Mentors, resiliency, and ganas: Factors influencing the success of DACAmented,

undocumented, and immigrant students in higher education

Abstract

Access to higher education for undocumented students is an important first step

toward educational equity; successful graduation is the goal, and in between

students encounter many challenges they must overcome. Emerging research has

explored the psychological and emotional challenges undocumented students

encounter in accessing higher education. Few studies have been devoted to factors

facilitating success once admitted. This study uses semi-structured interviews

with eight former or current undocumented students to examine barriers as well as

factors that help them to overcome these barriers. The research considers factors

such as the presence of mentors, institutional and community support, and

individual resiliency. Interviewees suggest solutions to institutional barriers

mitigating the negative effects of immigration status.

Keywords: DACA, immigrants, higher education, liminal legality

Mentors, resiliency, and ganas: Factors influencing the success of DACAmented

students in higher education

Introduction

"It is the *ganas*, the *ganas* of wanting to succeed that allows you to see the

responsibilities that you have... I think that the message that is extremely

important to tell and to portray is that regardless of all of that, it is

possible. It is possible because of mentors; it is possible because of

families; it is possible because of communities."

José Luis, a 28-year-old Latino from Honduras is currently pursuing a

Ph.D. in Urban Education. Like many undocumented youth, José saw the passage

of the DREAM Act[1] as the opportunity to realize his aspirations to attend a

college or university. But another failed attempt at garnering bipartisan support to

pass the DREAM Act in 2010 left thousands of undocumented youth, like José in

limbo (Muñoz, 2015). In the aftermath of the DREAM Act failure, undocumented

youth took ownership of their stories becoming their own advocates, lobbyists,

and change agents. They leveraged the power of their narratives and built upon

the failed promises of immigration reform (Nicholls, 2013). After organized

protests and pressure on elected officials, these young immigrants saw a glimmer

---

[1]Senate Bill 1291, Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act,
introduced August 1, 2001

of hope through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) (Adams &

Boyne, 2015, Wong & Valdivia, 2014, Nicholls, 2013).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A breath of fresh air

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama signed the Deferred Action

for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which granted two-year relief from

deportation and opportunity for work permits to undocumented immigrants who

entered the United States prior to age 16 and who were under age 31 as of June

12, 2012. Applicants were further required to be in school or have graduated from

high school or obtained a high school diploma or GED (Consideration of Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) | USCIS, 2016). Gonzales et al. (2014)

found that in the short-term, receiving DACA reduced some of the challenges

associated with not achieving full social and economic incorporation. Access to

these benefits increased opportunities for social and economic mobility,

opportunities hindered by undocumented statuses. While DACA or

"DACAmented"[2] as a new type of immigrant status does not provide a path to

legal permanent residency or citizenship, it increases the opportunities for many

previously undocumented individuals by facilitating their ability to more

meaningfully connect to social and educational resources. Gonzales and Bautista-

Chavez assert that DACA has the potential to move young adults into the

American mainstream and improve their social and economic well-being.

---

[2] Coined term in frequent use since 2014 to describe those persons who have attained DACA approval.

DACA in Higher Education

Like other young people in America, undocumented students increasingly understand the importance of attaining some type of postsecondary education. While access to K-12 education for undocumented students has been readily available[3] for years, entry to postsecondary education has been less open. In some states legal barriers restricted admission of undocumented students to colleges and universities. Other states permitted admission but classified them as international students or out-of-state residents in assigning tuition rates, even when they were long-term state residents and graduates of local high schools. Prior to DACA only a few states granted in-state tuition for undocumented students. Additionally, undocumented students were restricted in applying for jobs requiring proof of legal status or citizenship, which included all federal work study programs and most domestic jobs. So even if undocumented students were admitted to college, and willing, like many other students, to work and pay their tuition, they encountered the challenge of work restrictions. Not having appropriate citizenship documents restricted them from internships, from participation in college insurance programs, from international travel and semester abroad programs.

The advent of DACA created pathways through these barriers for undocumented students and provided at least temporary relief from some

---

[3] Plyler v Doe, 457 U.S. 202(1982) Supreme Court Decision struck down state statues denying K-12 access to undocumented students

restrictions. More institutions began to actively recruit and admit undocumented

students. California and Texas led the way in offering in-state tuition; other states

followed; and others discussed this possibility. Colleges and universities, in the

absence of state policy, made in-state tuition an institutional policy. (Boyne &

Adams, 2015) DACA, in giving access to social security numbers, made possible

participation in study abroad, humanitarian trips, and visits to sick relatives

through the "advance parole," a travel permit allowing re-enter to the country

(Berger & Avila, n.d). DACA improved access and helped many students

ameliorate the stress and anxiety inherently associated with college attendance

(Patler & Cabrera, 2015). But it did not address some of the most important

stressors and challenges faced by undocumented students. Costs continue to be

the primary barrier to access. Federal financial aid is still not available to

DACAmented students. Even with increased access to in-state tuition, lack of

access to federal aid and to many scholarships makes tuition costs prohibitive for

many families (Muñoz, 2015). DACA recipients are also not eligible for health

insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) (HealthCare.gov, n.d.)

and must pay out-of-pocket for most healthcare services. These financial costs

often cause DACA-eligible students to depend on alternative healthcare

(Raymond-Flesch, Siemons, Pourat, Jacobs, & Brindis, 2014). A growing body of

literature shows undocumented students experience severe stress from a variety of

sources including job insecurity, perceptions of discrimination, parental

immigration status, uncertainty of immigration laws, and ambiguous immigration statuses. These stressors can manifest as emotional problems and health issues (APA, 2012; Finch, Hummer, Kol, & Vega, 2001; Gonzales et al., 2013; Menjívar, 2006). Additionally, many of these students must continually cope with the emotional trauma associated with their own migration experiences (Foster, 2001).

DACA permits many undocumented students to share in the common experiences of American higher education; but it has not completely leveled the playing field. It is now relatively safe for undocumented students to be more visible within higher education, but many students are still wary of disclosing their status, and they often remain invisible on campus, navigating through their education in silence. DACA was meant to be and has been only a partial response to the issues cited here. It is not surprising there are differentiated impacts of DACA, and college students and college graduates are amongst the individuals who most benefit (Boyne, 2013; Gonzales & Bautista-Chavez, 2014; Pérez, 2014). DACA has made college attendance possible but often with great effort. In this paper, we explore some of the benefits and continuing barriers presented by DACA.

Analytic Framework: DACA as Liminal Positioning

In *Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants' lives in the United States,* (2006) Menjívar discusses the effect of the ambiguous legal status

offered to some immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala through Temporary

Protective Status (TPS). At the time, TPS was a designation by the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services to individuals from countries deemed

unable to deal adequately with the return of their nationals. TPS allows recipients

to obtain an employment authorization card, travel authorization, and temporary

relief from deportation (USCIS.GOV, n.d), a status that Menjívar describes as

ambiguous and uncertain. Menjívar uses "liminal legality," to express the

uncertain legality status of these immigrants and the temporariness of this

condition that defines their legal position. She explains, "'liminal legality' is

characterized by its ambiguity, as it is neither an undocumented status nor a

documented one, but may have the characteristics of both" (Menjiívar, 2006, p.

108), and at any moment a change in Presidential administration can signify a

return to being undocumented and having the benefits they have obtained taken

away. Chacón (2015) posits that "the temporal and legal instability of their

freedom from banishment at the hands of the state is not the only feature of

liminal legality." (p. 717)

     As we have explored the issues inherent in DACA status, we see a close

connection between these two conditions, and we have adopted the use of

"liminal legality" as a framework to explore the experiences of DACAmented

students in various stages of their pursuit of higher education. We have

considered the ambiguity of DACA status as a type of liminal legality creating an

ambiguous and tentative landing place for undocumented students, and the very

nature of the ambiguity of the status creates its own stress and tension and impacts

their ability to matriculate as they are always conscious of the uncertainty of their

status.

Many states have failed to recognize DACA as sufficient proof of

residency to provide in-state tuition rates for DACAmented students. Upon

receiving DACA, students enroll in colleges and universities only to find their

newly acquired status, while providing them access to many opportunities, keep

them in a liminal state—good enough to enroll, even to obtain internships in some

cases, but not legal *enough* to qualify for in-state tuition and state or federal

financial assistance. In the current study, we draw upon the experiences of

students who have navigated or are currently navigating higher education with

different immigration statuses. By considering the factors influencing the success

of DACAmented and undocumented, in higher education, educators and

advocates could be better prepared to leverage the strengths of these students and

work to ensure their academic success.

Methods

Qualitative methods were chosen for this study to create the space for

participants to share about their lives as undocumented immigrants generally and

in higher education institutions specifically. This methodology has allowed us to

capture their words and stories and allow for close listening, thoughtful

consideration, and yet close analysis to examine the most critical themes that

emerge and how those themes speak to the broader experience of undocumented

students. We further believed a qualitative approach would best allow us to

support authentic representation of what we heard in an "unapologetic and

unafraid" (Seif, 2011) perspective by inviting participants to share their narratives

and world views with as little outside imposition as possible. It is often

challenging for researchers to obtain data from undocumented immigrant

populations as they comprise a fairly small proportion of the population, are

legally vulnerable, often invisible within institutions, and as members from low

socio-economic communities are often reluctant to share with "establishment"

individuals (Bloch, 2007). For this reason, much work with undocumented

immigrant students in higher education has occurred in collaboration with

community based organizations or via social media (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2014;

Raymond-Flesch, Siemons, Pourat, Jacobs, & Brindis, 2014; Siemons, Raymond-

Flesh, Auerswald, & Brindis, 2016, Wong & Valdivia, 2014). Additional

strategies include recruitment of participants at an event dedicated to supporting

the advancement of undocumented students in higher education, as described

below. Our study was approved by the University of Michigan Institutional

Review Board (IRB).

Setting

On April 14th and 15th of 2015, the National Center for Institutional Diversity and the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good hosted a National Summit entitled "Educational Equity Beyond Access: Institutional Action in Support of Undocumented, DACAmented and Immigrant Students," in which leaders in education and advocacy from around the country met at the University of Michigan to discuss support for immigrant, DACAmented, and undocumented students in institutions of higher learning (for a description of the event, see http://ncid.umich.edu/events/national-convenings/educational-equity-beyond-access/). This event included a series of panels and sessions in which current and former higher education students who were immigrants, undocumented, or DACAmented shared their narratives on a variety of topics. Panel topics included: "Home Communities and Immigration Narratives," and "Students and Family Dynamics." The authors of the current study attended the event and Gámez and Lopez served as conference organizers and had thus been in contact with some of the potential study participants for months.

Following the event, these individuals were contacted to inquire about participation in a study focused on experiences of undocumented students in higher education. If participants agreed to participate, they were given the option of participating over the phone or in-person. Of the eight individuals contacted, seven were interviewed over the phone, and one was interviewed face-to-face.

Recruitment of this type has at least three implications for data collection. First, because we were in the audience when participants shared their experiences, we were aware of many of their experiences before interviews began. This allowed us to probe specific experiences or reference experiences that participants did not mention in their interviews but shared with the audience. Second, because the authors were also support staff and organizers for the event, rapport had been established with many of the potential study participants before any interviews were formally conducted. This rapport was incredibly helpful in soliciting information over the telephone, an interview medium with notable challenges that, when overcome, can solicit data on par with face-to-face interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Third, as discussed by Hoffman (2007), interviews involve dynamic shifts of power between the interviewee and the interviewer. By negotiating speaking roles on panels with potential participants, we acknowledged the value of their stories and positioned them as the educators and us (the authors and audience) as the students and listeners. We were thus able to bring interviews within a dynamic relationship to the interviewees that encouraged and provoked a level of openness.

Data Collection

All participants were interviewed by the first author in the language of their choice. All chose to use English, but Spanish words were frequently used to

capture emotion and meaning lacking in English translation. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by the first author for accuracy.

The interviewer utilized an interview guide with open-ended questions developed from three sources. First, we built upon a review of literature related to immigrant students in higher education. Second, we reflected on personal and professional experiences of our work in higher education and undocumented immigrant advocacy. Third, we drew from observations of participants at the event, including their interactions with each other, with the audience and the narratives they relayed during panel presentations.

The interview guide consisted of three domains: Background, Higher Education, and Next Steps, with each section containing between one and three sub-questions. Established probes were used to gain clarification or solicit further conversation and description of experiences from the participant. While the participants were encouraged to respond to the open ended questions, they were free to speak to whatever themes they felt were most relevant, and the interviews thus moved conversationally from one domain to the next in a time and order that the participants facilitated. Participants were encouraged to speak at length in response to any question chosen, but were generally encouraged to speak to the three domains.

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by trained transcriptionists and reviewed by the first author for accuracy. Completed transcriptions were then imported to NVivo Version 10.2.1 (QSR International; Burlington, MA, USA). While the interviewer guided the conversation among three domains (Background, Higher Ed, and Next Steps), each participant was encouraged to allow the story to unfold as she saw fit, using language, timing, and order she prioritized (Escamilla & Trevino, 2014). This emic perspective allowed participants to have a level of control over what they felt comfortable sharing, but also made the conversations more open and transparent.

The two primary authors inductively coded the interviews in the following way (Thomas, 2006). First, each author read and memo-ed a different subset of interviews and independently reduced the data to recurring themes (Copeland, Scholle, & Binko, 2003; Patton, 2002). We then met to compare themes, resolved discrepancies, developed a conceptual model, and generated selective codes based on shared properties among recurring themes (Doering-White et al., 2014; Kusow, 2004). We created a codebook of selective codes that contained six parent codes and seventeen sub codes. We described the codes in a formalized codebook that included a description of each code. Codes were not mutually exclusive. Codes were compared horizontally (across interviews) and vertically (within interviews) (Glaser, 2005; Graham et al., 2014).

Results

Participants

At the time of the interviews, all participants were attending or had graduated from various higher education institutions (Table 1). Students' educational experiences ranged from currently attending community college to pursuing a Ph.D. While some participants crossed the border without authorization to do so, others overstayed tourist visas, but all had lived in the U.S. without legal authorization since childhood. Six of eight participants had received DACA, one had a U Visa, and one had obtained citizenship as a result of being placed in the foster care system. Despite differences in life experiences prior to enrolling in higher education, all participants had been accepted into higher education institutions; two were enrolled in community colleges, two had attained their bachelor's degree; one was enrolled in a four-year institution; two were pursuing graduate degrees, and one had received her master's degree at the time of the interviews. Participants' countries of birth included México, Honduras, and Zimbabwe.

Extracting our findings from the interview content, we discuss here three key themes related to their success: (1) mentors, or the importance of individuals who provide guidance and support in the process of enrolling and attending higher education institutions; (2) resiliency, or the personal strength, bravery, courage, or perseverance that allowed students to stay in school; and (3) *ganas*, or the grit,

desire and internal motivation that fueled their persistence despite the challenges they faced in their educational journeys.

[Table 1 about here]

Mentors

In the uncertainty of their educational journeys, many participants mentioned individuals who provided mentorship and guidance. They noted, however, that there was rarely a systematic means of finding such mentors, and they had either benefited from serendipitous encounters or sought mentors out themselves. Participants highlighted the lack of intentionality on the part of educational institutions to identify individuals with experience advising or counseling DACAmented or undocumented students. Participants primarily identified two types of mentors, those who represented institutions, and those who worked in a community capacity.

Institutional mentors

José Luis, a 28-year-old student enrolled in a Ph.D. program identified people along his educational journey whom he believed helped to ensure his success. As can be seen in the following quote, José Luis realized very early in his academic career the power of mentorship, and he was purposeful in seeking role models within and outside of his institution:

It is about being intentional….. Every step is strategic, every relation, every relationship is strategic to growth whether it's from a community

standpoint or family support system….I found a mentor very quickly in

financial aid. I found a mentor very quickly in advising, I found a mentor

very quickly in academic advising, I found a mentor for my discipline. I

found a mentor for my time management, for my community organization,

for my student leadership.

José Luis' experience is similar to others in that they had to find the resources and

individuals when institutions did not have a person or process in place to advise

DACAmented or undocumented students. This student also indicates a strategy of

reliance on multiple points of information and support, and learning to identify

specific individuals across an institution that can provide needed services.

José Luis and other interviewees noted that there are people within

institutions willing to provide the necessary support; however, they often provide

these services outside of their job duties or with a scarcity of resources because

most institutions don't have programs dedicated specifically to DACAmented or

undocumented students. José, a 24-year-old with a Bachelor's in Architecture

mentioned that at his institution his

biggest frustration was with the lack of information regarding

undocumented students and the lack of resources…. I once asked the

Hispanic support group if I could get help with scholarships and the

answer was that there were not any scholarships for somebody with my

status….

José adds that after the advice received from the Hispanic group, he had to "knock on almost every door" at his institution until he found someone who gave him a list of scholarships to which he could apply. Often, students had to become the instructors, and had to educate their institutions about the process of enrolling DACAmented students. José also stated,

> when I first attended school nobody knew about this status. I had to do a lot of explaining in order to see if I could find any type of financial aid because I had a social security number… but it wasn't valid for FAFSA or for most private loans or anything like that."

These students thus faced the undue burden of being a student and an educator simultaneously. Further, not only did participants often have to seek out mentors, these mentors, while supportive generally, were often unaware of the intricacies of DACA or undocumented status themselves. That is, many mentors served as emotional support while they and the student co-learned how to navigate and negotiate a system geared toward U.S. citizens. Our interviews seemed to indicate it was the personal commitment of some personnel and not institutional practices or services that spurred these mentoring opportunities.

Community mentors

Many of the participants also mentioned their strong family and community ties, and noted much of the mentoring supporting their educational pursuits came from persons outside of academe. José Luis explains the

immeasurable amount of support from community mentors, saying, "It is possible

because of mentors. It's possible because of families, it's possible because of

communities, it's possible because we are the solution of the communities and we

are their hope and that's what really kept me going, understanding that." His

statement serves as recognition of the many individuals, professionals, or

community members, who believe in these students and helped them remain

committed to their education. Many of the participants similarly identified,

coaches, church leaders, family members, and friends or other individuals who

had no affiliation to higher education who provided guidance and support, and in

the simplest form, a source of encouragement for students to continue their

efforts. Maria, an 18-year-old enrolled in community college explained,

> I am lucky that my brothers kind of went through this process already, so I
>
> kind of always had a guide. If I didn't have them I would've found it very
>
> difficult to know where to go…I have found that some counselors [at my
>
> college] don't really know much about DACA and how to guide the
>
> students.

All of our participants mentioned their reliance on individuals, community

organizations, or family members to better understand the process of enrolling,

navigating, and getting access to the limited resources available to them. Lucho, a

24-year-old enrolled in a Master's in Public Policy summarized the impact his

community had on his success, noting

> I consider myself really a child who was raised by a village. In the
>
> true sense, the reason why I was able to go to college, graduate
>
> from high school and go work for Facebook [is] because there was
>
> a community that came together and pitched in.

In sum, whether from community member or institutions, it has been

individuals who saw the potential of these students and who used their knowledge

to support them and provide guidance. These findings demonstrate the need for

better informed staff at higher education institutions that understand and are

aware of the policy changes and can provide adequate guidance and support to

these students. It was clear from the interviews that a major source of support

for these students has been "found" mentors who understood the plight of

the students and who were willing in their personal encounters with the

students to provide guidance and support. This support contributed to the

ability of the students to generate a type of resiliency we identified as our

second theme.

Resilience

We define resiliency as the personal strength, bravery, courage, or

perseverance that allowed students to stay in school. While participants

acknowledged the significant challenges they faced while pursuing higher

education, they referenced the strength upon which they drew to continue their

educational journeys. Participants referenced their need to remain courageous,

brave and persevering, despite the uncertainty of graduation or what would

follow. Ñaña a 24-year-old with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and

Organizational Studies stated, "I think resilience is something that we all have in

common… if you came here from [another country], you left your family, left

everything that you knew and you came to this country started off pretty much all

over again, you have every reason in the world to become resilient…."

As one example of resilient behavior, participants spoke of a need to self-

fund. As noted earlier, DACA students continue to be excluded from federal

financial aid and in most cases state funding. The patchwork of policies

encouraged some participants to simply avoid applying for aid altogether: Kaitlin

a 22-year old pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Engineering stated, "I knew I

wasn't able to apply for federal aid. So I didn't even try." Lack of aid created a

financial burden that forced others to fund large portions of their own education.

Xochitl, for example, a 23-year-old community college student had to work

multiple jobs in order to pay for one or two classes at a time, thus slowing

significantly her time to graduation. Xochitl shared, "I'm actually working two

jobs, I'm a waiter and a sales associate at a retail store, and I'm also a part-time

student." Kaitlin similarly stated, "you know I didn't have this work permit

[DACA] for that long, I was a waitress; because they'll pay you under the table.

And that really sucked, I hated it." Both participants had to work in jobs that were

not aligned with their skills and abilities. Kaitlin, for example, even though she

hated waitressing, remained in the job because she knew it was not a permanent position.

Resiliency, as we identified it, was demonstrated in these examples as a form of determination and persistence in the face of the barriers, and an acceptance of the fact that they might have to work harder to attain their degree than others.

Finding one's own mentors, educating and sensitizing them to the issues of undocumented students, working multiple jobs, managing family issues, maintaining academic requirements, seeking healthcare from disparate sources, and dealing with the social and emotional issues inherent in the undocumented or DACAmented status identification are among the specific challenges that call for high levels of resilient behavior. This "resilience," their personal strength measured beyond their will, appeared to be essential for them to "hang around" when the odds were stacked against them. However, we suggest that these students are successful not merely from maintaining a presence in education, but because of their ability to create systems of support allowing them to be resilient. In our next theme we believe we identify a characteristic that allows the mentoring and the personal resilience to manifest into thriving as part of these experiences.

Ganas

Through the interview process we learned that successful matriculation of these participants is attributed to a number of things: self-advocacy, resourcefulness, and an action orientation. The students not only sought out mentors and learned resilient strategies, but we found that the challenges themselves became motivators, helping them strive to achieve their goals. It is this internal motivation that became one of the most fascinating findings from our interviews. These students seemed to have grown a type of grit, internal motivation, desire and personal commitment to be successful, failing was not an option. All these are internal motivators, the *ganas* that pushed these students to thrive. *Ganas* is often defined as motivation sufficient to act (Merriam Webster Dictionary, Spanish Central). In Spanish "ganas" derives from the verb "ganar" meaning to win. In its translation it connotes basic sense of desire or drive that serves as a motivator to action. Repeatedly in the interviews students talked about not merely the resilience they have learned but an underlying ganas propelled them forward. These *ganas* were the fuel that they used to remain persistent and focused on their ultimate goal amid all the challenges they faced in higher education.

José Luis states,

    it is the ganas, the ganas of wanting to succeed that allows you to see the

    responsibilities that you have…One I understood that all the challenges

became more fuel and more leña (firewood) to the fire, it just became it,

that motivated me.

In many respects their efforts are indeed about winning for themselves and their

families a different life. Ganas seems to move beyond mere resilience, an ability

to rebound and keep moving forward, to an internally and communally driven

sense of determination to win out over the barriers. The adversity and layers of

obstacles the interviewees faced are seen as motivators for sustaining their

movement forward.   José Luis and all of the interviewees noted that they allow

their *ganas* to turn those obstacles into fuel that keeps them focused on their

goals.

Discussion

In this study, we considered the experiences of a small sample of

DACAmented and undocumented students who have navigated or are currently

navigating higher education to attain degrees to propel them into meaningful jobs

and social mobility in the U.S.. Related research has affirmed that while

undocumented students are achieving college success, the effort costs are high

and often contribute to the detriment of their mental and emotional health

(Gonzales et al., 2013). Having to work multiple jobs, support their families, and

obtain good grades, is not unlike the experience of other groups; however,

accomplishing these things under the uncertainty their immigrant status serves to

exacerbate pressures at multiple levels. Our interviews evidence that students

learn strategies for moving toward their goals. All participants mention the importance of knowledgeable, culturally competent, and supportive professionals to help navigate the higher education system. The interviews also surface observations about the institutional mentors that tied their mentoring process more to personal commitments to these students than to their roles within institutional programs seeking to serve these students.

The interviews also identified a type of resilience that allowed students to work through a variety of barriers. When the challenges of higher education were overwhelming, they refused to drop out, *y le echaron más ganas*, or put forth effort to go the extra mile to succeed. Many participants spoke about the shortcomings of DACA but saw it as a step in the right direction. Kaitlin, for example, speaks with excitement about her summer job, "I am tutoring this summer, I am really excited about that actually, because it feels like a professional job, they have a dress code. It's a real job, I'm pretty excited!" While for many a tutoring job may not be a reason for excitement, for Kaitlin it was concrete proof of the benefits of DACA.

We believe this study provides some key insights into points of intervention for higher education institutions to support DACAmented and undocumented students. First, there needs to been more intentionality in creating avenues and training faculty and staff who are well equipped to provide the necessary mentoring support these students' need. Second, while students are

resilient, they must be provided with equal opportunities that allow them to succeed and achieve to their full potential. The effort cost that comes with undocumented or DACAmented status continues to exert additional burdens on these students and institutions can help with this through outreach programs and acknowledgement of the challenges. And last, students may put forth effort to excel and persevere, however; clear avenues about where resources are needed would help to ease their path and allow them to focus on being students first.

Conclusion

While DACA may have increased access to colleges and universities, higher education institutions must reflect on their own roles and commitment in supporting DACAmented students. Institutions of higher education cannot be fully inclusive if DACAmented students are denied access to resources and opportunities that help them achieve their full potential.

TABLE 1

[Table 1, Participants]

	Sex	Age	Country of Origin	Education	Immigration Status
Maria	F	18	Mexico	Enrolled in Community College	DACA

Xochitl	F	19	Mexico	Enrolled in Community College	DACA
Kaitlin	F	22	Mexico	Enrolled in Bachelor of Science in Engineering	DACA
José	M	24	Mexico	Completed Bachelor of Arts in Architecture	DACA
Lucho	M	24	Mexico	Enrolled Master's in Public Policy	U.S. Citizen
Ñaña	F	24	Zimbabwe	Completed Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and Organizational Studies	U-Visa
Laura	F	26	Mexico	Completed Master's in Higher Education	DACA
José Luis	M	28	Honduras	Enrolled in Ph.D. - Urban Education	DACA

References

Adams, A., & Boyne, K. S. (2015). Access to Higher Education for

Undocumented and Dacamented Students: The Current State of Affairs.

Ind. Int'l & Comp. L. Rev., *25*, 47.

American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration.

(2012). *Crossroads: The psychology of immigration in the new century.*

Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/report.aspx

Berger, D., & Avila, K. (n.d.). Traveling Abroad with Advance Parole: A guide

for Deferred Action (Daca) Beneficiaries. *Educators for Fair Consideration*.

Bloch. (2007). Methodological challenges for national and multi-sited

comparative survey research. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *20*(2), 230–247.

Coalition for Tuition Equality. (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://maizepages.umich.edu/organization/cte/about

Chacón, J. M. (2016). Producing Liminal Legality. *Denver University Law

Review*, *92*(4), 2015-99.

Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) | USCIS.

(n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-

deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca

Copeland, V. C., Scholle, S. H., & Binko, J. A. (2003). Patient satisfaction:

African American women's views of the patient-doctor relationship. *Journal

of Health and Social Policy*, *17*(2), 35–48.

Doering-White, J., Horner, P., Sanders, L., Martinez, R., Lopez, W., & Delva, J.

(2014). Testimonial Engagement: Undocumented Latina Mothers Navigating

a Gendered Deportation Regime. *Journal of International Migration and

Integration*.

Escamilla, A., & Trevino, N. G. (2014). An investigation of the factors

contributing to the successful completion of undergraduate degrees by the

students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *13*(3), 158–176.

Finch, B. K., Hummer, R. A., Kol, B., & Vega, W. A. (2001). The role of discrimination and acculturative stress in the physical health of Mexican-origin adults. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *23*(4), 399-429.

Foster, R. P. (2001). When immigration is trauma: guidelines for the individual and family clinician. *The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *71*(2), 153–170.

Ganas. 2016. In *Spanishcentral.com*. Retrieved March, 31, 2016, from http://www.spanishcentral.com/translate/ganas

Glaser, B. G. (2005). *The grounded theory perspective III: Theoretical coding*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Gonzales, R. G., Suarez-Orozco, C., & Dedios-Sanguineti, M. C. (2013). No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health Among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*(8), 1174–1199.

Gonzales, R. G., & Bastista-Chang, A. M. (2014). Two years and counting: Assessing the Growing Power of DACA (June) 16. Retrieved from http://www.immigrantionpolicy.org/special report/two-years-and counting-assessing-growing-power-DACA.

Graham, L. F., Crissman, H. P., Tocco, J., Hughes, L. a., Snow, R. C., & Padilla,

M. B. (2014). Interpersonal Relationships and Social Support in

Transitioning Narratives of Black Transgender Women in Detroit.

International Journal of Transgenderism, *15*(2), 100–113.

HealthCare.gov. (n.d.). Immigration status and the Marketplace. Retrieved from

https://www.healthcare.gov/immigrants/immigration-status/

Hoffmann, E. a. (2007). Open-Ended Interviews, Power, and Emotional Labor.

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, *36*, 318–346.

Jaimes Pérez, Z. (2014). *How DACA Has Improved the Lives of Undocumented

Young People*. *Center for American Progress*.

Johnson, K. R. (2011). Sweet Home Alabama? Immigration and Civil Rights in

the'New'South. *Stanford Law Review Online*, *62*(22).

Kusow, A. M. (2004). Contesting stigma: On Goffman's assumptions of

normative order. *Symbolic Interaction*, *27*(2), 179–197.

Menjivar, C. (2006). Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants'

Lives in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, *111*(4), 999–

1037.

Muñoz, S. M. (2015). *Identity, Social Activism, and the Pursuit of Higher

Education*. Lang, Peter New York.

Nicholls, W. (2013). *The DREAMers: How the undocumented youth movement

transformed the immigrant rights debate*. Stanford University Press.

Patler, C., & Cabrera, J. A. (2015). From undocumented to DACAmented impacts of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Three years following its announcement, (June), 36. Retrieved from http://www.chicano.ucla.edu/files/Patler_DACA_Report_061515.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pérez, Z. J. (2014). *How DACA Has Improved the Lives of Undocumented Young People*. *Center for American Progress*.

Raymond-Flesch, M., Siemons, R., Pourat, N., Jacobs, K., & Brindis, C. D. (2014). There is no help out there and if there is, it's really hard to find": A qualitative study of the health concerns and health care access of latino "dREAMers. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *55*(3), 323–328.

Rumbaut, R. G., & Komaie, G. (2010). Immigration and adult transitions. *Future of Children*, *20*(1), 43–66.

Seif, H. (2011). "Unapologetic and Unafraid": Immigrant youth come out from the shadows. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, *134*, 59–75.

Siemons, R., Raymond-Flesh, M., Auerswald, C. L., & Brindis, C. D. (2016). Coming of Age on the Margins: Mental Health and Wellbeing Among Latino Immigrant Young Adults Eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA). *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face

qualitative interviews: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, *4*(1), 107–118.

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative

Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246.