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Exploring DACA Recipients' Access to Higher Education in Connecticut

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**Exploring DACA Recipients' Access to Higher Education in
Connecticut**

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients represent a new and somewhat unexplored population within the undocumented immigrant community. Since the DACA program was only introduced three years ago, DACA recipients live within a state of liminality, without fear of deportation for the first time but with the understanding that it can be stripped from them without a moments warning. DACA is an executive order announced by President Barack Obama in 2012, which stated that certain DREAMers (young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States by their parents at a young age) would receive temporary relief from deportation, a work permit, and a social security number for a two-year period.¹ These benefits allow immigrant youth to start actively participating in society, open their imaginations to what kind of life they can have, and start planning their futures. For many DACA youth, this has meant finally being able to think about pursuing higher education.

This paper will explore how a DACA status has affected recipients' ability to access higher education in Connecticut. While DACA does not include direct policies concerning educational attainment, there is a strong correlation between obtaining DACA status and accessing higher education. Primarily, DACA has increased DREAMers' access to higher education because it is easier to pay tuition once obtaining a legal work permit. However, there are several other ways in which DACA has affected access to higher education. These include increased motivation and aspirations of immigrant students, higher availability of private scholarships, improved receptiveness

¹ "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*. 12 Dec, 2014. Department of Homeland Security, Web. 15 Dec, 2014.

of colleges to immigrant students, and a lesser sense of fear and a greater sense of security and belonging.

In order to demonstrate a correlation between possessing DACA status and an increased access to higher education, interviews were conducted with DREAMers (with and without DACA status), immigration attorneys, non-profit service providers, youth organizers, and college administrators. In addition, statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and several think-tanks are provided to show trends in the DACA population and undocumented population in Connecticut and nationally. However, it must be taken into consideration that the topic of this paper is focused on a highly vulnerable and hidden population. In his book, “Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society,” Leo R. Chavez underlines this dilemma. “Finding undocumented immigrants is no easy task...How could they know that I was a legitimate researcher and that talking to me would not lead to their deportation? Their rational course of action, given their undocumented status, is to avoid contact with strangers as much as possible.”²

As DACA is a federal program, data on this population is more readily available than on the undocumented population in general. Undocumented immigrants lead informal and closeted lives. There are no formal laws or guidelines that undocumented people have to follow; consequently, it is hard to know exactly how many undocumented people there are in the U.S., in the school systems, and in the workforce. One result of this is that undocumented students and higher education officials alike have a lack of understanding of the guidelines for undocumented students in the college

² Leo R. Chavez, *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2013), 7.

application and enrollment processes. In fact, many undocumented students and colleges believe that it is illegal for undocumented immigrants to attend college, which is not the case.

The introduction of DACA, however, has improved the legitimacy for its recipients. For example, higher education officials are more likely to know the policies for a DACA recipient than for a completely undocumented student, as the government officially acknowledges DACA recipients. In addition, without an immediate fear of deportation, DACA has created a subpopulation that is more likely to speak out and advocate than the rest of the undocumented population. That being said, while statistics on the number of DACA applicants exists, it is still difficult to identify DACA recipients within the college and high school systems.

When DACA legitimized a group of undocumented immigrants for the first time, opportunities in education began to open up. There are scholarships open only for DACA recipients, current legislation is being proposed to provide financial aid for DACA recipients, and some states only allow DACA recipients, rather than all undocumented immigrants, to pay in-state tuition at public colleges. Education is one of the most effective ways for immigrants, as it is for all U.S. citizens, to achieve upward mobility and to grow out of poverty. However, in order for education to deliver on its promise, access to education must be readily and equally available to all. In the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, in which Brown fought for education equality in public schooling, the Court stated, “In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right

which must be made available to all on equal terms.”³ More than 60 years later, the fight for equality in access to education continues, due to a lack of state and federal actions. While the introduction of DACA has helped to reduce this inequality gap, undocumented immigrants still do not have equal access to higher education in America.

I. Background and the Connecticut Context

On June 15, 2012, DREAMers and advocates gathered in front of the White House and Americans tuned into their televisions to watch President Obama announce the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Obama explained the benefits of the program, such as temporary relief from deportation, a work permit, and social security number for a two-year period, and justified the program by stating that DREAMers “are Americans in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one, on paper. They were brought to this country by their parents, sometimes even as infants. And often have no idea that they are undocumented until they apply for a job, or a driver’s license, or a college scholarship.”⁴ The executive order is not a law and does not provide lawful status or legal permanent residence for any undocumented immigrant. Rather, it is a practice of prosecutorial discretion by the federal government and provides lawful *presence* for its recipients.⁵ Since DACA is an executive order and not a law, President Obama or his successor can take it away at any time. Nevertheless, it has been in effect since it was announced in 2012.

³ Victor C. Romero. “Immigrant Education and the Promise of Integrative Egalitarianism,” *Penn State Law eLibrary*. 1 Jan, 2011. Penn State Law, Web. 2 Apr 2015.

⁴ “Obama DREAM Act Prosecutorial Discretion Remarks,” YouTube video, 8:58, posted by “MicEvHill,” June 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HrdqBSaVz8>

⁵ *Ibid.*

While DACA was a great victory for the undocumented population, there are many requirements in order to qualify for DACA status, which excludes a large percentage of the DREAMer and broader immigrant community from its benefits. The guidelines to qualify for DACA as stated by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are as follows. To be DACA eligible, you:

1. “Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;
3. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
4. Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
5. Had no lawful status on June 15, 2012, meaning that:
 - a. You never had a lawful immigration status on or before June 15, 2012, or
 - b. Any lawful immigration status or parole that you obtained prior to June 15, 2012, had expired as of June 15, 2012;
6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
7. Have not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.”⁶

However, on November 20, 2014, President Obama announced a new series of executive actions that affect the DREAMer population. In an effort to respond to pressures from the immigrant population, President Obama extended DACA to last for three years before an applicant would need to renew, rather than the former two-year period.⁷ In addition, the new executive action expanded DACA to people who have been present in the U.S. since January 1, 2010, rather than since 2007 (qualification #2 above). However, applicants must still have come to the U.S. before they turned 16

⁶ “Frequently Asked Questions,” *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*. 23 Oct, 2014. Department of Homeland Security, Web. 15 Dec, 2014.

⁷ “Executive Actions on Immigration,” *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*. 4 Dec, 2014. Department of Homeland Security, Web. 15 Dec, 2014.

years old.⁸ While this expansion of DACA was a great stride forward for the immigrant community, on February 16, 2015, it was blocked by a Federal District Court Judge in Texas who responded to a lawsuit filed by Texas and 25 other states against President Obama's executive order. The judge's ruling halted the new program indefinitely, just one day before undocumented immigrants could have begun the application process. The 26 states argued that President Obama's executive order was unconstitutional and an abuse of his power. While President Obama plans to appeal the case, the program is suspended for now.⁹

Since the release of the initial DACA application in August 2012, lawyers, non-profits, and community-based organizations have been working with the undocumented population to hold information sessions and clinics and help DACA youth fill out their applications. The application process involves collecting documents such as school and health records, bills, pay stubs, apartment leases, and other documentation that will prove presence in the United States for the last several years. In addition, applicants must begin to gather the \$465 application fee that DACA requires, which includes \$380 for an employment authorization application and \$85 for fingerprints.¹⁰

According to USCIS data, 5,105 DACA applications have been approved in Connecticut, and 6,128 applications have been accepted in Connecticut as of December 31, 2014.¹¹ Of all 50 states, plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and Guam, Connecticut

⁸ "Executive Actions on Immigration."

⁹ Preston, Grace and Shear, Michael D.. "Dealt Setback, Obama Puts off Immigrant Plan." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 17 Feb 2015, Web. 18 Feb 2015.

¹⁰ "Frequently Asked Questions The Obama Administration's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," *National Immigration Law Center*. 13 Jun, 2014. National Immigration Law Center, Web. 15, Dec 2014.

¹¹ "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2015 (December 31)," *U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services*. Dec 2014. Department of Homeland Security, Web. 18 Feb 2015.

ranks as having accepted the 29th highest number of requests.¹² Further, USCIS data reports on the number of DACA requests accepted in 75 metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas. Of these 75 areas, the Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk Metropolitan Area is listed as having received the 44th highest number of requests, with 2,000 accepted and 1,800 approvals between August 2012 and September 2013.¹³ As only 75 metropolitan areas are listed, the ranking of Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk is a significant statistic, especially because Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk is only the 56th largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States according to U.S. Census data from 2010.¹⁴ That is, the number of DACA applicants in the state of Connecticut is proportionally larger than the metropolitan statistical area population might suggest. This large number of applicants in the Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk region can be partially attributed to a youth-led non-profit organization in Connecticut called Connecticut Students for a Dream.

Known colloquially as C4D, Connecticut Students for a Dream is one of the most active organizations in Connecticut that offers DACA clinics, information sessions, and assistance in finding and applying for college scholarships. The organization is an affiliate of the largest youth-led immigrant organization in the country, United We Dream, and both organizations are committed to advocating for justice for all immigrants.¹⁵ C4D played a large role in the organizing efforts that resulted in DACA. The executive order was not a policy that President Obama came up with on his own,

¹² “Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2015 (December 31)”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “Table 20. Large Metropolitan Statistical Areas—Population: 1990 to 2010,” *U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States*. 2012. U.S. Census Bureau, Web. 26 Mar, 2015.

¹⁵ “About Us,” *United We Dream*. United We Dream. 15 Dec, 2014.

but rather, was the result of a long fight by organizers such as C4D and United We Dream.¹⁶

C4D is also committed to the educational success of undocumented youth in Connecticut. In 2011 Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy signed Connecticut's in-state tuition bill, the Connecticut DREAM Act, allowing undocumented students to have access to in-state tuition at public colleges in Connecticut.¹⁷ Currently, 17 other states also allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition.¹⁸ This law is a great benefit for the undocumented immigrant population. The University of Connecticut cost of tuition for in-state students is \$9,858, compared to \$30,038 for out-of-state students.¹⁹ Likewise, at Manchester Community College, in-state tuition for four classes per semester costs \$1,716 and out-of-state tuition costs \$5,148.²⁰ While the in-state tuition cost is still a big financial burden for most immigrant families, it is significantly more affordable.

Undocumented students in Connecticut, however, are not eligible for federal or state scholarships. C4D helps undocumented youth find private scholarships open to them and is in the process of pursuing legislative action to open up more opportunities for financial aid for DACA recipients. Nevertheless, between 2008 and 2012, Connecticut had the fourth highest rate of DACA applicants enrolled in higher

¹⁶ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

¹⁷ Thomas, Jacqueline Rabe. "In-state Tuition for Undocumented Students Headed to Malloy's Desk." *The CT Mirror*. The CT Mirror, 24 May 2011. Web. 15 Dec 2014.

¹⁸ "Undocumented Student Tuition: State Action," *National Conference of State Legislatures*. 12 Jun 2014. National Conference of State Legislatures, Web. 15 Dec 2014.

¹⁹ "Estimated Cost of Attendance," *Office of Student Financial Aid Services*. University of Connecticut, Web. 15 Dec 2014.

²⁰ "Tuition and Fees," *Admission & Aid*. Manchester Community College, Web. 18 Feb 2015.

education, with 25%—just after Massachusetts, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.²¹ This percentage is quite impressive considering the national average of DACA college-goers, which is just 19 percent.

The Migration Policy Institute attributes the different rates of DACA college-goers in each state to differences in “state policies regarding college enrollment and tuition rates for unauthorized immigrants, as well as variations in labor market opportunities for immigrant youth and underlying differences in high school graduation and college enrollment rates for the broader young adult population.”²² Migration Policy Institute’s first point is not applicable to the situation in Connecticut, because, even though Connecticut does allow undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition, the state has the strictest in-state tuition laws for undocumented immigrants in the country.²³ Therefore, this high percentage of DACA college-goers could be connected to the culture promoting higher education that exists within the state of Connecticut. This theory is likely as the college participation rates in Connecticut exceed those of the average college participation rates of the nation.²⁴ As of 2010, the college-going rate of high school graduates directly from high school in Connecticut was 78.7%, compared to the national average of 62.5%.²⁵ This trend, although at different percentages, has been evident since as far back as 1992, showing that education has long been a priority for families and policymakers alike in Connecticut. With such high rates of college-goers and a culture that values higher education, Connecticut’s continuing passage of state

²¹ Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps. “DACA At the Two-Year Mark,” *Migration Policy Institute*. Aug 2014. Migration Policy Institute, Web. 15 Dec 2014.

²² *Ibid*, 22.

²³ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

²⁴ “College-Going Rates of High School Graduates – Directly from High School,” *NCHEMS Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis*. 2015. Higher Ed Info, Web. 30 Mar, 2015.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

legislation that specifically makes higher education more accessible to undocumented students, like the DREAM Act, will maintain the state's culture.

II. Institutional Aid

In 2011, Connecticut passed the CT DREAM Act, House Bill Number 6390, allowing undocumented students to pay the in-state tuition rate for public colleges and universities. Nevertheless, many undocumented students still could not afford college tuition. As leaders and organizers at C4D recognized the financial burden facing DREAMers, they teamed up with Yale Law School's Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic (WIRAC) to find ways to increase financial aid for undocumented students. In 2013, they undertook legislative action to introduce a bill that would open up state financial aid to undocumented youth. This bill, however, never got out of Connecticut's Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Returning to the drawing board, they found a statute in Connecticut that requires 15% of all tuition revenue at public colleges to go back to the student body in the form of need-based scholarships. This form of scholarships, called institutional aid, is available to students attending public college in Connecticut. Nevertheless, it is not accessible to undocumented students at public colleges even though their tuition contributes to the pool of institutional aid.²⁶

With this discovery, C4D and WIRAC submitted a rulemaking petition to the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities Board of Regents, the Office of Higher Education, and the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees that recommended that undocumented youth should not be discriminated against when applying for institutional

²⁶ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

aid. The Board of Regents responded by saying that it did not have the power to regulate who receives financial aid from the state. Reaching a dead end once again, C4D and WIRAC decided to pursue a legislative campaign for the second time.²⁷

The campaign started in January 2015 with C4D teaming up with Senator Martin Looney and other state legislators and organizers to present a bill to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. The bill is called S.B. 398, An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program with the Cost of College. As of April 2015 the bill was given a Joint Favorable Report and is being scheduled for a vote in the Legislature.²⁸

To begin, the proposed bill states that the Office of Higher Education should have the authority to create regulations regarding institutional and state financial aid, including who is able to access that aid. This provision addresses the roadblock that C4D confronted when petitioning the Board of Regents to make changes to its institutional aid policies.²⁹

Secondly, the bill states that undocumented students should have access to institutional and state aid consistent with the requirements needed to access in-state tuition. This policy would allow undocumented students to access the 15% of tuition expenses that they contribute to institutional aid as students at public colleges or universities. In addition, the bill seeks to change the in-state tuition eligibility requirements for undocumented students. Currently, undocumented students must have attended high school in Connecticut for four full years in order to qualify for in-state tuition. This is the strictest in-state tuition law of all 18 states that have enacted such a

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Connecticut General Assembly. "S.B. No. 398 Session Year 2015." CGA/Bill Status. 30 Mar, 2015.

²⁹ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

provision (i.e., other states only require one to three years of high school attendance in the state in order to be eligible for in-state tuition). This part of S.B. 398 would change the eligibility requirements of in-state tuition to only three years of high school in Connecticut for undocumented students, allowing a much larger portion of undocumented students to be able to afford college. While C4D hopes that institutional aid will be available to all undocumented students at some point, it decided only to propose that DACA recipients be covered by the proposed legislation in order to foster more support for it from politicians and the public.³⁰

Lastly, S.B. 398 seeks to develop an equivalent to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for undocumented students. The FAFSA is the process by which colleges determine a student's financial aid need. At present, undocumented students are currently unable to use this application; meaning, colleges and the state are unable to determine undocumented students' financial need. This part of the bill asks the Office of Higher Education to develop a system for undocumented students to be able to show the state their financial need—a necessary tool if the bill were to be passed and undocumented students had access to state and institutional aid. As indicated by its title, the bill, as of now, would only benefit DACA recipients.³¹

With few actions being taken on the federal level to advance immigration reform, state and local governments are increasingly the jurisdictions responsible for developing opportunities to assist immigrants. In the Migration Policy Institute's study on DACA's impact on education in seven states, the authors report, "our fieldwork found that the extent of DACA's impact on college enrollment and persistence largely

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

depended on the presence, or absence, of state policies and institutional practices supporting college access for unauthorized immigrants.”³² Secondly, the same study emphasizes the importance of financial aid from institutions in order to lessen the financial burden that undocumented students face. “Given the high hurdle college affordability poses to DACA youth in all seven study states, private and institutional scholarship programs play a critical role and are needed to expand college opportunities for DACA grantees and unauthorized youth more generally.”³³

If “An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program with the Cost of College” legislation is passed, DACA recipients in Connecticut will be posed to make monumental strides towards realizing equal opportunity in education. Allowing DACA recipients to access state and institutional aid will allow them to further their education, to become more financially stable, and to feel more integrated in civic life. This paper will show just how important financial aid is to undocumented immigrants’ ability to access higher education and to reduce the struggles they currently endure in order to further their education.

Chapter 2. *The Intersection Between DACA and Higher Education*

One of the main reasons that undocumented immigrants come to the United States is for their children to receive a better education than what was available in their home country. Chavez states, “Undocumented immigrants hope their children will be better educated and find better, less menial jobs than their own. For some, the life they

³² Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, and Angelo Mathay. “Lessons from the Local Level: DACA’s Implementation and Impact on Education and Training Success,” *Migration Policy Institute*. Jan 2015. Migration Policy Institute, Web. 2 Apr, 2015. 20.

³³ *Ibid*, 24.

must endure as “illegal aliens” is part of the sacrifice they are willing to make for the next generation.”³⁴ Parents who come to the United States in order to offer a better future to their children, building on a good education, are making a monumental sacrifice as their lives will prove much harder than those of their children, who generally are seen as a more sympathetic population.

When discussing the benefits of DACA with recipients, policy analysts, and advocates, their primary focus rests on the economic benefits that DACA provides, due to the granting of a work permit.³⁵ Undoubtedly, the benefit of receiving a work permit is one of the main factors that drive youth to apply for DACA. This study, however, will take a different viewpoint and will not focus directly on DACA youths’ increased economic position. Rather, it will look at a result that stems from undocumented youths’ increased economic position: access to higher education. While many reports state the statistics of DACA youth who have attained higher education, little exploration has been made as to how DACA status has affected DACA youths’ access to higher education. This study—through interviews with DREAMers, immigration attorneys, non-profit service providers, youth organizers, and college administrators—will provide an in-depth analysis of how DACA has influenced access to higher education.

With 25% of DACA youth in Connecticut in college, there is much to be explored. At first glance, this number seems low. It seems surprising that three quarters of DACA youth are not in college. However, it must be taken into account that the

³⁴ Chavez, 201.

³⁵ “The Top Ten Benefits Of Being DACA-Mented!” *United We Dream*. United We Dream, Web. 15 Dec. 2014.

Roberto G. Gonzales and Veronica Terriquez, “How DACA is Impacting the Lives of Those Who are Now DACAmented,” *Immigration Policy Center*. Immigration Policy Center, Web. 15 Dec. 2014.
Grace, Personal Interview.

DACA population does not only consist of the typical DREAMer student population. A percentage of DACA youth are under the college-going age and are likely to enroll in higher education when they are of age. In addition, there is a percentage of DACA recipients who are as old as 31, and are likely to have jobs and family commitments, and be uninterested in enrolling in higher education. In fact, immigration attorney Douglas Penn in Stamford stated that none of his DACA clients who are past college age are going back to school.³⁶

In addition, Connecticut's rate of 25% of DACA youth attending college is the fourth highest percentage in the country.³⁷ This is extremely significant, especially when considering the fact that Connecticut has only the 29th highest number of DACA requests accepted. Due to the high number of college-going DACA youth, Connecticut is an optimal state to study the effects of DACA on access to higher education.

Discovering how DACA has affected undocumented immigrants' access to higher education is an important inquiry for a number of reasons. First, regardless of one's immigration status, education serves as one of the most effective ways to climb out of poverty, to succeed economically, and to have the ability to make an impact on society. With 50% of DACA youth in families with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level in Connecticut, education is a vital resource that many undocumented immigrants need.³⁸

Before DACA was announced, many undocumented youth in high school did not see the point in accessing higher education. After all, they had no work permit and no guarantee that they would be able to get a job after receiving their degree. For some, this

³⁶ Douglas Penn, Personal Interview

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "DACA At the Two-Year Mark,"

meant taking drastic measures such as dropping out of high school and working in a low-level job with an under-the-table wage in order to help provide for family members.³⁹

However, with the announcement of DACA and the promise of a work permit, the perception of blocked mobility has begun to decrease. Immigration attorney Sister Mary Ellen Burns of Apostle Immigrant Services in New Haven stated that DACA “gives, for some people around the edge of ‘why should I bother,’ a little bit more confidence that they’ll actually be able to do something with a degree when they get out. I’m amazed by people who went and got heavy-duty degrees before DACA—that they put this huge investment in without any guarantee that they’d get a return on it and would have to go back to a low-income job.”⁴⁰

The second reason to focus on the educational attainment of DACA youth relates to the potential for future DREAM Act legislation in the future that would likely require undocumented immigrant youth to complete at least two years of postsecondary education in order to be eligible for a fast track to citizenship.⁴¹ If DREAMers fulfill this requirement now, they will not have to rush with thousands of other undocumented immigrants to complete two years of postsecondary education if a federal DREAM Act is enacted. In the intervening years DACA could be eliminated, making it harder for undocumented immigrants to be able to afford college.⁴²

The introduction of DACA has made undocumented students a visible population within the higher education system. Although still a work in progress, undocumented students now have some guidelines and protocols for where they fit in education

³⁹ Alex Arévalo, Personal Interview.

⁴⁰ Sister Mary Ellen Burns, Personal Interview.

⁴¹ “DREAM Act: Summary,” *National Immigration Law Center*. May, 2011. National Immigration Law Center, Web. 18 Feb. 2015.

⁴² Eduardo, Personal Interview.

application and enrollment systems. One DREAMer stated, “As an undocumented student, I have to be like a lawyer. I have to know all of my rights because most people don’t know the laws and rules for undocumented people.”⁴³ Now, with the combination of the CT DREAM Act and DACA, administrators are more knowledgeable about how to treat undocumented students in terms of tuition and other administrative details. With relief from deportation, students can now feel comfortable seeking out school administrators with questions and becoming involved in campus activities and clubs.⁴⁴

Lastly, immigrant populations, both documented and undocumented, serve as a crucial element in the preservation and success of cities. The Knight Foundation makes this point in the case of Nashville, Tennessee by saying, “Nashville has benefited economically from its focus on immigrant inclusion; immigrants attracted to the region have increased the county’s housing wealth by nearly \$1 billion over a 10-year span, and as natural entrepreneurs – immigrants are more likely to start a business than U.S.-born residents – are overrepresented among small business owners, according to recent data. Nashville’s success as a thriving city that led the U.S. in job growth in 2012 has also been directly linked to its welcoming climate.”⁴⁵ Cities in Connecticut, such as Hartford, are not as prosperous as cities such as Nashville. Indeed, according to a poll from WNPR, half of residents in Connecticut would choose to move to a different state if the opportunity arose.⁴⁶ With a potential depopulation crisis in Connecticut, the state could

⁴³ Julia, Personal Interview.

⁴⁴ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

⁴⁵ Rachel Peric, “Welcoming immigrants helps cities succeed,” *Knight Blog*. Dec 12, 2014. Knight Foundation, Web. 31 Mar 2015.

⁴⁶ Heather Brandon and Catie Talariski, “Why Half of Connecticut’s Residents Want to Move to Another State,” *WNPR*. 30 Apr, 2014. WNPR, Web. 31 Mar, 2015.

focus on securing education rights for immigrants, who are likely to remain in Connecticut if given the opportunity to attend college in Connecticut.

Further, immigrants serve as a critical population in Connecticut due to the state's aging population. Connecticut Voices for Children's report, "Immigration in Connecticut: A Growing Opportunity," states that an increase in the immigrant population in Connecticut will help to prevent "a serious demographic challenge" due to Connecticut's aging population.⁴⁷ Further, the report states that immigrants will help Connecticut's population "by expanding the labor pool, assuring Connecticut's economy a more adequately sized workforce. Second, the language skills and cultural competencies of Connecticut's immigrants, along with their established ties to dozens of countries, will be strong competitive assets for the state in this increasingly global economy. Finally, these workers will expand Connecticut's tax base, a necessity if Connecticut is to have sufficient revenues to support publicly-funded services, such as health care and housing, for its growing elderly population."⁴⁸ This report shows that young immigrants are the future of the state of Connecticut. However, if young immigrants are to achieve the goals listed in this report, they must be able to access higher education in order to contribute significantly to the workforce and economy. The more highly educated immigrants are, the better jobs they can obtain and the more taxes they can pay in order to support Connecticut's aging residents and other citizens.

Overall, Connecticut is in no position to drive away young residents that are contributing to the economy. If the overall atmosphere of Connecticut is not welcoming towards immigrants, and local legislation such as an education equity law is not passed

⁴⁷ Rafael Mejia and Priscilla Canny, "Immigration in Connecticut: A Growing Opportunity," *Connecticut Voices for Children*, Sep 2007. Connecticut Voices for Children, Web. 31 Mar, 2015. 2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 14.

that benefits the rights of immigrants, the state will continue to lose immigrant residents. Undocumented immigrants will move to cities in which they feel more welcomed. In their book, “Global Cities and Immigrants” Maria de los Angeles Torres and Francisco Velasco Caballero state, “Global cities continue to be key players in a global economy, and this includes stances towards their labor forces. Best practices include providing education for immigrant children, creating safe zones in which local governments protect immigrants from indiscriminate deportation policies, and the encouragement of immigrant civic participations.”⁴⁹ If Connecticut wishes to develop cities with global importance, it must prioritize the wellbeing of its immigrant residents.

Further, Torres and Caballero point out the possibility for legal action and reform at the local city level as immigration policy and reform remains at a standstill at the federal level, “In the face of national impasse, can we conceive of a smaller scale citizenship that can provide rights and responsibilities to the denizens of a local region? Let’s say that local governments begin a process of “regularizing” or “legalizing” that, to some extent, provides not only services and protections, but also extends a local voice in political affairs. Can we conceive of a citizenship that is located in “place of residency” and perhaps tied to an individuals’ contributions to the local economy?”⁵⁰ While local “citizenship” rights may be far off, this same strategy can be applied to smaller scale reforms such as education equity for the undocumented immigrant population. If Connecticut’s cities use its resources and funds to educate undocumented immigrants in the public school system, then they should extend the effort to see these students through and make higher education equally accessible to all Connecticut students. Connecticut

⁴⁹ Maria de los Angeles Torres and Francisco Velasco Caballero, *Global Cities and Immigrants* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2015), 289.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 290.

State and City governments do not need to wait for Congress to take action in order to change the lives of the immigrants in their own communities.

Lastly, Connecticut stands to gain economic benefits if undocumented immigrants are able to receive higher education. When exploring how the United States will benefit from the introduction of DACA, the Center for American Progress states that DACA recipients' "lawful work authorization will make them less vulnerable to wage theft and workplace exploitation. These factors all lead to higher wages and more job security, which translate into more tax revenue generated and more economic activity across the nation."⁵¹ This national trend is no different in the state of Connecticut.

The way in which undocumented immigrants will be able to hold jobs with higher wages is by receiving a college degree. DACA's work permit allows undocumented immigrants to both attend college, as students can work before and during college to pay for tuition, and to hold jobs after college that match the skillsets of a college degree holder. The state will benefit economically from increased tuition rates at public colleges and universities and from increased tax revenue as a larger percent of the population holds high paying jobs. If DACA is taken away, not only will undocumented immigrants be less able to attend college, but they will also no longer be able to hold high wage jobs, and will be forced to return to the informal workplace, which the state and federal government cannot benefit from financially.

The Center for American Progress also reported that with the continuation of DACA, in addition to the enactment of the new executive order that President Obama announced in November 2014, the gross domestic product (GDP) would increase by

⁵¹ Silva Mathema, "Assessing the Economic Impacts of Granting Deferred Action Through DACA and DAPA," *Center for American Progress*, 2 Apr, 2015. Center for American Progress, Web. 7 Apr, 2015.

\$230 billion over ten years throughout the United States. In addition, the income of all Americans would increase by \$124 billion over ten years, and the earnings of eligible undocumented immigrants would increase by \$103 billion over ten years.⁵² This proves that DACA not only increases the wages for undocumented immigrants themselves and for the government, but it also increases wages of the general American population. Further, an average of 28,814 jobs would be created each year over the next ten years if recipients of DACA and President Obama’s new executive order were able to work legally.⁵³ These trends prove the economic gains for the U.S. if DACA recipients are able to attend higher education and subsequently receive a high paying job, and show the need for the passing of President Obama’s new executive order, which is currently halted by a Federal Judge in Texas.

If this judge’s ruling is overturned and the expansion of DACA is enacted, the nation’s tax revenue will increase by \$41 billion over the next ten years.⁵⁴ Ironically, one of the judge’s reasons for ruling on the side of the 26 states against President Obama’s executive order was the fact that the expansion of DACA would require financial burdens to states, as states would have to issue driver’s licenses to recipients. While each state would have some costs from supplying driver’s licenses, the huge increases in GDP, incomes, and jobs certainly make up for these small costs. In fact, after the judge’s ruling, “The Department of Justice, recognizing the big economic benefits from these deferred action programs, filed for an emergency stay at the 5th Circuit Court that asked to lift the judge’s ruling, and 14 states and the District of Columbia have filed an amicus brief in

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

support of the stay.”⁵⁵ Overall, with the passing of President Obama’s expansion of DACA, federal and local governments’ economies will benefit profoundly. Presently, DACA continues to increase tax revenue as undocumented immigrants attain higher education and are hired in high quality jobs.

Chapter 3. *Methods*

Interviews with DACA recipients, DREAMers, immigration lawyers, non-profit service providers, youth organizers, and college administrators were conducted throughout the state of Connecticut in order to collect qualitative data on how DACA has affected recipients’ access to higher education. A set of interview questions was customized for each group, as the desired outcome of each conversation was slightly different.

For DACA recipients the goal was to understand their process of applying to college, find out their main incentive in applying for DACA, identify how DACA has contributed to their educational experience, and understand their experiences as undocumented youth in general. Questions were asked such as, ‘Discuss any educational or career aspirations that changed after receiving DACA.’ And, ‘How did your DACA status contribute to the furthering of your education? Would you still be where you are today if DACA had not been announced?’

For DREAMers who do not have DACA, the conversation was still focused on discussing the individual’s process of applying and staying in college. However, these conversations also focused on the difficulties experienced due to their lack of DACA status. Questions included, ‘What do you believe are the most significant barriers to

⁵⁵ Ibid.

college enrollment, persistence, and completion that remain for undocumented immigrant youth?’ And, ‘Please explain your process of applying to college and any difficulties you encountered. Feel free to discuss any personal challenges or any difficulties you encountered from colleges and other institutions.’

When speaking with immigration lawyers who helped immigrant youth fill out their DACA applications, the goal of the conversation was to understand the DACA application process in Connecticut, specifically. This included finding out lawyers’ involvement in DACA outreach and education, the costs for application services, and the lawyers’ opinion on how the DACA application process will affect the application process of any prospective future immigration reform, such as the national DREAM Act. In addition, lawyers gave their opinions on their clients’ educational opportunities, attainment, and aspirations once receiving DACA. Questions included, ‘Do you find that the clients you serve are interested in DACA in order to obtain a work permit, further their education, or both? Please describe how these choices are made.’ And, ‘Do you find that unauthorized youth in your community are unwilling or afraid to expose their immigration status? If so, discuss factors that contribute to this fear.’

Interviews with non-profit service providers were similar to conversations with lawyers as both assist in the application process. However, non-profits tend to be more involved in the community and have a better idea of how DACA youth vary from city to city. Therefore, these conversations also included questions about what steps are being taken to help DACA youth achieve higher education as well as questions about the overall atmosphere of acceptance or intolerance towards undocumented immigrants in the given city. Questions included, ‘What impact has DACA and/or the passing of the

Connecticut DREAM Act in 2011 had on increasing rates of immigrant students attending college?’ And, ‘Discuss any colleges in the area that have been receptive or eager to admit DACA/immigrant students. How do these colleges reach out to immigrant students?’

Connecticut Students for a Dream is the only youth-led organization that was interviewed. As this organization spearheaded outreach and education for DACA when it was first announced, has a program focused specifically on access to higher education for undocumented students, and is currently pursuing legislation to obtain institutional aid for undocumented students, this interview was particularly customized. Further, C4D is special in that many of the people that are running the organization and work to connect DACA recipients with higher education are undocumented immigrants themselves. Questions included, ‘Describe the role your organization plays in advocacy campaigns related to college access or tuition equity for DACA youth.’ And, ‘Do you know of any youth who have dropped out of high school or college after receiving DACA so they can work full time? Discuss the challenges that DACA grantees face in balancing the incentives of working versus attending school.’

Speaking with colleges and high schools can be very informative sources, but these conversations are hard to arrange. As DACA, in-state tuition, and other benefits for undocumented students are relatively new and policies are not as formally grounded as they are for documented students, there does not tend to be a faculty member or administrator who is well-informed about the situation or about policies for undocumented students at colleges. Therefore, finding someone to interview at a college or high school can be challenging, even in cities with the highest percentages of

immigrant students. Further, to prevent discrimination, both colleges and high schools are not permitted to keep statistics on the undocumented population in their student body. Therefore, information regarding how high schools and colleges either help students to access higher education, or prevent them from doing so, is based on firsthand experiences from DACA recipients, immigration lawyers, and non-profit service providers alike.

Interviews were used in this study as the primary source of collecting data because they provide factual evidence while also exposing the personal and emotional factors that play into this issue.⁵⁶ In the DREAMer movement, it has been demonstrated that one of the most effective ways to bring about change is through sharing stories. These interviews not only collected data on DACA recipients' increased access to higher education, but also gave DREAMers an opportunity to share their stories and bring more awareness to their need for equality in the education system. These interviews became an outlet for DREAMers to share their experiences and struggles, potentially allowing them to be heard by a greater community than they might otherwise be able to reach. For a population that spends so much time living in the shadows with their heads down, this was a valuable and empowering experience.

Chapter 4. *Interviews with DREAMers*

Interviews were conducted with eight DREAMers (six with DACA status, and two without DACA status). This chapter discusses the evidence from these interviews that shows how DACA has increased recipients' access to higher education in

⁵⁶ Cochrane, Allan. "Interviews." *Researching the City*. Ed. Kevin Ward. London: Sage Publications, 2014. 41. Print.

Connecticut. Two DACA recipients interviewed chose not to pursue higher education once they received DACA as they had full-time jobs and family responsibilities such as taking care of children and were past the typical ‘college-going’ age; therefore, their interviews are not discussed in this chapter.

I. Experiences Applying to College

The process of applying to college for most DREAMers was difficult for a number of reasons. First, undocumented students tend to be the first generation in their family to apply to college in the United States, meaning, there is little knowledge within the family about the confusing college application process.⁵⁷ Second, it is difficult for undocumented students to decide what kind of college would be best for them and, in particular, which college will be able to offer them the most financial aid. Some students take the approach of applying to private colleges because they can offer a full scholarship for undocumented students, while some opt to pay the in-state tuition at public universities and community colleges. Third, the experiences of each DACA recipient were affected by the city or suburb in which they live. As Chapter 6 will show, there is a greater availability of resources for undocumented immigrants within cities; therefore, DACA recipients who live in the suburbs have more trouble applying to college. This is due to a number of reasons, such as lack of information about the college process for undocumented students from college counselors in suburban high schools and a lack of resources for undocumented immigrants within close proximity to suburban areas. This dynamic can be seen throughout this chapter when reviewing the

⁵⁷ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

stories of Camila and Estefania, sisters from Rockville, Connecticut, a highly suburbanized town.

In 2011 Grace was about to graduate high school and applied to Trinity College, the University of New Haven, and the University of Connecticut (UCONN). She had heard informally that Trinity College was very receptive towards immigrant students and was hoping for a scholarship from it. However, she was rejected from both Trinity College and the University of New Haven. Further, the University of New Haven was unsure how to handle undocumented students and Grace felt very discriminated against by it. When she opened up to someone at the University of New Haven about her status, the individual did not try to help her or answer her questions. However, to her surprise, she was accepted to UCONN. In her first year she had to pay out-of-state tuition because the CT DREAM Act had not yet passed. Grace now feels that her education is worth so much because of how hard she had to fight to get it.⁵⁸

Eduardo graduated from New Britain High School and dreamed of attending Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). After applying and being accepted, he realized the university was going to charge him out-of-state tuition because the CT DREAM Act states that students must have gone to a Connecticut high school for four years. Eduardo had only attended school in Connecticut for three and a half years, because he moved to Connecticut from Georgia in ninth grade. CCSU would not help him find a solution that would allow him to pay in-state tuition. It advised him to take only one or two classes, but Eduardo realized that he would not graduate for eight years if he took that approach. As the school of his dreams slipped out of his fingertips,

⁵⁸ Grace, Personal Interview.

Eduardo was heartbroken but decided to attend community college to keep his education on track.⁵⁹

When Eduardo was accepted to Capital Community College, he was charged out-of-state tuition again. But, this time, he went to the registrar and asked why he was charged out-of-state tuition. The staff asked him if he went to high school and graduated in Connecticut and he said yes. Confusedly, the staff allowed him to pay in-state tuition. Eduardo believes that if staff had asked more questions and realized he was undocumented, he would have been charged for out-of-state tuition. Luckily, the registrar did not, and Eduardo was given the opportunity to get a college education for which he had worked so hard. This is a rare example of an incident in which misinformation surrounding the policies of undocumented students worked in favor of an undocumented student. However, now at Capital Community College, Eduardo has difficulties finding the answers to questions relating to his status, as there is no trained faculty member that can help undocumented students.⁶⁰

For Michael, a student at UCONN, even thinking about going to college was hard for him in high school, as many of his classmates in Bridgeport did not see college in their future. Many struggled just to graduate from high school. However, Michael triumphed through this confusing time and applied to 15 colleges in Connecticut and surrounding states. Although he was accepted to many colleges, he could only consider Fairfield University and UCONN because of the scholarships they offered to him.

⁵⁹ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

⁶⁰ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

Michael ended up choosing UCONN and he reports that it has been a life-changing experience for him so far.⁶¹

Camila and Estefania, twin sisters who arrived in the U.S. in 2009, do not qualify for DACA because they had not been here for five years when DACA was announced. Therefore, their experiences applying for and attending college are slightly different than DACA recipients. In addition, Camila and Estefania come from a highly suburban area with few undocumented immigrants, which also caused some issues when applying to college. When applying for college, Camila and Estefania did not just have to think about an interesting topic for their college essays, they also had to figure out how the American college system worked. The sisters became part of C4D's College Access Program, which provided them with a mentor to help with essay writing, completing the common application, and finding scholarships. Both Camila and Estefania applied to Yale University, Wesleyan University, and Trinity College because they hoped to receive full scholarships. However, both sisters were rejected from all three private colleges. They ended up attending Manchester Community College and hope to transfer to UCONN and then go on to medical school where Camila wants to be a pediatrician and Estefania wants to be an OBGYN. People told Camila and Estefania that they were aiming too high by applying to such prestigious private colleges, but the sisters do not believe this to be true. Camila does not believe they were well informed enough when filling out the applications and states, "This whole experience made me realize that I do not need to go to a school like that to be who I am."⁶²

⁶¹ Michael, Personal Interview.

⁶² Camila and Estefania, Personal Interviews.

Julia, the only DREAMer interviewed from out-of-state and who attends a private college, also had a different experience applying to and attending college than the other DREAMers interviewed. Julia received a leadership merit scholarship from the Posse Foundation, which identifies young leaders in the community who may be overlooked in the traditional scholarship process. Once selected, deans from Posse's partner colleges come to a workshop where they select students to apply to their college. As a foundation, Posse provides scholarships to undocumented students, but it ultimately depends on a participating college to decide whether to accept an undocumented student. Through the Posse process, Julia was approached by Trinity College to apply for admission and was subsequently accepted.⁶³

II. Scholarships and Financial Aid for DREAMers

Almost all undocumented students require financial aid for college, even when paying the in-state tuition price. But undocumented students are not eligible for federal or state financial aid in Connecticut and finding private scholarships without citizenship can be extremely difficult. Five out of six of the DREAMers interviewed who currently attend college referred to the seasonal list of scholarships prepared by C4D for undocumented students through its College Access Program.⁶⁴ Other students received scholarships from their high schools,⁶⁵ or from their colleges, once they were accepted.⁶⁶

Although she applied for countless private scholarships, Grace was unable to receive any financial help. There are very few private scholarships that are just for

⁶³ Julia, Personal Interview.

⁶⁴ Camila, Estefania, Grace, Eduardo, Personal Interviews.

⁶⁵ Estefania and Camila, Personal Interviews.

⁶⁶ Michael and Eduardo Personal Interviews.

undocumented students. Therefore, when applying for private scholarships that are open to U.S. citizens as well, Grace stated, “you kind of have to be [one of the] top five students to stand a chance. Because if not, you’re probably the last one they look at.”⁶⁷

Undocumented students’ inability to receive federal or state aid is particularly frustrating for students who attend public colleges and universities because 15% of the tuition they pay each year goes to institutional aid, a pool of need-based financial aid for the student body. This is a pool of funding that undocumented students cannot currently access.

“The school was receptive to me in the sense that I was accepted. But I don’t feel comfortable because I don’t have any type of aid to help me pay for school and I feel like I have the right to at least apply for institutional aid but I don’t at all. I don’t even have that option even though I pay into this pool of money. So far I’ve contributed around \$21,000 and I’ve only gone as a part-time student. Every semester is stressful because I don’t know if I’m going to be able to go to school. It’s always a guessing game and it’s just really difficult.”⁶⁸

Since Grace could not receive any financial aid, she has had to attend UCONN part-time for the last four years and is only in her sophomore year. She predicts it will take her seven years to complete her college education.⁶⁹

Eduardo was able to receive some help from “The Foundation” at Capital Community College. It pays \$1,500 towards his tuition. Eduardo found out about this resource through his own networking; it was not advertised to the undocumented community in any way.⁷⁰

Michael represents the lucky but small population of undocumented students to receive full scholarships to college. He was offered the Bridgeport Scholarship from Fairfield University. This scholarship grants full tuition to Fairfield University for

⁶⁷ Grace, Personal Interview.

⁶⁸ Grace, Personal Interview.

⁶⁹ Grace, Personal Interview.

⁷⁰ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

applicants who graduated from one of four high schools in Bridgeport and whose families earn under \$50,000 a year. In the end, he turned down the Bridgeport Scholarship for a full merit-based scholarship from UCONN. Michael's brother faced a similar path but with a radically different outcome. His brother, who also has DACA, received the Bridgeport Scholarship for Fairfield University as well. But, upon entering his second year at Fairfield, the Bridgeport Scholarship re-evaluated his family's income, only to find that it now equaled \$50,100, just \$100 over the income limit for the scholarship. The grant was taken away, and Michael's brother had to find an alternative way to pay for his education.⁷¹

Camila and Estefania received small private scholarships in order to attend community college but, when they spoke to the advisor of international students at Sacred Heart University about applying to the college as undocumented students, the advisor said she would not recommend that they apply because the college would not be able to give them enough financial aid. The advisor said this without seeing any part of their applications, making Camila and Estefania believe that they would not receive enough financial aid from any private college. This was harmful advice, as the sisters realized they would not be able to achieve all they wanted to due to their status, and they were left feeling shattered and defeated.⁷²

Julia's parents lost their jobs in her freshman year at Trinity College. Therefore, Posse's and Trinity's financial support was crucial for her. Julia stated, "Trinity has done a lot for me personally, I just want to make sure they continue to do so." However, Julia also expressed frustration and struggle with finding scholarships for which she was

⁷¹ Michael, Personal Interview.

⁷² Camila and Estefania, Personal Interviews.

eligible and receiving aid from her college. “It’s tough to communicate to people in the financial aid office what the policies are for undocumented students. There are so many things that I can’t prove to the financial aid office to show my need for financial aid because I’m undocumented.” Julia also said that she did not realize how being undocumented would affect her until she started to look for college scholarships.⁷³

III. Barriers to College Enrollment, Persistence, and Completion for DACA Youth

As can be seen from the struggles that undocumented students face in finding ways to fund their education, many barriers exist that keep undocumented and DACA youth from enrolling, persisting and completing higher education. Overall, all DREAMers interviewed agreed that finances are the biggest barrier to higher education for undocumented students. Therefore, this section will highlight the other barriers that remain for undocumented youth while also explaining the financial barrier in greater detail.

It will take Grace almost twice as long to graduate college than her classmates. This is due to a combination of being unable to receive financial aid and being the only legal worker in her household (thanks to the work permit she received with DACA status). While most college students only deal with the pressure of classes, Grace must juggle her academic workload and her part-time job to support her family and herself financially. Because of this responsibility Grace stated that there are times when she feels that she should be working full-time, as she is able to make the most money in her

⁷³ Julia, Personal Interview.

family as a legal worker, rather than going to school. This is one of the dilemmas that DACA presents.⁷⁴

For many undocumented youth, receiving DACA makes them the primary earner in their household. This places a huge amount of responsibility on DACA recipients as many are expected to work to pay for their education and to help support their families. Grace explained, “There’s pressure now that you have the work permit, so you better work. School is still first in your mind, but realistically it’s probably second because the burden to work falls on me. It’s definitely a barrier.”⁷⁵

For Eduardo, the biggest barrier for DACA recipients interested in higher education is the lack of information within the undocumented community about how to apply to college and who can apply to college. He also notes that many undocumented students have to take a semester off due to financial constraints and then never end up reenrolling; in other cases, students can only take two to three classes at a time and do not end up finishing because it takes too long. However, the true barrier, he says, is that many undocumented people think they cannot apply to college and are unwilling to ask the hard questions to find out their rights. Eduardo realizes that his outspokenness and courage to ask questions is unique, “I went ahead and asked many questions to people in charge, but most people won’t because they are afraid because of their status. As a result, they don’t get the answers and think school is not for them.” While finances are a struggle for Eduardo as well, his scholarships help him and he is dedicated to finishing school as quickly and as productively as possible. He has even received some job offers

⁷⁴ Grace, Personal Interview.

⁷⁵ Grace, Personal Interview.

that would have required him to quit school, but he turned them down, motivated to finish college.⁷⁶

Michael agrees with Eduardo that information about how to apply for college and for scholarships is limited, constituting a big barrier to undocumented young people. He noted that they think it is illegal for undocumented immigrants to go to college and therefore generally do not try to apply. In addition, Michael is very thankful for his scholarship that allows him to attend college and realizes that finances are a huge barrier to accessing college for most undocumented students.⁷⁷

Camila and Estefania believe the biggest barriers to college enrollment, persistence, and completion are finances, stress, family responsibilities, and uninformed staff members in colleges. Camila frequently has to inform college staff on policies for undocumented students and feels that she should not have to do this. In addition, Camila and Estefania, without DACA status, work at a Mexican fast-food restaurant to help pay for community college. “It’s really hard work and a big change to not be spending all my free time studying” Estefania said. They work Fridays from 3:00p.m. to 9:00p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 10:30a.m. to 5:00p.m. Lastly, both Camila and Estefania think another barrier to applying to college is being afraid of what people will do if they find out they are undocumented. This barrier was not mentioned by any of the DACA recipients and shows the increased security that DACA recipients feel when applying to college, in contrast to students who do not have DACA status.⁷⁸

For Julia, the biggest barrier to her college persistence is feeling the familial pressure to provide for her family. As the only legal worker in her household, she feels

⁷⁶ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

⁷⁷ Michael, Personal Interview.

⁷⁸ Estefania and Camila, Personal Interviews.

guilty being a full-time student when she could be working full-time to support her parents and sibling. Julia explained this pressure and the hard decision to stay in school,

“I received DACA before my parents lost their jobs and they paid for my fees while they were working. It was a situation where I was the only person in the family who could work, and my parents, who had paid for this authorization, no longer had their jobs. And I was sitting there with an authorization, they couldn’t find anybody who was bold enough to hire them because of their immigration status, and I was spending my days in school. Of course my parents are very prideful, but a year passed with no job. Every time I called my mother she had some story about looking for a job. I couldn’t focus on school anyway so there was serious consideration of working rather than going to school.”

But Julia has made the best of her situation. She has four on-campus jobs now, positions she could not have secured without DACA, and works as much as she can to help her family financially.⁷⁹

Interestingly, Julia, as the only DACA recipient interviewed attending a private college, also expressed concerns about barriers that would inhibit her success in the workforce in the future. No other DACA recipient or DREAMer brought up this concern, as others were more focused on the day-to-day barriers that existed for them more immediately. Julia identified the following barrier to the workforce as an undocumented student,

“I don’t really have examples in my family of professionals—people who work in a formal setting with a formal job. I don’t know the proper ways to network. I don’t know the proper ways to communicate with my boss. My career development advisor has to go through baby steps with me because I really have no background in the professional field. Of course I try to keep up my academics so that this is not part of the issue when trying to get a job.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Julia, Personal Interview.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

This focused concern on future success in the formal workplace is, perhaps, due to the fact that Julia is the only DREAMer interviewed who attends a private college. Specifically, this could stem from the aspirations a private college, such as Trinity College, evokes in its students as well as the availability of high quality career development advisors. Further, this sort of pressure is likely to arise when surrounded by peers that come from families with social and cultural capital, including examples of professionals in the workforce. With the low rates of undocumented students accepted to private colleges, very few undocumented immigrants are able to benefit from the career advising, mentoring, and encouragement that private colleges offer.

In addition, while Julia mentioned the difficulties she might encounter when looking for a job after college, she displayed no doubt that she would, in fact, get a job after college. This is unlike the responses of other DREAMers whose concerns are more focused on getting through present challenges. This outlook, focused on the future, reflects Julia's confidence that she will be able to make full use of her degree after college.⁸¹

IV. Ways in which DACA Furthers Higher Education

The most frequent point made in all of the interviews conducted is that the greatest benefit provided to DREAMers from DACA is the work permit it provides. And, for DACA recipients in the "college-going age group", around ages 18-23, this translates into being able both to afford college tuition and to help their families financially. In comparing the jobs that DACA recipients hold with the jobs that undocumented youth without DACA hold, it can be seen that DACA recipients are able to get higher quality

⁸¹ Ibid.

and higher paying jobs with a legal work permit. This results not only in more money but also in more impressive resumes and better employment opportunities in the future. For example, DACA recipients interviewed hold jobs and paid internships at Travelers Insurance, Bridgeport City Hall, and the Marriott Hotel. In contrast, the DREAMers without DACA who were interviewed work at a Mexican fast-food restaurant. In addition, several DACA recipients stated that their jobs are higher paying than their parents' jobs.⁸² This section provides DACA recipients' views on how DACA has contributed to the furthering of their education the most.

As chance would have it, as soon as Grace received DACA, her parents became less financially stable. As a result, Grace had to start paying for school on her own. If it were not for DACA and the work permit, she would not have been able to get the high quality education she is receiving at UCONN, and possibly would not be able to attend college at all. Grace has a full-time job but can still only afford to take a couple of classes at a time. Still, she says that, when she received DACA, her career aspirations changed and she saw, for the first time, the prospect of being able to use her degree after college in a high paying job.

Eduardo always knew he would receive a higher education. But, growing up in the U.S. as an undocumented student, he was unsure how he would make this happen. When DACA was announced, it was appealing to Eduardo because he realized the work permit would allow him to work harder and with more security so he could take more classes in college, graduate sooner, and find a successful job. While at Capital

⁸² Grace, Personal Interview.

Community College, having DACA proved more useful than Eduardo could have imagined.⁸³

Eduardo came across a program at his college called the Capital Crossroads to Careers, which provides tuition assistance and a paid internship with Travelers Insurance or United Healthcare. However, the qualifications stated that applicants needed to be U.S. citizens. Eduardo went to speak to the director of the program, who told him to apply anyway. When he was selected for an interview, Eduardo told his story to the program directors and explained that he has a work permit through DACA and was able to work legally for the program. Ultimately, he was accepted into one of the few spots in the program, thanks to his DACA status. Eduardo works at Travelers Insurance part-time during the year and full-time during the summer.⁸⁴

Eduardo is very grateful for DACA and realizes that it is the biggest contributing factor to the furtherance of his education. “More than anything the work permit was the best part of DACA. If I didn’t have the work permit I wouldn’t have gotten my job at Travelers and wouldn’t be able to go to school and get an education. I would have had to find a job in a far-away town that pays minimum wage and would only be able to take a couple of classes a semester.” Instead, Eduardo now takes six classes a semester and has a high paying and prestigious internship at Travelers Insurance.⁸⁵

In high school, Michael was exposed to the struggle and frustration that comes with not being able to work in the U.S. legally. He was offered an internship but could not take it because DACA had not yet been introduced. However, once he received DACA he worked at the Mayor’s Conservation Corps in City Hall in Bridgeport over the

⁸³ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

summer. Next summer, he has jobs lined up at People United Community Foundation reviewing grants and at Community Health Network in corporate communications.

DACA has helped Michael obtain work experience throughout college, which will help him get a job after college. Michael is extremely happy to be at UCONN now and to be just like the rest of the students there, “I don’t feel poor anymore. There’s always food around and my own room. I have everything I need here.”⁸⁶

For Julia, receiving DACA has made her college life much more enjoyable and manageable. Julia said, “DACA makes my experiences in college easier. I can work and pay for books and other personal expenses that I wouldn’t be able to afford otherwise.” In addition, graduate school is more in Julia’s mindset now that she has DACA, a step she did not think would be possible before receiving DACA. For now, she is focused on building her experience and qualifications and keeping up her grades so she will be a competitive applicant for graduate schools.⁸⁷

Lastly, Julia is the president of Trinity College’s only immigrant rights club, called Stop the Raids. As part of the club, Julia held a forum about undocumented immigrants, in which many undocumented students came out to the public as undocumented and immigration advocates and lawyers educated the public on policies affecting undocumented immigrants in Connecticut. Julia stated that she would not have felt comfortable holding such an event and sharing her status with the student body if she did not have DACA. The new status gave her the courage to inform the college of the experiences of undocumented immigrants in the community. Further, Julia believes that

⁸⁶ Michael, Personal Interview.

⁸⁷ Julia, Personal Interview.

there would have been backlash from the Trinity community about an undocumented student attending the college if she did not have DACA.⁸⁸

Camila and Estefania do not have DACA, and, therefore, their higher education experiences were adversely affected. Camila and Estefania qualified to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, which is the English as a Second Language version of the English section of the SAT. However, the test required a \$70 registration fee and was only offered in Danbury, Connecticut. Camila and Estefania's family could not afford the fee nor find transportation to Danbury from their home in Rockville, Connecticut. Taking the TOEFL would have likely improved the sisters' SAT scores significantly, as Camila stated that she was confident in her grades when applying to college, but not in her SAT scores.⁸⁹

Camila and Estefania were both rejected from the private colleges to which they applied. Perhaps they would have been accepted to one of these colleges, which have the resources to provide full scholarships, if their SAT scores had been stronger or if the college knew they would be able to work on campus, once accepted, through a work permit from DACA. Without a stable financial situation, a benefit that DACA facilitates, Camila and Estefania's educational opportunities suffered.⁹⁰

Chapter 5. *Interviews with Attorneys, Non-Profit Service Providers, and Youth*

Organizers

In four cities in Connecticut, three attorneys, two non-profit service providers, and one youth organizer were interviewed. These professionals were able to provide a

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Camila and Estefania, Personal Interviews.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

deeper look into the experiences of applicants in their particular city and how they compare to those of DACA applicants in other cities in Connecticut. In addition, as they have met with and guided most DACA applicants in the state, they were able to give an account of how immigrants' educational aspirations changed upon receiving DACA and the extent to which DACA has increased recipients' access to higher education.

This chapter will discuss the results from interviews with private immigration attorney Douglas Penn in Norwalk, immigration attorney Sister Mary Ellen Burns of Apostle Immigrant Services in New Haven, immigration attorney Joanne Lewis of Connecticut Legal Services in Bridgeport, immigration counselor Alex Arévalo of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, non-profit service provider Alicia Kinsman of International Institute of Connecticut (IICONN) in Bridgeport, and director of CT Students for a Dream, Lucas Codognolla.

I. Clients' Reasons for Applying for DACA

Most attorneys and non-profit service providers agree that undocumented youth want to apply for DACA in order to obtain a work permit and to further their education. Some brought up other incentives for applying for DACA, such as increased security from deportation or a sense of belonging. Several disagreed on which incentive was the most important to the undocumented population.

Douglas Penn believes accessing education is a big part of what makes DACA attractive to undocumented youth. In addition, when interviewed, he could only think of one client who is of college-going age and is only attending college, rather than working while attending college. All of his other clients go to school and have a job, or only have

a job. Therefore, the ability to access higher education is very much dependent on obtaining a work permit and a job, and many DACA youth are able to provide for their families and contribute money towards their schooling by receiving DACA.⁹¹

Sister Mary Ellen Burns, of Apostle Immigrant Services, helps many DACA applicants fill out their applications in New Haven and has seen firsthand the reasons that undocumented youth are eager to receive a DACA status. Sister Burns stated that there is one part on the DACA application that asks why the applicant has a necessity for work authorization. Most of Apostle Immigrant Services' clients will say they need authorization in order to be able to pay for their education. Of Sister Burns's clients, the only DACA applicants that do not use DACA to get an education are the older applicants who have families or jobs and more established lives. But, 15 to 22-year-olds want to work to go to college and to help their parents financially.⁹²

Sister Burns also spoke about the emotional factors that play into the desire to obtain DACA, "Their social security number gives them a sense of legitimacy and a sense that they're not totally rejected and that they're taking a step forward as participants in civic life. It's nice to see that two years later some have graduated from high school and are at least part-time students at a university and are achieving some of their goals with a little bit more ease."⁹³

Alex Arévalo of Catholic Charities of Fairfield County believes that youth are interested in DACA in order to obtain a work permit and to further their education. He states that it serves as a motivational tool for undocumented youth to finish high school,

⁹¹ Douglas Penn, Personal Interview.

⁹² Sister Mary Ellen Burns, Personal Interview.

⁹³ Ibid.

as they can start a college fund for themselves and move on to higher education.⁹⁴ Alicia Kinsman of ICONN agrees with Mr. Arévalo and believes that obtaining a work permit and wanting to obtain higher education go hand in hand as the work permit is the means to furthering one's education.⁹⁵

Lucas Codognolla, the director of C4D and a DACA recipient himself, described how many undocumented immigrants do prioritize the ability to work and help their families over educational opportunities because of the low-income realities that exist for most immigrant families. If there is an opportunity to work legally, he explained, they are going to take it even if it means making some sacrifices to their educational success.⁹⁶

Overall, attorneys and non-profit service providers agree that obtaining a work permit is the most important objective for DACA applicants. Further, most times the work permit is needed in order for undocumented youth to fulfill their plans of receiving a higher education.

II. Barriers to College Enrollment, Persistence, and Completion for DACA Youth

Every attorney, non-profit service provider, and youth organizer believed that money is the number one barrier to college enrollment, persistence, and completion because undocumented students are blocked from federal and state financial aid and come from low-income families. Mr. Penn said that, because of financial barriers, undocumented students have trouble maintaining their grades as most students are working while attending school at the same time. In addition, he believes that, even for students who are able to afford college, they have trouble getting accepted because they

⁹⁴ Alex Arévalo, Personal Interview.

⁹⁵ Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

⁹⁶ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

do not know how to answer questions about their immigration status when filling out college applications.⁹⁷

Sister Burns explained that, in Connecticut, even going to community college is very expensive when the student has to earn the entire tuition himself. In addition, coming from New Haven where foreign-born individuals are 16% of the population, Sister Burns believes that some undocumented students struggle in college due to living outside of an immigrant neighborhood for the first time. As the majority of undocumented immigrants tend to be concentrated in a few cities, leaving these relatively secure and accepting communities can be a challenge to many DACA youth. In addition, as many DACA youth are the first generation in their families to go to college, at least in the United States, they are unlikely to know what to expect or how to navigate American college life.⁹⁸ The Migration Policy Institute confirms this point,

“Compounding the challenges associated with college affordability, unauthorized immigrant students—like others from groups that are underrepresented in higher education—often struggle to navigate a confusing array of requirements and resources on college campuses. They also frequently juggle adult responsibilities and concerns, including work, caring for family members, and dealing with immigration-related issues and fears, each of which serves as a barrier to college completion.”⁹⁹

Alicia Kinsman elaborated on this barrier, “For people who are born to college attending parents, college is just what you do. So DACA students may not have that same instilled drive to go to college. Plus they’re going to be lower income and less able to afford it and not eligible for federal financial aid. It is also hard for undocumented youth to get loans because they tend to not have any credit.”¹⁰⁰ Alex Arévalo agreed

⁹⁷ Douglas Penn, Personal Interview.

⁹⁸ Sister Mary Ellen Burns, Personal Interview

⁹⁹ Hooker, McHugh, and Mathay, “Lessons from the Local Level.” 26.

¹⁰⁰ Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

with this point and added, that even if an undocumented student is at the top of their class, it is very unlikely that he or she will be awarded a private scholarship. This results in the top students in Connecticut being unable to further their education or having to attend a less prestigious university or community college.¹⁰¹

Lastly, Mr. Codognolla highlighted a barrier that colleges create by not publicizing their opportunities for immigrant or undocumented youth. “For example,” he said, “there are a lot of institutions that don’t outline their processes for undocumented students to access in-state tuition, and that policy has already been in place for three years.”¹⁰²

III. DACA’s Impact on Increasing Rates of Immigrant Students Attending College

Anecdotally, Mr. Penn believes that DACA has increased the likelihood of recent high school graduates attending college. He believes this to be true because DACA provides an opportunity to start thinking about the future. In fact, Mr. Penn stated that, when he looks at his clients’ high school report cards, in the context of their applications for DACA, he can almost always identify the moment the student found out that they were undocumented because their grades tend to plummet as they lose hope for the future. Feeling they will not be able to work or go to college after high school, they no longer see a point in working hard to get good grades. “DACA gives them their future back and motivates them to do well in school and hopefully go on to college.” Mr. Penn said.¹⁰³ Sister Burns agrees with this notion and stated that DACA pushes many

¹⁰¹ Alex Arévalo, Personal Interview.

¹⁰² Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

¹⁰³ Douglas Penn, Personal Interview.

undocumented students to continue their education, whether it is high school or college, because they now have some reassurance for the future.

Mr. Codognolla agrees that DACA is most effective in encouraging high school recipients to attend higher education. When receiving DACA in high school, he explains, students now feel like they have a purpose in finishing high school because they will be able to work afterwards and go to college. Mr. Codognolla remembers his own experience of finding out he was undocumented in high school and how his grades dropped as he no longer believed he could achieve the future he had dreamed of, especially as DACA had not yet been announced. Further, after being accepted to a prestigious private college in New York, but being unable to attend due to a lack of federal financial aid, Mr. Codognolla lost hope for his future. However, he followed his instilled desire to receive higher education and worked to put himself through community college, and ultimately transferred to and graduated from UCONN. Now, having received DACA, not only does Mr. Codognolla help other young undocumented immigrants to apply for DACA and access higher education, but also, he was able to be employed as a paralegal at an immigration law firm in Stamford, Connecticut. Mr. Codognolla, and his job as a paralegal, is an example of the benefits that DACA provides for its recipients after receiving a college degree.¹⁰⁴

Joanne Lewis of Connecticut Legal Services believes DACA has helped many youth achieve their goals and also has a greater impact on the rest of the community, “There are a lot of wonderful, intelligent people who are being held back by their lack of

¹⁰⁴ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

status. They have a lot to contribute, and not allowing them to do it is shortchanging our future.”¹⁰⁵

Ms. Kinsman stressed the benefits that arise for education from the work permit. She said, “Allowing these individuals to lawfully work gives them the chance to even think about higher education. If you’re just thinking about paying rent or helping your parents, you don’t have time to even think about going to college.” She also believes that DACA has increased recipients civic involvement in ways that do not stem from having a work permit, “being part of this program and movement has inspired lots of young people to just be more involved. For some people that means going to college to get more knowledge and to speak louder and advocate for relief. They want to be more civically and socially engaged and education definitely plays a role in that.”¹⁰⁶

Lastly, Mr. Arévalo is a strong believer that DACA serves as a catalyst for recipients’ desire to access higher education. As he has developed close relationships with many of his clients, he has been able to see a higher increase in high school graduation rates and higher motivation in his clients who have received DACA. Additionally, with DACA, students without financial support from parents, either because of deportation or low paying jobs, now have the tools to be successful through an education. Mr. Arévalo even goes as far as to walk his DACA clients to the admissions office at local colleges to help them enroll.¹⁰⁷

Originally from El Salvador, Mr. Arévalo is a formerly undocumented immigrant who completed four years at community college and received his masters. He did it all without papers and without DACA or in-state tuition. He shares his personal experience

¹⁰⁵ Joanne Lewis, Personal Interview.

¹⁰⁶ Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

¹⁰⁷ Alex Arévalo, Personal Interview.

with each DREAMer who comes to his office. “No one who meets me can say that I didn’t do my best to try to convince them that finding ways to invest in yourself through education is the way to go.” He hopes that those who meet him will go on to receive a higher education and will be inspired by his experiences.¹⁰⁸

With strong ties to his community, Mr. Arévalo emailed every parent in his database when DACA was announced, telling them to bring their child to his office to be screened for DACA eligibility. He also disseminated flyers with information about DACA broadly, realizing that many people are scared to talk about their status and would rather know the guidelines before seeking professional help. He filed more than 60 applications before the end of 2012, the year DACA was announced, and has filed more than 150 applications as of 2014. However, Mr. Arévalo is deeply concerned about the lack of information about DACA within the undocumented community. He estimates that only 600,000 of the 2 million DACA eligible youth are aware that DACA exists or that they are eligible.¹⁰⁹

Chapter 6. City Analysis

Name	Urban vs. Suburban	County	Characteristics
1. Bridgeport/Norwalk/Stamford	Urban	Fairfield County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44th highest number of DACA requests in metropolitan areas • Bridgeport: 27% Foreign-Born • Norwalk: 23% Foreign-Born • Stamford: 35% Foreign-Born¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “State and County QuickFacts,” *United States Census Bureau*. 5 Feb, 2015. United States Census Bureau, Web. 23 Feb, 2015.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large C4D presence • Atmosphere of “undocumented and unafraid”¹¹¹ • Support from local colleges: Fairfield University, University of Bridgeport, Housatonic Community College, and Norwalk Community College¹¹²
2. Hartford/New Britain	Urban	Hartford County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartford: 23% Foreign-Born • New Britain: 20% Foreign-Born¹¹³ • Large C4D presence • Atmosphere of “undocumented and unafraid”¹¹⁴ • Some support from Capital Community College¹¹⁵
3. New Haven	Urban	New Haven County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Haven: 16% Foreign-Born¹¹⁶ • Atmosphere of “undocumented and unafraid”¹¹⁷ • Legal and fundraising support from Yale Law School Immigration Clinic, New Haven Legal Services, and Apostle Immigrant Services¹¹⁸
4. Rockville	Suburban	Tolland County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockville: 5% Foreign-Born¹¹⁹ • Atmosphere of fear and unwillingness to expose undocumented status¹²⁰ • Lack of information about DACA within public school system¹²¹
5. Plainville/Manchester /West Hartford	Suburban	Hartford County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manchester: 11% Foreign-Born • West Hartford: 18% Foreign-Born¹²² • Little public activity from the undocumented community • Few resources for undocumented students in local colleges and universities¹²³

¹¹¹ Douglas Penn, Personal Interview.

¹¹² Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview; Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

¹¹³ “State and County QuickFacts”

¹¹⁴ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

¹¹⁵ Eduardo, Personal Interview.

¹¹⁶ “State and County QuickFacts”

¹¹⁷ Sister Mary-Ellen Burns, Personal Interview.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ “State and County QuickFacts”

¹²⁰ Camila and Estefania, Personal Interviews.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “State and County QuickFacts”

¹²³ Grace, Personal Interview.

6. Windham	Suburban	Windham County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windham: 5% Foreign-Born¹²⁴ • Some C4D presence • Little public activity from the undocumented community • Lack of widespread information to the undocumented community
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Table 1. Characteristics and degree of civic participation from the undocumented community in cities/towns studied.

As of 2013, almost 14% of Connecticut residents were foreign born. Of the foreign born population, 20.6% are undocumented or hold temporary visas.¹²⁵ While conducting fieldwork throughout Connecticut, DREAMers, legal service providers, attorneys, and community college administrators were interviewed in ten different cities/towns in Connecticut. Based on a number of factors—including urbanization, suburbanization, size of undocumented population, and C4D involvement—the experiences of DACA applicants from the different geographic areas of Connecticut vary significantly. Primarily, there is a wide range in the amount of fear that DACA youth feel from one region to another. Therefore, it can be assumed that the amount of fear that an undocumented immigrant feels in regard to his or her status can be largely attributed to demographics and dynamics within the particular city or town in which they live.

As can be seen in Table 1., the biggest determinant of civic participation for the undocumented community is urbanization, versus suburbanization. The most significant characteristic is the magnitude of the immigrant population in cities, in comparison to suburban towns in Connecticut. Taking into consideration the fact that 76% of DACA eligible youth are from Mexico and from Central American countries, it is logical to look at the percentages of Latino or Hispanic residents in Connecticut’s metropolitan areas

¹²⁴ “State and County QuickFacts”

¹²⁵ “NIWAP Demographics Map,” *The National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project*. 2012. The National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project, Web. 23 Feb, 2015.

that are not foreign-born.¹²⁶ These statistics can be found in Table 2. below. While the U.S. Census does aim to count all undocumented immigrants, it is plausible that some undocumented immigrants are not counted in the foreign born category in an attempt to keep their identities hidden. Therefore, some undocumented immigrants may be counted in the foreign born category and not the Latino or Hispanic category and vice versa.

Name	% Hispanic or Latino	% Foreign-Born
Hartford	43%	23%
Bridgeport	38%	27%
New Britain	37%	20%
New Haven	27%	16%
Stamford	24%	35%
Norwalk	24%	23%
Manchester	15%	11%
Rockville	12%	5%
Windham	11%	5%
West Hartford	10%	18%
Plainville	N/A	N/A

Table 2. Percentages of Hispanic or Latino Residents in cities/towns studied compared to percentages of Foreign-Born Residents in cities/towns studied

Of the areas studied, Hartford (43%), Bridgeport (38%), New Britain (37%), and New Haven (27%) have the largest percentages of Hispanic or Latino residents.¹²⁷ While these percentages do not tell us the number of citizens, naturalized citizens, temporary visa holders, or undocumented immigrants within the Hispanic and Latino population, it can be assumed that most of the DACA recipients are included in these percentages, as the majority of DACA recipients are Hispanic. However, it must be taken into account that some people in these populations are U.S. citizens, naturalized citizens, or ineligible for DACA. For example, it is known that Bridgeport has a higher percentage of DACA

¹²⁶ “DACA At the Two-Year Mark,”

¹²⁷ “State and County QuickFacts”

applicants than Hartford; however Hartford has 43% Hispanics or Latinos and Bridgeport has 38% Hispanics or Latinos. Hartford's higher percentage is most likely attributed to the large population of Puerto Ricans that live in Hartford and are U.S. citizens. In fact, in 2000, Puerto Ricans made up more than 80% of Hispanics in Hartford.¹²⁸ This fact is likely the explanation for Hartford's higher Latino or Hispanic population (43%) and lower foreign-born population (23%), compared to Fairfield County (Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford).

Overall, the percentages of foreign-born residents in the cities studied serves as the best proxy for the distribution of DACA recipients throughout Connecticut. These data state that the cities with the highest percentages of foreign-born residents are Stamford (35%), Bridgeport (27%), Norwalk (23%), and Hartford (23%). Estimating that these percentages correlate most closely with the percentages of DACA recipients in each city is corroborated by USCIS's data that reports that Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk has the 44th highest number of DACA requests in a metropolitan area in the United States (no other metropolitan areas in Connecticut are listed). The testimony of immigration lawyers', non-profit service providers', and youth organizers' provides similar corroboration. Alicia Kinsman from IICONN stated that, of their three offices, they serve the most DACA recipients in Bridgeport, followed by Stamford and then Hartford.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Michael Paul Sacks, "The Puerto Rican Effect on Hispanic Residential Segregation," in *Confronting Urban Legacy*, ed. Xiangming Chen and Nick Bacon. (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), 127.

¹²⁹ Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

Connecticut's cities are characterized by concentrations of poverty.¹³⁰ As 50% of DACA families in Connecticut have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, it is sensible that many undocumented families reside in the cities, as opposed to the suburbs, which are characterized by expensive housing and lack of public transportation. In addition, immigrants tend to form homogenous communities when resettling in the United States. This fosters tight-knit communities whose members speak the same language, contains familiar shops and products, and has a united support system. This situation is the case in both Fairfield County (Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford) and Hartford County (Hartford, New Britain), where immigrant groups have come together in particular communities.

In his chapter, *The Puerto Rican Effect on Hispanic Residential Segregation*, Michael Sacks outlines the nature of urban segregation based on race and ethnicity. He states that, "Households of racial and ethnic minority groups are far from randomly distributed across a metropolitan area."¹³¹ Immigrant families tend to live in the same areas for economic and social reasons. In the case of undocumented immigrants, this serves as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The negative consequence of undocumented immigrants being concentrated in cities is that they tend to live in low-income areas, resulting in lower quality schools, lack of transportation to high paying jobs, and higher rates of crime. The conditions that come from these disadvantages directly affect undocumented students' access to higher education.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Kneebone, Carey Nadeau, and Alan Berube, "The Re-Emergence of Concentrated Poverty: Metropolitan Trends in the 2000s," *Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings*, Nov 2011. The Brookings Institute, Web. 3 Apr, 2015. 9.

¹³¹ Sacks, "The Puerto Rican Effect on Hispanic Residential Segregation," 127.

Students concentrated within the city who attend schools in poor areas may not receive the same quality of standardized test preparation as students in affluent suburbs. As most undocumented students will require scholarships to attend college, they are judged exclusively on their grades, test scores, and extracurricular activities. If an undocumented student has not received a quality education in math or English or cannot afford to take the college entrance test multiple times, they are likely to have lower SAT scores when applying to college. This obstacle for upward mobility via high quality schooling is not easily solved as, “theory predicts that individuals with higher income and education and those with English-language proficiency will be more likely to seek entry into white neighborhoods and have greater success making such moves.”¹³²

Conversely, the advantage for undocumented immigrants concentrated in several cities is that they have more access to resources such as C4D events, which are held in highly populated areas. In his article in *The New York Times*, Kirk Semple describes the issues that arise for an undocumented immigrant who lives outside of the city,

“He quickly learned that being poor and undocumented and living far from the well-established immigrant networks found in the nation’s big cities made life especially difficult. There was the absence of public transportation (he cannot legally drive), the scarcity of lawyers with immigration expertise and a feeling of isolation fed by his inability to speak English and the lack of opportunities to learn it.”¹³³

In addition, immigrants are able to develop a greater sense of community, which can end up empowering them to come out of the shadows and rally for reform. Advocacy and service groups such as C4D and ICONN establish themselves in the same neighborhoods in which undocumented immigrants reside in order to serve the largest populations in

¹³² Ibid. 128.

¹³³ Kirk Semple. “As Immigrants Settle Beyond City Limits, Help is Hard to Find.” *The New York Times*, 15 Feb 2015, Web. 31 Mar 2015.

need. Consequentially, with a solidified immigrant community and organized advocacy support, an atmosphere of “coming out” and being “undocumented and unafraid” has developed in the cities. This is a concept less feasible in the suburbs as the immigrant community is smaller, and there is less widespread information and support for the undocumented community due to a lack of community organizers and advocates. Insufficient or inaccurate information on the situation of undocumented immigrants can result in disapproval towards the undocumented community, resulting in undocumented immigrants being fearful of exposing their status in their neighborhoods.

Another positive consequence of the large numbers of undocumented immigrants residing in cities is that it tends to generate support from local colleges and universities. This is most true in Fairfield County, where many DREAMers have had positive experiences with colleges, including receiving scholarships and overall acceptance from the local college administrations.¹³⁴ Fairfield University provides a program for intercity youth in Bridgeport whose parents make below a certain income, which provides almost a full merit-based scholarship; and undocumented students are eligible for this program.¹³⁵ In addition, the University of Bridgeport and Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport have been receptive towards undocumented students.¹³⁶ Lastly, Norwalk Community College’s Foundation recently opened up their scholarships to undocumented students, whether or not they have DACA status. This change was passed by a recommendation from the scholarship committee and approved by the Board of Directors. The amount of money a student receives depends on the number of

¹³⁴ Lucas Codognolla, Personal Interview.

¹³⁵ Alex Arévalo, Personal Interview.

¹³⁶ Alicia Kinsman, Personal Interview.

scholarship applicants and how much money the college has in its pool in a given year.¹³⁷

The experiences of undocumented immigrants in the suburbs vary significantly from those in cities. With a smaller population of undocumented immigrants, (e.g., foreign-born populations: West Hartford 18%, Manchester 11%, Rockville 5%, Windham 5%), there is a culture of keeping one's immigration status hidden and a stronger fear of getting caught by the police, academic administrators, or neighbors.¹³⁸ Further, DREAMers must travel into city centers in order to attend C4D meetings, clinics, and DACA information sessions, a logistic that can be difficult for youth without their own transportation or the presence of good public transportation. Lastly, the smaller percentage of undocumented people in the suburbs also results in a lack of widespread misinformation, especially surrounding DACA and the college application process for undocumented students. Semple corroborates the isolation in the suburbs, reporting on the experience of an undocumented mother where translators were not provided for parent-teacher conferences at her children's school in the suburbs of New York.¹³⁹

The two undocumented immigrants from Rockville, Connecticut, who were interviewed for this study, told their stories of the fear they experienced in their suburb, where they were the only undocumented students in their high school and felt they had to lie to their closest friends about their status.¹⁴⁰ At Rockville High School, Camila and Estefania's guidance counselor did not know how to help them apply to college. Taking

¹³⁷ Norwalk Foundation, Personal Interview.

¹³⁸ Camila, Personal Interview.

¹³⁹ Semple, "As Immigrants Settle Beyond City Limits, Help is Hard to Find."

¹⁴⁰ Camila and Estefania, Personal Interviews.

matters into their own hands, Camila and Estefania soon heard about C4D's College Access Program, in which undocumented students are paired up with mentors that help with the college application process, from finding scholarships to writing essays. In addition, the College Access Program provides trainings for uninformed high school college guidance counselors. Camila recommended this program to her guidance counselor in order to help future undocumented students apply to college.¹⁴¹

At Rockville High School, Camila believes that she, her sister, and one other student were the only undocumented immigrants. And, when it came time for her classmates to get their driver's licenses, questions arose from her friends. Living in a small suburb without many undocumented immigrants, Camila felt she had to lie to her friends and told them she could not get her driver's license because her immigration papers were still being processed.¹⁴²

Once Camila was participating in the College Access Program, she became more involved with C4D. She made an effort to attend team meetings in Hartford, and, through this experience, she felt comfortable speaking about her status openly for the first time. Camila had never been around many other undocumented students before, and hearing them talk about their status candidly and proudly was an extremely motivating moment for her.¹⁴³

Camila and Estefania are now enrolled at Manchester Community College. While they have developed a newfound sense of pride in their status, they still remain fearful while attending Manchester Community College. As the sisters did not qualify for DACA, they have no relief from deportation and interacting with authorities can be

¹⁴¹ Camila, Personal Interview.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

quite frightening. Camila stated that, for her, the fear comes from authorities, such as professors at school or the police. However, after working with C4D, Camila has come to realize that she is not doing anything wrong. “I was brought here by my parents to have a better future and why should I be afraid of this?” she said, “I really want to tell my story and share it with other people because it makes me feel better about myself. When I talk about it, I feel like I’m doing the right thing.”¹⁴⁴

In his book, “Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society,” Leo Chavez reported similar findings relating to undocumented immigrants’ comfort within the city. While some undocumented immigrants continue to feel out of place due to their legal status, Chavez states, “that many undocumented settlers believed they were part of the local community. They spoke of adapting to local life and becoming interested in local events, as did this Mexican immigrant: ‘I have adapted to the society. I’m concerned about the community. I’m interested in things that happen in this city, this country.’”¹⁴⁵ Another undocumented immigrant whom Chavez interviews attributes the fear he used to feel as an undocumented immigrant to the fact that he was a rural man. Now, as a resident of the city, he believes, “he has gone, in his own estimation, from being a rather timid rural person to someone who is not afraid to express himself, even with English-only speakers.”¹⁴⁶ Summarizing reasons that undocumented immigrants feel a connection to the cities in which they live, Chavez states, “Some undocumented immigrants believed they had earned the right to feel part of the community; they had paid their dues in one form or another. As a fellow from

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Chavez, 203.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Mexico said, ‘Since I have been here I have contributed to the community by paying taxes, and so I am part of the community.’”¹⁴⁷

This sort of thinking is very common among the young undocumented community today. In her book, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal*, Aviva Chomsky states, “This generation of undocumented youth coming of age in today’s United States is historically unprecedented.”¹⁴⁸ She later states, “In 2009, DREAMers founded the organization United We Dream to coordinate nationally and use the tactic of coming out or telling their own stories as a political weapon. ‘Leaders realized that encouraging young people to recount stories of their lives in hiding and of their thwarted aspirations could be liberating for them, and also compelling for skeptical Americans.’ Taking inspiration from the gay rights movement, many have themselves and encouraged others to come out and hold public coming-out ceremonies.”¹⁴⁹ As an affiliate of United We Dream, C4D holds coming-out ceremonies for youth who feel comfortable, and empowered by sharing their status and personal stories.

When discussing Puerto Ricans’ involvement in political life in Hartford, sociologist Michael Sacks states, “Also important was the fact that Hartford was a medium-sized city, which afforded ‘easy access to city hall, proximity to elected officials, an accessible media, and small electoral districts that allow direct contact with large numbers of voters even when financial resources are scarce.’ Puerto Rican influence could be far greater than in cities like Chicago and New York, where Puerto Ricans were found in much greater numbers.”¹⁵⁰ This same reasoning can be applied to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 204.

¹⁴⁸ Aviva Chomsky, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 166.

¹⁴⁹ Chomsky, 170.

¹⁵⁰ Sacks, “The Puerto Rican Effect on Hispanic Residential Segregation,” 131.

the political involvement and advocacy of undocumented immigrants in Hartford. The accessibility of the city, combined with the population size of undocumented immigrants and the fact that Hispanics are prominent in the government, allows DREAMers to speak louder and advocate powerfully as the city size and atmosphere is manageable. Even though Connecticut does not have one of the largest populations of undocumented immigrants, it has been one of the most forward-thinking states in implementing reform and benefits for the undocumented community, such as in-state tuition, and legislation currently under consideration to provide institutional aid for DACA recipients. This proposed legislation is a direct result of the organizing efforts of undocumented youth in the city.

Despite its significance and benefits, DACA is not permanent, and it does not make an undocumented immigrant legal. Therefore, fear within the undocumented community, absent comprehensive immigration reform, is always going to be present. As one DREAMer, Grace, stated, “I chant ‘undocumented and unafraid’ at rallies, but I am afraid! I am because my community still lives in fear and I’m part of it, despite having DACA. It’s not something that will 100% protect me. There’s still fear and I still see it in youth and it’s heartbreaking. But it’s honestly what motivates me to keep doing what I do for C4D.”¹⁵¹

DREAMers, advocates, and legal service providers nevertheless agree that, while it is not permanent, DACA status does help to diminish some of the fear of deportation, especially for urban dwellers where the immigrant populations tend to be larger. Grace stated, “A little fear went away by having DACA. For example, when I’m rallying I feel better speaking up and not being belittled knowing that I’m protected from getting

¹⁵¹ Grace, Personal Interview.

deported. But it's really not enough, because I represent my parents out there so I have to be really careful when I share my story.”¹⁵² Despite DACA's impermanence, immigrants report that when there is an atmosphere of being “undocumented and unafraid,” it tends to rub off on other DREAMers. They also become motivated and inspired to share their stories and come out of the shadows, just as Camila was motivated by advocates like Grace. As noted by Chavez, when undocumented immigrants have an attitude of undocumented, unafraid, and unapologetic, “they are, in essence, refuting the larger society's characterization of them as transient and rootless aliens.”¹⁵³

Chapter 7. *Trinity College*

Based on the DACA participants in this study, the majority of DACA recipients attend public universities or community colleges. Public universities, and community colleges especially, are less expensive than private colleges because undocumented students can pay the in-state tuition rate. As private colleges and universities do not offer an in-state tuition rate, many undocumented students would need full scholarships to attend them. And, without federal or state financial aid opportunities and limited financial aid from private colleges themselves, it is difficult for DACA youth to attend private colleges in Connecticut.¹⁵⁴

Private colleges and universities, however, are the only institutions that are legally able to give undocumented students full scholarships, as they do not have to abide by financial aid regulations for the state. That being said, as institutions of higher education,

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Chavez, 206.

¹⁵⁴ Mandi Haines, Personal Interview.

private colleges have a certain responsibility to the undocumented community. The majority of DACA recipients interviewed applied to private universities, as they realized this would be one of their only opportunities for sufficient financial aid to attend a college that matched their academic qualifications. However, only one of these students enrolled in a private college or university.

Rejections from private colleges and universities have concrete implications for DACA students. For example, due to rejections from private universities, Grace will have to complete college in seven years instead of four because of a lack of financial aid to attend college full-time. She will essentially lose three years in which she could have been employed at a job fit for a college degree holder. Instead, she works as a concierge at a hotel to pay for as many part-time classes as she can afford. Eduardo, who graduated as the top student in his class from New Britain High School, was forced to go to community college, even after being accepted to Central Connecticut State University, as he could not afford tuition elsewhere. The lack of financial aid available thwarts Connecticut's top students—not Connecticut's top immigrant students, Connecticut's top students overall—from being able to attend Connecticut's top colleges and universities.

The only DACA recipient interviewed who attends a private university, Julia, attends Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. This chapter outlines her experiences as an undocumented student in the Trinity community, Trinity College Admissions' outlook on its responsibility to the undocumented community in Connecticut, and Trinity College's President's view on the importance of admitting undocumented students to the college.

Trinity College is currently in a period of transition. President Joanne Berger-Sweeney started in the 2014-2015 academic year, and a new Dean of Admissions will start in the Fall of 2015. Upon arriving at Trinity College, one of President Berger-Sweeney's early priorities was to increase the endowment for financial aid. Understanding that the college's lack of financial aid affects its ability to accept some of its brightest applicants, President Berger-Sweeney's first fundraising goal was to raise \$10 million for the endowment for financial aid. The college already has commitments for \$7.5 million towards this goal. Five percent of the \$10 million will be able to be used each year, generating \$500,000 of additional financial aid each year, sufficient to support nine full tuition scholarships. The Dean of Admissions will decide how this money is distributed among international and domestic students.¹⁵⁵

In President Berger-Sweeney's Inaugural Address to the college, she stated, "One of the greatest strengths of academia is the diversity of people and the openness to different viewpoints. To be a great college, we must ensure that we have financial resources to allow a diverse set of students to attend this institution without regard to their ability to pay full tuition."¹⁵⁶ This mission supports the admittance of highly talented undocumented youth to institutions of higher education. However, when discussing Trinity's responsibility to the undocumented community, as one of the few private institutions in Connecticut that has the ability to provide undocumented students with full scholarships, President Berger-Sweeney stated that she did not believe that "undocumented students should get a hand up or a hand down." The President's goal is to admit more qualified students without the financial means, however no effort is focused

¹⁵⁵ President Berger-Sweeney, Personal Interview.

¹⁵⁶ "The Inaugural Address," *Trinity College*. 2015. Trinity College, Web. 9 Apr, 2015.

specifically on the undocumented community. President Berger-Sweeney stated, “I don’t have a particular quota or goal of a number of undocumented students to come to Trinity. My goal is a bit more holistic: that we have the best students that fit our organization and can make the most benefit of being at a liberal arts college in the city. It seems that those are more important criteria.”¹⁵⁷

All in all, the President’s priorities lie in increasing financial aid opportunities in order to admit students that will add to and benefit from the Trinity community. President Berger-Sweeney stated, “The education system in the United States is rigged all the way through, based on ability to pay. So at some point, we have to give credit both to what people have achieved, but also what they have overcome and the potential that they bring or we are just throwing away enormous talent. And we can’t afford to do that as a country; we cannot afford to throw away our best talent.”¹⁵⁸

Mandi Haines is the Associate Director of Admissions and Coordinator of International Recruitment and Financial Aid at Trinity College, and the most knowledgeable faculty member on DACA at Trinity. As at most colleges, undocumented students are considered international students when they apply to Trinity. As Ms. Haines recruits and reads international students’ applications, she has taken it upon herself to become familiar with the policies and requirements surrounding DACA in order to be well informed. Trinity College did not tell Ms. Haines that she should research DACA, nor give her any information regarding Trinity’s policies for DACA students. If Ms. Haines had not decided herself that knowing the requirements of DACA was important

¹⁵⁷ President Berger-Sweeney, Personal Interview.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

for her job, she would have been uninformed about a very important policy affecting her pool of applicants.¹⁵⁹

Ms. Haines has worked with undocumented students for over ten years and has seen an increase in the number of undocumented applicants to Trinity in the last three to four years. She believes this increase has occurred because Trinity has been listed on websites that state the college will provide need-based scholarships to international students, including members of the undocumented community. While Trinity did not place itself on any formal list, Ms. Haines believes this information is communicated through word of mouth from undocumented students or college counselors who have had positive experiences with Trinity. Nevertheless, Ms. Haines clearly stated that Trinity in no way “promotes” Trinity’s receptiveness towards undocumented students.¹⁶⁰ In addition, when six of the most involved non-profit service providers and immigration attorneys in Connecticut were asked which colleges have been receptive towards immigrant students, other private colleges such as Yale University and Fairfield University were mentioned but no one stated that Trinity College has this reputation.

As the number of undocumented applicants has increased, Trinity has declared a new policy in which admission preference is given to undocumented students in Connecticut, from Hartford and surrounding cities, and several surrounding states rather than undocumented students from states further away. Even though the college receives applications from undocumented students in California, Texas, and Florida, Admissions staff believe it is Trinity’s responsibility to give priority to the undocumented students in the local community. Ms. Haines explained, “We evaluate them on their academic

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

performance, but it's hard to give a student in California priority over a kid who's been in the Hartford public school system. We really felt that we needed to look at our own community first." As most undocumented students require full needs-based scholarships, which Trinity can only provide to a handful of students, the college decided that these scholarships should be given to the exceptional undocumented students in Connecticut first.¹⁶¹

Of the 25 to 50 applications from undocumented students that Trinity receives each year, it only accepts an estimate of two undocumented students per class. As of now, there is only one undocumented student accepted for the incoming class of 2019. Ms. Haines explained that this low acceptance rate does not have anything to do with merit, "So many of them are really well qualified because they work really hard in school...because they know that education is their only path. And what they're doing academically and in their communities and their extracurricular activities are so impressive, but the financial need is very high."¹⁶²

Ms. Haines stated that immigration status is not a factor in the admissions decision, but financial need is a factor as Trinity's policy is to meet 100% of an accepted student's calculated financial need. Therefore, if Trinity will not be able to provide enough financial aid to an undocumented student, that student will not be accepted to the college. In addition, undocumented students compete with all international students for financial aid, which Ms. Haines described as "extremely competitive." Specifically, Trinity receives about 2,100 international applications every year and can only accept 50 to 60 international students in each class, as many of them need significant financial aid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

While this begs the question of whether more undocumented students would be admitted if they were considered with domestic applicants, rather than international applicants, Ms. Haines stated that she believes there would be no difference in the number of undocumented students admitted. Further, Trinity College has made no budget cuts that affect the undocumented student population in particular, but the cost of tuition is going up while the financial aid budget is not, impacting the students that the college is able to admit.¹⁶³

As stated, immigration status is not a factor when Trinity College reviews applications. However, as an international admissions officer for over ten years, Ms. Haines is usually able to distinguish an undocumented student—and, sometimes, even a DACA recipient—from an international student. There are several ways in which the student's background and status become evident. As the attitude of 'undocumented and unafraid' gains momentum, many undocumented students choose to 'come out' in their college essays. In fact, many students do not find out that they are undocumented until they start to apply to college and realize they do not have a social security number to put on their applications. Many students then write about this powerful experience in their college essay. Since the announcement of DACA, Ms. Haines has seen an increase in this kind of college essay, most likely due to the security that DACA provides. Ms. Haines stated that, unsurprisingly, DACA applicants tend to be more forthcoming about their status in their applications than other undocumented students. In other cases, a student's status sometimes comes up in a recommendation from his or her college counselor.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Ms. Haines noted that sometimes this distinction is quite obvious, as undocumented students have likely lived in the U.S. for the majority of their lives, while international students are living in foreign countries. She noted that the main difference between all undocumented and documented applicants is that undocumented students tend to have lower standardized test scores because they did not attend a school that provided sufficient prep work or could not afford to take the test multiple times or the ESL version of the test. This disadvantage derives from undocumented immigrants coming from low-income families residing in the inner city. Ms. Haines also observed that undocumented students' grades, experiences, and recommendations are just as impressive as those of documented applicants.¹⁶⁵

Ms. Haines commented on Trinity College's responsibility to the undocumented community and the resources it can provide as a private institution. While Ms. Haines does see the benefits that a private college can provide, she returned to the limitations of the financial aid budget, which prevents Trinity from enrolling a larger number of qualified undocumented students, "Since we're not a state school, we can set our own policy. So we don't charge different tuition rates and we don't have any sort of policy that says we cannot admit certain populations. But the biggest challenge for us is that our financial aid is really limited and it's very competitive for any student who has a full financial need, whether that student is undocumented or not."¹⁶⁶

Ms. Haines also spoke about a benefit that has arisen for DACA recipients since the announcement of the executive order in 2012, "What was challenging before DACA was that undocumented students couldn't even have a part-time job on campus. So they

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

weren't able to earn money for books and personal expenses."¹⁶⁷ Now, when DACA recipients are accepted to colleges, they can hold part-time jobs at the college and earn money to contribute to their tuition costs and their personal expenses. As evidenced by Ms. Haines raising the ability of DACA students to hold jobs, their earning potential is clearly a factor that admissions officers take into consideration when considering admitting an undocumented student. Therefore, a DACA recipient may be more likely to be accepted to a college than an undocumented student without DACA.

Lastly, Ms. Haines touched on the experiences for undocumented students at Trinity College, "This is a school that's not an easy place to be when you're surrounded by people who have almost unlimited resources and to be the one who, for example, can't study abroad. We've had situations where classes have taken trips to Canada and an undocumented student couldn't go. Just dealing with those issues has been so difficult for them and really heartbreaking to know they can't have that opportunity." As an undocumented student at Trinity, Julia spoke about her firsthand experiences tackling the environment at Trinity to which Ms. Haines alluded.¹⁶⁸

Julia's full story is set out in Chapter 4, but this section will highlight her view on Trinity's receptiveness to the undocumented community. Julia is the president of Stop the Raids, an immigrant rights group at Trinity. The group started after 40 undocumented immigrants were unconstitutionally arrested and detained during immigration raids throughout Connecticut in 2012.¹⁶⁹ Julia felt that Stop the Raids could make an impact by educating Trinity students about immigration policies and practices, especially

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ "40 Arrested in Immigration Raid." *NBC Connecticut*. NBC Connecticut, 1 Mar 2012, Web. 28 Mar 2015.

concerning the undocumented community—information that she believes the majority of Trinity students do not fully or correctly understand. Therefore, Stop the Raids aims to set forth the facts to the community in advance of staging protests or performing acts of advocacy at Trinity. Its members feel that, if they educate the Trinity student body on the correct facts about undocumented immigrants, then their protests will be received more positively in the future.¹⁷⁰

Stop the Raids is also involved in C4D's fight for institutional aid. In addition, it is currently reaching out to President Berger-Sweeney and other administration officials to discuss the fact that Trinity College will not accept undocumented students through a scholarship foundation called QuestBridge. Along with the Posse Foundation in which Julia participated, QuestBridge is a scholarship foundation with which Trinity works. Both QuestBridge and the Posse Foundation welcome undocumented students to apply for their scholarships but let their partner colleges decide whether to accept undocumented students. While Trinity accepts undocumented students from the Posse Foundation, the college does not currently accept undocumented students from QuestBridge. Of the 28 colleges that partner with QuestBridge, which provides a full four year scholarship to exceptional students who face economic challenges, 22 institutions will admit undocumented students. Trinity College is one of only six institutions that will not admit undocumented students for the QuestBridge Scholarship.¹⁷¹

As Associate Director of Admissions Haines stated that Trinity does not have a large enough financial aid budget to admit as many undocumented students as it would like, admitting undocumented students through QuestBridge would be a smart and simple

¹⁷⁰ Julia, Personal Interview.

¹⁷¹ "Who Should Apply for the National College Match," *QuestBridge*. QuestBridge. 28 Mar, 2015.

solution to this problem. When asked if this policy is something she would be interested in changing, President Berger-Sweeney stated, “I’d like to hear the pros and cons of why or why not. I’m not sure why that particular program is different from the Posse program, so not knowing the pros and cons and why the decision was made, I can’t comment.”¹⁷² So far, Stop the Raids has had no success in pressuring the administration to take action.¹⁷³

While Julia is grateful for her education, being a Trinity student has not been easy for her. When she arrived at Trinity as a freshman she did not feel welcomed. She was confused by the international students orientation she was forced to sit through, in which students were introduced to customs and life in the United States, even though she had lived in the United States for most her life and considered herself to be an American. In addition, she realized there were no resources specifically for undocumented students and that, even when she went to the counseling center, she had to explain her legal status before getting to the issues. She quickly came to believe that most Trinity students hold a conservative view when it comes to immigration policy.¹⁷⁴

As a social science major, Julia sat through classes in which students debated immigration reform and sometimes used discriminatory language about immigrants, which was tolerated. Julia felt this hostility even more when she put up signs for Stop the Raids about educational events on the undocumented community, only to see them torn down by members of the Trinity community. All in all, Julia pinpoints the complexity of the undocumented movement, “It’s a lot harder than other movements because the people that are suffering from the injustice like to stay under the radar.” Despite these setbacks,

¹⁷² President Berger-Sweeney, Personal Interview.

¹⁷³ Julia, Personal Interview.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

however, Julia, a strong, outspoken, and driven advocate, continues to maintain a positive attitude and to speak out for her rights and her beliefs.¹⁷⁵

Chapter 8. *Conclusion and Future Implications*

This study has provided evidence that shows how DACA status increases recipients' ability to access higher education in Connecticut. The ability to work legally, due to the DACA work permit, helps DACA recipients to have sufficient income to afford in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. As federal and state financial aid is not available for undocumented individuals, a legal work permit is the best way for undocumented students to be able to afford college.

The study found that, in many cases, in-state tuition at public colleges and universities still constitutes a heavy economic burden for DACA recipients, who often are called upon to help support their families. This is especially the case as many family members do not have permits to work legally in the United States. The study revealed the importance of other scholarship support, including scholarships from private colleges and universities and institutional aid from public colleges and universities.

This study provides concrete examples of the utility of a pending legislative proposal, S.B. 398, which would allow DACA recipients to access institutional aid at public colleges and universities in Connecticut. The proposal, which explicitly complements DACA status, seeks to respond to the education equity gaps that persist for undocumented youth in Connecticut. As DACA allows more undocumented students to attend college, the need for increased financial aid for undocumented students has become more visible. If the legislation is enacted, having DACA status in Connecticut

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

will prove even more valuable and trigger the financial resources necessary to equalize access to higher education for many undocumented youth. Overall, the introduction of this legislation, which, like DACA, is a stopgap measure, shows the need for broader comprehensive immigration reform in order to regularize the status of undocumented students permanently so that they have the same opportunities as their peers. For the time being, however, the enactment of this legislation would benefit DACA students, enabling them to contribute fully to the economic and social life of the Connecticut cities in which they are largely present.

The study also found that DACA status increases recipients' sense of security and belonging in their city, state, and country. This increased sense of security allows DACA youth to no longer be afraid to speak with high school counselors, college administrators, financial aid officers, and professors in order to receive the information they need to enroll, persist, and complete college. An increased sense of belonging encourages DACA youth to engage in their city and state not only by pursuing an education but also by speaking out for their rights and participating in civic life in other ways.

More generally, receiving DACA status motivates high school and college students to reevaluate their futures. Realizing that they will be able to work legally after college restores hope to high school students who believed there would be no point in working hard in school, graduating and applying to college. DACA gives undocumented youth the tools to dream larger, work hard to reach their goals, and realize their full potential.

The findings of this study also show the importance of undocumented immigrants receiving a college education now, in preparation of the eventual enactment of the federal

DREAM Act or comprehensive immigration reform. A potential requirement of the federal DREAM Act, which would likely provide a pathway to citizenship for the DREAMer population, is that applicants must have completed at least two years of postsecondary education. As DACA makes it easier—including more financially feasible—for undocumented youth to attend college, it is vital that as many DACA youth as possible take advantage of the executive order while it is in place. DACA is not a permanent program and a future president may not opt to continue it. This study shows just how hard it is for undocumented youth to attend college without a legal work permit. Taking full advantage of DACA status and receiving a college education now will allow these youth to be among the first applicants for a pathway to citizenship through the federal DREAM Act, if enacted.

Connecticut and cities with significant immigrant populations across the state will benefit economically from undocumented immigrants having the financial support they need to have equal access to higher education. First, if more students are able to attend college by having access to financial aid, their future incomes will increase dramatically. The College Board states, “During a 40-year full-time working life, the median earnings of bachelor's degree recipients without an advanced degree are 65% higher than the median earnings of high school graduates.”¹⁷⁶ These increased incomes will result in significantly increased tax revenue for the state. In fact, the College Board reports that, “The median total tax payments of full-time workers with a professional degree in 2011 were over three and a half times as high as the median tax payments of high school

¹⁷⁶ Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, “Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society,” *College Board*, 2013. College Board, Web. 5 Apr, 2015. 10

graduates working full-time.”¹⁷⁷ The state of Connecticut will lose this potential tax revenue if it does not equalize access to higher education for undocumented immigrants by allowing them to access financial aid. Second, Connecticut spends \$16,273 per student in secondary education—the fourth highest amount in the country.¹⁷⁸ If, after this investment, the state does not help all students to fairly access higher education, the returns on this initial investment will be diminished. With additional support to help students gain their college or university degree, the state will not only recoup this investment in increased tax revenue, as graduates take high-paying jobs, but also benefit from the graduates’ contributions to local and state economic development through entrepreneurship, job creation and innovation.

Immigrants have long been the lifeblood of America’s cities. As populations have moved to suburbs, immigrants have re-populated city centers, revitalizing neighborhoods, providing needed services and establishing new businesses. Like other residents, undocumented individuals will be able to increase the impact of their contributions and their level of engagement in city life through gaining the knowledge and skills achieved through higher education. Whether Connecticut’s cities aim to compete globally or develop robust local economies, providing equal access to undocumented students, starting with those with DACA status, will ensure that they are benefitting fully from the talents of their residents. DACA status clearly is helping to develop this pipeline of talent by making higher education more accessible to a subsection of the undocumented population.

¹⁷⁷ “Education Pays 2013” 11.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas C. Frohlich. “States spending the most on education.” *USA Today*, 7 Jun, 2014, Web. 5 Apr, 2015.

The emerging benefits of DACA for Connecticut cities and the state also has implications for broader policies. Most immediately, the continuance of DACA and the implementation of President Obama’s expansion of DACA, which is currently blocked by Federal Judge Hanen, would result in huge economic gains for the nation as a larger number of undocumented immigrants would receive DACA status and could hold legal jobs, contributing both to increased tax revenue and a higher GDP. DACA, while only benefiting a small percentage of the undocumented population, makes a case for the economic benefits of comprehensive immigration reform. As stated by the Center for American Progress, “Rather than fighting this important—and temporary—administrative step, Congress and the states should be pushing for a lasting legislative solution that will realize the full economic potential of a 21st century immigration system.”¹⁷⁹

Comprehensive immigration reform would regularize the status of undocumented students and, in the process, help to equalize their access to higher education.

In conclusion, while DACA has removed some barriers to higher education for certain undocumented young people, taking steps to provide true education equality would benefit both Connecticut and the nation as a whole. With the introduction of S.B. 398, Connecticut has the opportunity to take an economically sound and groundbreaking step to improve the access to higher education for DACA youth, students who have made Connecticut their home and are positioned to contribute to the political, social, and economic life of the community. As found in this study, DACA students place high value both on attaining a higher education degree and on having sufficient security to participate fully in the community. Clearly, DACA students are willing to make significant sacrifices and work hard to pursue higher education. Policy decisions by the

¹⁷⁹ Mathema, “Assessing the Economic Impacts of Granting Deferred Action Through DACA and DAPA”

state and by private colleges and universities in Connecticut that support this ambition will ensure that these students can contribute to the vitality of cities throughout the state in the years ahead.

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