song, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pérez, 2014; Pope, 2016), greater access to health care (Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Patler et al., 2015a; Pérez, 2014; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014), improved psychological well-being (Alif et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2019; Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Panjwani, 2019; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Siemons et al., 2017; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017; Venkataramani et al., 2017), an increased sense of belonging (Abrego, 2018; Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016), and greater participation in political and civic activities by undocumented youths and DACA recipients (Dao, 2017; Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Pérez, 2014; Williams, 2016). Though DACA improved many facets of recipients' lives, there remained challenges and deficits in each of these domains, such as the cost of college enrollment (Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). Many states passed policies to help alleviate the obstacles not addressed by DACA, but not all states were hospitable in this way toward immigrants. Thus, the

effect of DACA varied for participants depending upon state context (Abrego, 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Macías, 2018; Martinez, 2014; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Furthermore, DACA provided only temporary legal status creating a perpetual state of legal liminality for recipients (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Coutin, 2013; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Menjívar, 2006; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). Since the program was created through administrative action, it could easily be modified or terminated at any time. Even if Congress were to pass legislation to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youths and DACA recipients, this would likely be a conditional path over a period of 5 to 10 years before permanent legal status would be granted, extending the period of legal liminality for this population (Roth, 2019).

The literature described in this chapter had several limitations. Many of the studies on the effects of DACA were qualitative studies with relatively small samples and limited demographics of participants, primarily members of the Latinx population (see Cebulko, 2014; Dao, 2017). Additional research is needed to determine if the results hold true for other demographic groups. Several of the studies used samples that included community members, providers, and DACA-eligible participants (e.g., Alif et al., 2020; Aranda et al., 2015; Gonzales, Dedios-Sanguineti & Suarez-Orozco, 2013; Marrow & Joseph, 2015; Patler & Pirtle, 2018; Raymond-Flesch et al., 2014; Siemons et al., 2017; Sudhinaraset et al., 2017); hence, the results of these studies may not pertain solely to DACA beneficiaries. Studies that used quantitative methodology typically used large datasets that

did not contain information on immigration or DACA status, so DACA status was inferred based on DACA eligibility criteria (e.g., Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman, 2017; Dennis, 2020a; 2020b; Giuntella & Lonsky, 2020; Jones, 2020; Liu & Song, 2020; Ortega et al., 2019; Pope, 2016; Venkataramani et al., 2017; Wong & Garcia, 2015); hence, the findings from these studies may not be reliable. Finally, since DACA was created in 2012, the research findings represented relatively short-term results, with long-term impacts of the program yet unknown. Further investigation of the long-term incorporation prospects for DACA recipients is needed, particularly due to their liminal status (Cebulko, 2014). Additional research can provide insight into the effects of long-term implementation of a temporary program.

The research on context related to DACA is also limited. Much of the research on DACA was conducted in states with policies that provided access to state benefits for DACA recipients, specifically in California with Spanish-speaking Latino youths (e.g., Abrego, 2006; Abrego, 2018; Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). A growing body of research has begun to investigate how state policy and other factors associated with place affect social inclusion for DACA recipients (see Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Roth, 2019; Wong & Garcia, 2015), yet few studies have investigated the experiences of DACA recipients in states with more hostile or unwelcoming contexts (see Cebulko & Silver 2016; Macías, 2018, Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016). As state and federal immigration laws continue to evolve, further research is necessary to

examine the interactive effects of federal and state policy and contexts of reception on the social exclusion experienced by DACA beneficiaries in hostile and unwelcoming states.

I sought to fill a gap in the research by investigating the experiences of DACA recipients and undocumented childhood arrivals in a new location, Wisconsin, which was representative of an unwelcoming state for immigrants in its state policy. Immigrant youths in new destinations with more rural areas may be exposed to more restrictive policies and aggressive immigration enforcement than those in more traditional migrant destinations (Cebulko, 2014; Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Silver, 2012; Wong & Garcia, 2015). Thus, Wisconsin represented a unique context in that it is not a traditional migrant destination and had a relatively small immigrant population (AIC, 2020). Much of the state is rural, with only a few metropolitan areas that are small relative to other U.S. cities (World Population Review, n.d.). My aim was to determine the extent to which perceptions of inclusion or exclusion as reflected in educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging were mitigated by DACA, how Wisconsin state-level policy contributed to this process, and whether a state with an inhospitable policy climate contained nested contexts of reception for legally liminal youths. Kubal (2013) noted that inquiries into the effect of the law on those with semilegal status are most useful when the experiences of those affected are examined; hence, a qualitative inquiry into participant experiences was appropriate for this undertaking.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of the research methods employed in this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the research design and rationale, continues with a discussion on methodological procedures, and describes issues of

trustworthiness related to this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy on undocumented childhood arrivals' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin. A generic qualitative approach was used with qualitative interviews for data collection and thematic coding for data analysis. The aim was to provide increased understanding of how federal and state policy in conservative and/or hostile locations shape undocumented childhood arrivals' experience of membership or exclusion.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology that was used in this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the research design and tradition chosen and a rationale for its selection. The following section describes important considerations regarding the role of the researcher and potential significant related factors that may have influenced this study. The methodology section includes a detailed description of the procedures for participant selection, recruitment, instrumentation, and data analysis. The final section describes relevant issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and closes with a summary of these topics.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I incorporated a generic qualitative approach by focusing on participant experiences related to exclusion in employment, higher education, and belonging for undocumented childhood arrivals in an inhospitable state. A generic qualitative design is useful when the aim is to understand a particular phenomenon through the

perspectives of participants (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). This approach allows concepts and themes to emerge from the data garnered through participants' explanations of their experiences. The ability of qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding of a real-world issue was paramount in my decision to use this approach, along with the potential to learn what is unknown about this topic and discover new insights for future research. Since the focus of this study was the effect of national and state-level policy on a specific group, this approach was the ideal choice, as it is most beneficial when the aim is to understand a complex topic or policy and its impact on individuals (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Kubal (2013) noted that inquiries into the effect of the law on those with semilegal status are most useful when the experiences of those affected are examined; hence, a qualitative inquiry into participant experiences was appropriate for this undertaking.

Individual interviews served as the method of data collection and participants were interviewed over the phone. Interviews are often used in qualitative research to gain insight into a participant's experiences and understand how they make sense of and construct reality in relation to a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews can also aid in exploration of similarities and differences among participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews are considered the best methodology for in-depth study of a topic (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Not only are participants given the opportunity to elaborate in a way that is not possible with other methods, but they are also able to provide information in a confidential and comfortable setting. These considerations were the main factors that influenced my decision to use a generic qualitative approach with individual interviews.

Research Question and Phenomenon of Interest

RQ: How has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?

The specific phenomenon of interest was the experience of exclusion for undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients related to education, employment, and belonging due to lack of permanent legal documentation in an inhospitable state.

Research Tradition and Rationale

I used the epistemological assumptions of constructivism in this study. In a constructivist worldview it is believed individuals develop subjective meanings toward objects or things (Burkholder et al., 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These meanings are created through complex and varied experiences and interactions with others in society and are shaped by historical and cultural norms (Burkholder et al., 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal of research in constructivism is to derive understanding of multiple participants' subjective views of the circumstances being studied and to create meanings based upon these accounts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A researcher uses open-ended questioning to allow participants to describe their experiences and views (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A researcher also pays particular attention to the context where participants live, as this is the setting where participant meanings are created (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These epistemological assumptions align with a generic qualitative method of inquiry, since the aim of this approach is deep exploration of

participant views and experiences to gain understanding of the phenomenon of study (see Burkholder et al., 2016).

The specific facets of this study supported a constructivist orientation. I sought to understand participant meanings derived from their interactions and experiences in society as it pertained to their immigration status using the central research question "how has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?" The specific policy (DACA) and state of residence (Wisconsin) provided important contextual factors that affected participant experiences, which were also a focus of this study. Open-ended questions were used in participant interviews to allow participants to share their views and the data collected was used to generate meaning. Hence a constructivist orientation aligned well with this study.

Role of the Researcher

My interest in this topic is rooted in both personal and professional experiences. Personally, I have relationships with individuals who emigrated from a foreign country and am part of a mixed-status family. I have often reflected on the changing nature of immigration policy and the resulting negative impact of punitive policies on families with mixed legal status. Professionally, I am employed as an instructor at an institution of higher education. I have worked with college students who were recipients of DACA and have witnessed their concerns stemming from the recent vacillations of the program. My experience teaching social welfare policy provided me with knowledge regarding the

requirements of DACA, and my personal experiences assisting with immigration applications gave me insight into the processes that DACA recipients must undergo.

Though my experiences served as a foundation for this study, they may have also biased my views since I am sympathetic toward immigrants in these circumstances. Hence, it was important to engage in self-reflection to ensure bias was minimized in data collection and interpretation. I incorporated a process of reflexivity into my research activities to evaluate the ways in which I as the researcher may have affected the research process (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I did this by creating researcher-generated data in the form of field notes and journal reflections to document my role as researcher and to maximize reliability and trustworthiness of the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I reviewed information from these documents during the data analysis process to minimize bias. I also considered my various roles and any potential conflicts that may have arisen. My professional role as an instructor at an institution of higher education could have created a conflict. In the course of my employment, I have had students in my classes that were DACA recipients. It was possible that students who met the inclusionary criteria could have chosen to participate in my study. My role of educator has a contrasting power differential with the role of student and could have created a conflict of interest. However, I did not recruit at my place of employment and, since all participants were anonymous, there would not be a conflict of interest if a student learned of my study and chose to participate since I was unaware of the identity of participants. There would not be a conflict of interest if a former student chose to participate as I would no longer be in

a position of authority relative to these students. I did not have any personal relationships with individuals that would have qualified for this study.

As the researcher, I served in the role of observer by interviewing participants about their experiences and analyzing their responses related to the topic of this study. Since I asked questions of a personal nature concerning legal status, participants may have been hesitant to provide open and honest responses. To mitigate any participant concerns, I used an informed consent process to advise participants of their rights and assured them that all information gathered was confidential. I did not gather names and addresses so individuals could choose to remain anonymous. I established a clear interview protocol that I followed for every participant. I created specific questions and potential follow-up questions that I used in every interview. I provided participants with the list of interview questions upon request prior to their interview and informed participants that they did not need to answer all interview questions and could end the interview at any time. I allotted time at the beginning and end of interviews to review informed consent procedures and gave participants the opportunity to ask questions. During interviews, I attempted to remain neutral to allow for authentic responses. As previously noted, I used a process of reflexivity by creating field notes after each interview and kept a journal of reflections that I reviewed during data analysis. I used a combination of transcription software and student teaching assistants to transcribe interviews. I redacted all identifiable information from the data prior to employing teaching assistants to maintain participant confidentiality. I reviewed transcriptions and took notes of any potential bias from each interview. Upon completion of their interview,

I gave each participant the choice between a $20 Amazon or Walmart gift card, which I sent via text. This amount seemed adequate to encourage participation, compensate participants for their time, and provide a token of appreciation for participating in the study, but it was not so large as to unduly induce participation or bias enrollment (see Resnik, 2015). I intended on giving all participants who completed any portion of the interview full compensation; however, all participants completed the full interview, and no participants chose to withdraw from the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population for this study included individuals who lived in the state of Wisconsin who were current recipients of DACA or were DACA-eligible. The following is a list of inclusion criteria that I used:

- Above the age of 18 at the time of the study, but not above the age of 39,
- A current resident of the state of Wisconsin,
- A current recipient of DACA,
- If the participant had never received DACA, they must have been undocumented and have met the eligibility criteria for DACA as outlined in Chapter 1,
- Did not have permanent legal immigration status, such as a Green Card or naturalization.

Prior to scheduling each interview, I screened participants over the phone to confirm eligibility by asking the following questions:

- Are you between the age of 18 and 39 years old?
- Are you a current resident of the state of Wisconsin?
- Are you a current DACA recipient?
    - If not, have you ever received DACA?
    - If not, do you (or did you) meet all the eligibility criteria for DACA? What is the reason for not receiving DACA?
- Do you have some other form of legal immigration status? If so, what is that status?

If responses to these questions excluded potential participants, I would not include them in the study; however, all five individuals that were screened for this study met the inclusion criteria and were subsequently interviewed. This selection criteria and confirmation process ensured that all participants met the requirements for the focus of this study.

Sampling Strategy and Recruitment Procedures

I recruited participants via nonprobability, purposive sampling which aims to find participants based on specific inclusionary characteristics of a study (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach was appropriate since the focus of this study was on a subpopulation of undocumented immigrants living in Wisconsin. I selected participants based upon inclusionary criteria of this study. I also used snowball sampling where I asked participants to provide my research flyer to others that may fit my study criteria to create a chain of interviewees (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

My recruitment plan consisted of contacting local community agencies and advocacy organizations that worked directly with immigrant populations and asking their leaders to disseminate information about my study. I began contacting agencies within my local community and broadened my geographic area within Wisconsin. I requested my flyer be posted at relevant agencies where potential participants might have been found (see Appendix A). I also posted information about my study on social media platforms, specifically Facebook and LinkedIn, and reached out to administrators of pages for immigrant organizations on these platforms. I attended any available events that focused on immigrant issues; for example, I attended *A Day Without Latinos* rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and a virtual meeting with an immigration task force that operates out of Appleton, Wisconsin to distribute my research flyer. Once I identified individuals as potential participants and I confirmed they met the inclusionary criteria, I scheduled a date and time to proceed with each interview. I then sent participants confirmation of our scheduled interview via text or email depending upon the participant's preferred method of communication. I also sent informed consent information and a copy of the interview questions if requested (see Appendix B) via email or text depending upon the participant's preferred method of communication. After each interview, I sent participants a copy of my research flyer and asked them to provide it to additional relevant contacts.

Sample Size and Saturation

Qualitative research typically involves small sample sizes; therefore, a researcher must be concerned with determining how many participants are sufficient to investigate

the phenomenon of interest. Saturation is a common way a researcher can evaluate the appropriateness of sample size, which is the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data being gathered (Guest et al., 2006). Saturation is determined not by number of participants, but at the point in the study where participant responses become repetitive in terms of content and common themes. While an exact number cannot be predetermined, several studies have investigated the point at which saturation is likely to occur. Guest et al. (2006) found saturation within 12 interviews with overall themes present within the first six interviews while Mason (2010) recommended that, in all qualitative studies, 15 was the smallest acceptable sample. For these reasons, my original target sample was 15 participants; however, my final sample size was five participants. My target sample was challenging to achieve, as I conducted participant recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many organizations and businesses were shut down, operating with limited hours, or conducting business virtually or over the phone. With limited organizations in operation and less walk-through traffic within organizations, there were less opportunities to reach potential participants. Furthermore, there were less community events where I could distribute flyers. I attempted to acquire additional participants via snowball sampling but did not obtain additional participants in this way. Despite these challenges, I was able to obtain quality data from the sample of participants interviewed and obtained saturation in much of the data, specifically in the areas of employment with saturation at four participants and education with saturation at five participants. There was some saturation in belonging at five participants, but additional research is needed to confirm results.

Instrumentation

I created an interview guide that included an introductory statement, series of questions with potential follow-up questions, and a closing statement (see Appendix B). I used a semi structured format to allow for flexibility in the interview process. I followed the interview protocol for every interview; however, additional probing questions were customized based upon the responses of the participant (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For this study, I chose to create an interview protocol rather than use an existing interview guide from similar research to ensure the questions aligned with the central research question and the interviews maintained the focus of this study. The questions comprised of a series of open-ended questions with potential follow-up questions to gather specific information and thoroughly investigate the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The questions were ordered so that the beginning of the interview gathered past experiences related to the phenomenon including participants' immigration experience and early life after immigration as well as how they learned about their undocumented status; the middle explored current experiences related to barriers in education, employment, and belonging due to their immigration status and their experiences related to DACA; and the end investigated future concerns related to barriers in education, employment, and belonging due to their legal status. The questions followed a chronological pattern to better aid participants in telling their immigration story and describe their experiences as an undocumented childhood arrival and DACA recipient in Wisconsin (see Patton, 2015). I audio-recorded interviews using VoiceMemo on an iPad device, and I used field notes to record pertinent interview information

including participant information; place, date, and time of the interview; and notes from the interview (see Burkholder et al., 2016). Once interviews were complete, I created verbatim transcripts and researcher-generated data in the form of journal reflections for the purpose of data analysis. I constructed the interview protocol by examining relevant literature to derive appropriate research questions (e.g., Aranda et al., 2015; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzales, Brant & Roth, 2020; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez 2020; Roth, 2019; Sahay et al., 2016; Williams, 2016). I contacted several experts in the field to request feedback and make improvements on my proposed interview questions. After consultation with several researchers and professors, feedback was considered, and appropriate revisions were made.

Research Procedures

Upon consultation with a member of the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB), I created the following research procedures. Once I identified participants through the recruitment and screening processes as described earlier in this chapter, I scheduled interviews at a specific date and time that was convenient for participants. Interviews were scheduled to allow 90 minutes for the entire process. I sent participants confirmation of their scheduled interview via email or text and interviewed them over the phone. I conducted interviews from my private work office to allow for privacy, while participants were at a location of their choosing. As previously noted, I sent participants information regarding informed consent and a list of interview questions upon request

(see Appendix B) via email or text prior to their scheduled interview. I also offered WhatsApp as a possible means of communication; however. none of the participants chose this method. I asked participants to reply to the email or text with “I consent” prior to their scheduled interview. Each interview began with a review of the informed consent information, and I allotted time for participants to ask initial questions about the study. I then interviewed each participant using the interview guide (see Appendix B). Once each interview was concluded, I gave participants time to ask any questions and debrief the interview. The debriefing process included a discussion of the purpose of the study, review of the information on informed consent, and a reminder of my contact information if the participant wished to follow-up later. I provided participants with information about where they could access the final study once completed and published. I thanked participants for their time and asked them to provide the research flyer to additional individuals who may meet the criteria for the study. At the conclusion of the interview, I gave participants the choice between a $20 Amazon or Walmart gift card. All participants chose an Amazon gift card, which I sent via text. I audio-recorded all interviews using VoiceMemo on an iPad device, and I took handwritten field notes during each interview. As previously mentioned, after each interview I created verbatim transcripts and researcher-generated data in the form of field notes and journal reflections in response to key reflective questions. I deleted audio recordings immediately following transcription. I offered participants a copy of their interview transcripts when they were completed and asked participants to provide comments, feedback, or ask additional questions. Four of

the five participants were sent copies of their interview transcripts. The data gathered from these interviews were then used for data analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

I began analyses of participant responses with a review of interview transcripts, field notes and journal entries. I used a content analysis that focused on recurring words and themes within and among data sources to identify core consistencies and meanings (see Patton, 2015). This was followed by a process of thematic coding where I located and labeled concepts, events, and examples within transcripts of interviews and identified recurring ideas, patterns, and common themes (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). I highlighted specific data, organized it into meaningful clusters, and used a delimitation process where irrelevant or overlapping data was eliminated (see Patton, 2015). I identified themes within the data and synthesized these into meanings and patterns of the experiences and perceptions described by participants (see Patton, 2015). I had intended to use NVivo software to aid in the coding process; however, since I had a small sample of five participants, I chose to manually code, organize, and analyze data using Microsoft Word and Excel.

In the first cycle of coding, I reviewed interview transcripts and field notes to identify major concepts present in the data with a focus on participant perceptions, experiences, and meanings. As the coding process progressed from one source to another, I created additional codes and revisited previous sources to apply newly generated codes to the data. I reviewed codes to identify commonalities and patterns among the data. I grouped codes into categories and noted specific phrases that related to the central

research question. As the coding process continued, my focus was to identify patterns, reduce the number of categories, and group related categories into overall themes. I continued this process until I identified a few prominent themes. I then reviewed the data to identify discrepant data that warranted acknowledgement in the discussion of the results. This analysis focused on participant descriptions of their experiences of inclusion or exclusion in education, employment, and belonging related to DACA and state-level policy in Wisconsin. I also reviewed the data for alignment with contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory. As previously mentioned, I had intended to use NVivo software to aid in this process; however, due to the small sample size, I chose to conduct this process manually with Microsoft Word and Excel.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data sources, research methods and findings can be impacted by several factors including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following is a summary of the strategies that were used to enhance trustworthiness, as well as those that are recommended in future studies to further increase confidence in results.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the study measures the phenomena as intended, as well as a researcher's confidence in the findings (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I incorporated numerous strategies to enhance its credibility. Prolonged engagement can help participants build trust with a researcher so that they are open and honest in their responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I contacted participants on several

occasions including the initial screening call, the research interview, and post interview follow-up. I scheduled research interviews for 90 minutes which allowed time to build rapport and have an in-depth discussion with participants. I used member checks during interviews where I asked participants to verify the accuracy of data on the spot, and I allotted time at the end of each interview for participants to add additional relevant information that was not covered in the interview (see Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I later asked participants to provide feedback and verify accuracy of transcripts post interview. Data saturation can aid in credibility by ensuring there is no new information or themes to be garnered by additional participants (Guest et al., 2006). As previously noted, I intended to continue sampling until it was determined that no new information or themes were emerging from the data and that data saturation has been achieved, with a target sample of 15 participants. Since I conducted my study during the COVID-19 pandemic when many organizations and businesses were shut down, operating with limited hours, or conducting business virtually or over the phone, reaching potential participants was more challenging. I attempted to obtain additional participants via snowball sampling but did not secure additional participants in this way. Despite these challenges, I was able to obtain quality data from the sample of five participants interviewed and obtained saturation in much of the data, specifically in the areas of employment with saturation at four participants and education with saturation at five participants, with some saturation in belonging occurring at five participants. I implemented triangulation in the form of evaluating consistency across interviewees with discrepant data noted for further discussion in the results (see Patton, 2015). I

incorporated a process of reflexivity into my research activities to evaluate the ways in which I as the researcher may have affected the research process (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During each interview I took handwritten field notes and created verbatim transcripts and researcher-generated data after each interview in the form of field notes and journal reflections in response to key reflective questions. Finally, this study was reviewed by a research committee and by members of Walden University prior to and after the study, ensuring the methodology and findings were credible (see Shenton, 2004). The use of these strategies enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

Though I used multiple strategies to develop credibility, other strategies are recommended in future research. One strategy that could be incorporated is iterative questioning in interviews where a researcher revisits previous topics with reworded questions to uncover any potential deceit or detect that a participant is withholding information (Shenton, 2004). I did not employ this method due to the time constraints of interviews in this study; however, future research with greater participant contact could include this strategy. I used triangulation through evaluation of consistency across participants; however, additional methods of triangulation could be used in future studies, such as the use of several methods of data collection, or the use of several analysts or multiple theories to interpret data (see Amankwaa, 2016; Burkholder et al., 2016; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Also, though I scheduled interviews for 90 minutes to allow for prolonged contact, this may not have been enough time for all participants to feel comfortable. Subsequent interviews may have yielded additional useful information. I

used member checks at several stages of the data collection process, but one participant chose not to review transcripts which limited the effectiveness of this strategy (see Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Finally, though I obtained saturation in much of the data, additional research with larger numbers of participants could increase the saturation yielded from the data.

Transferability

Also known as generalizability, transferability refers to the degree to which results of a study are applicable to the general population and in other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Thick description helps with transferability, which requires a researcher to describe a phenomenon in abundant detail so that others can evaluate conclusions and determine if they are transferable to similar groups, situations, settings at a different time. (Amankwaa, 2016). I provided information pertaining to every aspect of the research process including the time and location of interviews, participant information, researcher reactions and feelings along with recorded and transcribed data, all of which I included in data analysis and reporting (see Amankwaa, 2016). A reader can review these details and make the determination if results may be applied to other groups and settings. A limitation in transferability is the small sample size of this study and resulting limited variation in participant demographics, particularly with respect to cultural/ethnic background, gender, geographical area of participants, and educational background. The focus of this study required participants to fit specific selection criteria; hence, wide variation in participant selection was not possible. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methodology with a relatively small sample also

limits the possibility of inclusion of a wide variation of participants. Additional research will be necessary in alternate locations and circumstances with a wider variation in participant demographics to determine if the results of this study are transferable.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and accuracy in data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as whether research can be repeated (Amankwaa, 2016; Burkholder et al., 2016). Audit trails are when a researcher describes in as much detail as possible how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the research process (Burkholder et al., 2016). This allows for transparency in the research process so that a reader can make a judgement about the dependability of the process and to enable future researchers to repeat a study (Shenton, 2004). I provided descriptions of the research design and implementation, details regarding how I gathered data in the field, and reflexive processes in this report; however additional details might be necessary for a reader to better assess the dependability of this study. Also, as previously mentioned, I implemented triangulation across data sources, but additional forms of triangulation could be incorporated for increased dependability (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Patton, 2015).

Confirmability

A final consideration in trustworthiness is confirmability, which refers to the extent to which a researcher was able to remain neutral and the degree to which findings are subject to researcher bias (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Use of audit trails that include transparency regarding predispositions, explanations why specific methods were

chosen over other options, and descriptions regarding weaknesses within the data-gathering techniques can illuminate where potential bias occurred (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). This chapter included a discussion of positionality, roles, potential researcher bias, and rationale for selection of data collection methods and limitations of this approach. The use of data triangulation across participants also aided in confirmability of results, but the addition of other methods of triangulation in future research could also promote confirmability (see Burkholder et al., 2016; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Procedures

To ensure this study fully complied with ethical standards in research with human subjects, an IRB conducted an ethics review and approved all ethical procedures prior to recruitment of participants and data collection. I completed a research ethics checklist to confirm all procedures were ethical and risks to participants were minimized. The following is a summary of the ethical procedures in this study.

Participants

To recruit participants, I contacted various relevant community organizations and asked them to disseminate a flyer with information regarding the study (see Appendix A). I posted the flyer on various relevant social media sites. The flyer contained information about the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, benefits of participation, and explained the voluntary nature of the research process. The flyer also contained my contact information for those who wished to volunteer for the study. This was to ensure that there were no ethical concerns regarding recruitment and all individuals who met the

inclusionary criteria had equal chance of participation with reduced likelihood of the rejection of potential participants. When screening potential participants to determine if they met the criteria for selection, I explained the purpose of the study and asked volunteers if they had any questions or concerns. All the potential participants that I screened met the inclusionary criteria, so no potential participants were rejected for this study.

Once selected, I provided information regarding the informed consent process to participants. I sent an informed consent document via email or text depending upon each participant's preferred method of communication. I offered WhatsApp as a possible method of communication, but none of the participants chose this method. I then reviewed the informed consent document over the phone so I could address any questions or concerns. I requested that participants reply "I consent" to the email or text prior to their interview and reminded them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I then scheduled an interview date and time. I informed participants that they could contact me with any additional questions prior to the interview appointment. At the beginning of the interview, I reminded participants of their rights as outlined in the informed consent document and asked for any additional questions prior to commencing the interview. Since I asked questions of a personal and potentially sensitive nature, I included a period of debriefing at the end of the interview, and I informed participants that they could contact me with questions or concerns post interview. The consent form included information regarding free or low-cost support resources should the study have created any distress. I provided each participant with a $20 Amazon or Walmart gift card upon

completion of the interview, an amount sufficient to compensate participants but not so large as to unduly induce participation. I intended to give full compensation to all participants who completed any portion of the interview; however, all participants completed the full interview and received full compensation.

Data

To ensure ethical standards in data collection, I outlined each step of the data collection and analysis process and articulated researcher responsibilities. To protect participants, I kept all participant contact information (phone numbers and email addresses) confidential. I did not collect participant names to prevent any potential ramifications due to legal status and ensure responses could not be traced back to a specific individual. I maintained participants' contact information in a log separate from research documentation so that this information could not be connected to a specific participant's data. I assigned each participant a number that I used in research documentation and data reporting. I did not give any identifiable information to teaching assistants that helped transcribe interview recordings to maintain participant confidentiality. I stored all paper documentation in a locked file cabinet in a locked office that only I could access. I stored electronic data on a password-protected cloud drive, with backups stored on my password-protected computer. Data will be stored for 5 years at which time all electronic data will be deleted, and paper data will be destroyed. I gave participants the option to review data and provide feedback. I provided participants with information at the end of their interview on how to access the final study. Throughout this

process, I was supervised by a research committee and completed all steps of institutional review to ensure the study fully complied with applicable ethical standards.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology and procedures used in this study. Choices regarding the research design and tradition were guided by the central research question and phenomenon of interest. I employed a generic qualitative approach with a constructivist orientation, which was appropriate for determining the effect of policy on the perceptions and experiences of the population. I used semi structured interviews for data collection, which effectively gathered rich and detailed information on participant perspectives and experiences. I discussed considerations regarding the role of the researcher as well as how I minimized conflicts of interest and bias. I outlined the procedures for sampling, participant recruitment and selection criteria, instrument creation, and implementation of the study. I also provided a description of how I organized and analyzed data. Finally, I discussed considerations of trustworthiness and the strategies that were employed to maximize confidence of results along with ethical considerations and methods that I used to mitigate any potential ethical concerns of this study.

In Chapter 4, I describe details related to the implementation of this study. Topics covered include participant demographics, procedures used for data collection and analysis, and results. The chapter also contains a discussion on evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experience of inclusion or exclusion for undocumented childhood arrivals related to education, employment, and belonging due to lack of permanent legal documentation in an inhospitable state. The central research question used for this analysis was "how has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?"

Chapter 4 begins with a description of the setting of the study and participant demographics. Next, the procedures that were used for data collection and analysis are detailed. The subsequent section reviews evidence of trustworthiness with a discussion of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, the results of this study are reported, and the chapter closes with a summary.

Setting

The primary setting for this study was the state of Wisconsin. The Walden IRB provided a 1-year approval to collect data beginning on September 13, 2021 (reference number 09-13-21-021879). Following IRB approval, I contacted numerous community agencies serving the immigrant population throughout the state of Wisconsin via phone, email, Facebook, and LinkedIn and asked leaders within these organizations to post or distribute my research flyer (see Appendix A). Most of these organizations were in the Milwaukee, Madison, and Green Bay areas of Wisconsin. I also distributed flyers at *A Day Without Latinos* rally in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, attended a virtual meeting with an

immigration task force that operates out of Appleton, Wisconsin to provide information on my study, and posted flyers on Facebook and LinkedIn. Through these efforts, I was able to recruit five participants. I interviewed participants over the phone, with participants at a location of their choosing, while I was in a private office at my place of employment. There were no significant or unanticipated conditions identified that influenced participants or their experiences at the time of the study that affected the results.

Demographics

For this study I interviewed five participants. Of the five participants, four were female and one was male. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 32 years old. Four of the five participants were born in Mexico and one participant was born in El Salvador. All participants migrated to the United States under the age of 18, ranging from 6 months old to 8 years old at their time of entry. Three participants were current recipients of DACA, while two were DACA-eligible. The two DACA-eligible participants had applied for DACA, but their applications were frozen due to the ruling in Texas federal court on July 16, 2021, that blocked new DACA applications from being processed (USCIS, n.d.-a); hence, both participants were undocumented at the time of this study. All participants were Wisconsin residents living in the areas of Milwaukee, Madison, and Racine. Most of the participants lived in Wisconsin since they immigrated to the United States, while one participant lived in Georgia and relocated to Wisconsin approximately 3 years ago. All participants had completed some higher education; one participant had a master's degree, one participant had a bachelor's degree, and the other three participants were in

the process of pursuing a bachelor’s or associates degree. In contrast, the highest level of education for parents of participants ranged from elementary school to high school. All participants were employed at the time of this study and had an approximate annual household income ranging from $25,000-$88,000. All participants were also part of mixed-status families, with one participant reporting his parents had been deported. See Table 1 and Table 2 for detailed information on participant demographic information.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Country of Origin	Age at Entry	Immigration Status	DACAmented Age	City of Residence
1	19	F	Mexico	2	DACA	16	Milwaukee
2	18	F	Mexico	3	Undocumented		Racine
3	30	M	El Salvador	8	DACA	20/21	Madison
4	24	F	Mexico	2	DACA	18	Milwaukee
5	32	F	Mexico	6 months	Undocumented		Milwaukee

Table 2

Education/Employment Demographics

Participant Number	Highest Level of Education	Type of Employment	Resides With	Approx. Annual Household Income	Parent's Highest Level of Education	Parent's Type of Employment	Family Immigration Statuses
1	2nd Year College Student	Hospitality	Parents and Siblings	\$25,000-\$27,000	Father: High School Mother: Middle School	Father: Unemployed, (Prev. Landscaping) Mother: Cleaning	Parents: Undocumented Siblings: Natural Born Citizens
2	1st Year College Student	Childcare	Parents	\$50,000	Father: Middle School Mother: High School	Both Parents: Fast Food	Parents: Undocumented
3	Master's Degree	Religious Field	Spouse	\$88,000	Both Parents: Elementary School	Both Parents: Deported (Prev. Cleaning Business Owners)	Both Parents: Deported Spouse: DACA
4	Bachelor's Degree	Political Field	Alone	\$45,000	Father: Middle School Mother: Elementary School	Father: Unemployed (Prev. Restaurant Work) Mother: Cleaning Business Owner	Parents: Undocumented 4 Siblings: 1 Citizen 1 U Visa 2 Undocumented
5	Technical College Student	Student Services	Alone	\$34,000	Father: Middle School Mother: Elementary School	Father: Restaurant Owner Mother: Busser	Parents: Undocumented

Data Collection

Data was collected from five individuals residing in the state of Wisconsin using semi structured interviews. Participants responded to the recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) and contacted me via phone or email to volunteer for this study. I requested a phone number from those that contacted me through email for the purpose of screening and interviewing participants. I immediately called all participants and spoke with each of them for approximately 5 minutes to ask the screening questions outlined in Chapter 3. I also briefly reviewed my study and asked for any initial questions. I then scheduled a 90-minute research interview at a date and time that was convenient for the participant. I

scheduled these interviews within a week of the initial screening phone call. I sent participants confirmation of their scheduled interview via text or email depending upon participant's preferred method of communication. I also offered WhatsApp as a possible communication method; however. none of the participants chose this method. Prior to their interview I sent participants the informed consent document and a copy of the interview questions upon request (see Appendix B) via text or email. Each participant replied to this email or text with "I consent" prior to their scheduled interview. I interviewed participants over the phone, with participants at a location of their choosing, while I was in a private office at my place of employment. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded participants of their rights as outlined in the informed consent document and asked for any additional questions prior to commencing the interview. I interviewed each participant using the same interview protocol (see Appendix B); however, additional probing questions were customized based upon the responses of the participants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I included a period of debriefing at the end of each interview, and I informed participants that they could contact me with questions or concerns post interview. I offered each participant a $20 Amazon or Walmart gift card as compensation; however, all participants chose an Amazon gift card which I sent via text to each participant immediately following their research interview. Four of the five interviews were completed under the allotted 90-minute timeframe, taking approximately 75-90 minutes, while one interview went 10 minutes over the allotted timeframe. This participant agreed to continue beyond the 90 minutes. I audio-recorded interviews using VoiceMemo on an iPad device and stored

them on a password-protected cloud drive, along with all other electronic documents from this study. I also took hand-written notes during each interview and created researcher-generated data in the form of field notes and journal reflections in response to key reflective questions following each interview. I stored these documents in a locked file cabinet in a locked office. I used the audio recordings to create verbatim transcripts and I deleted these recordings once I completed the transcripts. I offered participants a copy of their interview transcripts and requested comments and feedback. Four of the five participants were sent copies of their interview transcripts. The data gathered from these interviews were then used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Analyses of participant responses began with a review of interview transcripts, field notes and journals. I used a content analysis to locate recurring words and themes within and among data sources to identify core consistencies and meanings (see Patton, 2015). This was followed by a process of thematic coding where I located and labeled concepts, events, and examples within transcripts of interviews to identify recurring ideas, patterns, and common themes (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2016). I highlighted specific data, organized it into categories related to the central research question, and used a delimitation process to eliminate irrelevant or overlapping data (see Patton, 2015). I identified themes within the data and synthesized these into meanings and patterns of the experiences and perceptions described by participants (see Patton, 2015). Though I had planned to use NVivo software in this process, I chose to hand code the data using Microsoft Word and Excel due to the small sample of five participants.

In the first cycle of coding, I reviewed interview transcripts and field notes to identify major concepts present in the data. As the coding process progressed from one source to another, I created additional codes and revisited previous sources to apply newly generated codes to the data. I reviewed codes to identify commonalities and patterns among the data. I grouped codes into categories and noted specific phrases that related to the central research question. As the coding process continued, my focus was on identifying patterns, reducing the number of categories, and grouping related categories into overall themes. I continued this process until I identified a few prominent themes. Throughout this process, I assessed data for discrepant data that warranted acknowledgement in the discussion of the results. This analysis focused on participant descriptions of their experiences of inclusion or exclusion in education, employment, and belonging related to DACA and state-level policy in Wisconsin. I also reviewed the data for alignment with contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory. As previously mentioned, I had intended to use NVivo software to aid in this process; however, due to the small sample size, I chose to conduct this process manually with Microsoft Word and Excel.

Codes, categories, and themes were generated from the data. Table 3 lists the significant major themes and subthemes that were created, along with categories within each theme and primary codes that were used. Themes are discussed in detail in the results section of this chapter.

Table 3

Significant Themes, Categories, Codes

Significant themes	Subthemes	Categories	Primary codes
Immigration Story: Hope for a Better Life		Transition	Small home, labor job, low wages
		Opportunity	Work, education, family, safety, escape poverty, better wages, homeowner, business owner
I'm Undocumented: An Evolving Meaning		Documented Status	Known status, unknown status, confusion, hope, work, Social Security number, driver's license
DACA: Temporary Peace		Benefits	Work, Social Security number, driver's license, scholarships, attend college, security, opportunity, no deportation, peace, hope
		Limitations	Temporary, no pathway to citizenship, travel restrictions, no federal aid, expensive, tedious, unstable
Effects of DACA: Limited Benefits			
	Early Education: Learning English	Early Education	Status irrelevant, language barrier, ESL, bilingual school
	High School: First Experiences of Exclusion	High School	No driver's license, no Social Security number, applying for college, no field trips, outsider
	College: Limited Choices	College	No federal aid, out-of-state tuition, lack of resources, lack of knowledge, scholarships, institutional support, family socioeconomic status
	Undocumented Yet Employed	Employment without DACA	No Social Security number, blocked mainstream jobs, underground economy, in the shadows, fear, uncertainty, stuck, business owner, family socioeconomic status
	DACA = Work Opportunities	Employment with DACA	Legitimacy, access, status, Social Security number
	DACA Does Not Mean I Belong	Belonging	Outsider, Americanized, secret, liminal, reidentification, community organization, family, commonality, comfortable, happy, unafraid, accepted, authentic, friends
Community Context: Finding Support in Local Spaces		Exclusion	287(g), deportation, ICE, Trump administration, resources, no medical care, Wisconsin, unsafe, fear
		Inclusion	Hispanic population, community organization, well-known, accepted, resources, activism

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Through the course of this study, I employed procedures to enhance trustworthiness related to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following is an account of strategies used.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the study measures the phenomena as intended, as well as a researcher's confidence in the findings (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I incorporated numerous strategies to enhance its credibility. Prolonged engagement can help participants build trust with a researcher so that they are open and honest in their responses (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I contacted participants on several occasions including the initial screening call, the research interview, and post interview follow-up. I scheduled research interviews for 90 minutes which allowed time to build rapport and have an in-depth discussion with participants. I used member checks during interviews where I asked participants to verify the accuracy of data on the spot, and I allotted time at the end of each interview for participants to add additional relevant information that was not covered in the interview (see Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I later asked participants to provide feedback and verify accuracy of transcripts post interview. Data saturation can aid in credibility by ensuring there is no new information or themes to be garnered by additional participants (Guest et al., 2006). As previously noted, I intended to continue sampling until it was determined that no new information or themes were emerging from the data and that data saturation has been achieved, with a target sample of 15 participants. Since I conducted my study during the COVID-19 pandemic when many organizations and businesses were shut down, operating with limited hours, or conducting business virtually or over the phone, reaching potential participants was more challenging. I attempted to obtain additional participants via snowball sampling but did not secure additional participants in this way. Despite these

challenges, I was able to obtain quality data from the sample of five participants interviewed and obtained saturation in much of the data, specifically in the areas of employment and education, with some saturation in occurring in belonging. I implemented triangulation in the form of evaluating consistency across interviewees with discrepant data noted for further discussion (see Patton, 2015). I incorporated a process of reflexivity into my research activities to evaluate the ways in which I as the researcher may have affected the research process (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During each interview I took handwritten field notes and created verbatim transcripts and researcher-generated data after each interview in the form of field notes and journal reflections in response to key reflective questions. I created a research protocol that I followed with each participant. The interview guide created was reviewed by several researchers and professors outside of my educational institution that conducted research on DACA and taught on this topic to ensure the instrument was credible. Finally, this study was reviewed by a research committee and by members of Walden University prior to and after the study, ensuring the methodology and findings were credible (see Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Also known as generalizability, transferability refers to the degree to which results of a study are applicable to the general population and in other contexts (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Thick description helps with transferability, which requires a researcher to describe a phenomenon in abundant detail so that others can evaluate conclusions and determine if they are transferable to similar groups, situations,

settings at a different time (Amankwaa, 2016). For this study, I provided information pertaining to every aspect of the research process along with rich, thick descriptions of the data. A reader can review these details and make the determination if results may be applied to other groups and settings. A limitation in transferability is the small sample size of this study and resulting limited variation in participant demographics, particularly with respect to cultural/ethnic background, gender, geographical area of participants, and educational background. The focus of this study required participants to fit specific selection criteria; hence, wide variation in participant selection was not possible. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methodology with a relatively small sample also limited the possibility of inclusion of a wide variation of participants.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and accuracy in data collection, analysis, and reporting, as well as whether research can be repeated (Amankwaa, 2016; Burkholder et al., 2016). Audit trails are when a researcher describes in as much detail as possible how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the research process (Burkholder et al., 2016). This allows for transparency in the research process so that a reader can make a judgement about the dependability of the process and to enable future researchers to repeat a study (Shenton, 2004). This report provided an audit trail related to the preparation of the study, participant selection and characteristics, and data collection and analysis. Additionally, consistency in the interview process among participants and data analysis along with triangulation across data sources also aided in dependability.

Confirmability

A final consideration in trustworthiness is confirmability, which refers to the extent to which a researcher was able to remain neutral and the degree to which findings are subject to researcher bias (Amankwaa, 2016; Shenton, 2004). As previously mentioned, I used audit trails that included a reflexive process to ensure I evaluated and minimized researcher bias in data collection and analysis. Audio recorded interviews and creation of verbatim transcripts also ensured accuracy of interpretation of participant responses and aided in data triangulation across participant responses, which increased confirmability of results.

Results

My aim in this study was to understand the perceived central issues for undocumented childhood arrivals regarding indicators of social exclusion: educational access, employment opportunities, and belonging with the central research question "how has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?" I began interviews by asking participants demographic questions, followed by open-ended questions about their immigration story, documented status, experiences applying for DACA, views of their community, their employment and educational background and how DACA affected those areas, as well as how status and DACA shaped their sense of belonging. These questions were intended to get a picture of participants' lives before and after DACA and to better understand how DACA shaped their past, present, and future in Wisconsin. The

following is a description of the major themes in the data. See Table 4 for definitions of each theme and subtheme.

Table 4

Definitions of Identified Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Definition
Theme 1: Immigration Story: Hope for a Better Life	Families chose to migrate for more opportunities and a better quality of life for themselves and their children.
Theme 2: I'm Undocumented: An Evolving Meaning	The implications of undocumented status were unknown in early childhood. This perspective changed when they began to experience exclusions in adolescence and adulthood.
Theme 3: DACA: Temporary Peace	DACA provided impermanent, partial security and incomplete inclusion.
Theme 4: Effects of DACA: Limited Benefits	DACA permitted access to some opportunities while program limitations left obstacles in other areas.
Subtheme 1: Early Education: Learning English	Immigration status was not a factor in early education. Language barriers were the primary challenge in elementary and middle school.
Subtheme 2: High School: First Experiences of Exclusion	Immigration status affected participants' ability to fully participate in opportunities that were presented during high school.
Subtheme 3: College: Limited Choices	Undocumented status affected participants' ability to pursue higher education. DACA did not improve participants' access to higher education, affecting where and when participants attended college.
Subtheme 4: Undocumented Yet Employed	While participants were undocumented, they were able to find employment in the shadows without a work permit.
Subtheme 5: DACA = Work Opportunities	DACA provided unrestricted access to employment.
Subtheme 6: DACA Does Not Mean I Belong	DACA status did not necessarily lead to feelings of belonging but being undocumented contributed to a sense of nonbelonging.
Theme 5: Community Context: Finding Support in Local Spaces	Local organizations, resources, and people helped mitigate exclusions. Communities provided places for participants to connect with others with similar immigration statuses and provided opportunities to advocate for change.

Theme 1: Immigration Story: Hope for a Better Life

Participants were asked to share their immigration story and early memories in the United States. A common theme to their stories was their parents' desire for increased opportunities for work, better wages, educational access, and an overall better quality of living for themselves and their children as motivating factors for migration. Four of the five participants mentioned that their parents experienced poverty and low wages back in

Mexico, so they came to the United States to find better opportunities for work and education for themselves and their families.

> They wanted a better life for us since they already had two kids and my dad, he migrated here when he was really young. He was 14 and he was here to provide for his family when he was younger. And then I guess when he married my mom, he wanted something better, so he brought my mom over and my older sister and myself. (Participant 5)

Participant 4 added that poverty brought her family to the United States, but safety kept them here. "We can all find ways to return to our lives in Mexico, but I think nobody feels safe going…because gangs and the drug cartel just got way worse than when they [family] had originally come." Participant 1 and 2 noted that many of their extended family members were already in the United States, so their parents joined them when they immigrated. Participant 3 was unique in that his family emigrated from El Salvador due to a 13-year-old war that left the country with political, social, and economic instability. "After the war ended it left a disastrous environment, so my parents migrated to the United States. First was my dad in '94 and then my mom in 2000…just because they couldn't stay due to political reasons." He noted that the remainder of his family relocated to a variety of countries throughout Europe.

For many of the participants' families, the transition in the United States was initially challenging but improved over time. Several participants indicated they lived in small homes when they first settled. Participant 1 described initially living in a small one-room attic and then basements of other people's houses, but her father eventually found a

better-paying job and now they live in their own home. Participant 2 stated she lived in a small 590-square-foot apartment with another family. Eventually, she and her family moved into their own apartment, and ultimately, her parents also purchased a house. Participants' parents initially found work in the labor industry in restaurants, factories, construction and cleaning homes and businesses. Participant 3, 4, and 5 all indicated that, over time, their parents became business owners.

Theme 2: I'm Undocumented: An Evolving Meaning

Participants understanding of their undocumented status changed over time. Three of the five participants stated they grew up knowing they were undocumented but did not know the implications of this status. Once they began to experience exclusions due to their status, they began to understand the impact of being undocumented. Participant 1 stated,

> I always knew I was born in Mexico due to these conversations that I overheard. And then I realized that that meant that I was undocumented, like legally I was not really supposed to be here…but then I realized that undocumented actually meant I didn't have some of the privileges or rights that US citizens have such as voting, such as going to any college I want to, federal aid, all these different things… Even working, having the opportunity to work wasn't there.

Participant 2 also indicated she always knew she was undocumented.

> As long as I can remember I knew that I was undocumented. I think my parents just really wanted me to be cautious about the actions and the consequences that could happen because many families do not feel the need to tell their children that

they're undocumented, but I think my parents were also scared for me because I'm very active in the community.

When asked what her status this meant to her, Participant 2 replied,

I really embraced my undocumented status and was like, “well I have to work harder than the rest because the scholarships that I wanted were also for undocumented children that were working their butts off too,” because there’s just such little help for undocumented students that want to get to college… So, I think I always felt this pressure of trying to be more and more and pushing myself to sometimes just breaking down because I couldn't handle the stress of knowing that I was undocumented and knowing that I'm doing a little bit better than my peers in school, but I don't get the chances to show that because of my status.

Participant 4 also indicated she always knew of her undocumented status and learned how it would affect her from witnessing her family members’ difficulties.

I always knew I was undocumented ever since I was little. It was never hidden from me so there wasn't an epiphany moment where I found out. We talked about it all the time like it was a common thing… I understood that I didn't have a Social Security number and that was what that was going to mean to me as well at some point ’cause my whole family was undocumented, so we all kind of grew up with those same struggles.

Participants 3 and 5 had different experiences learning of their undocumented status.

In middle school my parents had to share that they didn't have a legal status and that I didn't either. It was always with high hopes… They were always telling me,

> just anticipating this is going to be a barrier but at the same time God will open the doors… So, for me I was always, "OK this is bad news but at the same time there's hope." (Participant 3)
>
> The first time I heard that I wasn't from Milwaukee I was in 5th grade… My teacher in 5th grade asked us to do a little bio poster of ourselves; what city we were born, favorite color and all that stuff and that's when I learned that I wasn't born here in Milwaukee, that I was actually born in a different country… I remember feeling super confused, like "what are they talking about?" But that was when I knew that I wasn't born here in Milwaukee, but I really didn't know how it would affect me later on until I was in high school… It was in my high school years when I really paid attention to that and what it meant. And that's how I truly understood that I am undocumented. (Participant 5)

All participants detailed the exclusions they began to experience as they got older, which is described later in this section.

Theme 3: DACA: Temporary Peace

Participants were asked to describe their experiences applying for DACA. All five participants had applied for DACA and three of the five were DACA recipients at the time of this study. Some applied on their own; others had assistance from notaries or attorneys. Participants paid approximately $500 for the DACA application fee, a range of $200-$300 for a notary, and roughly $1500 for an attorney. Some participants paid this fee on their own, while others received assistance from their parents. Participant 1 noted she also had help from the community organization Voces de la Frontera in paying the

DACA application fee and filling out the application. For many participants, the biggest challenge when completing the initial application was locating all the necessary documentation to prove residency.

> I had to gather my school records, my vaccination records, my doctor records, my dental, everything that I could possibly have I had to get it… It was really stressful because you never know how many papers are necessary to send or if you are going to have enough proof that you were here in America ever since you were 15-16. (Participant 2)
>
> That first one was just challenging coming up with all the materials…certificates like all my awards, all my dental visits, any proof of being in this country… Coming up with it was definitely difficult. I didn't want to get anything wrong. I didn't want to risk anything being wrong and then my application getting denied. (Participant 4)

Most participants applied for DACA after it was an established program, but Participant 3 initially applied for DACA when it was first created; hence, his experience was unique.

> I remember being very suspicious, I had friends who were undocumented too, so we were talking, "should we do it, should we wait?" … Some people were really excited saying, "oh yes I want to apply." Others were like, "no don't do it, it's a trap. Don't do it 'cause it's not going to last" … After I got approved and others were approved, we became these voices in the community like, "hey it works. Do it. Yeah, there is this fear if this gets stopped, yeah, but it's better than nothing." So, it was that kind of testimony, "it's better than nothing, you got to do it."

All three participants that had DACA at the time of this study had renewed their initial DACA status several times. Participant 4 noted her frustration with the expense of continuously paying the renewal fee.

> Every time I pay for it, it hurts my bank account, and it pisses me off so much 'cause it literally just feels like an extra tax I have to pay. And it's just tedious. Especially with the license. You have to also renew your license and that's so frustrating… It just adds another thing that you have to do, another thing that you have to pay for.

Besides the expense, most participants indicated that the renewal process was not a challenge.

Participants were asked to describe what they saw as the major benefits of DACA. Participants replied that the program provided increased access to opportunities including work, having a Social Security number to use on applications for scholarships, college applications, and with banks, being able to have a valid state ID in the form of a driver's license, and reprieve from fear of deportation. "DACA has helped me feel better in my life… It's provided opportunities, work, a sense of peace, not permanent peace but temporary peace to say that I can work here for a little longer" (Participant 3). "It really did give young youths the opportunity to take a breather and have just a moment of peace knowing 'I'm fine. I can get a job. I won't get deported for going out in the world'" (Participant 2). Overall, participants described DACA as a beneficial program.

Despite its positive aspects, there were areas in which the participants believed DACA was lacking, particularly due to its impermanence and deficient benefits.

Participants stated the major limitations of the program as they saw it included international travel restrictions, as many participants had family living in Mexico and El Salvador that they were unable to see, that it did not help with financing higher education, and that it was temporary. “It's very temporary; 2 years is like no time. Even if it was 4 years, you'd be a little bit more appreciative of it, but 2 years is no time” (Participant 4). “I know a lot of DACA students struggle later on to be able to get a higher education 'cause it’s super expensive. Because even with DACA you still can’t get any government assistance, you can't get FAFSA” (Participant 5). When asked what they thought was needed for DACA recipients and undocumented youths, participants emphasized that the greatest need was a more permanent solution to their status, specifically a pathway to citizenship.

> This [DACA] isn't the stopping point that it should be. I think that there definitely should be a path to citizenship for us Dreamers… We've been here since forever and this is our home… I really hope I become a United States citizen, resident, anything, and be able to live here peacefully. (Participant 2).

“I'm really hoping on Congress to pass the bill or potentially making DACA students residents, and then a pathway to citizenship, so I’m hoping on becoming a US citizen one day” (Participant 1). Other suggestions included more support in education, both financial aid support and support for finding resources, mental health support, and organizations to support DACA recipients and their families with practical needs.

I also asked participants to comment on their experiences during the Trump administration when DACA was rescinded and reinstated. Participant 1 indicated she had

just finished her DACA application after Trump entered office and had been fearful that her application might be frozen like many other applicants; however, she was fortunate that her application was approved. Participant 2 turned 16 a few months into the Trump administration, so she was unable to apply during those 4 years. After DACA was reinstated, she began the application process, but her application was frozen when the U.S. District Court in Texas ruled that no new DACA applications could be processed (USCIS, n.d.-a). Similarly, Participant 5 started her DACA application in 2020 when it was announced that new applications were being processed. She was also in the midst of applying for DACA when the Texas ruling froze her application. As a result, Participant 2 and Participant 5, while meeting the eligibility criteria for DACA benefits, remained undocumented. They both noted that they were unable to get any type of Wisconsin state ID or driver's license due to their undocumented status, but, instead, had a consulate ID from Mexico. This created barriers, as many places did not accept foreign IDs when an ID was required.

> Here in Milwaukee, it's not accepted. I remember trying to go to… Summerfest and they're like, "no we need an actual state ID" and I'm like, "oh. I was just trying to get a beer." … Even when I moved, when I started to live on my own, because people were becoming really aware of people who are undocumented, they're like, "oh you bring in your consulate ID's they will know right away that you don't have a status." … So, to find a house, a place to live in, an apartment, was really, really hard too. There're days that I wanted to cry because I couldn't

> find a place. It sucks because you're limited. They're like, “no we only take a valid state ID not an ID from a different country.” (Participant 5)

All participants, even those that were not directly affected by the changes to DACA, found the years of the Trump administration to be a stressful time. They used words including *insecurity*, *emotional*, *annoying*, *on edge*, *overwhelming*, and *uncertainty* to describe their feelings.

> It didn't affect me directly in the sense where the status was stopped 'cause it only affected those who were going to be new applicants, but it did affect me even then that I had to be watching the news constantly… I went through a few months of crisis, you know, coming this close to depression. Just like, “what’s going to happen? I’ve done things right. I went to college. I’ve done *everything* right and now I'm having this danger that I am going to lose it all.” … The notion of peace, the notion of stability, the notion of having a better life was all put into danger… But, as anything, I learned how to cope with it. I learned to have this large shadow behind me just say “OK I need to cope with it,” but the first few months, it hit hard and then I was able to recuperate. (Participant 3)
>
> Even though I didn't have it [DACA], I was always on edge with that. I don't know what's going to happen next. I just have to be super careful. Those 4 years were the longest. It was just a scary time, to know that there was so much hate towards undocumented families. (Participant 5)

Several participants described how they and others began creating backup plans should DACA be ended.

> You have to start thinking, "what am I going to do? What am I going to do with my job, what am I going to do with this $10,000 loan that I'm paying?" 'Cause you're living your life everyday trying to succeed and then you're unsure of your status, so you have to think of so many alternatives. (Participant 1)
>
> I just remember thinking like, "what's the point of me even going to school if I'm not even going to be able to do what I want to do with my career… I'll probably just have to go to house cleaning. What's the point of me doing anything?" And I feel like that was a common sentiment… I think a lot of us also thought of plan B's and thinking of, "well what am I going to do when my DACA runs out and I can't renew," and "how am I going to manage?" … And I remember I would talk to a lot of people and a lot of people would say, "oh well, I have the landscaping business so we can work on that," and everybody had a plan B that they had already set up… And having a Plan B, that's got to do something to your head, having to think, "man I'm going back to square A all over again after I've worked so hard for all this." (Participant 4)

Some participants described residual effects from all the changes that occurred to DACA. Participant 4 who is a DACA recipient stated,

> It was hard too when they put DACA back in place… I was so numb 'cause I just remember thinking, "why are we in this place in the first place?" … I'm very adamant of not planning too much in this country and just seeing it go to waste. And I see that with a lot of the people I know that are DACA, because one day

> things might be looking great and then the next day things are right back to where they started.

When asked about her hopes for her status in the future, Participant 5 who was undocumented at the time of this study due to the Texas ruling stated,

> I'm unsure. I don't know. Sometimes I feel a bit desperate because I'm 32 and then I think about it because I want more… I just want the same opportunities as everyone else and I'm just not getting them. And if I am it's at a really, really slow rate… It's always a thought, "how am I going to get there? How am I going to be able to one day buy my home or one day be able to travel freely?" So, it's really uncertain… I don't want to settle for a job that I don't like, and it doesn't pay well. I want to be able to get a better education to have a better career to be able to eventually buy a home and stuff like that, and travel too…. I think my biggest concern is not being able to feel free to pursue my goals, and all these goals revolve around just that, being undocumented.

Hence, all participants indicated they were affected directly or indirectly by the changes to DACA during the Trump administration.

Theme 4: Effects of DACA: Limited Benefits

DACA helped participants gain opportunities in some areas, such as employment, but not in others, such as financing their higher education. The following describes subthemes found in the data regarding DACA's effect on education, employment, and belonging.

Subtheme 1: Early Education: Learning English

Immigration status did not impact participants' experiences in early education. Most participants began school in the United States in 4K or Kindergarten, with one participant starting in 4th grade. Immigration status did not play a role in their early educational experiences; some participants were not aware of their immigration status at this age and those who did know their status did not yet realize the implications of being undocumented. All participants indicated learning English was their greatest challenge in early education, but all participants indicated they had access to either bilingual schools or ESL classes to assist in learning English.

Subtheme 2: High School: First Experiences of Exclusion

For all participants, immigration status became relevant during high school when they were excluded from a variety of activities and opportunities that other students had. Participant 3 summarized what it felt like to experience being undocumented during high school.

> As I grew older my family moved a lot. Whenever I changed my high school, it became harder to actually adapt. Especially when I realized I didn't have a legal status. That really hit me hard just 'cause I felt like I was different. I didn't have the rights as others so that really affected me. It took a few years for me to bounce back.

A common theme among participants was their inability to take driver's education or get a driver's license. Participant 2 stated, "it really held me back, driving was such a good thing in high school. If you had a car, you could do whatever you wanted to do."

Participant 3 described the sense of being restricted by not being able to drive, "[as] more of my friends were able to have a driver's license and I couldn't drive, there was always that idea, 'There's something I cannot do'." Participant 4 explained how she hid from her friends the fact that her status was the reason she was not taking driver's education class.

> I remember my counselor telling me to not take driver's ed… She was like, "don't take it. You're going to waste credits on it if you take it 'cause you won't be able to drive." My friends would always ask me, and I'd be like, "oh my parents are really scared. They're really scared to see me drive so they're just not comfortable with it." That was the first time that I started feeling like, "OK, this is what it's going to mean to be undocumented."

Participant 1 was unique in that she received DACA when she was 16 years old, was able to begin driving school at 16, and received her driver's license at 18.

Participants noted other ways they were excluded during high school. Participant 1 indicated that, prior to receiving DACA, she was not able to fully participate. For instance, there was a school trip to Spain that she could not attend with her classmates. As a result, she expressed feelings of school being "more of a struggle and being kind of an outsider in that school setting." Participant 4 described a similar experience. "If there were ever any field trips that were across the country, or we'd have to fly or anything like that I couldn't do them. That happened often because I was very involved." Participants were excluded from any opportunities that required a Social Security number. Participant 1 stated that there was a new high school that she wanted to apply to but could not because she did not have a Social Security number to put on the application. The school

staff was not knowledgeable about undocumented status at the time, which impacted her educational opportunities.

> I was discouraged because that was the school that everyone wanted to go to… And later on, I come to find out that my best friend went to the school that I wanted to go to, and she said that there were undocumented students there… My counselor wasn't educated enough on the status for undocumented students and the education programs, and I could potentially have gotten into that school somehow. He just saw the Social Security number on the application and was like, “oh no you can't.”

Participant 2 had been nominated for an award that she was unable to apply for due to her status and expressed her feelings of frustration.

> I got nominated for this presidential scholar’s award for Wisconsin, but I couldn't apply to it because I wasn't a legal United States citizen or resident… Well, why am I working so hard if I can't get anything in return for my hard work? I worked so hard, I’m top of my class right now, I've been pushing and wanting this opportunity… I was just so mad, I feel like I am a responsible person here in America, I haven't done anything wrong.

Participants continued to experience exclusions when they began searching for and applying to colleges. As their peers were planning for their future education, a big hurdle for participants was learning they were ineligible for federal financial aid and were unable to apply for FAFSA; hence, tuition cost would be a barrier to higher education.

> Around that time, junior year, people begin to prepare for college… And my parents had already shared, "you could perhaps go to a private school, but we don't know if that's a possibility because of state tuition." So, there was that uncertainty. (Participant 3)
>
> There was not a lot of resources to help students like myself to try to get into college and try to get in-state tuition and all that, there was not a lot, I mean I think there was none actually… That's when it really hit me and I'm like, "oh OK, there's going to be a lot of things I won't be able to do, or I won't be able to receive help and there's not a lot of support." (Participant 5).

Participant 4 noted the increased challenges when she was transitioning out of high school and into college.

> From high school to college, that's when it was just blatantly in my face. Before that, I could do a lot of things without the need of a Social Security number. But when I applied to school and all that, it was just thing after thing after thing after thing, and it was obstacle after obstacle.

The exclusions that participants began to experience during high school continued and were magnified as they entered adulthood and pursued a college degree.

Subtheme 3: College: Limited Choices

Undocumented status affected participants' ability to pursue higher education, with DACA having limited impact in educational access in Wisconsin. When planning for higher education, immigration status influenced where and when participants attended college, with finances being a primary deciding factor. Since undocumented and DACA

students were ineligible for federal financial aid and Wisconsin did not provide any type of state aid, participants had to take this into consideration when choosing colleges.

> I didn’t apply to as many schools that I know I could have gotten into because of my status. I looked at the most affordable places I could go and places that had in-state tuition, ‘cause even in Wisconsin you have to pay out-of-state tuition to attend… I looked at schools that help DACA students out or undocumented immigrants out the most. I wasn't even looking at the type of program they had at their school. (Participant 2)

Participant 4 also limited the schools she considered and only applied to one college due to affordability; however, she was unaware that she would be charged out-of-state tuition.

> Within my first week I had seen the out-of-state tuition. And I didn't know that; I didn't know that DACA recipients are considered out-of-state, so I thought I was going to be charged in-state tuition. So, it went from 5K to 10K for the semester and I was like, “man, I saved enough for 5K. I didn't save enough for 10K.”

Participant 5 chose to attend technical college because it was the most affordable. She initially enrolled but had to drop out due to finances; later she re-enrolled once she had enough funds to take classes again. Participant 1 chose to attend college out of state due to the financial constraints of attending school in Wisconsin.

> Once I saw all the scholarships that I did end up getting, it just wouldn't have been enough to go to a college in Milwaukee. I would have had to take out loans, or I probably would have been taking a year off.

Participants used a variety of sources to help fund their education including private scholarships, private donations, work, and family. Participant 2 indicated she received a private scholarship that paid for the first 2 years of tuition and books and paid half of tuition last 2 years of college; her parents helped fund the remaining half of the last 2 years of college. Participant 3 stated he received funding support from a variety of private scholarships and donations. He also worked to support himself through college. After learning she was being charged out-of-state tuition, Participant 4 worked with a residency specialist on her college campus who was able to locate a few funding opportunities for DACA and undocumented students. Participant 4 applied and received a scholarship that reduced her tuition in half, from $10,000 to $5,000 per semester. The remainder she paid out-of-pocket by working all summer to earn enough for one semester ($5,000), and her mother funded the second semester ($5,000), which they needed to do each year she attended college. She applied for additional scholarships but noted, “scholarships were really tough. A lot of them required a Social Security number for you to be a legal resident of Milwaukee or Wisconsin or the United States. I feel like I wasn't eligible for many scholarships.” Participant 5 initially paid entirely out-of-pocket for her college classes, but in recent years received small institutional scholarships and COVID relief funds provided by the school. Despite the assistance they received, each of these participants noted that paying for college was difficult. Participant 1 was unique in that she received funding from the Dream.US, a scholarship that was only available for TPS or DACA students, which provided her a full ride to college.

Finances drove other choices that impacted participants' college experiences. Three of the five participants (Participant 2, 3, and 4) had the option of living in a dorm or off-campus, and they chose to commute due to the added expense of on-campus living.

> The dorms were so much more expensive, and my scholarship would cover tuition and books… And then we took into consideration meal plans, and it came down to I'll need the money that I would be spending if I was dorming. I'll need that for the last 2 years of my schooling. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 reflected on how being a commuting student affected his college experience. "Most of my friends went to dorms the first year. I was always a commuter… I knew that I felt different 'cause I was a commuter and that was a hassle." Participant 4 lived in a small two-bedroom apartment with four or five roommates to save on living expenses. She also took extra credits each semester and graduated in 3 years to save on tuition costs. Participant 1 was unique in that her scholarship paid for her dorm and meal expenses, so she was able to live on campus. All five participants noted they worked while attending college.

Participants described the challenge of finding support and resources before and during college. When asked about assistance in finding and applying for school, Participant 5 stated,

> I did it on my own. It was really hard to get someone to help. No one really knew. I kind of had to guess for the paperwork. Where it asked for a Social Security, I actually left it blank, and someone approached me when I was paying for part of my tuition and said that I have no Social Security number documented on my

> application… [I said] “well I have my tax ID number” and I wrote it down. So far, it's worked.

When participants were asked what supports were on their college campuses for undocumented or DACAmented students, Participant 2 indicated there were not any that she was aware of. Participant 4 stated that she thought there were more resources at her college than other schools and they had improved over time, but that they were limited. She described the challenge in finding resources when she learned she would have to pay out-of-state tuition,

> I remember that had hit my account, that 10K, and I remember thinking, “why am I just finding out about this now?” And then eventually I was able to find answers out, but I remember when that happened, I called a bunch of schools, I called basically any public UW school and asked them if they had resources for undocumented folks and every single school said they didn't, that they didn’t know what we were talking about when I called them… At that time, I felt like the world was crumbling. I was like, “oh my gosh, there's no resources. I can't do anything,” and then that Resource Center helped me and guided me, but it was person by person. It was a lot of a person handholding me and letting me go with another person, and now it’s a lot more streamlined… There's a lot of little things that have changed since then, but initially there was definitely not enough resources.

Participant 3 described having a similar impression of Wisconsin public universities. “Part of my work has been working here in Madison with UW students. Madison is

struggling to include undocumented and DACA students here in UW and in other schools. There are some exceptions but it's very hard to find." Participant 5 stated there were more resources and support at her school within the past few years for DACA and undocumented students, including some small scholarships and a newsletter for Hispanic students, but otherwise there were none that she was aware of. Participant 1 had a different response. Her experience was unique in that she was attending a school out of state that had a large population of DACA and undocumented students. She stated, "there's a lot of clubs and a lot of support for people like me so that's where I feel happy and comfortable here." She indicated that many of the students at her college had received the same scholarship that she had, and it was very well known among faculty and staff that the student body was comprised of many undocumented and DACA students.

I asked participants if they had any future aspirations for additional education. Participant 3 had already completed a master's degree and stated he did not intend to continue his education. He also noted that his DACA status and uncertainty about financing were also considerations. Participant 1 wanted to continue her education but stated, "I don't know if there's as much financial help for DACA students or undocumented students if you want to get your masters or your Ph.D." Participant 5 also wanted to pursue more education, but her undocumented status and finances were an obstacle.

> If I have the same opportunities as everyone else, I would love to do that. It's just a huge expense and being able to work full-time, it's just really hard and still being able to have the money to pay for it.

Participant 2 indicated, “I really don't know. I want to see first how my bachelor’s degree goes and what changes happen in the future with the whole pathway for me to get my citizenship here and be able to freely work.” Participant 4 was unique in that she was intending on pursuing a master’s degree and was applying to two programs in Wisconsin, Marquette University and UW Parkside. She indicated she was interested in these programs because they had made themselves very accessible for DACAmented students.

Subtheme 4: Undocumented Yet Employed

Before DACA and for those who were unable to receive DACA, employment restrictions were a challenge, though all participants found ways to access employment despite not having a work permit or Social Security number while undocumented. When participants were asked about their employment history, all respondents indicated they began working when they were teenagers, ranging from 14 to 16 years old at the time of their first job. Four of the five respondents were undocumented when they began seeking employment and described opportunities, they had wanted to pursue but could not because of their status including chain stores (Walmart, Target, Barnes & Noble), fast-food restaurants (Starbucks, Chick-fil-A), or jobs where their friends worked (summer resort).

> I found a job when I was 15 at a local store here, but at that point I already knew that I wasn't going to be able to apply at a local chain store like a Walmart or

> whatever 'cause my older sister had tried and because she didn't have a Social Security [number], she didn't get the job. (Participant 5)

Another participant noted,

> I didn't have that classic “oh working at whatever like basic first job” type of place because I didn't have a Social Security number to do that. So, I really could only do under-the-table type of jobs where I'd be getting paid cash. (Participant 4)

A third participant stated,

> When I was in middle school I was like, “I’m getting my DACA soon… I'm going to get a job as soon as I can.” So, I was already starting to look up what I needed to go to work and then I couldn't apply [for DACA] and I was like “OK, another option.” So as soon as I can work some other place I will, I really want to. (Participant 2)

This exclusion extended to internships and job training programs that participants hoped to pursue but were not allowed to because of a lack of a Social Security number.

> I wanted to apply to start the program to become a CNA, but you needed a Social Security number. And I was telling them by the end of this course I would probably have my DACA by then, but they just didn't allow me to, so I didn't get to do that. (Participant 1)

Participant 5 was offered an internship opportunity in high school but did not initially apply because the application asked for a Social Security number; however, she applied a year later and was accepted despite being undocumented and still not having a Social Security number.

> That alone will stop you from doing a lot of things because you don't know what the outcome will be. You don't want to be denied… You don't want to feel that pain because you're going to; you already know that you're going to be denied.

The work opportunities that participants found were often through friends, family, or other community connections. Participant 2 volunteered at a church and was offered work after connecting with the program director of the church's afterschool program. This continued to be her place of employment at the time of her interview. She also found part-time work at a restaurant and another shop that were both owned by one of her aunts. Participant 3 first worked at a restaurant in a mall owned by a family friend and later volunteered at a community center that turned into a job. Over the years he worked at several other restaurants. Though he was employed, there was a fear associated with working undocumented. "I was working but, in the shadows… That fear was there that, 'oh what happens if they find out?'." In all these instances, the employers were aware of the participants' undocumented status and most of these jobs paid in cash. Participant 5 also found work through a community connection; a local store owner offered her a job, but rather than disclosing her undocumented status she obtained false identification and a false Social Security number to apply for this job. She continued to use this identification to obtain employment at other jobs as a regular employee.

Subtheme 5: DACA = Work Opportunities

DACA had a major impact on participants' employment past, present and future. Participants who applied for and received DACA indicated their access to employment was improved. For instance, Participant 3 stated that though DACA did not provide him

with work because he had worked since he was 14, it gave him status and more opportunities.

> When I received DACA I was able to officially be installed as a community developer at the community center. That meant a lot, no health benefits, but I had that status. And then at the fast-food restaurant I became official. I was an employee with a name. I was given a payroll stub instead of being paid cash... After I got DACA I feel like I could have access to dream jobs, opportunities.

Participants that completed higher education were able leverage their degrees into careers of their choosing. At the time of his interview, Participant 3 was working in a job related to his master's degree, while Participant 4 completed a bachelor's degree and was able to seek employment in the political field. Participant 1 was unique among the DACA recipients in this study in that she received DACA when she was 16 years old when she was just beginning to seek employment; hence, she did not encounter the same job exclusions as other participants. She indicated she had many job opportunities available, which further demonstrates that DACA provided greater access to employment for participants. Participants who were unable to receive DACA and remained undocumented continued to face challenges in employment. Participant 2 indicated she wanted to work somewhere else as soon as possible and was planning on doing freelance work after graduating with her bachelor's degree because she did not have any other options.

> I'm really scared 'cause I don't know what status I'm going to be at when I have my bachelors. Am I going to be able to go to a company and apply or am I not?

> … Do I have the opportunity to work, do I have my work permit or not? I would like to work in an office type of space too, but I just don't know where I will be at when I get my bachelor's degree.

Participant 5 described feeling stuck at her current place of employment. "I've just settled there even though I really hate my job and the pay is not good pay for what I do." When asked about employment opportunities she would like to pursue but cannot because of her undocumented status, she described hoping to find employment in an area related to her college degree but knows her status will be an issue.

Subtheme 6: DACA Does Not Mean I Belong

Receiving DACA did not necessarily lead to feelings of belonging for participants who received program benefits, but participants noted that being undocumented contributed to feeling they did not belong. Participants were asked what belonging means to them. Participant 1, 2, and 3 all described belonging as a feeling of being comfortable and happy and unafraid to share your story; feeling like you can be your true self and not hold back who you are. Participant 5 added that belonging was being accepted and having the same opportunities in society. Participant 4 stated,

> I think belonging to me would be having the answers or having the solutions already premade… When you're undocumented a lot of answers aren't there and you have to figure them out, and I think that is what separates the sense of belonging because when you encounter a problem that there isn't a clear solution to it and you have to come up with your own solution to it, it means that you don't even belong in that space.

When asked where they found a sense of belonging, Participant 1 said she found belonging with her family. She also indicated that she had always felt she belonged in the United States and was American because of how long she has been here. To her, status had not defined her sense of belonging.

> I feel like I always belonged here, I came since I was 2. I literally am a full-on American. I do feel American, I'm still very in touch with my culture, being Mexican, but at the same time I know legally I'm not, but I am very American… My documented status, getting DACA, just gave me a little bit more of the privileges that I can have, but in the sense of feeling like I belong, I have always felt that.

For others, growing up in the United States made them feel like they did not completely belong within their family. “I'm not Mexican enough to my family in Mexico; they don't see me as Mexican anymore they see me more as an American” (Participant 2). “With my family I'm definitely the most Americanized, so I don't necessarily fit in there (Participant 4).

> I feel like the people that are not in my situation don't understand, including my siblings. And my older sister has DACA, but I feel like maybe she worries, and she doesn't express it, but my other siblings that are from here, like born here, citizens or whatever, they've never gone through it, so they don't understand my frustration when I bring it up. They just basically shut me down like they don't want to listen… Knowing that my siblings aren't open to discuss this and truly

> understand, I don't want to be able to open up to other people that don't understand outside of my household. (Participant 5)

Several participants indicated they found a sense of belonging with friends, or chosen family, as Participant 4 described them, and with others who were in similar circumstances. Participant 3 noted, “I just found others who were going through a similar situation… So, I did make certain connections with people like that, but they were very limited.” Participant 4 stated,

> You have to be OK with understanding that you don't belong because you're not the only one that doesn't belong, there's other people that don't belong, and it's almost like within that solidarity of meeting other DACA folks and other undocumented folks you realize, “I belong in a space.” It's just you have to learn how to find solidarity in a different way.

Community organizations were one avenue where participants found others in similar circumstances. “Voces; I feel like that organization and those people that I met in those groups understand where this is all coming from… Or I feel I belong with my people that are on DACA, I feel like they understand” (Participant 2). These organizations provided opportunities for participants to connect with others who were also undocumented or DACA recipients and created spaces of belonging.

When participants were asked how their status, undocumented or DACA, influenced their sense of belonging, participants responded that immigration status contributed to a feeling of nonbelonging, but not necessarily increased their sense of

belonging. Participant 5, who was still undocumented, described how being undocumented shaped her feelings of belonging.

> It's always a struggle, you always think about it all the time. For example, with me I have friends that don't know my status. There's a lot of things that have to do with you being able to present something so simple as an ID. And it's like right away I know I don't belong. And it's kind of scary, you meet people you don't know how they're going to react if you tell them [your status]. That is part of me, and I hold that back from a lot of people I meet. And I don't open up to people unless I've known them for years and I know they're going to stick around. That's when I tell them. I can't just present myself almost anywhere.

Other participants also limited the people with whom they shared their immigration status. Typically, they shared their status when it was necessary such as a financial aid person in college, with others who had similar immigration statuses, or with very close friends. Even in those circumstances, Participant 2 described being concerned about sharing her status.

> I had a lot of anxiety because I don't know how these people are going to react, I don't know what they're going to say, or like what they can do. What if one of my friends got mad at me and told someone. That was always on the back of my mind so that's why I never really told many people because people change all the time… If you tell someone I feel like I had to really trust them and know them for a good chunk of time.

The inability to be completely open about their status contributed to participants feelings of nonbelonging. Participant 4 was unique in that once she shared her status with her close friends in high school, she no longer kept it a secret. “I remember I sat them down and I told them that I was undocumented, and they were all super understanding. As soon as I did that, I stopped being quiet about it. I'm super outspoken about it now.” Participant 3, who had DACA, described how DACA somewhat increased belonging, but not entirely.

> There were some places I felt like I belonged, but it was always in the back of my mind, “I don’t completely belong 'cause they don't know my struggle” … So, it was always this in-between space, this in-between where I belong, and I don't belong… I think with DACA slightly perhaps… ‘cause DACA was still a taboo. Every time I say I’m DACA I have to reidentify myself like, “what the hell is that?” There’re people that don’t even know what that is. There’s always this constant struggle to reidentify myself, reassert what that is, what that means, what that implies. So, I was still a stranger, I was still this DACAmented student or Dreamer. Now maybe more people know what DACA is, this in-between space or this liminal space, or to use another religious metaphor, it's like purgatory. It’s like you’re stuck between heaven and hell you know. So, you're still a little bit better off, it’s not hell, but it’s not heaven.

Participant 4 stated that there were more institutions that had evolved to include DACA recipients. “I'm applying to master’s programs and a lot of them have very specific guidelines for DACA recipients… It gives me a sense of ‘I belong here, I just have to do

a few different things.'" Finding institutions with inclusive criteria for DACA students helped her find more places of belonging.

Theme 5: Community Context: Finding Support in Local Spaces

Participants discussed their communities noting that local organizations and people within the community helped provide resources and opportunities otherwise unavailable at the federal and state level. Participant's communities also provided places for participants to connect with others with similar immigration statuses and created spaces where participants could become social and political agents of change. Participants were asked to share what aspects of their community they believed were supportive or unsupportive to undocumented immigrants or DACA recipients. All participants indicated they felt their current cities of residence and hometowns were supportive due to large communities of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking residents and DACA recipients. Participants also found these cities supportive because it was well-known within these communities that there was a large presence of undocumented families living there and there were numerous resources available for this population. Participant 1, 4, and 5 described resources in Milwaukee that were helpful and inclusive toward undocumented immigrants that included banks, churches, schools, community clinics, and nonprofit organizations. Participant 1 recounted feeling supported by her school,

> I remember when I went to a district meeting where they wanted to make schools [accessible to] ICE… The district rejected that and [made] it a safe space for immigrant students… My school ended up putting a lot of posters, if ICE knocks

> on your door things that you can and can't do just to guide people, or undocumented individuals. So, I always did feel that sense of support.

Participant 4 felt supported by her undergraduate educational institution during the Trump administration,

> I just remember that there would be therapy sessions where they'd do open circles and a lot of individual appointments with our university counseling services, and people really took advantage of it. People were in some serious distress and there were a lot of spaces where you could feel comfortable venting and crying. I remember it was just so tough, especially when Trump was elected… I just remember that they definitely did a fair effort in getting us the support needed, and when DACA was rescinded.

Participants living in Madison and Racine also indicated that there were large communities of Latinx and DACA recipients, and these communities also had resources available that supported undocumented immigrants including religious entities, community clinics, and community centers.

Participants noted a key component within these communities was the presence of advocacy organizations that represented and supported undocumented people and DACA recipients. One organization that four of the five participants mentioned, and many were active within this organization, was Voces de la Frontera. Participant 3 also mentioned Centro Hispano in Madison, while Participant 2 also mentioned Latinos Unidos in Racine. These organizations have helped undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients in numerous ways, making participants feel more supported. Participants also

found support on an individual level from neighbors, friends, and those they met through their connections with community organizations.

> I've met so many DACA people, a lot of people who are resources too, who are able to say, "you have DACA, there's a way here and there's a way there," and I'm so thankful for that. (Participant 3)

One area that participants indicated that there were not enough community resources was for medical care. Participant 1 and 2 both described having injuries or illnesses that they did not seek medical care for, but likely needed to, due to the cost of medical care and lack of health insurance. "I have scars now because of it but I couldn't go to the hospital because it would have just been so much money that we did not have" (Participant 2). Participant 3 described the experience of receiving dental care from a nonaccredited dentist because his family did not have healthcare coverage.

> I needed a dental procedure…and not being able to rely on a health insurance and go to a dentist and receive those services. So, going to a sketchy place where there was a dentist that wasn't accredited through the state but who was a dentist back in his or her country and…just be exposed to that kind of environment, that kind of work just because I didn't have health insurance.

Participant 5 indicated she could not afford health insurance through her employer, so she was restricted to using community clinics that helped individuals regardless of their immigration status. Participant 4 shared an incident where her mother had a medical emergency that required an emergency room visit. Rather than going to the closest emergency room, they drove to their hometown hospital where they knew they could get

financial assistance. Collectively, participants noted that access to affordable healthcare due to lack of health insurance had been a challenge, but when needed, they found community clinics and local community resources that could help.

Participants indicated they did not feel supported in greater Wisconsin. Participant 1 noted that the demographics and political views throughout the state made her feel cautious.

> When we would go on long road trips or anything like that, we would just see all these Trump signs, or confederate flags, or white supremacist signs…outside of Milwaukee. So, I think that's where I get that sense of this is not really a place where I can be completely safe. (Participant 1)

Participant 2 stated "I think in Wisconsin our governor supports us, but everyone else I feel does not, or haven't made the efforts to change the way that it is here in the United States for undocumented immigrants." She also recounted several incidents where she was treated in a discriminatory manner by Wisconsin residents that contributed to her not feeling supported in Wisconsin. Participant 3 described a lack of resources for immigrants in rural locations in Wisconsin for immigrants. He also noted how the University of Wisconsin system was not supportive of DACA recipients.

> UW is still struggling with access to resources for DACA. There are certain hubs. I know that Hispanic and Latinx students at UW have been growing, so, some opportunities, but it still isn't a place where it's friendly for DACA students like California or other states that are more accessible, more open for DACAmented students or undocumented students.

Participant 5 stated, “outside of Milwaukee there's not a lot of support… Just a few miles away from where I live, I'm borderline with Waukesha County, they're not supportive at all. The officers there cooperate with ICE and that alone is scary.” Due to these factors, participants did not feel immigrants were supported throughout the state of Wisconsin.

I asked participants if they were aware of 287(g) ICE contracts in their community and how this affected them and their families. Participants noted that the counties in which they resided, Milwaukee, Racine, and Dane counties did not have these contracts with ICE. Participant 1 mentioned there were rallies and marches in Milwaukee to stop 287(g) and Participant 4 and 5 noted that Milwaukee had become a sanctuary city. Participant 1 noted that her parents did become fearful when they heard news stories of ICE knocking on thousands of doors and deporting people, and their family avoided travel to minimize possible police contact. Participant 5 also indicated that she was “super cautious” whenever traveling outside of the Milwaukee area, particularly if she ever saw law enforcement. She also worried about deportation at the beginning of the Trump administration.

> When he first came into office and there were all these deportations, even if you had no criminal record, I was so afraid. I didn't even want to keep my windows open… I knew that closing my windows wasn't going to do anything, but just that feeling of being OK, of somewhat safe in a box.

Participant 4 stated that she was not personally afraid of deportation, but if her parents had gotten pulled over, they worried about deportation. Participant 2 stated that Racine County did have 287(g) at one point, but the organization Voces de la Frontera helped

remove it; however, she indicated that she feared deportation for herself and for her family.

> I feel like I follow the law a little bit too much sometimes. Getting deported has always been a fear… Sometimes when my parents take too long going to the store, I would make sure they're OK. I just want them to come home because I have had family members get deported, and my aunt was in a deportation center for a while.

Participant 3 indicated that in 2012 or 2013 there was an attempt to install 287(g) in Dane County, but the community stopped this from happening. However, he personally suffered the deportation of his parents because of 287(g).

> My parents were detained in a county where 287(g) was installed, and my dad had been detained before just because of a traffic light. So, it wasn't any type of felony, it was not robbing, it was not drugs like people tend to think that it is. It was simply coming back from work… They didn't have any immigration status and that gave them [the police] the discretion to report them to ICE… We went there to pay [bond], and they told us, "we're sorry we cannot release them because immigration has a hold on him and her," both of my parents. So, in essence it's because of programs like this, 287(g), that is detaining people whose main crime has been to put food in their homes for their children and their families.

The presence of 287(g) ICE contracts in Wisconsin and the threat of deportation had directly or indirectly affected most participants.

I also asked participants if they had become socially or politically active in their communities due to their immigration status. Participants 1 through 4 indicated they were advocates for themselves and for others with undocumented or DACAmented status. “I was always very political, and I am a huge advocate” (Participant 1). “Anything that Voces [de la Frontera] does I’m usually there… I really am now pushing more for people to be awakened and look at everything that is happening in our world” (Participant 2).

> I'm very vocal about supporting undocumented and DACAmented families and friends… I’m involved with Centro Hispano… Since I got here, I was connected with Voces, have been a vocero. Last year in the elections, my wife and I knocked hundreds of doors here in Dane county… So, very involved in advocacy here at the local level. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 stated,

> When I went to undergrad, I was very outspoken, very into the activist work… I wanted people to know when we talk about DACA, when we talk about policy, when we talk about immigration reform, we’re literally talking about me, we’re talking about my family.

Participant 5 was the one exception due to her undocumented status. She stated, “at one point I did want to, but I don't want people to know my status. Even in school and at work if that leaks, I may lose my job. So no, I don’t want to try.” Hence, she avoided participation in social or political activism due to the potential risks.

Summary

The central research question for this study was "how has the intersection of DACA and related state-level policy affected participants' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin?" The results revealed that participants' status was not relevant until high school when they began to experience exclusions due to being undocumented. Primary exclusions included barriers to obtaining employment, the inability to get a driver's license or travel, and ineligibility to apply for FAFSA. Most participants did not receive DACA until after they graduated high school. Once participants did receive DACA, they were able to access additional job opportunities and obtain their driver's license. Those that remained undocumented continued to face barriers in these areas. As it pertained to higher education, Wisconsin did not provide state financial aid for undocumented or DACA students. These students were charged out-of-state tuition in public universities, and private institutions had higher tuition; hence, the greatest barrier for participants was financing a college degree. To attend college, participants had to rely on funding from private scholarships, work, and family, attended colleges that were more affordable, and chose colleges that provided institutional assistance. Those with DACA had employment opportunities in their career field, while those that remained undocumented continued to worry that they would be unable to work freely once they graduated. Hence, the results pertaining to employment showed that DACA aided participants in accessing employment and achieving their desired careers. Results related to belonging were mixed. DACA helped increase a sense

of belonging for some, while for others, not having DACA made them feel a greater sense of nonbelonging, yet for others, status had no impact. Local communities, community organizations, and individuals within the community were instrumental in facilitating a sense of belonging for participants. However, due to their status, most participants indicated they never felt as though they fully belonged.

In Chapter 5, I begin with a discussion on the interpretation of the results. I also describe the limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research. The chapter ends with a discussion on the implications and significance of the findings and a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore undocumented childhood arrivals' perceptions of their social exclusion as reflected in their educational access, employment opportunities, and perceptions of belonging in Wisconsin. The nature of this study was a generic qualitative approach using semi structured qualitative interviews to collect data. The population consisted of individuals who arrived in the United States as children, did not have permanent legal status, were recipients of DACA or DACA-eligible, were between the ages of 18 and 38 at the time of the study and resided in the state of Wisconsin. I used nonprobability, homogenous purposive sampling, and snowball sampling, which generated a final sample size of five participants. Data analysis focused on thematic coding where concepts, themes, events, and examples were labeled to identify emerging themes among data sources. My aim was to gain a greater understanding of the intersection of DACA and state-level policy in a conservative location and its effect on recipients' experiences of membership or exclusion.

Key findings described in Chapter 4 revealed that participants' immigration status was not relevant until high school when they began to experience exclusions due to being undocumented. Primary exclusions included barriers to obtaining employment, the inability to get a driver's license or travel, and ineligibility to apply for FAFSA. Once participants did receive DACA, they had increased access to employment and were able to apply for a Social Security number and obtain their driver's license. Those that remained undocumented continued to face barriers in these areas. As it pertained to higher education, Wisconsin did not provide state financial aid for undocumented or

DACA students. These students were charged out-of-state tuition in public universities and private institutions had higher tuition; hence, the greatest barrier for participants was financing a college degree. To attend college, participants had to rely on funding from private scholarships, work, and family, attended colleges that were more affordable, and chose colleges that provided institutional assistance. Those with DACA were able to pursue employment opportunities in their career field, while those that remained undocumented continued to worry that they would be unable to work freely once they graduated. Hence, the results pertaining to employment showed that DACA aided participants in accessing employment and achieving their desired careers. Results related to belonging were mixed. DACA helped increase a sense of belonging for some, while for others, not having DACA made them feel a greater sense of nonbelonging, yet for others, status had no impact. Local communities, community organizations, and individuals within the community were instrumental in facilitating a sense of belonging for participants. However, due to their status, most participants indicated they never felt as though they fully belonged.

This chapter begins with an interpretation of the key findings from this study. Next is a discussion on limitations and recommendations for future research. The implications and significance of the results are described followed by a conclusion to this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The focus of this study was on participants' experiences of exclusion based upon their access to education, employment opportunities, and belonging in Wisconsin. The

following is a discussion of the results of this study compared to what has been found in previous research. The results are also interpreted through the lens of nested contexts of reception from segmented assimilation theory.

Employment Opportunities

A major component of the DACA program is the provision of a work permit and the ability to apply for a Social Security number. Previous studies indicated that undocumented immigrants were restricted to jobs in the underground economy with employers that did not require formal legal documentation from employees (e.g., Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Pérez, 2009). Once individuals received DACA, they were able to find new jobs with better wages, working conditions, and hours (see Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Jones, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pérez, 2014; Pope, 2016). Previous studies also found that DACA recipients were able to obtain internships and participate in work training programs that their undocumented counterparts were unable to access (e.g., Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014). Furthermore, by extending work authorization to undocumented childhood arrivals, DACA increased returns on a college degree by allowing recipients to attain a job commensurate with their higher level of education that provided higher wages (see Abrego, 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Jones, 2020).

Consistent with previous studies, the results of my study supported the idea that DACA both expanded and improved employment prospects for recipients. This was

evident for workers of varying ages, whether they were seeking employment as a teenager or adult, and levels of educational achievement, whether they were high school students or had graduated from college. Participants in my study who entered the workforce during their adolescent years while undocumented were limited to jobs in the shadows where they were employed without status, usually paid with cash, and typically were employed by family, friends, or places of employment that were aware of their status and willing to unofficially employ them. Mainstream jobs that required a work permit or Social Security number were unavailable unless participants obtained false documentation to obtain the job. Participants were also unable to pursue internships and job training programs that required a Social Security number. Participants who received DACA benefits were able to pursue employment in jobs that were previously inaccessible. DACA recipients who had obtained a college degree were able to pursue careers in their field of study and those with DACA who were enrolled in higher education at the time of my study anticipated they would be able to freely work in their chosen career field upon graduation. Those that remained undocumented continued to experience restrictions in employment and were uncertain if they would be able to secure a job in their field of study. Instead, they considered alternative options so they could capitalize on their education even though they would not be able to work in a traditional work environment. Hence, DACA recipients in Wisconsin were benefitted from the DACA program by having increased access to employment opportunities.

The results of my study did not support the idea that DACA increases labor force participation (see Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman 2017; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk,

2014; Hardina, 2014; Liu & Song, 2020; Ortega et al., 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Pope, 2016) as participants in my study were employed prior to receiving DACA, and those that remained undocumented were also working. Previous studies reported DACA recipients enjoyed higher income, better job benefits, and greater financial stability with greater access to professional job opportunities (e.g., Jones, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Patler et al., 2015a, 2015b). I did not specifically investigate mobility patterns for DACA recipients prior to and after receiving DACA or compare economic status between DACA recipients and those that remained undocumented. It is reasonable to surmise that DACA recipients had greater income and job benefits due to increased job accessibility and the ability to leverage their higher education into a career; however, this conclusion cannot be made within the confines of my study and future research will need to explore this further.

Educational Access

In early education, status was not a factor in participants' educational experience, which is consistent with previous research. The 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyer v Doe* guaranteed access to K-12 education allowing immigrant children to participate freely in the U.S. education system (see Gonzales, 2011; Mallet et al., 2017; Silver, 2012; Stewart, 2014). Participants indicated they did not face any restrictions in school in their early years and had access to needed services to learn English, including bilingual and ESL classes. Gonzales (2011) referred to childhood and early adolescence as a buffer stage where children were legally integrated and their activities were rarely limited by immigration status, which is consistent with participants' experiences in my study.

Rosenberg et al. (2020) described this period as one of blissful ignorance where children who immigrated at younger ages were unaware of their status and impending restrictions. In contrast with this finding, most participants in my study knew of their immigration status at a very early age and knew on some level that this would present challenges; however, participants noted that they were not fully aware of the implications of being undocumented until later. As participants entered adolescence, their status began to affect their experiences. Researchers noted restrictions in adolescence in obtaining a job, getting driver's license, and applying for college (e.g., Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Martinez, 2014; Monico & Duncan, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020). Participants in my study faced similar restrictions while they were undocumented. DACA helped ease some of these obstacles, as DACA recipients could obtain a Social Security number and access employment and a driver's license in Wisconsin. Undocumented and DACA students were not barred from attending higher education in Wisconsin, so DACA had no effect on participants' ability to apply for college in Wisconsin.

A notable body of research explored the effect of DACA on higher education. Previous studies found that DACA increased access to higher education and scholarship opportunities (e.g., Gonzales, Roth et al., 2016; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020); however, despite having greater access, cost remained a major factor in recipients' ability to attend college. Contributing factors included that undocumented and DACAmented students were ineligible for federal aid, many states did not provide state financial aid for these groups, and undocumented and DACAmented students were charged out-of-state tuition

in many states (see Benuto et al., 2018; Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015; Martinez, 2014; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Pérez, 2009; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020; Sahay et al., 2016; Silver, 2012; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014; Williams, 2016). As previously noted, neither undocumented or DACAmented students were barred from attending higher education in Wisconsin, so documented status did not affect participants' ability to attend college; however, Wisconsin did not provide state financial aid for higher education for undocumented and DACAmented students and both these groups were charged out-of-state tuition in public colleges and universities. Hence, participants in my study found cost problematic in attaining a college education. DACA did provide greater access to scholarships, as many required a Social Security number to apply and DACA recipients had access to a Social Security number. This expanded the number of available scholarships for participants who had DACA. Additionally, one participant had her entire college education funded by a scholarship for DACA recipients, though this was a nationwide scholarship and not specific to Wisconsin. Sahay et al. (2016) noted that DACA recipients chose less expensive college options due to expense when state subsidies were not present. Results from my study supported this idea, as participants made decisions regarding college based on affordability rather than by the programs of study offered by educational institutions. In addition, previous studies noted that in states without state-level financial assistance for higher education, undocumented and DACAmented students found it difficult to afford both tuition and living expenses; hence, many of these students worked a full-time job or several part-time jobs and borrowed money from friends and family to finance their

education (e.g., Macías, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2020). Consistent with previous research, participants in my study had to rely on private and institutional scholarships, family assistance, and private donations to help fund their education while self-funding the remainder of their tuition and other college-related expenses. All participants in my study worked to pay for college and living expenses. A novel finding that I did not locate in previous research was that finances also drove other choices that impacted participants' college experience, including the decision to commute rather than living on campus and finding ways to cut living expenses, such as living in small apartments with multiple roommates. Previous studies indicated that undocumented childhood arrivals were at greater risk of attrition once enrolled in higher education due the financial strain of fully or partly self-funding their education, leading to delayed or suspended degree completion (e.g., Cebulko, 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Gonzales, Terriquez & Ruszczyk, 2014; Macías, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). This was consistent with several participants in my study who delayed enrollment or dropped out of college temporarily due to inability to afford tuition; however, several participants accelerated their college career by taking an overload of credits to reduce overall out-of-pocket tuition costs, which was also a novel finding.

Institutional policies also played a role in participants' college experience. Participants described a lack of information and support at the colleges they attended in Wisconsin. Golash-Boza and Valdez (2018) noted that progressive policies on a college campus aimed at providing support and resources for undocumented students allowed these students to thrive, which is something that participants in my study noted as lacking

or limited at Wisconsin colleges. Previous studies also indicated that graduate school became possible for DACA recipients, as many graduate programs offered fellowships and university employment for students with DACA (see Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). One participant in my study applied to two master's programs in Wisconsin due to their DACA-friendly admission policies and funding opportunities; hence, the findings of my study are consistent with this previous finding, though this is an area to be explored further by future research.

Findings in my study did not support the idea that undocumented college students and DACA recipients prioritized work over education and deferred college entirely (see Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman, 2017; Gonzales, 2011; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Liu & Song, 2020; Luna & Montoya, 2019; Ortega et al., 2019; Sahay et al., 2016), rather, supported the conclusion made by Pope (2016) that DACA did not impact college enrollment, as all five participants, regardless of documented status, had previously completed or were in the process of pursuing a college degree. Findings from my study also did not support the idea that because DACA benefits were temporary, recipients were hesitant to invest in higher education when they were uncertain that they would finish (see Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020), as all participants were motivated to pursue higher education regardless of status. However, since all the participants in my study were current or previous college students, future research will need to explore this further with undocumented and DACAmented individuals in Wisconsin that chose not to attend college. The results of my study also contrast the findings from Jones (2020) who asserted that recipients in states with supportive policy allowed DACA recipients to work

and attend college simultaneously, as Wisconsin does not have supportive policies related to higher education and all participants in my study, regardless of DACA status, worked and attended higher education. Future studies will need to explore this idea further through comparison between states with and without supportive policies for higher education.

Belonging

Participants' responses regarding status and its effect on belonging were mixed. Previous studies reported that because undocumented youths grew up in the United States and were integrated into society at a young age, they developed a sense of belonging that was challenged when they entered adolescence and adulthood and began to face exclusions due to their status (e.g., Aranda et al., 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Gonzales, Ellis et al., 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Silver, 2012). Though in many respects they were Americanized, lack of legal paperwork undermined their sense of being American (see Aranda et al., 2015; Cebulko, 2014). DACA increased feelings of belonging for some when they were afforded greater access to opportunities (see Abrego, 2018; Cebulko & Silver, 2016), but for others DACA had limited effect on belonging when recipients continued to face exclusions in areas DACA did not address (see Benuto et al., 2018). The findings in my study are consistent with the body of research on belonging. Some participants reported they felt a sense of belonging regardless of status, while others indicated status had a large impact on belonging. One participant indicated that she always felt that she belonged in the United States and DACA only provided increased opportunities, while another participant indicated that DACA somewhat increased

belonging but that he continued to feel separate due to people not being familiar with DACA and constantly having to reidentify himself. Another participant indicated that because she was unable to receive DACA, the continued restrictions of being undocumented made her feel as though she had no place of belonging. Hence, DACA did not necessarily create a sense of belonging for participants, but lack of legal status contributed to feelings of nonbelonging. For some, it created a sense of *in-betweenness* where they only partially belonged. A novel finding that I did not locate in previous research was that for some participants, growing up in the United States and becoming Americanized led to feeling they did not belong within their family. Gonzales, Brant & Roth (2020) noted that when DACA youths are unable to find larger contexts of belonging, they find spaces of belonging through personal and social relationships. Many participants in my study reported a similar notion in that they found belonging with friends and others with similar struggles that could relate to their circumstances. Most participants were involved with community organizations where they found connections with others with similar immigration statuses. A unique finding was that belonging influenced participants' willingness to share their immigration status. Most participants indicated they were very selective with whom and under what circumstances they shared their status. Usually, it was with others who were also undocumented, DACAmented, or when it was necessary, such as with a financial aid advisor at college. One participant indicated she had not shared her status even with most of her friends. The connection between belonging, status, and transparency regarding status is an area that future research could explore further.

Segmented Assimilation Theory: Nested Contexts in Wisconsin

Segmented assimilation theory was created to describe distinct pathways of immigrant incorporation into a host society (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Researchers expanded this theory by identifying key factors that influenced integration patterns within and among immigrant groups including immigration policy, social reception, and institutions in which immigrants participated (see Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Luthra et al., 2018; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). The social context, or context of reception, was found to be integral to integration (Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Luthra et al., 2018; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006; Wong & Garcia, 2015; Xie & Greenman, 2011; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Golash-Boza and Valdez (2018) extended the concept of context of reception. They described "nested contexts of reception" (p. 536) that were characterized by layers of federal, state, and local policies and environments that shaped incorporation of students (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018). Distinct combinations of favorable and unfavorable circumstances at various levels (institutional, local, state, federal) aided in incorporation or contributed to social exclusion. In my study, I extended the work of Golash-Boza and Valdez who focused on educational experiences of undocumented students at a California institution of higher education. I examined the results of my study using nested contexts of reception to identify contextual factors in Wisconsin that affected educational experiences as studied by Golash-Boza and Valdez, but also employment and belonging.

Within the areas of employment, education, and belonging, nested contexts played an important role in the inclusion or exclusion of participants. As it pertains to

employment, all participants were able to obtain a job regardless of status, undocumented or DACA. Participants were able to find jobs with family, friends, and places of employment within the community willing to accept workers who were undocumented. The local labor market within participants' communities was favorable in that participants had the ability to obtain employment despite not having work authorization; hence, the local context was instrumental in participants' ability to work. For those that received DACA benefits, there was an added layer of favorable context at the federal level, as these recipients had expanded employment opportunities due to gaining work authorization and ability to apply for a Social Security number. The shifting political landscape during the Trump administration and in its aftermath exposed those who were DACA-eligible to an unfavorable context at the federal level due to the recent ruling to freeze new DACA applications. With the inability to legalize their status, obtain work authorization or a Social Security number, support at the local level was even more significant for participants that remained undocumented.

In the area of higher education, nested contexts were prevalent on many levels in Wisconsin. At the federal and state level, participants were exposed to unfavorable contexts regarding financial aid. Participants were not eligible for federal financial aid and Wisconsin did not extend state financial aid for undocumented or DACAmented students who wanted to pursue higher education. The state context was favorable in that both undocumented and DACAmented students were eligible to apply for college; however, it was unfavorable in that these students were required to pay out-of-state tuition. Participants' ability to afford college was dependent upon financial assistance

from a variety of sources including family, private scholarships, institutional scholarships, and churches and community organizations that helped fund DACA students' college education. Participants found local and institutional support that made college attendance possible when federal and state support was nonexistent. However, the amount of support varied by institution, with some providing more and some providing less assistance; hence, the assistance received by participants was unequal. Those who received higher levels of institutional and private assistance found it easier to pay for tuition and related expenses than participants with less support. This affected participants' choices regarding the timing and location of college attendance. One participant chose an out-of-state college due to a national scholarship she received for DACA recipients that was not available at Wisconsin colleges. Other participants selected colleges within Wisconsin that had more affordable tuition rates and offered more assistance to undocumented and DACAmented students. All participants who attended college in Wisconsin reported challenges in locating funding sources and paying tuition and living expenses. Participants avoided colleges without financial support; hence, favorable institutional and local contexts were crucial in participants' ability to attend college.

Participants also experienced nested contexts that affected their perceptions of belonging. At the federal level, participants encountered a shifting political landscape as the Trump administration attempted to end DACA, creating an unfavorable national context. Participants were acutely aware of these circumstances, contributing to feelings of uncertainty and nonbelonging. Participants indicated they also felt an unwelcoming

context in Wisconsin due to a combination of factors including conservative politics, negative encounters with people outside of their resident communities, the knowledge of 287(g) ICE contracts with counties throughout Wisconsin that increased the threat of deportation for themselves and their families, and the inability to obtain a Wisconsin state ID or driver's license while undocumented. Despite the unfavorable federal and state contexts, participants felt supported within their resident cities. Participants noted that there were large communities of Hispanic and Spanish-speaking residents within their cities, and it was well-known that there were many undocumented families and DACA recipients living there. As a result, there were numerous resources available for these populations. Participants stated they found many institutions inclusive toward immigrants including banks, churches, schools, community clinics, and nonprofit organizations. Among the nonprofit organizations was the presence of advocacy organizations that provided social and political support for immigrants, including Voces de la Frontera, Centro Hispano, Latinos Unidos, among others. These organizations fought for more inclusive policies for immigrants, such as the prevention or removal of 287(g) ICE contracts within the counties participants resided, and sanctuary legislation that was passed in Milwaukee. These organizations also provided a place for participants to partake in civic engagement and form connections with others that had similar immigration statuses and could relate to their struggles. Hence, a local favorable context helped shield participants from larger negative contexts and created spaces where participants could find belonging.

The results of my study demonstrate how nested contexts at the federal, state, local, and institutional level can shape inclusion or exclusion of participants, not only in educational experiences (see Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018), but also in employment and belonging. Federal and state immigration policy, social reception within state and local communities, and institutions in which immigrants participated created distinct layered contexts that either enhanced social integration or contributed to social exclusion in Wisconsin. Participants experienced a combination of positive and negative contexts that created unique incorporation patterns, with increased level of incorporation with positive and supportive contexts, and blocked integration with negative and unsupportive contexts.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in several ways. One of the main limitations was the sample size. I originally intended on interviewing 15 participants and ended with a sample of five participants. I conducted my study during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, many organizations and businesses were shut down, operating with limited hours, or conducting business virtually or over the phone. I distributed flyers to organizations, but with limited organizations in operation and less walk-through traffic within organizations, there were less opportunities to reach potential participants. Furthermore, there were less community events to distribute flyers. I attempted to obtain additional participants via snowball sampling but did not secure additional participants in this way. Despite these challenges, I was able to obtain quality data from the sample of participants interviewed and obtained saturation in much of the data. However, the

credibility and transferability of the results would be further enhanced with a larger sample size.

Due to the small sample size, there was limited variation in participant demographics, particularly in the areas of cultural/ethnic background, gender, geographical area of participants, and educational background. The sample comprised entirely of participants who were from a Hispanic/Latinx background. Though there were both males and females who participated in my study, there was only one male participant. All participants lived in urban communities, and all were college-educated. With a greater sample size comes greater variation among participant demographics, which would have allowed for increased transferability of results.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research. The limited demographic variability of the sample presents opportunities for further investigation. Previous studies have found that undocumented youths faced the same challenges in rural locations as those that resided in urban areas but also experienced rural disadvantages such as increased immigration enforcement, poor community infrastructure, limited opportunities, and lack of educational support (e.g., Gonzales & Ruiz, 2014; Silver, 2012; Wong & Garcia, 2015; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). However, Silver (2012) noted that rural communities with safe neighborhoods and positive social support helped mitigate some of the roadblocks for undocumented youths. Since the participants in my study resided in urban communities, it is unknown if the results would be similar in rural areas of Wisconsin. Future research could investigate relevant contextual factors in both rural and

urban areas within the state. In addition, participants in my study comprised of current and previous college students. Martinez (2014) noted that the state-level measures implemented to assist DACA recipients were limited in that they only benefitted college-bound participants; hence, an investigation into the perceptions of exclusion for DACA and DACA-eligible recipients in Wisconsin who had never gone to college is also warranted.

Participant interviews brought to light several topics that were not the focus of my study that merit further investigation. Participants described their perspectives on the level of resources and support at institutions of higher education that they attended. Future research could compare experiences of DACA and DACA-eligible students at various institutions of higher education within Wisconsin to determine relevant contextual factors in perceptions of social exclusion at these institutions. Participants also described their knowledge of and experiences with 287(g) ICE contracts in Wisconsin counties; however, all participants in my study resided in counties that did not have 287(g) ICE contracts in place. Future research could compare participant responses among counties with and without these contracts throughout Wisconsin. Finally, one of the eligibility requirements of DACA stated that recipients had to be in the United States on June 15, 2012, and continuously resided in the United States a minimum of 5 years prior to this date (Napolitano, 2012). Additionally, due to the U.S. District Court ruling in Texas on July 16, 2021, no new DACA applications were being processed for those that met the program’s eligibility criteria (USCIS, n.d.-a). Hence, there is a cohort of young undocumented youths who are outside the eligibility criteria for DACA that face the

same challenges that were present before DACA was implemented. Similarly, those that are DACA-eligible but unable to apply are stuck without any means to legitimize their presence. Future research could investigate the effects of these policy changes on undocumented childhood arrivals.

Implications

The results of this study revealed important implications for undocumented childhood arrivals and the DACA program, as well as avenues for positive social change. On an individual level, this study allowed DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals to describe the challenges they encountered regarding employment, education, and belonging in Wisconsin. Their perspectives and experiences highlighted the unique challenges faced by this population in a conservative location and demonstrated how immigration status can shape the daily lives and future trajectories of individuals and their families (see Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Their accounts also exemplified the effects of a legally liminal program that could be altered or terminated at any time, preventing recipients from fully planning for their futures. At the local level, grass roots organizations could make a significant impact on the lives of those with impermanent legal status through services and support. Not only can these organizations advocate for rights for this population, but they can also provide necessary practical resources, as well as offer a place where individuals can connect with others with similar immigration statuses. Undocumented childhood arrivals also need guidance during their K-12 education. Professionals in the educational system need to be informed of the legal obstacles facing undocumented childhood arrivals so they can assist these students in

locating resources necessary to achieving their educational and occupational goals. Social workers can be instrumental in addressing barriers to employment, housing, and medical services (Stewart, 2014), as well as providing targeted interventions in areas such as college admissions, financial aid, legal issues, counseling, and mental health support (Kim, 2013).

At the state level, one of the biggest challenges facing undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients was the cost of higher education in Wisconsin. Access to in-state tuition at public colleges and universities is essential in making higher education more feasible. However, even with in-state tuition, affording college remains a challenge due to the inability to access federal student aid; hence, provisions for state financial aid would remove significant cost barriers for undocumented childhood arrivals and DACA recipients. Social workers can advocate for state-level policy to extend these benefits to this population. Another area of concern was the presence of 287(g) ICE contracts in several counties throughout Wisconsin. These contracts increase the possibility of detainment and deportation for undocumented childhood arrivals and their family members and produce fear and anxiety due to the heightened threat in these locations. Social workers can advocate for the removal of such contracts and for implementation of sanctuary legislation in communities throughout Wisconsin.

At the national level, there are several policy implications. At the time I chose this topic, I did not envision the DACA program would undergo such significant and numerous changes as it did during the Trump administration (see McEvoy, 2020) and in subsequent court rulings (see NILC, n.d.-b). The most notable change over the past few

years was the Texas U.S. District Court ruling on July 16, 2021, that stated no new DACA applications could be processed (USCIS, n.d.-a). Though this ruling allowed DACA holders to continue to apply for renewal, DACA-eligible individuals who had never received DACA benefits were unable to apply or have their pending applications processed (USCIS, n.d.-a). The Biden administration and the DHS announced a DACA final rule that essentially replaced the original program with new DACA policy guidance that went into effect October 31, 2022, and maintained the existing eligibility criteria and application processes for DACA benefits (Napolitano, 2012; NILC, n.d.-b; USCIS, n.d.-a; DHS, 2022). Despite this change, the 2021 injunction remained in effect and new DACA applications were not being processed (NILC, n.d.-b; USCIS, n.d.-a; DHS, 2022), leaving those who were undocumented stuck without an avenue to legalize their status. It is expected that the legality of the DACA final rule will be challenged in court (Garcia, 2022), leaving the DACA program and its recipients vulnerable. Another issue is that one of DACA's eligibility criteria required potential applicants to have entered the United States on or before June 15, 2012, and have continuously resided in the United States a minimum of 5 years prior to that date (Napolitano, 2012). There is a cohort of undocumented childhood arrivals living in the United States who will be entering adulthood that do not meet the criteria for DACA and will be facing the same challenges that were present before DACA was created. At minimum, the program eligibility needs to be expanded to include undocumented childhood arrivals that migrated to the United States after June 15, 2012. However, Congressional action creating a pathway to citizenship is the only avenue to protect undocumented childhood arrivals from an

insecure future. Though the Biden administration has advanced a policy proposal that would create a conditional path to citizenship for undocumented childhood arrivals, Congress has yet to address the issue (The White House, 2021). There is a social change opportunity for social workers to advocate for the continuation of DACA and ultimately for a permanent policy solution for undocumented childhood arrivals to obtain and maintain legal presence in the United States.

Conclusion

DACA was created to provide temporary legal status and work authorization for undocumented childhood arrivals. Though the program improved many aspects of recipients' lives, there were obstacles that remained. While a number of states passed state-level policy to remove some of these barriers, others remained inhospitable; hence, state context had a major effect in the daily lives and prospects for this population. I sought to investigate the experiences of undocumented childhood arrivals in one state considered conservative/inhospitable. Results revealed that DACA improved employment opportunities, but federal and state policy increased obstacles in educational attainment, while local favorable contexts helped shield participants from larger negative contextual factors and provided support and belonging.

The accounts of the participants in this study represent only a few of the hundreds of thousands of undocumented childhood arrivals who immigrated with their parents and grew up in the United States. Some of these individuals were able to receive DACA, while others were caught in the political vacillation over the past several years that upended the DACA program, leaving DACA-eligible individuals without a means to

legalize their presence. Others remain outside the eligibility requirements and will be entering adulthood with the same obstacles that were present before DACA was created. With the DACA program at risk of being terminated, all undocumented childhood arrivals are facing an uncertain future. States and local communities can mitigate some of these challenges, but ultimately Congressional action is needed to create a pathway to citizenship and secure a future for these individuals who by all accounts are American save for the country in which they were born.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Earn $20 by volunteering to participate in a research study about DACA

There is a new study called *"The Effect of Federal and State-Level Policy on Undocumented Childhood Arrivals"* that could help social workers understand how DACA and state policy affects access to education, employment, and social belonging. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences in the state of Wisconsin.

This survey is part of the doctoral study for Kim Kaczmarowski, a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

About the study:

- One 60–90-minute phone interview
- To protect your privacy, no names will be collected
- Participants will receive a $20 Amazon or Walmart gift card

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Between the age of 18 and 39
- Current resident of Wisconsin
- Current DACA recipient *or* if you have you have never received DACA benefits, you must be undocumented and meet the eligibility criteria for DACA
- Do not have another form of permanent immigration status

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Introductory Statement

Thank you for taking the time for this interview. I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Social Work and this interview is for my dissertation research. My research study is called "*The Effect of Federal and State-Level Policy on Undocumented Childhood Arrivals.*" The purpose of my study is to explore how DACA, and related state-level policy affects access to education, employment and belonging. Your participation is important as it will provide me with understanding of the experiences of undocumented childhood arrivals who have received DACA (or are DACA-eligible) in Wisconsin. I hope to interview 15 people for this study.

Before we begin the interview, I would like to review the informed consent document that I sent to you. {Informed Consent Document}

Important takeaways: Your participation is completely voluntary. If I ask you a question that you do not feel comfortable answering or if you wish to stop the interview at any time, please let me know. Also, as you are aware, I will be audio-recording this interview and taking notes. Once the interview is complete, I will create a transcript of our conversation. If you wish to review the transcripts and my data analysis to make any corrections, we can schedule a follow-up meeting. The information gathered from this interview will be used to write a research report that will be submitted for my dissertation and eventually publication. I will not ask for your name at any time, so your responses will be completely anonymous. The length of this interview should last no more than 90 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

Part 1: Demographic Information

I would like to start our interview by gathering some general demographic information.

1. What is your current age?
2. In what country were you born?
3. In terms of your race/ethnicity, how do you identify?
4. In terms of your gender, how do you identify?
5. Where is your current city/state of residence?
6. How long have you lived there?
7. Who do you live with?
    a. What are each of their immigration statuses? Undocumented DACA Other?
8. What is your current immigration status?
    a. Undocumented DACA Other?
    b. If DACA: How old were you when you received DACA?
9. What is your highest level of education? HS/College/Other?
10. What are your parents' highest level of education? HS/College/Other?
11. What are your parents' current occupations?
12. Are you currently employed? Y/N What is your area of employment?
13. What is your current annual household income: $

Part 2: Qualitative Interview

Immigration Experience and Early Life

I want to begin our interview with a discussion of your immigration story.

1. What memories do you have of migrating to the United States?

   Possible follow-up:

   How old were you when you migrated?

   Who did you migrate with?

   What was the reason you and/or your family migrated to the United States?

   Where did you and your family settle?

   What work did your family find?

   What was the transition like when you first arrived?

2. What memories do you have growing up in the United States?

3. How did you first learn you were undocumented?

   Possible follow-up:

   What did "being undocumented" mean to you?

   How did "being undocumented" affect your life: childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, etc.?

   Was there anything you felt you could not do because of your immigration status?

4. If you had to define 'belonging', how would you describe it? What does 'belonging' mean to you?

5. How has your documented status shaped your sense of belonging?

   Possible follow-up:

Have you ever felt like you did not belong because of your documented status?

Describe a memory where you felt this way.

Education & Employment

Now I want to focus more specifically on the areas of education and work, beginning with school:

6. What was your experience like in K-12 school?

   Possible follow-up:

   Was your immigration status ever an issue in school? If so, how?

7. You mentioned that your highest level of education was (see above response to demographic questions). How has your documented status affected your decisions about education? (dropout of h/s, attend college, drop out of college, etc.)?

   Possible follow-up:

   What level of education do you hope to pursue? (educational goals) Why?

   What barriers have you encountered?

   What were your family's hopes/dreams for your education?

   If attending or attended college:

   What help did you receive finding and applying for college? From whom?

   Why did you choose the school you attended?

   How did you fund your college education?

What help did you receive paying for college? From whom?

(tuition assistance, financial aid, scholarship, other)

What has been your experience attending college? Positives?

Challenges?

Was anyone aware of your immigration status in college? If so,

who? How did you share this information about yourself?

What support does this college have for people with your

immigration status?

I would like to know a bit about your work history:

8. At what age did you get your first job?

    Possible Follow-up:

    How did you find this job?

    How were you paid?

    Did your employer know your documented status?

9. What other types of jobs have you had?

    Possible Follow-up:

    How did you find these jobs?

    How were you paid?

    Did you share your documented status with your employers?

10. Were there job opportunities you wanted to pursue but could not because of your status? If so, can you tell me more about that?

    Possible follow-up:

11. What type of work would you like to pursue? (What would you like to be doing in 5 years? What stands in your way?)

Community

I want to shift our interview to discuss your views on your community.

12. Would you describe your community (school/teachers, neighborhood/neighbors, friends, family, or the community at large) as supportive or unsupportive to people with your immigration status? Why or why not?

    Possible follow-up:

    Have you received help or support from individuals in the community? (teachers, neighbors, friends, family, church members, other)? In what way?

    Have you received help or support from a community organization? How so?

13. Do you know what a 287g arrangement is? Do you know if your city/county has a 287g contract with ICE? If so, how has this affected you?
14. Have you become socially or politically active because of your immigration status? How so?

DACA

I want to talk specifically about DACA

15. A. For those who have DACA:
    a. What was the application process like?
    b. Did you work with a lawyer to submit your application?

c. How much did it cost?

d. Was it difficult to afford the application fee?

e. Have you renewed your application? If so, how many times have you renewed?

   If not, why not?

f. How has DACA benefitted you?

   Possible follow-up:

   How do you feel that DACA has impacted your education?

   How do you feel that DACA has impacted your employment?

   How do you feel that DACA has impacted your sense of belonging?

   How do you feel that DACA has impacted your overall wellbeing?

g. How have your experiences changed before and after DACA? What has it enabled you to do? What additional barriers have you encountered?

B. For those who do not have DACA:

a. Have you ever applied for DACA? Why or why not?

   If yes, follow-up:

   What was the application process like?

   Did you work with a lawyer to submit your application?

   How much did it cost?

   Was it difficult to afford the application fee?

b. If they have received DACA but no longer have it: What were the circumstances that you no longer have DACA?

c. Will you try to apply again in the future?

16. How has DACA benefited DACAmented young people in general?

17. What are DACAs limitations as you see it?

Future and Suggestions

18. What hopes do you have for your future regarding your immigration status?

19. What concerns do you have for your future due to your immigration status?

    Possible follow-up:

    How has the recission and reinstatement of DACA over the past several years affected you and/or your family?

20. What other support is needed for people with your immigration status?

    Possible follow-up:

    Have you obtained your driver's license or a state ID? If so, how has this helped you?

21. What other information would you like to share that we have not discussed?

22. What questions do you have for me?

Closing Statement

This concludes our interview. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this interview. As I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, the purpose of this study is to explore how DACA and related state-level policy affects access to education, employment and belonging. Now that the interview is complete, I will create a transcript of our conversation. If you wish to review the transcripts and my data analysis to make any comments or corrections, we can schedule a follow-up meeting; however, this is

completely voluntary. Is this something you would like to do? Y/N Once the final report is completed and published you may find it through Google Scholar. The information gathered in this interview will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you wish to contact me, my phone number and email are included on the informed consent document. There is also a list of community resources on the informed consent document if you need support. Also, if you know of anyone who would qualify for this study, please feel free to give them my contact information. I will send you a copy of the study flyer for this purpose.

To thank you for your participation, I will send you a $20 e-gift card. Do you prefer Amazon or Walmart? What email address or phone number would you like me to use for the gift card?

Thank you again for participating in my study. Do you have any final questions or concerns?