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The State Control of Identity: Ramifications for 'DACA' recipients

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1- Background

The US immigration system has not been substantially reformed for over three decades. The last major reform was in the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986. Because immigration patterns have evolved since the 1980s, the current US immigration system seems ill adapted to face the challenges of the recent decades. Since the turn of the millennial, Congress has repeatedly failed to pass significant immigration legislation to address the issues of undocumented migration; one of the most recent example is the DREAM Acts, various versions of which have been introduced since 2001, but none of which were ever passed.[1]

This situation has led to the rise of the undocumented population in the US, which peaked at approximately 12.2 million individuals in 2007 and stabilised at approximately 10.5 million today.[2] Among them, approximately half come from Mexico, followed by Central America.[3]

There is an estimated 5.6 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 34[4], most of whom were brought to the US as children, and were raised in the US This group, referred to as the 1.5 generation, has been at the centre of recent scholarly research, as they constitute a generation in limbo. Indeed, because they were born abroad, they are considered immigrants, like their first-generation immigrant parents; unlike them, however, they were brought to the US as children and were raised alongside their US citizen peers, leading them to believe that they belonged to the country.

It is not until they transition into adulthood that these young undocumented immigrants begin to fully grasp the limitations of their status, and face the numerous barriers towards inclusion, such as enrolling in higher education, finding employment, or obtaining a driver's license, which are all important milestones that they cannot achieve, and that prevent them from fully assimilating into American society (Gonzalez, 2011).

In this context, then-President Obama introduced in 2012 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This executive order was construed as a temporary solution to alleviate the burden of illegality for this so-called 1.5 generation. The requirements to qualify for DACA are outlined by the United States

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[1] Marie L. Mallet. The Dream Act. In L. Ganong, M. Coleman, J. G. Golson (Eds.), *The Social History of the American Family*. Sage Publication, 2013. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452286143.n171

[2] Pew Research Center, 'U.S. unauthorized immigrant total rises, then falls', June 2019 https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/ft_19-06-12_5factsillegalimmigration_us-unauthorized-immigrant-total/

[3] Pew Research Center, 'Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time', June 2019

https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/

[4] Baker, Bryan, Population Estimates: Illegal Alien Population Residing in the United States: January 2015. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18_1214_PLCY_pops-est-report.pdf

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Applicants must meet some key requirements, although meeting them does not guarantee approval. They include: being under the age of 31, as of June 15, 2012; having arrived to the United States before the age of 16; having continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time; being physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making the request for consideration of deferred action; having no lawful status on June 15, 2012; being currently in school, having graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, having obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or having been honourably discharged from the United States Armed Forces; and not having been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanour, or three or more other misdemeanours, and not otherwise posing a threat to national security or public safety. For those who qualify and can afford to pay the fee, the programme offers temporary lawful presence for a renewable period of two years. Under the programme, they can work, enrol in higher education, or obtain a social security number, among other benefits. As of June 30, 2019, there are 660,880 active DACA recipients in the US,[5] out of a pool of approximately 1.3 million eligible individuals.[6] Among them, approximately 80% of them come from Mexico and nearly half (45%) of them live in just two states: California (29%) and Texas (16%).[7]

In September 2017, the Trump administration announced that it rescinded the DACA programme, which marked the beginning of a legal and political battle. At the time of writing, Trump's executive order to rescind DACA has been temporarily halted in federal court, but the future of the DACA programme remains uncertain. Indeed, existing DACA recipients can renew their work permits but the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are not accepting new applications from individuals who may qualify for the DACA programme.[8] Meanwhile, the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019 was introduced in Congress. If passed, it would allow approximately 700,000 DACA recipients, as well as another 1.6 million eligible Dreamers brought to America as children, to stay in the US. The bill's protections would also allow over

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[5] U.S. Citizenship and Migration Services 'Approximate DACA Receipts as of June 30, 2019' https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data?topic_id=20673&field_native_doc_issue_date_value%25255Bvalue%25255D%25255Bmonth%25255D=&field_native_doc_issue_date_value_1%25255Bvalue%25255D%25255Byear%25255D=&combined=&items_per_page=10

[6] Zong, Jie et al. A Profile of Current DACA Recipients by Education, Industry, and Occupation, Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/profile-current-daca-recipients-education-industry-and-occupation

[7] Lopez, Gustavo and Jens Krogstad, 'Key facts about unauthorized immigrants enrolled in DACA' Pew Research Center, September 2017 https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/25/key-facts-about-unauthorized-immigrants-enrolled-in-daca/

Patler, Caitlin et al. 'From undocumented to lawfully present: Do changes to legal status impact psychological wellbeing among Latino immigrant young adults? Social Science and Medicine, 2018

[8] Harrington, Ben 'DACA Rescission: Legal Issues and Litigation Status', Congressional Research Service, CRS Legal Side-bar, LSB10136, May 23, 2018

300,000 Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders and up to 3,600 individuals with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) to have the opportunity to remain in the country.

In November 2019, the Supreme Court heard arguments to determine the legality of the Trump administration's decision to end the programme. The decision is expected in June 2020.

Although DACA was not intended to be a long-term solution, and was not unanimously popular, recent scholarly research has demonstrated the positive effects of DACA and showed that the programme has greatly benefited its recipients. However, to date, not much is known about the impacts of the legal uncertainty created by the rescission announcement on the sense of belonging of these undocumented immigrants who grew up alongside their US citizens peers. In this article, we try to answer the following question: how does the legal turmoil around DACA affect the sense of belonging of DACA recipients?

2. Undocumented Immigrants' Sense of Belonging in the United States

Importance of Belonging & Definition

Perceptions of belonging shape the everyday life of individuals, whether they be immigrants or citizens. It is a key aspect of nation building and influences the behaviour of these individuals, such as their social interactions, their positions on policies or their participation in the public sphere.[9] Research demonstrated the importance of a strong sense of belonging and shared identity for stability and socially desirable outcomes in society, from greater educational achievements to motivation to participate in civic life.[10]

Beyond the societal benefits derived from high levels of belongings, individuals also benefit from higher feelings of belonging. People have an innate need to belong and seek membership to a group, a community, a country, to create a network of support and increase collaboration with their peers. This is particularly true for immigrants who typically exhibit lower levels of social and human capital than their US citizen peers, and rely on these networks to find employment, housing, or fulfil other basic needs.

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[9] Kroneberg, Clemens, and Andreas Wimmer. 'Struggling over the Boundaries of Belonging: A Formal Model of Nation Building, Ethnic Closure, and Populism.' American Journal of Sociology, vol. 118, no. 1, 2012, pp. 176–230. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/666671

Efrén O. Pérez, Jack Citrin and David O. Sears. American Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2014. 352 pp.

[10] Gaertner, Samuel and John Dovidio. Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model. 2000. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 'E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century'. 2007 Scandinavian Political Studies 30(2):137-74.

Researchers often use the concepts of identity and belonging interchangeably to capture the subjective sense of being part of a social group or a place.[11] For the purpose of this research, a sense of belonging is to be understood as a subjective feeling of perceived inclusion to the US by the respondents interviewed. It refers both to an internalised feeling of membership to a group, as well as the external acknowledgement from the group that one belongs to it.

Sense of Belonging among Immigrants

When analysing immigrant populations, scholars traditionally measure their feelings of belonging by looking at the levels of retention of their ethnic or racial identity[12] and their levels of adoption of the mainstream national identity.[13] Assimilation theories postulate that ethnic identity is not static but rather evolves with time.[14] The classical approach suggests that as immigrants adopt American cultures and values, they tend to lose their ethnic identity and blend in with the mainstream group, especially across successive generations. However, this model, which was primarily based on the assimilation of White European immigrants, does not adequately capture the assimilation process of racialised minorities.

Indeed, for visible minorities, the assimilation process through the relinquishment of their ethnic identity and the development of a sense of belonging is more complex than it was for White migrants. Previous studies have shown that in this case, their ethnic identity is influenced by the context of reception.[15] For instance,

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[11] Karin Amit & Shirly Bar-Lev. 'Immigrants' Sense of Belonging to the Host Country: The Role of Life Satisfaction, Language Proficiency, and Religious Motives,' 2015 Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement, Springer, vol. 124(3), pages 947-961.

Black, R. Conceptions of 'home' and the political geography of refugee repatriation: Between assumption and contested reality in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 2002, Applied Geography, 22, 123–138.

[12] Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén G. Rumbaut. Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation. University of California Press, 2001.

[13] Phinney, J.S., Romero, I., Nava, M. et al. The Role of Language, Parents, and Peers in Ethnic Identity Among Adolescents in Immigrant Families. Journal of Youth and Adolescence 30, 135–153 (2001) doi:10.1023/A:1010389607319

[14] Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54(3), 271–281. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271

[15] Sabatier, Colette. 'Ethnic and National Identity among Second-Generation Immigrant Adolescents in France: The Role of Social Context and Family.' Journal of Adolescence, vol. 31, no. 2, 2008, pp. 185–205., doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2007.08.001.

Tovar, Jessica, and Cynthia Feliciano. "Not Mexican-American, but Mexican': Shifting Ethnic Self-Identifications among Children of Mexican Immigrants.' Latino Studies, vol. 7, no. 2, 2009, pp. 197–221., doi:10.1057/lst.2009.18.

while a welcoming environment might foster a higher degree of assimilation and higher levels of feelings of belonging, a more hostile environment might decrease the sense of belonging and heighten the ethnic identity, in an attempt to buffer the negative effects of discrimination.[16] In this case, immigrants might assimilate into different segments of US society, depending on what is available to them. Indeed, research showed that discrimination, or anti-immigrant policies tend to reinforce ethnic identity, particularly for the 1.5 and subsequent generations, who then form a reactive ethnicity by adopting the cultural and moral values of their or their parents' home country.[17]

Sense of Belonging among Latino Immigrants

In the case of Latino immigrants, the development of their sense of belonging exemplifies this complexity. Previous research showed that Latinos exhibit multiple identities based on the context: while some have a strong sense of belonging to the US, others oscillate between their US identity, their pan-ethnic Latino identity, and their country of origin national identity, and finally others strongly feel that they do not belong to US society[18]. As is the case for other racialised minorities, the relation between Latino immigrants' ethnic and national identities is not inversely correlated; rather, they can choose between various ethnic identities (or ethnic options) based on their immediate situation.[19] Studies have also found that Latinos who experience discrimination are less likely to identify as American and that overall, even native-born Latinos are often still considered foreigners who must earn their place in society.[20] During his campaign, presidential candidate Donald Trump notoriously referred to Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists, heightening concerns and

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Schildkraut, Deborah J., Tomás R. Jiménez, Huo, Yuen J., and John F. Dovidio. 2019. 'A Tale of Two States: How State Immigration Climate Affects Belonging to State and Country among Latinos' Social Problems 66(3): 332–355.

[16] Yip, Tiffany, et al. 'Racial Discrimination and Psychological Distress: The Impact of Ethnic Identity and Age among Immigrant and United States-Born Asian Adults.' Developmental Psychology, vol. 44, no. 3, 2008, pp. 787–800., doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.3.787.

[17] Tovar and Feliciano 2009; Portes and Rumbaut 2001

[18] Fraga, Luis Ricardo, John A. Garcia, Rodney Hero, Michael Jones-Correa, Valerie Martinez-

Ebers and Gary M. Segura. Latino lives in America: making it home. 2010. Temple University Press.

Golash-Boza, Tanya. Dropping the hyphen? Becoming Latino (a)-American through racialized assimilation.' 2006, Social Forces 85(1).

[19] Waters, Mary C. Ethnic Options: Choosing Ethnic Identities in America. University of California Press, 1990.

[20] Golash-Boza, 2006

reviving fears about immigrants, who are perceived as changing the fabric of society in a negative way, and provoking a clash of civilisations.[21]

Sense of Belonging among undocumented and 1.5 generation Latinos

For undocumented Latino immigrants, developing a sense of belonging is rendered more difficult by their legal status.[22] While some undocumented Latinos internalised their high vulnerability and deportability and had low levels of perception of belonging in the US because they felt alienated from US society, others were able to develop a higher sense of belonging, by transforming the boundaries that define memberships into US society.[23]

These contradictions are particularly salient among the 1.5 generation. Indeed, studies have shown that the experiences of the 1.5-gen Latinos are much different compared to their documented peers. Even though they might consider themselves American, they lack the legal status to be able to fully and truly be American. Because of this tension / paradox, they tend to identify more with their country of origin, compared to their US-born peers.[24]

Conversely, some studies have found that even upon learning about their undocumented status, the undocumented youth who grew up in the US retain a strong sense of being American, despite the deAmericanization they experience when they transition into adulthood. The authors argue that 'American identity is sticky'.[25] Recent studies further showed that when these youths were offered lawful presence through the DACA programme, it increased their sense of integration into American society, as well as their sense of belonging.[26]

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[21] Huntington, Samuel P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. New York: Touchstone, 1997.

[22] Browne, Irene, and Mary Odem. "JUAN CROW' IN THE NUEVO SOUTH?: Racialization of Guatemalan and Dominican Immigrants in the Atlanta Metro Area.' Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, vol. 9, no. 2, 2012, pp. 321–337. doi:10.1017/S1742058X1200015X.

[23] Cha vez Maria, et al. Living the Dream: New Immigration Policies and the Lives of Undocumented Latino Youth. Routledge, 2016.

[24] Tovar and Feliciano 2009

[25] Tafoya et al. 2019 I feel like I was born here: Social identity, political socialization, and de-Americanization

[26] Getrich, Christina M., et al. 'Navigating a Fragmented Health Care Landscape: DACA Recipients' Shifting Access to Health Care.' Social Science & Medicine, vol. 223, 2019, pp. 8–15., doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.01.018.

Gap in the literature and what this study does

However, to date, there are no studies analysing the effect of the rescission announcement on the sense of belonging of DACA recipients. Analysing the changes in DACA recipients' sense of belonging is important because it influences the effectiveness of the programme, by affecting DACA recipients' abilities to be integrated into American society and various aspects of daily life including school, work, and family relationships. Previous studies on related subjects showed that the rescission announcement caused DACA recipients to experience transitory legality and had negative effect on the health outcomes of DACA recipients.[27]

In this study, we draw on the concept of transitory legality to hypothesise that DACA recipients' sense of belonging will be negatively affected by the turmoil around the programme. We argue that learning that their pathway to a legal status might be terminated will likely prompt a return to the shadows and that the current narratives around immigrants will lead them to experience a decreased sense of integration into American society.

3. Method

This study is based on qualitative data, composed of 43 interviews with adult DACA recipients in California. The interviews were conducted between October 2017 and August 2018, following the rescission announcement of the programme by President Donald Trump.

The data presented here is part of a larger dataset of 450 Latino immigrants in Europe and the United States, collected between 2013 and 2018. California was chosen as the main fieldwork site because it is home to almost a third of all DACA recipients.[28] The research team began the recruitment process by contacting immigrant rights organisations and advocacy groups, as well as community leaders to facilitate access to the targeted populations. Respondents were initially recruited through convenience sampling. Once the initial interviews are conducted, we used snowball sampling to increase the sample size. We also used purposeful sampling to ensure diversity among participants in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, national origin, etc. The data collected for this study is therefore representative of the DACA population nationally.[29] After obtaining the respondents' explicit consent to be recorded, the interviews were digitally recorded. Due to the

[27] Mallet, Marie L., and Lisa Garcia Bedolla. 'Transitory Legality: The Health Implication of Ending DACA.' California Journal of Politics and Policy, vol. 11, no. 2, 2019, doi:10.5070/p2cjpp11243090.

[28] Top 20 Metropolitan Areas of residence of DACA recipients (2017). Pew Research Center. Source: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/25/key-facts-about-unauthorized-immigrants-enrolled-in-daca/

[29] See Mallet and Bedolla

sensitive nature of the information collected, we ensured that all information collected was confidential and anonymised.

We used semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the respondents' subjective assessment of their access to health care, use of health care facilities, and overall mental and physical health outcomes. We used standardised questions to steer the interviews, ensuring consistency in addressing the topics around which the larger project is based, while still leaving latitude for the in-depth exploration of issues relevant to each interviewee as well as other topics that the interviewee wished to explore. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours 45 minutes and were conducted either in English or in Spanish, depending on the participant's preference. Once we had transcribed the interviews, we conducted a first round of coding in Atlas.ti based on the interview questions. A second round of coding in Atlas.ti was then conducted to codify information that was not originally present in the initial codebook but emerged from the first round of coding, and to uncover patterns and additional information related to their relations with social services and social service providers, such as co-ethnic concordance.

4. Findings:

From Invisible to Unwanted

As children, undocumented individuals were relatively shielded from the reality of their status: they did not yet need to worry about not having a Social Security Number (SSN) to work and were allowed to go to school[30]. However, unlike their US peers, instead of continuing to reach and achieve the typical milestones of transitioning into adulthood, they experienced the full trauma of having to live in the shadows when they became adults and lost all the protections they had received as children. When DACA was implemented, it offered them temporary relief, which enabled its grantees to continue to achieve these milestones. We argue that the current political turmoil around DACA and the legal challenges it faces are affecting DACA recipients' sense of belonging. Indeed, among the respondents, 2/3 indicated that they feel more excluded from the US today than before the rescission announcement. This is exemplified by Interviewee 1: Doris (27), a nurse:

> *[Trump's] election was bad. Like before people weren't racist in your face like that. But now they will just tell you that you're not welcome here. They don't hide anymore. (…)* ***it is painful to feel that you're not wanted in the only place you can call home****.*

To her, the Trump election symbolises a radical change/paradigm shift. She thinks that it galvanised / inhibited people, who were no longer afraid of expressing their anti-immigrant feelings. The election seemed to legitimise their views, and even though it may not represent the views of the majority of the population, it is

[30] Plyler versus Doe

giving a megaphone to an already vocal group of conservative individuals who hold anti-immigrant views. Interviewee 1 internalised these feelings, which made her feel excluded and unwanted.

Similarly, most of our respondents 65% take personally the attacks on immigrants and on Latinos more generally. These attacks make them feel unwanted, and unwelcome in the US For instance, Bernardo, 25, students, explains that he might have to leave the US due to the announcement rescission and the limitations they will bring:

> *They call us [Latinos] all sorts of names [on TV]. Rapist, thieves, you name it. I don't know why they hate us so much. It makes you question everything. Makes you wonder what you're doing here (…) I didn't ask to come [to the US], and just because I wasn't born here doesn't make me a criminal. In fact, I am a better citizen than most of the [documented] people I know. [INTERVIEWER: How so?] I don't know, like I am more respectful, I don't do drugs and all that [stuff]. But it's me they want to deport! (…) Do you feel differently about your place here in the US now that DACA might end? I do see a difference now. When I first got DACA, it felt like fair, like I was getting what I deserved, you know, that I could hope to finally settle here (…) Now I don't know anymore. I want to accomplish things, so if they don't want me here, maybe I'll try my luck somewhere else.*

Although Interviewee 2 refers to himself as a model citizen who epitomises American-ness, he does not hold the permanent legal status required to experience fully what it means to be an American. His conflicting feelings of belonging and exclusion reduce his ability to feel that he truly belongs in the US While DACA granted him visibility through his legal visible presence, ending the programme will impede his progression and reverse the benefits of having received DACA.

When asked about his feelings regarding the uncertainly regarding DACA, he explains that he feels unwelcome:

> *'I am tired of this you know. The way I see it, if they really wanted it [to pass the DREAM Act or similar legislation to legalise undocumented immigrants], it would be done already. As they say, when there's a will… They just don't want us here.'*

Like the majority of our respondents, DACA recipients feel that they are targeted, excluded and not wanted. This has an impact on their sense of belonging: 70% of the respondents say that they have a decreased sense of belonging. This is demonstrated by Interviewee 3: Sophia (31), a sales representative, when she explains:

> *'It's kind of hard, because people assume that I am undocumented. I mean, I fit the stereotype [she makes a hand gesture pointing at her face and her skin colour]. Sometimes they'll act like I shouldn't be here; but even when they don't, I can see it on their face. I wish my parents didn't bring me here. It's clear that I don't fit in. How would these people act to make you feel that you should not be here? Hum, like this one time, I was with my mom and she doesn't speak English so I guess they heard us [speak Spanish] and these guys started insulting us, that we should go back to Mexico, but we're not even Mexican. I left really bad, but we just left, because my mom doesn't have papers, so*

> *I didn't want the cops to show up. You said that you see it in their face that you don't belong; can you explain what you mean? It's like they look down on you, I don't know how to explain. They don't treat you like you belong here, in this country, that you'll always be different, you know? Did DACA help you feel that you belonged here? Yeah, with DACA things got better, (…) but now that the programs will end, I will be illegal again, and I can't go through it again.*

Our respondents reported a decreased sense of belonging, despite having been granted temporary legal status. They explained that they could not fight back by fear of being deported and feel that undocumented migration has been racialised as a Latino issue in recent years. In some way, they resent their increased visibility because it has made them more vulnerable (for instance, they had to provide their full address) and some would have preferred to remain undocumented because they felt less likely to be deported if they were in the shadows. This is illustrated by Interviewee 4: Sergio (29) a mechanic.

> *Before DACA, there is [sic] many things I couldn't do because I didn't have papers. But now I don't do them because I am scared. (…) Well, they can't deport you if they don't see you, if they can't find you. I have paper for now, but when they end DACA, they'll put me on the first flight back to Mexico.*

Even though the structural limitations of their status have been lifted, they now experience discrimination and feelings of exclusion that impede their integration which causes them to experience a decreased sense of belonging compared to their situation prior to receiving DACA.

The Risks of DACA's Increased Visibility

Another important finding that arose during the conversations with DACA recipients is that some of them now consider the visibility they have gained with DACA as a drawback rather than an improvement. While they recognise that they are legally entitled to an array of new rights, they sometimes choose not to pursue them because they fear that it will be in vain. This is particularly visible in the way interviewee 5 (Camilo, 33, bank employee) describes his situation. He explains that he lost all motivation to try to progress in his profession, because he feels that his hard work is likely to be in vain.

> *I was so happy when I got this job. Everyone knew I was a DREAMer, but I thought it wouldn't matter because I would be legalised later. But now [that Trump announced the end of the programme], it all changed. (…) My colleague is teasing me, he says that he'll take my job when I get deported. And he's probably right.*

He further added that he believes that he will not be promoted even though he is 'ticking the right boxes' because his managers are not interested in investing time and money in someone who might not stay much longer. It therefore seems that while DACA is increasing the visibility of its recipients by affording them new rights and opportunities, one of its unintended consequences is to concomitantly put them at higher risk of

deportation if the programme is ended without a solution to protect them. As a result, some of our respondents seem unable to fully enjoy the benefits granted by the programme and still feel that their rights are being denied.

With DACA, even if the programme only offered temporary relief, recipients were able to project themselves into the future and make plans similar to those of their US peers. However, because of this increased perceived vulnerability, some of them are postponing major life projects, such as starting a family, working towards a new degree or even looking for a better job, as they worry that it might be in vain. This is epitomised by Interviewee 6 (Joanna, 29, administrative assistant) who explains that the turmoil around the programme led her to reconsider her future.

> *I should be thinking about having kids, but with my status, it's out of the question. I have seen so many families torn apart, destroyed by ICE. My boyfriend is legal, and when I got DACA, we talked about starting a family, but those plans are long gone, because I basically have no future now.*

Even though DACA recipients have a Social Security Number that allows them to find employment, or have a driver's license that offers more geographical mobility and shorter commute times, they live on the edge, watching the news and the latest development on the programme. For many, it is as if time froze and stopped them in their social mobility/ascent, because they are no longer able to make plans, and feel that they may soon need to return to live 'in the shadows' like they did when they were undocumented.

The rescission announcement of the DACA programme increases their vulnerability and chips away at their American-ness as some feel that they don't belong anymore. It also creates deeper confusion on their sense of identity: despite still being officially granted temporary legal status, they cannot fully associate with their documented peers as they may soon lose their documented status; at the same time, this legal (albeit temporary) status further differentiates them from undocumented peers because of their different life experiences. This is what Interviewee 7 shows (Ana, 31, cook):

> *I used to feel American. I grew up here, so this is my home, you know, that's all I know. But when I was 16, my parents told me I wasn't legal, and that's when it started to change. Before, I didn't care much about Mexico, I didn't care that I couldn't really speak Spanish. But now I realised I'll never be American, so what other choice do I have? At least I could be Mexican. (…) To survive, I need to stop thinking of myself as an American, because it won't take it anywhere. I need to accept that I am Mexican.*

The current uncertainty regarding the DACA programme is viewed by a majority of our respondents as a major setback whose impact has been deemed worse than not having benefited from DACA to begin with. Its implementation in 2012 gave thousands of undocumented youths renewed hope and the motivation to mobilise to further improve their condition. By coming out of the shadows, they took a calculated risk based on the insurance that they would be temporarily protected by DACA until they were able to regularise their status.

This newly gained visibility was welcomed by most, as it enabled them to make their voices heard and gave them more agency to pursue their life goals. However, the rescission announcement has now turned their visibility into a liability, which is causing them to experience an increased sense of vulnerability.

5- Discussion and conclusion:

Despite being granted legal (albeit temporary) inclusion, many respondents have experienced the rescission announcement as a turning point in their lives. It made them more acutely aware of the anti-immigrant sentiment displayed by a portion of the US population. It heightened their sense of exclusion and decreased their sense of belonging into US society to levels lower than those experienced prior to being granted DACA, reversing the benefits of the programme. They were offered a taste of what it really means to be an American, by being allowed to pursue an education, drive a car, find employment, etc. The threat of being stripped of their status causes them to feel unwelcome. The narratives around DACA makes them acutely aware of not being wanted by a portion of the US population. This causes them to experience a decreased sense of belonging, even lower than when they were undocumented; this is reversing the positive impact of the DACA programme; this does not come from structural barriers, but rather the current political climate and the negative rhetoric about immigrants. Further, their renewed vulnerability causes them to experience a form of de-Americanisation. They choose to remove themselves from US society, and are unable or unwilling to plan for their future. While before they were 'simply' undocumented, and thus invisible, they are now highly visible and worry that they will be the first ones to be deported. The concept of transitory legality is particularly useful to show that their sense of belonging is negatively affected by the turmoil around the programme. Upon learning that their pathway to a legal status might be terminated, some DACA recipients decided to return to the shadows as they experienced a decreased sense of integration into American society.

Regardless of the USSC's decision, significant immigration reform is still needed, and this paper offers a contribution to the debate by showing the impact that these policies have on the lives of the individuals affected by them.