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The Effect of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program on the Self-Concept of DACA Recipients

Theodora Karamanlis Powers

A Thesis in the Field of Psychology

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

This study investigated the role that the fluctuating status of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has on the self-concept and related components, self-esteem and self-concept clarity, of young adult DREAMers or DACA recipients (aged 21-35 years) throughout the U.S. Given the short period of time that the DACA program was in effect (2012-2017), researchers encountered many difficulties when attempting to study and understand the emotional and psychological effects experienced by DACAs, some of whom continue to live reclusive lives in fear of being deported. In fact, researchers have only just begun to explore DACA's fluctuating impacts on the population. This study hypothesized that DACA recipients have a lower self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem than non-DACAs (legal residents and U.S. citizens). The study used self-reported measures of the participants' general self-concept (Self-Description Questionnaire III; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984), self-concept clarity (Self-Concept Clarity Scale; Campbell et al., 1996), and self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Rosenberg, 1979). To date, due to the ethical implications and liminal legalities (Menjívar, 2006) involved with the stigmatization of this minority immigrant group, no studies exist on how the program's uncertainty affects the DREAMer self-concept, or the way members of this cohort perceive themselves. This research took place following the June 2020 Supreme Court verdict to reinstate the DACA program, following its 3-year long termination since September 2017. It is one of the first studies to examine the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of DACA recipients.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the immigrants and migrants throughout the world. To the families who strive for a better life outside of their current circumstances. To the parents who dream with a purpose and act on it. To the future generations who challenge the stereotypes, segregation, discrimination, and suppression of domineering chauvinists. To the advocates who face against the binary semantics of ‘legal’ humans versus ‘illegal’ humans. To all who strive to eliminate artificial man-made barriers and seek to establish a more unified and welcoming world.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all the participants who volunteered for this research study. I hope that the results published in this work would add to future research projects in various fields to address the implications that inconsistencies of the "immigration" rhetoric have on the psyche of vulnerable cohorts such as the DREAMers.

I would also like to express my sincerest appreciation to my thesis advisor, Dr. Alexandra Sedlovskaya, for all her support, encouragement, and her positivity which pushed me through the most challenging parts of my Master studies and this research, as well as to my research advisor, Dr. Adrienne Tierney, for her patience and guidance through the various edits and stages of my project.

Lastly and most importantly, I want to convey my deepest gratitude to MD—a colleague, confidant, chess mate, and closest friend—who motivated me to pursue this thesis in the first place, who pushed me forward when I pushed back, who taught me what it is to be damaged but not broken, and whose work and life continue to inspire me to this day. I wish you all the best and hope to see you again for another adventure.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

Self-concept is how individuals perceive themselves (Burns, 1979). It is a hypothetical construct that is developed via participation in community life, education, career, military service, and other components of society (Burns, 1979; Ellis & Chen, 2013; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Marsella et al., 1985; Torres et al., 2018), and it plays a key role in the integration of personality, behavior, and mental health (Burns, 1979). As a structure, self-concept remains stable through long periods of time, unless aspect(s) of the individual's self-image or self-esteem are altered via negative psychosocial or environmental circumstances (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Records indicate a loss of self in the face of such personal disorganization, unexpected loss of control, and psychological disability, like in cases of culturally transformative factors, including immigration (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Torres et al., 2018).

The culturally transformative factor of this research focuses on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was implemented in 2012 via an executive order with the intention to alleviate the immigration restrictions of undocumented youths (aged 16-31) known as the DREAMers. These DREAMers, or DACA recipients, were either clandestinely or legally brought into the U.S. as children and were educated and raised within the American system and culture. The DACA program provides temporary work authorization, social security numbers, and protection

from deportation. However, as a deferred action enacted via an executive order, it both legally excludes and yet physically includes DREAMers as members of U.S. society, leaving them in a perpetual state of limbo. Differing political ideologies and legal challenges between 2012 and 2020 placed approximately 600,000 DREAMers in fluctuating immigrant statuses ranging from liminal legality to illegality and then back to liminal legality.

Prior studies on immigration status showed that statuses caused a plethora of negative psychological side-effects (Chavez, 1998; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). For this minority immigrant cohort of DACA recipients specifically, immigration policy vacillations may have impacted their self-concept entirely, as policies are continuously forcing young adult DACAs to direct their attention to their immigration status alone. As such, the fear of deportation, the anxiety of confiding in others, and the pain of living reclusive lives are unending (Ellis & Chen, 2013). These outcomes create insecurity for recipients to obtain a higher education, a secure profession, to start a family, or to inclusively contribute to society. Instead, the recipients undergo incessant transformations of their self-perceptions and aspirations (Ellis et al., 2019), which may be negatively affecting their self-concept and harming their "need to belong" in society.

Self-Concept

The individual's perceptions of the world are phenomenological, which means they are based on human experience and there is no objective reality to those experiences (Burns, 1979). Perceptions are selective because they are distorted by the existing attitudes, goals, and motives of the perceiver. They are formed via the individual's

interpretations and experiences with their environment (Bracken, 1996), and affect how the individual views themselves via the:

1. Cognized self, which is the self that the individual knows of,
2. Other self, which is the self that the individual believes others see, and
3. Ideal self, which is the self that the individual wants to be.

Perceptions create limits for the perceiver and their interpretation of their surroundings because there is no singular, all-encompassing understanding of the surrounding world for the perceiver to use as a model. These perceptions are composed of four factors that depend on the cultural values of the individual's surroundings and experiences (Coppersmith, 1967):

1. Self-image, which is what a person sees when they see themselves,
2. Affective intensity, which is how strongly the person feels about various components or characteristics of themselves,
3. Self-esteem, or self-evaluation, which is whether the person is favorable or unfavorable towards those components or characters of themselves, and
4. Behavioral predisposition, which is what the person is likely to do in how they evaluate themselves.

These surroundings and experiences contribute to the social, emotional, and cognitive development of the individual, from childhood to adulthood, via the use and application of compliments and comparisons that form the way the individual evaluates themselves (Aron, 2003; Demo, 1992; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Tenenbaum, 2008). The individual monitors this feedback from others to verify, sustain, or redirect their perceptions of themselves. In doing so, the individual actively chooses roles,

environments, and group associations that reconfirm that feedback and discredit inaccurate criticism (Campbell & Tesser, 1983; Demo, 1992). This feedback from continual interactions and social comparisons are powerful determinants of the cognitive, socio-interactional, emotional, and behavioral elements of the individual (Bracken, 1996), and make a significant contribution to the individual's self-knowledge and the solidification of their self-views (Schwartz et al., 2017; Suls & Miller, 1977).

Through time, these consistent elements form a multi-dimensional construct known as the self-concept, which both regulates those elements and is maintained by them (Burns, 1979) (shown in Figure 1). The self-concept is concurrently both a stable *and* dynamic structural process: it organizes a base for the individual's actions, plans, and rules that determine their behavior, but it is also malleable to life transitions, environmental challenges, or situational stimuli which readjusts it along with the individual's behavior (Demo, 1992; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Due to these constant changes and alterations, the self-concept is also regarded as the individual's drive to self-actualization, or their inclination to grow in their experiences through constant activity (Burns, 1979). This constant activity adds to the individual's self-knowledge that is acquired between childhood and adulthood, and coincides with enhanced problem-solving abilities, intellectual aptitude, and dialectic reasoning, all of which provide stronger feelings of self-worth for the individual (Demo, 1992; Schaie, 1994).

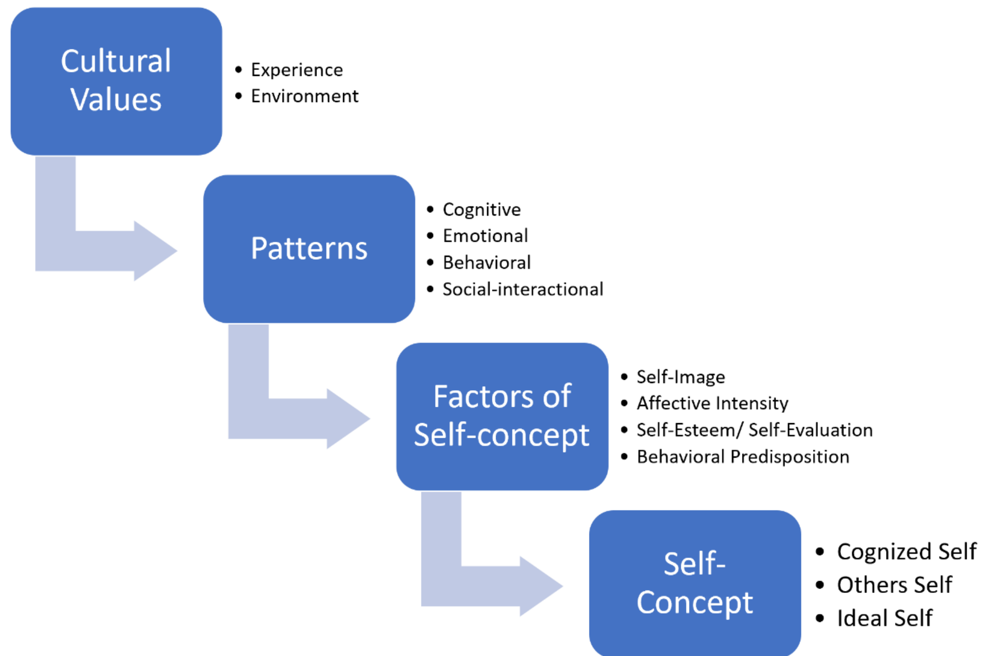

Figure 1. Theoretical model of self-concept components

Theoretical association between cultural values and the concepts that contribute to the making of the self-concept.

The social roles and life transitions that individuals undergo are vital in the construction of their self-concepts, their understanding of their identities, and their behavioral routines (Biddle, 1986; Demo, 1992; Slotter & Emery, 2017). When social roles and transitions are added, such as entering the workforce, graduating, or getting married, then the individual's self expands and new attributes and characteristics are included into their self-concepts (Aron, 2003; Slotter & Emery, 2017). Role-prescribed relationships are created that reinforce the individual's self-confirmed views and behaviors (Light & Visser, 2013). This positive self-concept has been correlated with better academic achievements, emotional stability, self-worth, and confidence

(Hatzichristou et al., 2010; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Marsh, 2002). When social roles or life transitions are rescinded, such as losing a job, getting divorced, or confronting the death of a loved one, numerous aspects of information processing are diminished, and the self-concept becomes constricted. This results in the loss of various facets of the self which the individual had once possessed, because it severs role-prescribed relationships (Lewandowski et al., 2006; Light & Visser, 2013; Mattingly & Lewandowski, 2013; Slotter & Emery, 2017).

In relation to this study's focus on a particular immigrant cohort, it is important to note that self-concept fluctuates and differs structurally depending on individualist and collectivist cultures. The work by Tannebaum (2008) recognized that individualist cultures such as those found in the U.S. and other Westernized countries, emphasize individual initiative, autonomy, and independence—the "I"—whereas collectivist cultures prioritize the collective, duty to the state, and group solidary—the "we". These elements vary in degrees that can affect the construction of the individual's self-concept, specifically in facets of cooperation, self-reliance, and emotional detachment. Collectivism was found to enhance self-concept more so than individualism, whereas individualism was correlated with social problems such as mental illness and stress (Dyson, 2015). More specifically, collectivist practices feature strong social support (Goodwin & Hernandez-Plaza, 2000), moderation of family and childhood stress (Rutter, 1981), and a positive relation to self-concept in children.

Research by Dyson (2015) discovered that immigrant children maintain the collectivist behaviors that shaped their identity. However, such behaviors conflict with the mainstream North American individualist culture. This leads to a double status in

children's development: an immigrant and an ethnic minority. The immigrant and native children in Dyson's (2015) study were tested on social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, global self-competence, and scholastic competence, all of which measured the self-concept of both cohorts. The results showed that the immigrant children scored lower in their self-concept tests than their Caucasian non-immigrant counterparts. The research concluded that the self-concept of immigrant children was related to socio-ecological contexts and social acceptance, primarily in the host country's classroom since that is the most occupied environment during middle-school and early high-school ages. When immigrants arrive to their host country, they have already developed a strong ethnic identity. Immigrant parents' child-rearing behaviors reiterate their cultural beliefs unto their children, and these influence the children's self-concept. This caused individuals to experience social isolation in the long-term.

Self-Concept Clarity

As noted in Figure 1, the self-concept is made up of tiered cognitive structures (Slotter & Emery, 2017) that are developed through the individual's self-reflections and experiences. Two of those self-reflective elements that have a significant impact on the way that individuals perceive themselves in relation to their surroundings and others are: self-concept clarity and self-esteem (Burns, 1979; Campbell et al., 1996; Tannenbaum, 2008).

Self-concept clarity is a property of the entire self-concept, but it also stands as an evaluative factor that connects the individual's self-concept and their identity (Hertel, 2017). It refers to how coherent, confident, consistent, and stable the individual is in their

identity and the attributes associated with it (Campbell et al., 1996; Cicero, 2017; Slotter & Emery, 2017). More specifically, it is the extent of how 'sure' the individual is of who they are and how consistent they remain in that 'sureness' and their description of themselves (Schwartz et al., 2011). This consistency of people's self-views reflects the stability of their self-knowledge (Hertel, 2017). As previously discussed, the individual's self-knowledge and the solidification of their self-views are gained via the social interactions they have. This means that self-knowledge is malleable and changes with the relationships and collaborations that the individual holds (Hertel, 2017). Situational stability in social roles and life transitions impact the self-concept clarity, which in turn affects and shifts the overall self-concept (Hertel, 2017; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Slotter & Emery, 2017). For instance, as self-beliefs go up, self-concept clarity is strengthened; as self-beliefs go down, self-concept clarity is undermined (Hertel, 2017).

Positive self-concept clarity is correlated with routine stability and reiteration of positive feedback and interactions that reaffirm the individual's self-beliefs (Light & Visser, 2013). In contrast, individuals who lack steady life transitions or social roles, experience a decrease of information about who they are. Consequently, their self-concept clarity declines, and they undergo a negative self-change, some of its effects include depression and loneliness (Light & Visser, 2013; Markus & Wurf, 1987). If a prospective situational stability is in sight, people are more likely to endure a temporary self-disconfirmation and negative self-change (Hertel, 2017; Light & Visser, 2013). However, if situational stability is not likely, the individual becomes alienated: their behavioral routines and self-confirmed views are disrupted, their self-concept clarity is reduced, and as a result, their overall self-concept diminishes.

Self-Esteem

It is important to note that even though self-concept clarity is a key element for both self-esteem and identity because it reflects how the individual evaluates themselves, it stands apart from either theory (Campbell, 1990). Rosenberg (1979) defined self-esteem as the person's evaluation of themselves, one that fluctuates as per surrounding circumstances. Much like self-concept clarity, self-esteem is also a property of the self-concept that develops throughout the person's lifespan. Self-concept clarity asks, "Who am I?" whereas self-esteem asks, "How do I feel about who I am?" It is a multi-dimensional construct that is based on, influenced by, and involves the individual's sense of belongingness, attitudes, and beliefs of the group that they identify with (Harris & Orth, 2019; Kim et al., 2014).

Self-esteem is congruent to self-concept: as one decreases, the other also declines (Batool et al., 2019). Self-esteem was also found to be correlated with self-concept clarity, but its causal direction is unknown (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993). High self-esteem individuals were found to have more positive beliefs about themselves, whereas those with low self-esteem showed a neutral self-concept clarity of themselves. The latter group of individuals would experience anxiety, self-diminishment, high levels of instability, and uncertainty—all elements that negatively affect social functioning (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993). Research on the relationship between self-esteem and psychological distresses shows that low self-esteem can be both a product and cause of emotional distress (Kolubinski et al., 2019). Fennell's (1997) study on individuals' persistent low self-esteem found that study participants who exhibited a persistent belief that they were flawed and inadequate had also voiced incessant hostile internal dialogue,

self-critical rumination, and hopelessness. Their belief in their incompetence rose from situations where the participants felt they experienced some form of failure, and as a result, they self-criticized aspects of their characters as being ‘not good enough’ (Swann et al., 2007).

This low level of self-esteem and its sources are important to note for this study’s focus on DACAmented and Non-DACA legal participants. Existing research on the psychological distresses, acculturation, and status uncertainty of undocumented and DACAmented youth documented feelings of shame, fear, and worthlessness due to their “illegal” status (Benuto et al., 2018; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Ellis et al., 2019; Gee et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016; Patler & Pirtle, 2018).

Identity

Identity is the “I” agent of the self. It creates and maintains the “me” agent. This “me” agent is the self-concept clarity of the self. The “I” creates the “me” through the interactions, feedback, relations, and experiences that the individual encounters (Schwartz et al., 2017). In that creation process, the “I” needs to organize the information that the individual absorbs through these interactions and experiences, so that only the facts that are most relevant to the individual’s needs are maintained.

The identity is an image of the self that the individuals wants to convey to others (Hertel, 2017). It comes from the membership they have with the group they associate themselves with (Bornewasser & Bober, 1987; Gee et al., 2016; Ruth et al., 2019). Identity standards come from, are impacted by, and vary in accordance with these groups (Gee et al., 2016). This is what differentiates the individual from another, and how

individuals compare themselves based on their distinct standards. Identity formation during adolescence is most critical because it establishes the social roles that facilitate the transition into adulthood (Meca et al., 2020). Those with a coherent sense of identity were found to have positive self-esteem, life purpose, protection from indicators of distress, clarity in career decision-making, and enhanced life quality (Demo, 1992; Kim et al., 2014; Schwartz et al., 2007).

The coherence in identity, positive self-esteem, and life purpose are particularly important to take note of for this study since the selected cohort resided in the U.S. prior to and throughout their adolescent years. In fact, their residence in the States during their youth and adolescent years is one of the mandated pre-requisites to apply and be accepted to the DACA program.

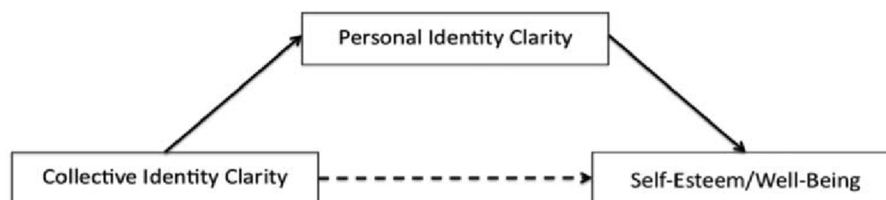

Figure 2. Theoretical association of self-concept components

Theoretical relation between self-concept, self-concept clarity and self-esteem (Usborne & Taylor, 2010).

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is another multi-dimensional construct whose development involves exploration and belonging to one's ethnic group (Meca et al., 2020). It is also

related to the individual's sense of belonging to their group and their nation (Tartakovsky, 2009). It includes the individual's:

1. Identification with an ethnic group
2. Involvement in and preference for that group, and
3. Sense of belonging to that group.

Ellis and Chen (2013) discovered that positive ethnic identity serves as a protective buffer against stereotypes and discrimination. This contributes to a positive sense of self, but it requires a connection to one's ethnic group to maintain it. Gee at al. (2016) later noted that positive emotions in the individual come from comparing themselves to others and finding aspects of others that match their own, while negative emotions happen when those aspects do not match with other individuals, thus leading to distress and anxiety. Moderating ethnic identity would exacerbate the negative effects of discrimination and stress on psychological well-being, because threats to a group identity, such as racial or ethnic discrimination, yield an increase in emotional defenselessness that may cause the individual to perceive the threat against their group as a threat to the self (Kim et al., 2014; Meca et al., 2020). The threat without a strong connection to one's ethnic group leads to a decrease in self-esteem (Kim et al., 2014).

Social Identity

The individual's behaviors and actions are reflections of the membership they have to a collective unit, such as a group, culture, or organization (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These groups that people identify with guide the individual's internal process (Bornewasser & Bober, 1987) and act as an important source of how people self-evaluate (Mummendey et

al., 1999). This group identification is fundamental to the development of a positive sense of self to satisfy people's:

1. Need to belong to a social group, and
2. Their need to be unique by remaining distinct from other groups (Mummendey et al., 1999).

Positive social identities are established when there is a favorable comparison between different groups (Operario & Fiske, 1999; Padilla & Perez, 2003). A positive group relation gives rise to a positive self-concept (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Since the degree of value, emotional significance, and attachment that the individual places on that group influences their self-concept, people willingly seek out memberships that they believe would contribute to their development of a positive social identity (Shinnar, 2008; Tajfel, 1981).

Individuals also attempt to enhance their in-group status and increase their self-concept by discriminating against out-groups (Tafoya et al., 2019; Tajfel, 1978). When variables such as hierarchy and status come into play, they sully social categories and create intergroup conflicts that give rise to prejudice, stereotypes, and stigmas against those who are lower in that hierarchy. These types of hierarchical comparisons place the individual in a disadvantaged position and contributes to the formation of a negative social identity, and in effect, a negative self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Mummendey et al., 1999). These negative thoughts about one's identity that result from negative self-concept have been correlated with psychological distress (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009).

It is important to note here that both ethnic and social identities also contribute to the development of self-concept clarity and self-esteem, via the social comparison and feedback that individuals receive (Usborne & Taylor, 2010) (shown in Figure 2). Behaviors, experiences, history, language, etc. are noteworthy traits and ideologies of the groups that people associate with. These traits are internalized by the individual and are used when individuals compare themselves to others. For instance, when minority groups, such as immigrants compare themselves to the majority groups, such as citizens, they internalize the fact that their status makes them inferior. This may lead to a lower self-concept clarity and self-esteem. This low self-concept clarity is suggested to have a relation to several psychopathological symptoms such as depression, anxiety, loneliness (Cicero, 2017) and suicide attempts (Ellis et al., 2019).

Similarly, as U.S. anti-immigration sentiment and immigrant status restrictions increase, the shared public opinion and immigrant stereotypes press in-group members to recognize immigrants in a negative light. That negative perspective may affect immigrant efforts to integrate and adapt to U.S. culture, leading to the development of a negative social identity, the inability to satisfy their need to belong, and potentially a negative self-concept and self-concept clarity.

Immigration

"The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment."

~ George Washington

"Born in other countries, yet believing you could be happy in this, our laws acknowledge, as they should do, your right to join us in society, conforming, as I doubt not you will do, to our established rules. That these rules shall be as equal as prudential considerations will admit, will certainly be the aim of our legislatures, general and particular."

~ Thomas Jefferson

"Remember, remember always, that all of us …are descended from immigrants and revolutionists."

~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

Before going into the intricacies of how the DACA program works and how its policies impact DACA recipients, it is important to first present a clearer image of the concept of "immigration" and refine what is an "immigrant."

Globalization today is determined by the concept of citizenship: it is characterized by increased control of human migration, and the stringent regulation of "belongingness" (Barbero, 2019). Immigrants are the product of that regulation and control, with approximately 1/5 of the world's immigrant population living in the U.S (Harrington, 2018). They are the largest group of people in the world who experience social isolation, cultural restrictions, and liminal legal protections against self-proclaimed 'dominant' cultures (Cannella & Huerta, 2019). These individuals migrate to host countries for reasons ranging as far and wide as war, famine, political exile, climate change, or human rights violations in their native countries. This nomadic movement across nations and continents is a human practice that has existed for millennia long before the politics of "immigration" ever took hold. In fact, the concept of "illegal immigration" did not exist until the Chinese Exclusion Act was first passed in the U.S. in 1888 (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Yet, the practice of seclusion and derision existed in the U.S. since the Alien

and Sedition Acts of 1798 (Behdad, 2005). Note the use of the derogatory term “alien” that is still used in modern-day immigration policies today. Despite these circumstances, self-proclaimed ‘dominant’ cultures impose unexpected subjectivities, liminal legalities, or minority identities on immigrants as they struggle to adapt to new cultures, learn new languages, move to new locations, and eventually acculturate to their new environments (Cannella & Huerta, 2019; Menjívar, 2016).

Immigration laws are supposed to function as a legal foundation for the adjudication of immigrants, but in truth, immigration policies are immersed with a loosely delineated concept of “belongingness” (Dao, 2017; Ngai, 2004). The misinterpretations and misconstructions of immigrant law diminish the knowledge and experience, livelihoods, and well-being of millions of politically vulnerable human beings (Cannella & Huerta, 2019; Ngai, 2004). The vagueness of the laws use a “good/bad” immigrant dichotomy (Menjívar, 2016): the “good” immigrant is a ‘super citizen’ that upholds the ideals of democracy, family, abides by the law, and is willing to work harder than the average citizen (Barbero, 2019; Behdad, 2005; Honig, 2001; Ngai, 2004), whereas the “bad” immigrant, or “illegal alien” has not received citizens’ consent to be in the host country (Barbero, 2019; Behdad, 2005; Honig, 2001; Ngai, 2004). This “illegal” cohort provides enough of an incentive to immigration authorities to simultaneously police and criminalize immigrants, even while the country still contradicts itself by claiming it is a “nation of immigrants” (Barbero, 2019; Behdad, 2005; Honig, 2001; Ngai, 2004). Numerous studies have already proved that varying “immigrant” statuses affect behavioral predisposition and behavior patterns, forcing these groups to solely focus on the fear of deportation and methods to avoid it, even if that

meant seclusion, or risking the development of psychoses (Bagley et al., 1982; Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1992; Roebers & Schneider, 1999; Sam & Berry, 1995).

Power Dynamics of Immigration

"It has always been easier, it always will be easier, to think of someone as a noncitizen than to decide that he is a nonperson."

~ Alexander Bickel, "Citizenship in the American Constitution"

Those who are in powerful positions engage and apply their power in either two ways: by default, or by design (Goodwin et al., 2000). When it is done by default, it relies on prejudice and discrimination to uphold existing stereotypes made up of inconsistent information (Fiske, 1993; Goodwin et al., 2000). People in power do not individuate powerless people with accurate impressions, because that would threaten and challenge the very power relations that keeps them in control. It is through these stereotypes that the people in power and decision-makers maintain the relevance of social identities and hierarchies as part of the 'dominant' culture. For instance, throughout U.S. immigration history, anti-immigrant sentiments stereotyped Jews as "radicals", Irish as "squalid", Italians and Polish for their Catholicism, Germans for being "unwelcoming", and Chinese as "criminals"—all were classified as inadmissible for U.S. society (Behdad, 2005; Ngai, 2004).

When it is done by design, it is both intentional and attentive to the powerless (Goodwin et al., 2000). Those in power become socially sanctioned to judge those without it and control their outcomes, in the way that a teacher oversees a student, or a judge condemns those deemed guilty (Goodwin et al., 2000). Such is the case when those

in power think of the powerless as members of a specific category, in the way that "illegal immigrants" or "aliens" are synonymized with "criminals" (Fiske, 1993; Menjívar, 2016; Ngai, 2004; Suarez-Orozco, 2011). For example, stereotypes associate immigrants as either victimized refugees or as model citizens, which is a binary logic of "us" versus "them" (Behdad, 2005). These stereotypes then alter non-immigrants' perceptions of immigrants and morphs them into pariahs. As a result, immigrants stigmatize themselves, seeing their existence as a burden to others, avoiding social networks and relationships, and eventually blaming themselves (Ellis & Chen, 2013). This abuse raises significant justice concerns over "belongingness" because it redefines the concept of citizenship as a marketable product that only those in power can obtain and control (Ngai, 2004; Shachar, 2018). Since immigration laws do not define categories of "who belongs" in their distinctive country's 'dominant' culture, government programs do not provide a clear message on who is more valued as a potential citizen (Ngai, 2004; Shachar, 2018).

In the U.S., the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) sets the conditions for and determines which foreign nationals are permitted to enter the U.S. The three most common categories for entry into the U.S. are family, employment, and diversity (Harrington, 2018). Those who seek admission as refugees or temporary visas to study, work, or tour, have other prerequisites that they must meet to enter. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the federal agency responsible for enforcing the rules set out by INA. If DHS wants to deport foreign nationals who have not violated any of the INA provisions, it needs a statutory basis to do so. It is important to note here that under the INA, the term "lawful immigration status" is undefined and has numerous variations

and interpretations associated with it (Harrington, 2018). Despite the indefinity of the terms "lawful immigration status" and "belongingness" that was mentioned earlier, the terms are still implemented within the U.S. social strata under the dominant group's open interpretation, and applied against immigrants through political rhetoric, stereotypes, media, and either educational, healthcare, professional, or financial restrictions.

The two most common ways that immigrants are identified as "unlawfully present" in the U.S. are: 1) they clandestinely cross the border, or 2) they overstay a temporary visa (Becerra, 2019). Those who are unlawful in the country are indefinitely "removable" under the INA unless they obtain a legal status (Harrington, 2018). The INA does not have a statute of limitations for the removal of unlawfully present immigrants, which means that there is no set time limit that would prevent these agencies from either bringing legal action against or deporting unlawful immigrants. However, in the case of humanitarian crises or administrative convenience, DHS may choose to not remove unlawfully present immigrants (Harrington, 2018). One such example which is addressed in this study is the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that grants temporary reprieve from removal for two years to thousands of young adults and can be renewed. As a deferred action, however, DHS perceives the program as "an act of administrative convenience to the government which gives some cases lower priority" (Harrington, 2018, p. 12). This "administrative convenience" means that DACA can always be terminated at the discretion of DHS if they find adequate justification (Harrington, 2018; Patler et al., 2019). There is currently still ongoing litigation as to the DHS's authority to rescind the program at its own discretion.

Acculturation & Documentation

"No one wants to leave their homeland illegally out of their heart's desire; they are compelled to do so as their last resort due to utter degradation of life there."

~ Abhijit Naskar, Sleepless for Society

"We are not meant to be in this country. We did not want to come. We were forced to flee or die. Americans perceive desperate brown masses swarming at their golden shores, wildly inventing claims of persecution for the opportunity to flourish in this prosperous land. The view from beneath the bridge is somewhat different: reluctant refugees with an aching love of their forsaken homeland, of a homeland that has forsaken them, refugees who desire nothing more than to be home again."

~ Bonne Annee

All immigrants experience psychological distress regardless of their status, especially when confronted with threats to their culture and individual identity once arriving to a host country (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Williams & Berry, 1991). Immigration is a major life event that disrupts relationships and personal well-being (Dyson, 2015; Lauby, 2018; Roebers & Schneider, 1999; Tannenbaum, 2008). It particularly challenges the adaptive capacity of the family collective and the individual (Roebers & Schneider, 1999) since the process of adapting to a new country relies on the length of time of stay, the availability of social support, the socio-economic status of the immigrants, and the socio-political context that they immigrate into (Ellis & Chen, 2013). Immigrants are expected to confront an environment that forces them to restructure their identity and role in society, from learning a new language to adapting to new education systems, establishing new networks, and replicating the normative behaviors and customs of their host country. Immigrants must redefine aspects of their selves such as their ethnic identity and values, while also trying to distance themselves from the norms of their

native country (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Tannenbaum, 2008). Without a group to identify and be involved with, coupled with anti-immigrant sentiment, immigrants have trouble developing a strong ethnic identity and thus struggle to acculturate to their host country.

This schism in identity that immigrants undergo in their attempt to adapt to their host country is often accompanied by feelings of nostalgia, emptiness, and melancholy, which affect the self-esteem and self-concept of the individual (Tannenbaum, 2008). This effect takes place once immigrants recognize the power dynamics of U.S. citizenship as "both a system of privilege and a source of social identity," and U.S. citizens' social and legal strata as an aspirational identity, or an "identity that is sought after but not yet achieved" (Gee et al., 2016, p. 680). When immigrants fail to rise to that high social status of U.S. citizenship, they experience feelings of dissonance and distress. More specific to the case of my research, DACA youth who arrived in the U.S. at an age when they did not yet develop their identity but were raised with American values, are still identified as un-American (Benuto et al., 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). This may have a detrimental impact on their self-concept, specifically how they perceive themselves, how they allow others to see them, and what their future aspirations would be.

The process of assimilating to a host country is known as acculturation, which refers to the emotional, socio-developmental, and mental changes that immigrants experience when exposed to a new culture (Kim et al., 2014; Roebers & Schneider, 1999). Under the ruling of *Plyler v. Doe, 1982*, undocumented immigrant children have a legal right to attend Kindergarten through 12th grade education once they arrive to the U.S., which makes their acculturation easier into American culture and society compared

to older undocumented immigrants (Ruth et al., 2019). However, this does not change the fact that undocumented immigrant youth experience a precarious situation that has shaped their identities around the uncertainty about their future, fear of deportation, anxiety about arrest, and shame, guilt, or self-blame about their status (Ellis et al., 2019). The acculturation process generates acculturative stress that comes from simultaneously having to learn a new language, balance native culture and the host country's practices, overcome economic barriers such as housing and work, address minority and/or immigration status, and cope with the negative anti-immigrant rhetoric of mainstream news (Kim et al., 2014). The outcomes of these stressors may be related to psychological distress (Takeuchi et al., 2007), and were found to be linked to mental illnesses such as suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety (Gee et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014), depression and self-imposed isolation due to the negative connotations associated with immigrants (Lauby, 2018). In fact, the attempted adjustment and readjustment to the host country's culture creates inconsistencies in behavior patterns and self-concept and less satisfaction with their lives (Ulman & Tatar, 2001).

The work by Tartakovsky's (2009) on the cultural identities of Jewish adolescent immigrants from Russia during their pre-migration period and post-migration years, identified three stages of attempted acclimation in immigrants between these two migratory stages:

1. Devaluation of their native country and idealization of their host country,
2. Disappointment of their host country in the first post-migratory year which leads to a bolstering of their own ethnic identity, and

3. Formation of an incompatible bi-cultural identity by the third post-migratory year: there was a stronger sense of belonging in their native country than their host country, but there was a more positive attitude towards their host country than their native country.

The work concluded that discrimination was the main factor affecting the identities of ethnic minorities and immigrants. When immigrants attempt to acclimate to their host country and are faced with too many obstacles that prevent that acclimation, they are forced to find alternative groups that would provide them with the social support they need.

In a qualitative study of pre-DACA youth done by Gonzales et al. (2013), respondents voiced a continuous restructuring of their self-narratives and identities and several suicidal attempts to accommodate their restrictive illegal status. Specifically, the fear of deportation negatively shaped the self-image of immigrant youth. These youth had severed social activities from a young age, limited socialization, and reframed their future goals to accommodate their abject status, simply because they were brought to the country clandestinely and were forced to live as socially distant. Being identified as "illegal" created a stop in the development of immigrant youth as individuals, forced them to see themselves as inferior to the cultural symbolism of being a person, and redefined how they should behave in public in order to avoid recognition as "illegals". When the host country promotes ideologies of assimilation and yet marginalizes minority groups from the very society it claims to want to acculturate them into, it creates a disruption in the social identity and thus the self-concept of the individual.

Benuto et al. (2018) further noted that when labeled as “illegal” or “non-resident” or “alien,” it incites fear and prejudice that shapes a negative public view of undocumented immigrants and forces them to create a future at the margins of society. This marginalization limits their life opportunities to complete school, apply to college, work, or even develop relationships and future families (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011), and they experience economic hardship, chronic stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (Benuto et al. 2018) that negatively impact the development of the self. In fact, the mere state of not having a legal status in the U.S. is a general stressor that risks the development of mental and physical conditions (Enriquez et al., 2018).

Menjívar and Lakhani (2016) conducted a study that focused on the alterations of self-image and behavior that immigrant youth undertake to project themselves as “deserving” immigrants per each new immigration law. These modifications to the self-image create an overall modification of the self, forcing immigrant youth throughout their developmental stages to make discrete changes to their activities and mindsets so they can legitimize their claim to be present in the U.S. One such example that was voiced by study participants was the maintenance of a paper trail to document and prove their contributions to society and their presence in the country. This is currently regarded as a “civic act” under immigrant regulations to demonstrate their commitment to “normative American values” (Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016, p. 1823). It is standard of a “deserving” applicant to fit within the construct that would be recognized by U.S. law (Bhuyan, 2008). More specifically, immigrants “learn to belong” in American society by re-constructing their sense of self repeatedly in accordance with the expectations laid out by continuously changing immigration policies.

This context reframes the psychosocial experiences of immigrants and their inclusion in work, school, and family life—it forces them to accept said restrictions as normal and deserving despite the inequality and insecurity of their protections. By reinventing their self-image, this cohort cannot establish a concise and confident identity, which may be deleterious to their self-concept clarity and its correlative factors of self-esteem and self-concept.

DACA & DREAMers

"It seems to me that America is constantly reinventing what 'America' means."

~ Ronald Reagan

The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) of California was initially designed to make higher education affordable for students regardless of immigration status, and it would potentially pave the way to U.S. citizenship for those who had not violated the law. These young adults, who were dubbed as DREAMers, were brought into the U.S. when they were babies or minors through no choice nor fault of their own, and they were assimilated into American culture as *de facto* American citizens (Mallet & Bedolla, 2019; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Under the DREAM Act, these young adults were recognized for "all intents and purposes, as American" (Becerra, 2019). However, the Act failed to pass on the federal level under a conservative Congress. Instead, after years of failed attempts for immigration reform, the Act led to the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in 2012 via executive order (Patler et al., 2019). To be eligible for the DACA program, applicants must meet the following criteria (Harrington, 2018):

- Arrived in the U.S. under the age of 16
- Continuously resided in the U.S. since June 15, 2007
- Either currently attend school, graduated from high school, obtained a general education certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran
- Have no convictions or criminal offenses or pose a threat to national security and public safety
- Were under the age of 31 on June 15, 2012

Out of the 1.7 million eligible DREAMers, approximately 800,000 applied and were accepted. These applicants self-disclosed their status as 'undocumented', risking exposure of their own families and surrendering personal information to DHS that included, but was not limited to, their name, address, birth certificates, school records, fingerprints, and biometrics (Becerra, 2019; Mallet & Bedolla, 2019). The DACA program's existence diminished aspects of the experience of illegality for these new recipients and allowed for feelings of security, sense of belonging, and overall well-being to develop (Ellis et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Patler & Pirtle, 2018). However, the program concurrently withholds privileges and protections otherwise granted to those with "lawful immigration status" (Harrington, 2018). The cost of having temporary protection from deportation comes with a price: restrictions on career developments, educational advances, health access, and financial aid—all conditions like the DACAs experienced when they were undocumented *and* unprotected (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Gonzales et al., 2013; Patler et al., 2019). More specifically, DACA recipients (Harrington, 2018):

- Cannot travel abroad on any legal basis

- Cannot re-enter the U.S. if they do travel abroad
- Cannot serve in the U.S. military
- Cannot apply for any federal public benefits, including FAFSA or food stamps
- Cannot apply for health insurance unless it is provided by an employer
- Cannot admit any relatives into the U.S.
- Cannot legally work in any/every position they want without the authorization of DHS
- Cannot apply for U.S. citizenship or legal permanent status
- Only qualify for work authorization if they can prove "an economic necessity"
- Have no statutorily established prospects to permanently remain in the U.S.
- Are subject to removal by virtue of their presence in the U.S.

As a result of these restrictions, DACA recipients are limited in their achievements and are prematurely disengaged from society (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2018).

Most DREAMers did not discover their 'undocumented' status until their late teen years, when they attempted to apply for driver's licenses or colleges like their American peers, only to discover that they were missing the necessary documents that their futures relied on (Becerra, 2019). Even with the program in effect, they remain in a perpetual "status of non-status", "twilight" status, "quasi-legal" status, "liminal," and "forever foreigners" (Harrington, 2018). Despite their best efforts to be "model minorities" and "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" without government assistance (Dao, 2017), the structural barrier of the program continues to criminalize and ostracize them.

In a qualitative study by Roth (2018) that included approximately 39 DACA recipients, the interviews concluded that the benefits DREAMers receive with their status are "subject to a paradox" (Roth, 2018, p. 8). Though they are they socially included, they are impermanent and restricted in what they can be included in, such as no military service, few options for professional licensing, no financial aid, no health insurance. The restrictive immigration procedures create a liminal legality which allows *legal* violence towards DACA recipients. These recipients are given the false hope of a social inclusion within U.S. society, coupled with restrictions to attain that potential inclusion. This disconnection from society, this "legal gray area" (Roth, 2018, p. 2), places the cohort in a disadvantaged position, and may further affect their social identity and self-concept.

The Trump administration's xenophobic positions—"the Trump Effect" (Kenny & Oshio, 2019)—and the termination of the DACA program in 2017, intensified the verbal assaults, anxiety, bullying, fears of deportation, negative health outcomes, economic instability, and psychological deterioration of DACA recipients (Kenny & Oshio, 2019). Though the program was reinstated following the June 2020 Supreme Court decision, the vacillation of the DACA program from liminal legality to rescission and then back to liminal legality again has had a tremendous negative impact on the recipients' mental state (Mallet & Bedolla, 2019). The recipients' restrictions have already been internalized, their identities have already been surrendered, and their families have already been exposed. The information that DACA recipients first provided to DHS's U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) was done so with the confidence that it would not be shared with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents (Becerra, 2019; Mallet & Bedolla, 2019). However, a single policy change

in DACA could expose that information, leaving its already essentially deportable recipients completely vulnerable to removal back to countries that they never knew, cultures they never understood, and languages they never learned (Mallet & Bedolla, 2019). This ambivalence surrounding their status only generates a heightened distrust in government institutions, a mistrust in the healthcare system, a heightened sense of anxiety, fear and helplessness, and a concrete feeling of not belonging (Mallet & Bedolla, 2019).

As it stands, on the one hand, DREAMers are expected to meet the standards of a "belonging threshold"; on the other hand, they are forced to maintain the mentality of "learn to be illegal", causing various mental health problems that they are *not allowed* to seek help for under the program's restrictions (Suarez-Orozco, 2011). As previously mentioned, coming-of-age rituals or life transitions are essential in the expansion of the self-concept (Aron, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 1999; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Slotter & Emery, 2017), because the individual partakes in the public sphere and engages with the community. However, under the current policy status, DREAMers cannot take part in the 'normative rituals' of everyday life and community (Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Instead, they find themselves still living with immigrant parents, working part-time, some studying on the collegiate level while working, helping siblings, translating for older family members, postponing their own family and career dreams, and circumnavigating medical bureaucracies. All these actions are being done while having exposed their identity, their location, and their biometrics (Aron, 2003; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2018; Slotter & Emery, 2017; Suarez-Orozco, 2011).

Rosenberg et al., (2020) adapted a five-stage Undocumented Adult Identity Development Model to outline the insecure sense of belonging that this limbo status provides. Their findings noted the following:

1. Pre-Encounter Stage: DREAMers are unaware of their undocumented status and the penalties associated with it.
2. Encounter Stage: DREAMers become aware of their circumstances, and experience the hopelessness of never achieving the American Dream. Suddenly, the life transitions and social roles that generally expand on self-concept, such as graduation, marriage, or buying a house (Aron, 2003; Slotter & Emery, 2017) are no longer available to DREAMers (Suarez-Orozco, 2011).
3. Identity Disintegration and Alienation: DREAMers choose to seclude themselves away from welcoming and positive environments, feeling illegitimate and unwanted (Suarez-Orozco, 2011), or unworthy of sharing in the same opportunities as their American counterparts (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2018).
4. Mourning: DREAMers lose the acculturated identity that they grew up with, as they were assimilated into American culture as *de facto* American citizens (Mallet & Bedolla, 2019; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011).
5. Adaptation: DREAMers attempt to rebuild their identity anew. They do this by protesting the liminal legalities placed against them via their success in higher education, advances in professional careers, and the use of a legal counsel to handle their immigration cases. In fact, some are still trying to get their first degree at the age of 35 (Suarez-Orozco, 2011). A potentially new self-concept can

then be achieved by mastering new rituals such as intense self-reliance, self-focus, and independence (Suarez-Orozco, 2011).

Ellis & Chen (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the identity development process of 11 undocumented college students, and specifically focused on how their status affected their acculturation, ethnic identity, and future goals. Findings concluded that immigration status challenged the participants' view of themselves, which at times forced them to see themselves in a negative way or blamed themselves for negative external experiences related to being undocumented, such as the legal, financial, and interpersonal barriers. Identity formation of undocumented immigrant youth was an ongoing development that was influenced by both native and host cultural factors. Participants stressed unending internal negotiations to balance the value systems of their homeland versus their host country, specifically the negative or positive social messages they received about their status and the personal meaning they formed around those messages. As adolescents and young adults who arrived before their high school years, DREAMers navigated their identity formation stages within the American culture: they integrated into schools and neighborhoods that treated them as equals until their late adolescent years when immigration policy barriers restricted them from pursuing anything outside of a reclusive life at home. The adolescent years of DACA recipients played a defining role in how they developed as adults today, as they watched their peers obtain licenses, degrees, professions, and started families of their own, while they remained "voiceless" and overlooked (Abrego, 2006). This study went on to note that these feelings of "voicelessness" related to fear, shame, and vulnerability had caused DREAMers to displace their negative emotions unto others. Interviewees admitted

feeling anger and jealousy toward peers who were instantly granted opportunities and privileges due to their American citizenship. DREAMers are still trying to catch up to those developments due to the legal limitations that come with their status, which may impact their self-concept expansion and self-actualization (Aron, 2003; Slotter & Emery, 2017). First, their undocumented status prior to DACA did not permit them access to privileges that were granted to U.S. citizen from the time they were adolescents, such as job experience, driver's licenses, or higher education. Today, their DACA status restricts them from advancing past a certain point in their careers, professional licenses, travel, etc.

Further research by Ellis et al. (2019) focused on 408 DACA recipients from six different states (Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, and New York) through the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP). Findings showed that the DACA program and its provisions of a social security number and the authorization to work offered its recipients with new self-understandings and a sense of belonging as they were included into American society. Some participants recalled that before DACA, they felt "discouraged, unfocused, and uncertain of what the future would hold" (Ellis et al. 2019, p. 166), while others stressed, they became "less fearful and more confident" (Ellis et al. 2019, p. 166). This revealed that the recipients' oppressive pre-DACA conditions taught them various methods of self-understanding and self-disciplinary practices (Gonzales et al., 2013) and forced them to continuously undergo transformations in self-perception, self-concept, aspirations, self-image, and self-esteem to match the demands of undocumented life, whereas inclusivity of the DACA program caused new psychosocial dynamics and agencies to develop in this select cohort.

However, significant limitations to vocational pursuits, financial aid, access to healthcare, or even a pathway to citizenship uphold and remind DACA recipients of their illegality today, which creates fear and anxiety that prevents their sense of self from growing.

Patler & Pirtle (2018) tested the distress, negative emotions, and deportation worry of 487 Latino immigrant young adults, both before and after their DACA status. The study reconfirmed that immigrant stress levels were due to the acculturation process and worry about deportation, but Patler & Pirtle's (2018) work went further to show that DACA recipients are forced to alter their behavior and norms, learn new modes of economic survival, and isolate themselves from former networks. Participants self-reported that their health and emotional consequences improved between 2012-2015 after DACA was utilized, but then it significantly worsened after 2015 due to the political climate of the presidential election. A later study by Alif et al. (2020) examined the self-esteem and psychological distress of 150 undocumented, temporary status, DACAmented, and citizen students. Participants with DACA and undocumented statuses reported higher levels of psychological distress, depression, and fear of deportation for themselves and their family. DACA students experienced higher levels of isolation, anxiety, and alienation than any other temporary immigration status. These levels were theorized to be associated with their once undocumented status which continues to serve as an embodied stressor who psychological distress impacts their actions.

Study

As a group, undocumented youth is invisible to the broader immigration spectrum, and researchers are challenged to understand the psychological effects of the

emotional pain associated with leading a secluded life and/or the fear to confide in others. While documented and citizen peers moved forward with higher education, professional vocations, the ability to drive and travel, healthcare access and other benefits, DREAMers were legally and socially excluded from such community-based advancements that would have otherwise positively impacted their self-concept formation. Without the permission to work, travel, nor spend time in public spaces, pre-DACA youth were afraid of being arrested, detained, or deported to nations whose language and/or culture they never knew. Despite few positive changes in the perception of their individual self since their DACAmentation, recipients still feel constricted by the fear of being deported due to the fluctuating policies behind their status. Existing qualitative and quantitative research on the psychological distresses, acculturation, and status uncertainty of both undocumented and DACAmented youth have already revealed feelings of shame, fear, and worthlessness due to their "illegal" status (Benuto et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Gee et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016; Patler & Pirtle, 2018).

This work attempts to understand the potential impact that the fluctuating DACA status and immigration policy may have on the self of DACA recipients, specifically their self-concept, self-concept clarity and self-esteem. I predict that this fluctuation in DACA's status affects the cognitive, social-interactional, emotional, and behavioral aspects of recipients' self-development and in effect, their overall self-concept and how they perceive themselves and their need to belong in U.S. society. This study specifically tests the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of DACA recipients versus their Non-DACA legal resident and U.S. citizen counterparts.

Chapter II.

Method

Participants

A sample of 47 young adults (aged 21-35) from across the U.S. were recruited for the study. The participants in the present study were either students or professionals in the academic setting. Out of the 47 participants, 35 fully completed all three surveys that were used for this study. There were 15 Non-DACA participants, which were legal residents and U.S. citizens, and 20 DACAmented participants. Participants had to meet the following criteria:

- Are either DACAmented or a legal resident of the U.S. (U.S. citizen; Green-card holder)
- Are between 21-35 years of age
- Are either a student or professional in academia
- Are currently not pregnant
- Do not exhibit any documented disabilities (e.g. communication, psychological, intellectual, etc)
- Are proficient in the English language
- Currently reside in the U.S.

Recruitment was done online via the Facebook pages of DACA and other immigration related groups:

- DACA News & Advice

- Immigrant & Refugee Rights Network
- DACA
- DACA Dreamers United
- DACA Unidos
- DACA Dreamers Book Club
- Not DACA Related
- DACA "DREAMERS"
- DACA…DREAMERS
- DACA "Dreamers" Only
- DACA Dreamers Moving Forward
- DACA "Dreamers" Renewals
- DACA Nation
- After DACA: Finances, Mortgage, Credit Coaching, Loans, Banking Support
- DACA Travels

These are closed groups that could only be joined via invitation. Administrators of the groups posted strict guidelines for only DACA recipients, refugees, undocumented immigrants, and/or supporters of the above to be permitted to participate in the group. Permission to join required pending approval.

Materials

The non-DACA and DACA recipients' self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1979; Appendix A); their self-concept was assessed using the Self-Description Questionnaire III (SDQ-III; Marsh & O'Neill,

1984; Appendix B); and, their self-concept clarity was assessed with the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS; Campbell et al., 1996; Appendix C). Each of the surveys was based on self-reported values.

Data were collected via Qualtrics, and the Excel smartsheet of the data was downloaded and stored in a password encrypted external hard drive. The participant responses were identified using automatically assigned identification numbers via Qualtrics. Completion of the surveys took approximately ten minutes (10) to complete. The participants answered questions on personal beliefs and values using a Likert scale of 1- 4 (strongly disagree to strongly agree), Likert scale 1-5 (strongly agree to strongly disagree), and Likert scale 1-8 (definitely false to definitely true), respectively. Questions worded in an opposite direction, which were either marked with an asterisk or with the capital letter “R,” were reverse-coded.

The survey platform did not collect direct identifiers, IP addresses or any identifiable information. Additionally, nothing was captured in the survey design that would prompt any identifiable information, including but not limited to names, location, birthdates, race, gender, religion, address, phone number, zip code, age, email address, etc. I did not recruit children, prisoners, mentally ill/disabled, non-English speakers, pregnant women, nor other vulnerable populations.

Measures

The study included three different measures to capture the self-esteem, self-concept clarity, and general self-concept of DACAmented versus non-DACAmented participants.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1979; Appendix A). This is a 10-item, unidimensional, self-reported scale (*Cronbach's* $\alpha = 0.87$) that was designed to measure the global self-esteem of individuals and is a common measure of self-esteem for adults, with a 4-point scale and scores ranging from 10 to 40 (Byrnes, 1996). SES measures the extent to which the individual is generally satisfied with their own life, considers themselves worthy, etc. Global self-esteem is measured as a separate and distinct entity using a single subscale. The responses range from sequentially weaker to stronger expressions of self-perception, such as 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' To control the response bias, positively and negatively worded items were alternated. The SES can be administered individually or in groups and can take anywhere between 5-15 minutes to complete.

Self-Description Questionnaire III (SDQ-III; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984; Appendix B). SDQ-III is the most extensively validated self-concept measure for adults (Byrnes, 1996, p. 204). This 136-item self-report survey is made up of 13 subscales that were designed to measure the self-concept for college students and adults (Bracken, 1996). Only one of the 13 subscales was used for this study because it measured the general self-concept (*Cronbach's* $\alpha = 0.94$). Twelve of the 136 original statements were discriminated from the rest of the survey and used for the purpose of this research (Byrnes, 1996). For each statement provided, participants needed to identify which one of the alternative responses best described them. The scale uses an 8-point Likert scale sequentially arranged from weaker to stronger expressions of self-perception, such as 'definitely false' to 'definitely true', respectively (Bracken, 1996, p. 134):

1. Overall, I have a lot of respect for myself
2. Overall, I lack self-confidence (R)
3. Overall, I am pretty accepting of myself
4. Overall, I don't have much respect for myself (R)
5. Overall, I have a lot of self-confidence
6. Overall, I have a very good self-concept
7. Overall, nothing that I do is very important (R)
8. Overall, I have pretty positive feelings about myself
9. Overall, I have very poor self-concept (R)
10. Overall, I have pretty negative feelings about myself (R)
11. Overall, I do lots of things that are important
12. Overall, I am not very accepting of myself (R)

Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCSS; Campbell et al., 1996; Appendix C). This is a 12-item, unidimensional, self-reported scale (*Cronbach's* $\alpha = 0.85$) that was designed to measure the self-concept clarity of adults. It differs from self-concept and self-esteem since it is the connective and evaluative factor between the two concepts. The scale uses 5-point system that ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Procedure

There were three main protocols used to ensure that the data and the collection process were done correctly – data collection protocol, study protocol and the data cleaning protocol.

Data Collection

Once permission was granted by the closed Facebook groups, the surveys were posted with an advertisement on the group's wall (see Appendix D). It is important to note that the surveys were not done via Facebook—rather, the Facebook post acted as a redirecting link to the Qualtrics form where the surveys were completed. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants' DACA and non-DACA status was used as a categorical predictor variable. The self-esteem, self-concept, and self-concept clarity were the continuous dependent variables that were theorized to be related to the DACA status. All assessments were administered and scored by the researcher and supervisor who had experience working with other human subjects in the social psychology field. The survey form asked participants at the end of the survey to choose if they are DACAmented, legal residents or U.S. citizens.

Study Protocol

Participants were provided with an online link to the surveys that were designed on Qualtrics, an online survey administration tool, via the Facebook pages of closed DACA and immigrant support groups. They were first provided with the consent form that offered an overview of the research and why it was being done, the requirements they must meet to participate, and the names of the researcher, research advisor and thesis director responsible for this study. After clicking "Yes, I consent" to this study, participants were presented with the study surveys: self-esteem, self-concept clarity, and general self-concept measure, respectively. This took approximately ten minutes to complete. After finishing the three surveys, the participants were then prompted to the

last page of Qualtrics form which asked, “Which of the following legally describes you?” and were offered three choices to pick from: DACAmented, Legal permanent resident, or U.S. citizen.

Data

After data collection was complete, I first ensured that responses that were not 100% complete were excluded from the study. Out of the 47 responses, 35 were 100% complete. The other 12 responses were either 33% or 50% complete, having stopped either after the first questionnaire or the second. Following this first step, I then examined the time it took for participants to complete the responses. When the surveys were tested by me before distributing them to the participants, it took approximately 10 minutes or more for all three of them to be complete. All the participants who completed the surveys 100% took approximately nine or more minutes to do so, with the longest being 15 minutes. Those who only partially completed the surveys had spent about five minutes on the responses and were excluded from the study. Lastly, I noted that each of the participant responses had the final question answered at the end of the survey that had asked to pick one of the three presented options describing their legal status.

Chapter III.

Results

General Self-Concept

With respect to general self-concept, I expected to see a more negative self-concept in DACAmented participants compared to non-DACA participants. This may be indicative of a negative social identity, the inability to satisfy their need to belong, and potentially a negative self-concept and self-concept clarity. Contrary to my prediction, there was no statistically significant difference between DACA recipients (M = 5.93, SD = 1.48) and non-DACA (M = 5.58, SD = 1.62), $(t)33$ = -0.65, p = 0.2.

Self-Concept Clarity

With respect to self-concept clarity, I expected to see lower results among DACAmented participants, compared to non-DACA participants, because without a consistent and stable self-concept, there is also an imbalanced self-concept clarity. Research thus far has demonstrated that DACA participants lack an established identity that is usually determined by the social group that the individual associates with. Without this grounded factor, I predicted that DACA participants would demonstrate a lower self-concept clarity. When minority groups such as immigrants compare themselves to the majority groups such as citizens, they internalize the fact that their status—as stereotypically presented in American culture—makes them inferior, which may lead to a lower self-concept clarity. Contrary to my prediction, there was no statistically significant

difference between DACA (*M*= 3.29, *SD* = 0.78) and non-DACA (*M* = 3.15, *SD* = 0.75) recipients, *(t)*33 = - 0.53, *p* = 0.2.

Self-Esteem

With respect to self-esteem, I also expected to see lower scores on this survey among DACA recipients, compared to Non-DACA participants, since previous research by Batool et al. (2019) demonstrates that self-esteem is correlated with self-concept and self-concept clarity. The latter is a connective and evaluative factor of self-concept and self-esteem. Thus, if the former two surveys project low scores, self-esteem would do the same. Consistent with my prediction, DACA recipients (*M* = 1.84, *SD* = 0.49) reported lower scores for self-esteem than non-DACA (*M* = 1.94, *SD* = 0.67), although the difference in means did not reach statistical significance (*t*)33 = - 0.51, *p* = 0.2.

Chapter IV.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine possible effects of the fluctuating status of the DACA program on the self-concept, self-concept clarity and self-esteem of DACA recipients. The study used self-reported measures that were specifically designed to assess self-esteem, self-concept clarity, and general self-concept of adults, respectively. I found no statistically significant differences between DACA recipients and Non-DACA legal permanent residents and U.S. citizens in relation to their self-concept, self-concept clarity, or self-esteem. Recognizing that none of the observed differences reached statistical significance, I explore below tentative implications of this research, along with its limitations and future directions.

General Self-Concept

With respect to general self-concept, I predicted that the self-concept of DACA recipients would be lower than that of their Non-DACA legal residents and U.S. citizens. Existing research on the self-concept of the general population describes this construct as the way the individual perceives themselves, encompassing the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that are constructed via their surroundings and experiences (Aron, 2003; Demo, 1992; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Tenenbaum, 2008). In Dyson's (2015) research, it was noted that the self-concept of immigrant children was shaped through the socio-ecological contexts and social acceptance of the host country's classrooms. However, for

undocumented immigrant children who lead secluded lives and must cope with anti-immigrant rhetoric (Kim et al., 2014) their experiences and surroundings are composed of stressors that were linked to mental illnesses (Gee et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014), depression and self-imposed isolation (Lauby, 2018). Together, these form inconsistencies in the development of the self-concept and potentially leads to less satisfaction with their lives (Ulman & Tatar, 2001).

In the case of this research, while not statistically significant, the observed difference suggests that DACA recipients may have a clearer self-concept than Non-DACAs. If the difference did not reach statistical significance due to the small sample size, higher self-concept in DACA recipients could be ascribed to the level of self-awareness that DREAMers have of their existing status as minorities. In other words, their cognized self as immigrant minorities is imposed on them daily via the negative anti-immigrant rhetoric, which solidifies these predetermined social roles that they are forced to abide by as “aliens”. Their Non-DACA counterparts, on the other hand, lack the same prearranged status impositions and have access to various social roles, life transitions, and social acceptance. All these conditions combined allow for their self-concept to expand but to remain without a concrete base, and this develops an imbalanced assessment of how they perceive themselves. The DACA recipients’ status, its accompanying restrictions on various day-to-day activities, along with the xenophobic rhetoric of mainstream news, may be factors that contribute to the DREAMers others’ self, or the way they believe others see them. These may result in a definitive structure of their self-concept and self-perception as “illegals”.

Self-Concept Clarity

With respect to self-concept clarity, I predicted that I would see a lower self-concept clarity in those results. This prediction was based on prior studies which proved that without a consistent and stable self-concept, there is also an imbalanced self-concept clarity. Previous research noted that self-concept clarity is an evaluative factor that connects the individual's self-concept and their identity (Hertel, 2017). It acts as the 'sureness' of how people perceive themselves and how confident they are in that 'sureness' (Schwartz et al., 2011). Self-concept clarity is the "me" and the identity is the "I". The "I" creates the "me" through the social interactions and life transitions that the individual goes through (Schwartz et al., 2017). This "me" becomes an attribute of the self-concept. For immigrants specifically, their identity—the "I—is accompanied by feelings of melancholia, nostalgia, and emptiness as they try to adapt to their host country (Tannenbaum, 2008). These feelings create a schism in their identity, between the "I" they were and "I" they need to become, which affect the self-concept of the individual. When immigrants fail to achieve the high "social status" of U.S. citizenship, they experience feelings of dissonance and distress. Related to this study specifically, DACA youth who arrived in the U.S. at an age when they did not yet develop their identity, were raised with American values but they are still identified as un-American (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Benuto et al., 2018).

Contrary to my prediction, the findings of this study, while not statistically significant, suggested that self-concept clarity was also higher for DACAmented individuals than U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents. This indicates that DACA recipients may have a more certain self-concept than Non-DACAs. Like in the case of

self-concept, the sample size may have been too small to yield statistically significant results. This finding is consistent with past research which showed an interconnection between the two variables, such as in the research by Hertel (2017) which found that as self-beliefs go up, self-concept clarity is strengthened, whereas when self-beliefs go down, self-concept clarity is weakened. I theorize that the direction of the observed difference suggests that DACAmented individuals may have higher self-concept clarity due to their definite recognition of their status as immigrant minorities. As previously discussed, the self-concept clarity acts as the "me" of the individual self, while the personal identity acts as the "I" agent which organizes information that is relevant to the individual's self. Broken down into relevant terms: DACA recipients' potentially higher self-concept clarity is their awareness of their minority status, which acts as the agent of how they function and behave in daily society; these inveterate functions attribute to a more balanced self-concept, which is the concreteness of how they see themselves as immigrant minorities.

Self-Esteem

With respect to self-esteem, I predicted to see lower scores among DACA recipients than Non-DACA legal residents and U.S. citizens. This prediction was based on previous research by Batool et al. (2019) who found that self-esteem is congruent to self-concept: as one decreases, the other also declines, and if one concept increases, then the other follows. In addition to that, earlier works by Campbell & Lavallee (1993), also found self-esteem to be correlated with self-concept, but its causal direction was unknown. Since my earlier predictions on self-concept and self-concept clarity were that both constructs would be lower for DACAs than Non-DACAs, it served to predict that

self-esteem would also be lower. Self-esteem is influenced by and relies on the individual's sense of belongingness (Kim et al., 2014; Harris & Orth, 2019). This sense of belongingness comes from the groups or beliefs that the individuals identify with. In other words, self-concept clarity asks, "Who am I?" and self-esteem asks, "How do I feel about who I am?" Research on individuals with low self-esteem showed that they experienced high levels of anxiety, self-diminishment, and instability (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993). These elements were correlated with negative effects on social functioning. In fact, the consistent belief in one's incompetence forces the individual to voice hostile internal dialogue, hopelessness (Fennell, 1997) and self-criticize themselves as inadequate and "not good enough" (Swann et al., 2007). Studies on the psychological distress of undocumented and DACAmented youth were consistent with these findings, as participants of these studies voiced feelings of shame, fear, and worthlessness due to their "illegal" status (Benuto et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Gee et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2014; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016; Patler et al., 2016).

Consistent with my predictions, DACA recipients reported lower scores for self-esteem than Non-DACAs, though the results of this measure were not statistically significant either. This non-significant result could be again attributed to the small sample size. This finding, however, is contrary to studies on the general population such as that of Campbell & Lavallee (1993) and Batool et al. (2019), who noted that self-concept and self-concept clarity were correlated to self-esteem. The self-concept and self-concept clarity of my study was potentially higher for DACA recipients than Non-DACA recipients. If self-esteem is a concurrent factor of either concept, it should have been higher, too. While the observed direction may be reversed with a larger sample size, this

finding may be an effect of the hierarchical design of the immigration policies surrounding DACA that allow for the legal discrimination of non-U.S. citizens. Note that life transitions and social roles expand the self-concept (Aron, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 1999; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Slotter & Emery, 2017) and act as 'normative rituals' of everyday life and community. But immigration policies restrict DACA recipients from legally participating in these social roles or transitions (Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Under current conditions, DACA recipients are still postponing their own family or career dreams and circumnavigating medical bureaucracies, even though they identified themselves, their location, and their biometrics to federal agencies who still see them as essentially deportable (Aron, 2003; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2018; Slotter & Emery, 2017; Suarez-Orozco, 2011). The higher self-concept and self-concept clarity—the "Who am I?" component—may reflect that DACA recipients are aware of the liminal legalities of their deferred status that has shaped their identity and self-views as minorities. However, this definite recognition of their minority status adversely affects their self-esteem—the "How do I feel about who I am?" component—because it forces them to perceive themselves as essentially inferior to that of their legal residents. The "cognized self" as subordinates is shaped by the governing and legally discriminating "others self" of their legal peers and this affects their "ideal self" of who they want to become.

Limitations

Since this is a quantitative study with a small sample size, the results were not statistically significant, and the findings cannot be generalizable to all DACA recipients. A larger sample size may also allow to test for the relationships between the self-concept,

self-concept clarity, and self-esteem variables among DACA and Non-DACA participants.

In addition to the above, I limited the sample to young adults aged 21-35, who were either enrolled in college or work within academia, who did not exhibit any documented disabilities, who were not currently pregnant, and who spoke fluent English. This research also did not collect any direct identifiers on gender, race, age, location, nationality, etc. to protect the anonymity of the participants. As such, the results cannot be generalized to the overall DACA population, as some of its members may not be enrolled in school and/or employed in academia, they may be currently pregnant or exhibit a documented disability, and they may not speak English fluently.

It is also important to note here, that to ensure the safety of members of this vulnerable cohort, I limited the number of different immigrant statuses that could be used for this research to DACA recipients and Non-DACA U.S. citizens and legal residents. As such, I did not compare the self-concept and its associated components for other immigrant statuses such as Temporary Protections Status (TPS), student visas, or undocumented immigrants. I am uncertain, at this point, on whether the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of these other statuses may also be affected by their status and how they compare to the DACA recipients, specifically. As such, the results of this research cannot also be generalized to the overall immigrant population, which includes various statuses and limitations tailored to each.

Future Research

Future research should use a larger sample size to test if there is a statistically significant relationship between DACA status and the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of the recipients. More importantly, it would be necessary to utilize additional modes of data collection beyond the online survey methodology to obtain more representative results. One such suggestion is to utilize interviews and focus specifically on how these three factors were shaped in post-DACA times to better discriminate between the status's impact versus other potential confounds, such as political climate, cultural responsibilities, gender roles, etc.

Additional elements to consider for further study into this subject is how the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of DACA recipients may be affected by other personal aspects of the individuals' lives such as the length of stay in the country, gender, or age of the individuals. These three factors may act as confounds to the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of DACA individuals and their distinct experiences. More specifically, migration from the native country to their host country may have impacted participants' self-concept and associated components from as far back as their early developmental years. It is important to note at what age everyone immigrated and how long were they present in the country to determine the concreteness of their identity development and need to belong. In relation to gender, it is important to mention that the way the individual perceives oneself is also impacted by the societal and tiered obligations of their culture, which may treat and perceive each gender differently and impose different responsibilities on either one. Addressing this factor would help narrow down if gender roles may act as confounding factors to the way the individual

perceives themselves in addition to, or in combination with, their immigration minority status.

Another confounding factor to contemplate for future studies may be a recipient's documented disability, if any. Existing research has noted documented psychological disabilities, shifts in overall emotional and behavioral health, self-harm and other mental illnesses that resulted from depression, seclusion, dissatisfaction, or loss of identity that was associated to persons' immigration status (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Ellis et al., 2019; Gee et al., 2016; Kenny & Oshio, 2019; Kim et al., 2014; Mallet & Bedolla, 2019). As previously mentioned, this study did not include participants with documented disabilities as a further precaution and protection of members of this vulnerable cohort. However, future work may want to address how documented disabilities that may result from their limbo status would have an impact on the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of participants. Furthermore, how do these disabilities affect these participants' chances of acculturation into U.S. society, or the prospects of renewing their status within the country given that they may be restricted from participating in additional societal roles given those disabilities.

One more element for future research to consider is the comparison of the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem to supplementary cohorts in addition to the U.S. citizens, legal residents and DACA recipients, which may include those with Temporary Protection Status (TPS), undocumented immigrants, and refugees. TPS is another deferred action program whose members are also considered to be "essentially deportable" should DHS find reasons to extradite any of its members. The U.S. citizens could also be categorized into U.S.-born citizens and naturalized U.S. citizens, which are

immigrants who held a green card for a few years before applying for citizenship. As my research has already noted, the theoretical construct of self-concept is composed of varying factors of culture, experience, and socialization. It has also been noted that immigrants recognize the power dynamics of U.S. citizenship as "both a system of privilege and a source of social identity," and U.S. citizens' social and legal strata as an aspirational identity, or an "identity that is sought after but not yet achieved" (Gee et al., 2016, p. 680). Within the immigration context, the green-card status, or legal resident status, is significantly higher in the hierarchy of immigration because it is closer to obtaining U.S. citizenship than DACA or TPS status, neither one of which have the option for a pathway to citizen. In the social context, previous studies have shown that when variables such as hierarchy and status come into play, they sully social categories and create intergroup conflicts that give rise to prejudice, stereotypes, and stigmas against those who are lower in that hierarchy. It was also found that when minority groups compare themselves to majority groups, they make themselves feel inferior. Future research may be able to identify how the experiences of the different immigration statuses, as well as the restrictions enforced under each status, may have contributed to, or detracted social roles and their associated acculturation opportunities. The different pathways into acculturation, and in some cases into eventual citizenship, may have an impact on the overall self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of participants differently. This would also be an exploration of how the multi-dimensionality of the self-concept dynamic may shift according to the different phases associated with the hierarchy of immigration status.

A fourth proposal is the exploration of how the binary terminologies of "American" versus "Non-American" and the creation of the "other" identity that immigrants classify as, may affect the psychosocial state of participants. More specifically, future studies may want to address how the use and association of negatively worded elements that are linked to the immigrant identity affect the self-concept and self-perceptions of those individuals. For instance, official government documents, policies, laws, political rhetoric, public discourse, and other references use the word "alien" to refer to immigrants. Existing works on the power dynamics discussed in this research show that the way that U.S. immigration laws work is as "protection" against a foreign intrusion, but for that "protection" to be effective, that foreign intrusion must first be identified as such. The use of the 18th century term "alien" accounts for that foreign identity that may shift the perspective of others to address it in that way too, it is synonymized with "illegality" and "criminality" (Behdad, 2005; Menjívar, 2016; Ngai, 2004). When this dichotomy of "us" versus "them" is implemented into legal rhetoric and introduced into the social context the result is a liminal legality employed in daily discourse: "lawful" or "unlawful", "legal" and "illegal", "good" versus "bad", "citizen" versus "non-citizen", "deserving" versus "undeserving", and "welcome" versus "unwelcome." Prior research on the general population has shown that comparisons, usually framed in positive versus negative and stereotypical contexts, place the individual in a disadvantaged position and contribute to the formation of a negative social identity, and in effect, a negative self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Mummendey et al., 1999). Further studies on this subject may help to address how the positive versus negative and stereotypical terms of hierarchical social groups are associated with the production of

societal identities into in-groups versus out-groups, and how such negative associations affect the self-concept and its associated components in immigrants' lives. This would also provide the opportunity to examine the use of more positive descriptors for "other" selves, such as using "foreign nationals" to promote the social identities of immigrants who are not citizens, with the goal to potentially shift the binary perspective of criminality to that of assimilation.

Lastly, to address the potential effect of immigration status on the psyche of the individual, especially that of deferred action programs, this study recommends that future work and research also focus on how immigration policies can shift away from liminal legalities and into social reformations. More specifically, the social construct of identity and the self has already been correlated to the social interactions with in-groups and out-groups throughout the individual's life (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Shinnar, 2008; Tajfel, 1981). These experiences add to the phenomenological perspective of the individual's sense of self and their overall identity. However, to recognize, understand, and address the dynamics associated with culture shock, acculturation, segregation, loss of identity, and the developmental stages of the self for immigrants, there needs to be an emphasis on addressing how the laws affect the socio-cultural hierarchy of the host country. As my study has pointed out, immigrant identity is tied to their immigrant status and that status relies on the law to determine the privileges that immigrants may be granted. However, *all* immigrant statuses limit access to certain basic human resources, protections, and privileges for *all* "non-Americans." In the deferred action programs, it is more so than others since DACA recipients have willfully surrendered their personal information and locations to government agencies, and yet they are *still* regarded as essentially deportable,

and the program *still* restricts them from advancing beyond that status (Aron, 2003; Ellis & Chen, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2018; Slotter & Emery, 2017; Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Prior works on the mental health, societal restrictions, and seclusion of immigrants have displayed that immigration is not a legal issue—it is a social one. Future studies that address this legal versus social dichotomy would be able to contribute to the expansion of immigration "reform" as a social change. After all, "reform" in its definition alone indicates a reorganization or restructuring of the concept and practice of immigration.

Conclusion

This study hypothesized that DACA recipients have a lower self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem than Non-DACAs legal residents and U.S. citizens. The study used a self-report questionnaire format to obtain information about the participants' general self-concept via the Self-Description Questionnaire III (SDQ-III; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984), their self-concept clarity using the Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCCS; Campbell et al., 1996), and their self-esteem via the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1979). To date, this is one of the first studies done on the self-concept of this politically susceptible minority immigrant cohort. Due to the ethical implications and liminal protections that exist to protect against the stigmatization of DACA recipients, there is limited research on the psychological implications that immigration policies have on the individual. Researchers who attempt to examine and understand the effects of liminal legality and lack of protections for undocumented and deferred action immigrants, have a difficult time understanding the lives of seclusion and the constant fear of deportation and displacement that these cohorts experience.

The findings suggested higher self-concept and self-concept clarity but a lower self-esteem for DACA recipients versus Non-DACA legal resident and U.S. citizen counterparts, although the differences between these two groups did not reach statistical significance. The small sample size may have undermined the study's statistical power. This preliminary work highlights the need for further research, with a larger sample size and measures that go beyond online questionnaires and into additional phenomenological and qualitative interviews, to understand how the DACA recipients' self-concept and its related constructs are affected.

Additional suggestions include looking at factors such as gender, length of stay in the host country, cultural background, documented disability or mental illness, and the age of the participants in order to rule out supplementary confounding factors that may otherwise impact the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of the individuals involved. Other proposals include researching how the use of negative terminologies such as "alien" and its negatively worded synonyms of "criminal" and "illegal" affect the psychosocial state and self-concept of participants. Further suggestions include investigating the self-concept, self-concept clarity, and self-esteem of supplemental immigration statuses, including TPS, DACA, and undocumented immigrants, in addition to naturalized U.S. citizens and U.S.-born citizens to explore if there is a potential shift in self-concept and its associated elements according to the hierarchy of immigrant statuses.

This study is optimistic that future work would consider practices, methods, and systematic approaches that would explore the emotional, socio-developmental, and mental changes that immigrants experience. The hope is that the rhetoric behind immigration would shift from a legal issue to a social one, so that immigration reforms

would be able to address the psychosocial impact that liminal legalities and essentially deportable statuses have on vulnerable populations.

Appendix A.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1979)

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale
RSES

Items

Rate the items using the following scale:

1 = *strongly agree* 2 = *agree* 3 = *disagree* 4 = *strongly disagree*

______ 1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

______ 2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

______ 3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*

______ 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

______ 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.*

______ 6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

______ 7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

______ 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.*

______ 9. I certainly feel useless at times.*

______ 10. At times I think I am no good at all.*

*reverse-scored

Appendix B.

Self-Description Questionnaire III (SDQ-III, Marsh & O'Neill, 1984)

Appendix I -- SDQ III Items

1. I find many mathematical problems interesting and challenging.
2. My parents are not very spiritual/religious people.
3. Overall, I have a lot of respect for myself.
4. I often tell small lies to avoid embarrassing situations.
5. I get a lot of attention from members of the opposite sex.
6. I have trouble expressing myself when trying to write something.
7. I am usually pretty calm and relaxed.
8. I hardly ever saw things the same way as my parents when I was growing up.
9. I enjoy doing work for most academic subjects.
10. I am never able to think up answers to problems that haven't already been figured out.
11. I have a physically attractive body.
12. I have few friends of the same sex that I can really count on.
13. I am a good athlete.
14. I have hesitated to take courses that involve mathematics.
15. I am a spiritual/religious person.
16. Overall, I lack self-confidence.
17. People can always rely on me.
18. I find it difficult to meet members of the opposite sex whom I like.
19. I can write effectively.
20. I worry a lot.
21. I would like to bring up children of my own (if I have any) like my parents raised me.
22. I hate studying for many academic subjects.
23. I am good at combining ideas in ways that others have not tried.
24. I am ugly.
25. I am comfortable talking to members of the same sex.
26. I am awkward and poorly coordinated at most sports and physical activities.
27. I have generally done better in mathematics courses than other courses.
28. Spiritual/religious beliefs have little to do with my life philosophy.
29. Overall, I am pretty accepting of myself.
30. Being honest is not particularly important to me.
31. I have lots of friends of the opposite sex.
32. I have a poor vocabulary.

33. I am happy most of the time.

34. I still have many unresolved conflicts with my parents.

35. I like most academic subjects.

36. I wish I had more imagination and originality.

37. I have a good body build.

38. I don't get along very well with other members of the same sex.

39. I have good endurance and stamina in sports and physical activities.

40. Mathematics makes me feel inadequate.

41. Spiritual/religious beliefs make my life better and make me a happier person.

42. Overall, I don't have much respect for myself.

43. I nearly always tell the truth.

44. Most of my friends are more comfortable with members of the opposite sex than I am.

45. I am an avid reader.

46. I am anxious much of the time.

47. My parents have usually been unhappy or disappointed with what I do and have done.

48. I have trouble with most academic subjects.

49. I enjoy working out new ways of solving problems.

50. There are lots of things about the way I look that I would like to change.

51. I make friends easily with members of the same sex.

52. I hate sports and physical activities.

53. I am quite good at mathematics.

54. My spiritual/religious beliefs provide the guidelines by which I conduct my life.

55. Overall, I have a lot of self-confidence.

56. I sometimes take things that do not belong to me.

57. I am comfortable talking to members of the opposite sex.

58. I do not do well on tests that require a lot of verbal reasoning ability.

59. I hardly ever feel depressed.

60. My values are similar to those of my parents.

61. I'm good at most academic subjects.

62. I'm not much good at problem solving.

63. My body weight is about right (neither too fat nor too skinny).

64. Other members of the same sex find me boring.

65. I have a high energy level in sports and physical activities.

66. I have trouble understanding anything that is based upon mathematics.

67. Continuous spiritual/religious growth is important to me.

68. Overall, I have a very good self-concept.

69. I never cheat.

70. I'm quite shy with members of the opposite sex.

71. Relative to most people, my verbal skills are quite good.

72. I tend to be high-strung, tense, and restless.

73. My parents have never had much respect for me.

74. I'm not particularly interested in most academic subjects.

75. I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.

76. I dislike the way I look.

77. I share lots of activities with members of the same sex.

78. I'm not very good at any activities that require physical ability and coordination.

79. I have always done well in mathematics classes.

80. I rarely if ever spend time in spiritual meditation or religious prayer.

81. Overall, nothing that I do is very important.

82. Being dishonest is often the lesser of two evils.

83. I make friends easily with members of the opposite sex.

84. I often have to read things several times before I understand them.

85. I do not spend a lot of time worrying about things.

86. My parents treated me fairly when I was young.

87. I learn quickly in most academic subjects.

88. I am not very original in my ideas, thoughts, and actions.

89. I have nice facial features.

90. Not many people of the same sex like me.

91. I like to exercise vigorously at sports and/or physical activities.

92. I never do well on tests that require mathematical reasoning.

93. I am a better person as a consequence of my spiritual/religious beliefs.

94. Overall, I have pretty positive feelings about myself.

95. I am a very honest person.

96. I have had lots of feelings of inadequacy about relating to members of the opposite sex.

97. I am good at expressing myself.

98. I am often depressed.

99. It has often been difficult for me to talk to my parents.

106. I am basically an atheist, and believe that there is no being higher than man.

107. Overall, I have a very poor self-concept.

108. I would feel OK about cheating on a test as long as I did not get caught.

109. I am comfortable being affectionate with members of the opposite sex.

110. In school I had more trouble learning to read than most other students.

111. I am inclined towards being an optimist.

112. My parents understand me.

113. I get good marks in **most** academic subjects.

114. I would have no interest in being an inventor.

115. Most of my friends are better looking than I am.

116. Most people have more friends of the same sex than I do.

117. I enjoy sports and physical activities.

118. I have never been very excited about mathematics.

119. I believe that there will be some form of continuation of my spirit or soul after my death.

120. Overall, I have pretty negative feelings about myself.

121. I value integrity above all other virtues.

122. I never seem to have much in common with members of the opposite sex.

123. I have good reading comprehension.

124. I tend to be a very nervous person.

125. I like my parents.

126. I could never achieve academic honours, even if I worked harder.

127. I can often see better ways of doing routine tasks.

128. I am good looking.

129. I have lots of friends of the same sex.

130. I am a sedentary type who avoids strenuous activity.

131. Overall, I do lots of things that are important.

132. I am not a very reliable person.

133. Spiritual/religious beliefs have little to do with the type of person I want to be.

134. I have never stolen anything of consequence.

135. Overall, I am not very accepting of myself.

136. Few, if any, of my friends are very spiritual or religious.

Appendix C.

Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCSS; Campbell et al., 1996)

Self-Concept Clarity Scale
SCC Scale

Items
1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.[a]
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.[a]
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.[a]
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.[a]
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.[a]
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.[a]
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.[a]
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day.[a]
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I'm really like.[a]
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.[a]

Scale ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). [a]Reverse-keyed item.

Appendix D.

Participant Recruitment Advertisement

"Dear members of [name of the group inserted here],

I am a DACA recipient and student at Harvard University's Division of Continuing Education finishing my Masters in Psychology. As part of my thesis research, I am interested in understanding the values and beliefs of DACA and legal U.S resident young adults (aged 21-35). I am specifically looking for volunteers who exhibit the following:

- Are either DACAmented or a legal resident of the U.S. (U.S. citizen; Green-card holder)
- Are between 21-35 years of age
- Are either a student or professional in academia
- Are currently not pregnant
- Do not exhibit any documented disabilities (e.g. communication, psychological, intellectual, etc)
- Are proficient in the English language
- Currently reside in the U.S.

I would appreciate your contribution to my research [Qualtrics link to the surveys and the electronic consent form]. This is an approximately 20-minute survey. All your answers will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential and will not be reused. Thank you in advance for your support and contribution to this study."

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