

Does Where I Live Affect Whether I Apply? The Contextual Determinants of Applying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

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The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provides temporary relief from deportation and legal work authorization for eligible undocumented youth in the United States. This study investigates the factors that help or hinder undocumented youth in applying for DACA. We focus on contexts of reception to understand the determinants of DACA applications, as studies of previous legalization programs indicate that the communities in which immigrants live help shape application decisions. Our analysis shows that more immigrant-serving organizations in a state translate into more applications, that DACA implementation rates are not statistically significantly lower in states with hostile policy climates, and that socioeconomic factors are most significantly related to DACA applications. In identifying the collective factors that influence applying to DACA, we demonstrate that the structural opportunities and barriers present in receiving locales shape undocumented youths' decisions to regularize their immigration status, which has significant implications for their resulting incorporation trajectories.

INTRODUCTION

Announced in June 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program — an executive order issued by the Obama administration

Author names appear in reverse alphabetical order. Both authors contributed equally.
[Minor typographical changes have been made to this article since it was first published.]

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DOI: 10.1111/imre.12166

— provides temporary relief from deportation and legal work authorization for eligible undocumented immigrant youth in the United States.¹ More than 573,000 young people have applied for DACA, and more than 430,000 have received “deferred action” in the program’s first year (USCIS 2013). While over half a million applications are clearly significant, the total number of applications submitted to date represents just 32.5 percent of the estimated population of DACA-eligible youth. Of those estimated to be immediately eligible for the program, approximately 60 percent have applied (IPC 2012).² What explains the decision to apply for DACA? Expanding on the contexts of reception literature and studies of previous legalizations, this analysis uses data from 465,509 DACA applications obtained via Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to investigate features in receiving locales that help or hinder undocumented youth in applying for deferred action.

The literature on contexts of reception argues that structural features of destinations shape immigrants’ trajectories in significant ways (Portes and Zhou 1993; Reitz 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). While individual characteristics and human capital are clearly important to immigrant incorporation, the characteristics of the places in which immigrants live — such as local labor markets, co-ethnic communities, and government policies — are also critical variables (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Reitz 2002; Alba and Nee 2003). Immigrants’ mobility hinges not only on what they bring with them, but also on what they experience in their destinations. That is to say, immigrants with similar socioeconomic backgrounds can experience different incorporation trajectories depending on the contexts of reception in the places in which they settle (Takenaka and Paerregaard 2012).

The conclusions of this scholarship are borne out in studies of the 1986 Immigrant Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the last and largest legalization in US history. Evidence strongly indicates that the locales in which immigrants lived played a significant role in determining whether those eligible for legalization via IRCA actually applied (Meissner and Papademetriou 1988; North and Portz 1989; Ong Hing 1992;

¹For full details on the program, see US Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process,” available at <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>.

²We draw from the IPC for estimates of the DACA-eligible population. See “Who and Where the DREAMers Are, Revised Estimates,” available at <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>.

Gonzalez-Baker 1997). The resources afforded to the street-level bureaucratic government agencies charged with administering the legalization effort were critical to galvanizing turnout (Gonzalez-Baker 1997) and community-based organizations (CBOs) helped many navigate the application process (Hagan and Baker 1993; Gonzalez-Baker 1997). Contexts of reception clearly shaped the experiences of undocumented immigrants who were faced with the decision to apply for legalization via IRCA. How, then, might the characteristics of immigrant destinations influence the choices made by undocumented youth when it comes to DACA today?

Our core argument is that undocumented immigrants do not confront the question of legalization only as individuals, but also as members of communities that present particular constellations of structural opportunities and barriers. A complete and compelling explanation of who applies to, and benefits from, regularization programs like DACA thus needs to take immigrants' actual destinations into account. We focus our empirical investigation on a key set of the contemporary features of immigrants' receiving locales to understand the determinants of DACA applications. These include the concentration of immigrant-serving CBOs, the presence of restrictive immigration policies, and socioeconomic factors, particularly unemployment among the non-citizen population. Our analyses show that more immigrant-serving organizations in a state translate into more applications, that DACA implementation rates are not statistically significantly lower in states with hostile policy climates, and that socioeconomic factors are most significantly related to DACA applications.

This study contributes to the literature on immigrant regularization policies and to scholarship that emphasizes a structural approach to understanding the trajectories of immigrant incorporation. Moreover, understanding the collective factors that contribute to and detract from DACA applications is critical for several reasons. Most practically, it can help identify how to make DACA accessible to eligible youth. While many have benefited from DACA already, the data show that the program is not reaching its entire target population. DACA can also be seen as a trial run for how a larger-scale legalization program, like those envisioned in various comprehensive immigration reform and executive action proposals, may function. If contexts of reception play a role in immigrants' decisions to apply for DACA, they are also likely to influence decisions to apply for a broader legalization program. Finally, given that DACA has been underway for a short period of time, this analysis of the contextual determinants

of the program establishes a baseline for future studies focused on the incorporation outcomes of youth who have received deferred action.

*DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS:
POLITICAL BACKGROUND*

Since 2000, immigration policy discussions at the national level have centered on comprehensive immigration reform, including increased border security, expanded interior immigration enforcement, improvements to employment eligibility verification, legal admissions reforms, and legalization of the millions of undocumented immigrants currently in the United States. The thorniest of these issues centers on legalization. Contentious debate around how to address the status of undocumented immigrants has, in large part, led to congressional stalemate despite bipartisan efforts to reform the nation's immigration system.

With the prospects for immigration reform uncertain, advocates have turned to less expansive measures. This includes addressing the legal status of the "1.5 generation" — foreign-born, undocumented minors brought to the United States at a young age. In 2010, there were an estimated one million undocumented immigrants under the age of 18 in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2011, 13). Lack of legal status inhibits these young people's potential for upward mobility and hampering educational, occupational, and economic attainment (Abrego 2006; Gonzales 2011). Illegality not only negatively affects undocumented youths' individual trajectories but also challenges the collective future of their ethnic communities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a piece of legislation first introduced in Congress in 2001, addresses the legal status of this group by enabling undocumented youth who satisfy certain requirements to legalize and eventually apply for citizenship. Slightly more than 2.1 million young people could be eligible to obtain legal status under this legislation (Batalova and McHugh 2010, 1). Like efforts to pass comprehensive immigration reform, however, the DREAM Act has also failed to pass in Congress despite repeated consideration.³

³The DREAM Act came within a few votes of becoming law in 2010 when the House passed a version of the Act, but the Senate failed to overcome a Republican filibuster by five votes. For a history of the DREAM Act, see <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act>.

During the summer of 2012, and with the November presidential election looming large, immigration reform became part of the debate between President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney. During this time, one of Romney's prospective vice presidential running mates, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, was poised to unveil a Republican version of the DREAM Act, which was intended to bridge a gap with his party and immigrants and Latino voters. Against this political backdrop, the Obama administration announced DACA on June 15, 2012. DACA directs agencies involved in immigration enforcement to practice prosecutorial discretion toward young people that meet criteria similar to that advanced by the DREAM Act. As an executive order issued by the president, DACA is not a law and was therefore not debated by Congress.

Unlike the DREAM Act, DACA is not a permanent solution for undocumented youth as it does not provide a pathway to citizenship. Rather, successful applicants receive a two-year renewable grant of reprieve from deportation, as well as work authorization. As many as 1.7 million undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children could be eligible for DACA (Batalova and Mittelstadt 2012, 1). The application requirements for the program, however, are complex.

Those eligible for DACA must have come to the United States before the age of 16, be at least 15 years of age, and under 31 as of June 15, 2012; have continuously lived in the US since June 15, 2007; and have been physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012.⁴ Applicants must meet education requirements (a high school degree or equivalent completion, current school enrollment, or an honorable discharge from a branch of the armed services) and be free of serious criminal history. Applying for DACA requires a \$465 application fee, along with proof of identity, and other documentation.

The following sections theoretically and empirically explore the determinants of DACA. Our puzzle is this: Not all who are thought to be eligible for DACA have applied, so what explains this variation?

⁴Immigrants younger than 15 are eligible to apply for DACA if they are in removal proceedings, have been ordered removed, or have a voluntary departure order. A complete list of eligibility requirements is available at <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process>.

*CONTEXTS OF RECEPTION AND IMMIGRANT
REGULARIZATION*

Studies of incorporation have long focused on immigrants' individual characteristics (educational attainment, income, language ability, length of time in receiving country) as predictors of various dimensions of integration in the host society (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean and Stevens 2003). Although much of the scholarship remains focused on these variables, the literature has shifted towards greater recognition of the role of institutional structure and context in shaping immigrants' lives and trajectories. Portes and Rumbaut (2006) emphasize that federal government policy, labor markets, and co-ethnic communities affect immigrants' contexts of reception and their resulting incorporation. Segmented assimilation theory also focuses on destinations, positing that the presence or absence of racial discrimination, co-ethnic communities, and inner-city residence are key variables in determining upward, downward, or stagnant incorporation paths (Portes and Zhou 1993). Other scholars highlight the fluidity of the incorporation process, with different outcomes depending on factors present in the neighborhoods, cities, or states in which immigrants live (Guarizno, Sanchez, and Roach 1999; Bloemraad 2006; Jimenez 2010). While immigrants' individual characteristics clearly impact incorporation, this scholarship demonstrates that contexts of reception are also critical (Marrow 2005; Zhou 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

This contention finds empirical support in studies of the regularization included in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). While IRCA was much broader than DACA and offered permanent rather than temporary regularization, it presents clear lessons in terms of the impact that immigrant destinations can have on the ability of immigrants to access legalization programs. Scholars of this massive regularization, which legalized almost 2.7 million immigrants (Kerwin 2010) emphasize that the opportunities and barriers embedded in receiving communities influenced IRCA's implementation on the ground. Street-level bureaucracies played a particularly significant role (Meissner and Papademetriou 1988; North 1988; North and Portz 1989). To overcome mistrust between immigrants and federal immigration enforcement, "legalization offices" were established to process IRCA applications (Ong Hing 2004, 173–74). The resources afforded to these offices were critical to galvanizing turnout, and the offices were credited with processing

approximately 71 percent of applications (Ong Hing 2004, 174). Nevertheless, because resources varied drastically by geographic area, some legalization office officials were more enthusiastic about the process than others. The Houston office, for example, saw twice the expected total number of applications, a result scholars attribute to highly motivated officials working in tight collaboration with immigrant-serving CBOs and religious groups (Gonzalez-Baker 1997, 11).

On their own, these CBOs were also influential in driving IRCA applications. In further anticipation of immigrants' suspicion of the federal immigration enforcement, Congress authorized such organizations to accept applications directly, making them key players in the implementation of the legalization (Ong Hing 2004, 170–71). Well-positioned in terms of accessibility and familiarity to the eligible immigrant population, CBOs processed an estimated 21 percent of applications (Ong Hing 2004, 174).⁵ The role of particular receiving locales is evident in this effort. In areas of high immigration with ethnically homogenous rather than diverse immigrant pools, studies suggest that immigrant-serving organizations were especially successful in increasing application rates through outreach and networks (Hagan and Baker 1993; Gonzalez-Baker 1997).⁶

Drawing from the contexts of reception scholarship and studies of IRCA, we analyze how the areas in which immigrants live affect DACA applications. Our empirical approach centers on a key set of the contemporary features of immigrants' destinations. Basing our analysis on the individual states in which DACA applicants reside, we examine the concentration of immigrant-serving CBOs, the presence of restrictive immigration policies, and broader socioeconomic factors, particularly unemployment among the non-citizen population. This approach allows us to look at both facilitating and inhibiting factors within immigrants' destinations to parse out the relationship between contexts of reception and DACA applications.

Community-based organizations are frequently studied within the literature on civic participation and political incorporation. Scholars demonstrate that these groups can provide avenues for and even enhance immigrants' engagement in their receiving locales. For instance, places

⁵The remaining 8 percent of applications to the IRCA legalization were submitted by private attorneys (Ong Hing 2004, 174).

⁶Gonzalez-Baker (1997) argues that the framers of IRCA had the Mexican-origin undocumented population in mind when they designed and implemented the legalization program, giving this group an advantage over others in terms of the application process.

with dense, well-resourced CBOs make it more likely for immigrants to become involved than destinations without such a civic infrastructure (Wong 2006; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008). Not surprisingly, research also shows the reverse: Lack of exposure to civic, labor, and advocacy organizations within immigrant-receiving communities decreases overall levels of immigrant incorporation (DeSipio 2001; Marrow 2005; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008).

Given this work, in addition to studies showing that CBOs were integral to IRCA, it is reasonable to expect that DACA-eligible youth who have access to nearby immigrant-serving organizations are more likely to obtain the information, resources, and support that can help them and their families navigate the DACA process. Indeed, with today's undocumented population much more spread out geographically relative to the IRCA period (Durand, Massey and Capoferro 2005; Zuñiga and Hernandez-Leon 2006), it is probable that immigrant-focused organizations in "new destinations," however sparse, are even more integral to DACA applications.

Subnational immigration-related laws are also likely to affect DACA application rates. Contemporary state and local immigration legislation has grown exponentially since California's passage of Proposition 187 in 1994, which sought to curtail undocumented immigrants' access to publically funded basic services, including health care and education.⁷ The number of immigration laws enacted in state legislatures across the United States increased tenfold between 2005 and 2010 (NCSL 2012). While some jurisdictions adopt accommodating measures, others are markedly restrictive, targeting the undocumented with the aim of pushing them out — either to other US locales or back to their home countries (Hopkins 2010; Ramakrishnan and Wong 2010; Wong 2012; García 2013). Studies indicate that such hostile policies have significant and often reverberating effects on the everyday lives of immigrants subject to them (Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011; Menjívar 2011; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; García 2014).

The literature on subnational immigration policy suggests that immigrants living in restrictive destinations experience more segregation and have fewer opportunities for participatory membership (Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro 2011; Gonzales and Chavez 2012) which would likely decrease eligible young people's incentive to move forward with the

⁷Legal challenges citing violation of federal plenary power successfully blocked most of the proposition, and the state halted its appeals in 1999 (Wroe 2008, 101–04).

DACA process. Indeed, these youth may be especially fearful of divulging information in the DACA application that would potentially put other undocumented family members, like their parents, at risk. Yet scholars also offer compelling examples of political and civic engagement that occurs after polarizing exposure to anti-immigrant legislation. For example, first- and second-generation immigrants became much more politically engaged after Proposition 187 passed in California (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Studies focusing on more recent events link the mobilization against H.R. 4437 — a 2005 House bill that sought, among other things, to make felons out of undocumented immigrants — to an increase in ethnic solidarity amongst the Latino population (e.g., Barreto et al. 2009). This strand of work indicates that immigrant participation may actually flourish in contexts of restrictionist policy. In this sense, the difficulties of living in hostile contexts may catalyze DACA-eligible youth to seek legal status via DACA as a way to contest their “illegality.”

The contextual factors that influence DACA applications go beyond immigrant-serving organizations and subnational immigration policies. Arguably, no other measure of incorporation is more important than socioeconomic attainment. Previous studies show that economic and labor market conditions in receiving locales can impinge on, or bolster, the socioeconomic mobility of immigrants (Reitz 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Specific metropolitan environments directly affect the entrepreneurial ventures of ethnic populations, for example (Light and Rosenstein 1995). Research on “new destinations” in the United States reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that immigrants’ socioeconomic trajectories are geographically specific because of their intrinsic link to opportunities and barriers in local labor markets (Marrow 2011).

This work suggests that the economic health of immigrant destinations is likely to play a role in DACA application rates, especially given the cost of applying.⁸ The application itself requires a \$465 fee, and this

⁸A survey of 1,472 undocumented millennials, nearly all of whom applied for or have been approved for DACA, shows that nearly half of respondents saved money, borrowed money, fundraised, or took out loans to pay for their application fee, and just over one-third of respondents reported a significant delay in submitting their application because of the cost (Wong and Valdivia 2014). While there is no waiver for the DACA application fee, some programs have emerged to help cover the cost. The organization 21 Progress, for example, provides zero-interest social loans for DACA-eligible youth. See <http://21progress.org/event/dreamer-circles>.

amount may rise significantly for applicants who seek legal counsel. Applicants can encounter further costs associated with acquiring supporting documents, in addition to the costs implied in taking time away from work, school, and family obligations to compile applications. Studies show that during the 1986 IRCA legalization, the cost of applying was prohibitive for many eligible immigrants (Ong Hing 1992). The DACA application fee is likely to be especially problematic for the young people the program targets because they are often without funds of their own. Given these factors, we hypothesize that states with tougher economic circumstances are more likely to see lower DACA application rates.

The literature on contexts of reception contends that the places in which immigrants live are influential to their incorporation trajectories. Similarly, studies of IRCA show that immigrants' receiving locales shaped application rates to that legalization program. Our analysis of the determinants of DACA applications expands this work, systematically specifying contextual features of immigrants' destinations across the American states that drive the critical decision to seek formal immigration relief.

DATA AND METHODS

As the agency in charge of administering DACA, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) periodically releases data on the application process.⁹ These data are informative, especially in terms of painting general portraits about the number of applications submitted nationally and rates of acceptance and denial. However, the USCIS reports are insufficient for gaining a deeper sense of who DACA applicants are and where they live, which are essential first steps in investigating the factors that help and hinder their decisions to apply to the program. Understanding the composition of the pool of DACA applicants requires more detailed data than what the federal government makes publically available.

To expand our insight on DACA applicants, we made two FOIA requests in late summer and early fall 2012. The FOIA requests returned 465,509 of a total of 573,404 applications that were received by USCIS. The data span from August 15, 2012 (the first day USCIS began accepting applications) to March 8, 2013. We requested data collected by USCIS on the DACA application (form I-821), including age, sex,

⁹See <http://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/individual-applications-and-petitions/data-individual-applications-and-petitions>.

country of birth, immigration history, as well as approval and denial decisions for every applicant.¹⁰ More importantly for the analysis at hand, the requests included all applicants' place of residence.¹¹ While we requested applicants' zip codes, this information was only included for the first batch of data that we received (146,313 applications). For the majority of our data, zip code information was redacted. Although such fine-grained analysis would be beneficial, in the absence of zip code-level data, we rely on state of residence to analyze the contexts of reception in which these undocumented youth live.

Although states are large measures of context, they are meaningful units in this analysis for three related reasons. The first — and most practical — revolves around the complexity of the contemporary immigration enforcement landscape within the United States. The national-level approach is joined by subnational efforts that include varying and overlapping legislation involving cities, counties, and states, as well as organizations such as school boards and police departments (García 2013; Varsanyi et al. 2012). Given the complexity of immigration enforcement federalism in the United States, no complete list of local, city, and county immigration policies exists. Comprehensive databases of state-level measures, however, are available.¹² Beyond the issue of data availability, immigration policy formed at the state level has a larger reach. It also has a potentially greater effect, given the numbers of immigrants subject to such measures and states' control over immigrants' access to key programs, such as welfare benefits (Hero and Preuhs 2007). States have usefully served as key variables in studies of legislation also found at the city or county level, such as English-only laws (Schildkraut 2001) and worksite employment eligibility enforcement (Newman et al. 2012).

The data obtained via the FOIA requests represent the dependent variable in our analyses. We operationalize our dependent variable in two distinct ways. The first is the total count of DACA applications by geography (e.g., 161,624 applications submitted from California). The total count helps provide insights about the reach and scope of DACA.

¹⁰The latest USCIS reports on DACA data show country of origin, but only for the top 20 countries of accepted and approved requests. Earlier reports show fewer countries of origin or none at all.

¹¹The latest USCIS reports on DACA show state of residence for accepted and approved requests. Earlier reports show only the top 10 states of residence or none at all.

¹²See, for example, the database maintained by the National Conference of State Legislatures, at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/immigration-laws-database.aspx>.

However, counts across geographies can vary widely due to differences in population size, the size of the undocumented population, and the number of DACA-eligible youth, among other sources of variation. We thus also operationalize DACA using a standardized measure that permits greater comparability across geographies. The DACA implementation rate is the number of DACA applications submitted in a place divided by the estimated total number of DACA-eligible youth in that place. Data on the DACA-eligible population come from the IPC. Estimates of the DACA-eligible population are obtained through analysis of the American Community Survey (ACS) 2006–2010 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Deriving these estimates begins by estimating the undocumented population by state, and then tabulating these estimates by the DACA eligibility criteria (e.g., age, school enrollment, educational attainment, and year of entry to the United States). Thus, for example, with 161,624 DACA applications submitted from California and an estimated total number of DACA-eligible youth of 539,774, the DACA implementation rate is 29.9 percent. Given the superiority of the standardized measure, we focus our analyses on the following:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(CBOs) + \beta_2(ICI) + \beta_3(SES) + \beta_4'(Controls) + \varepsilon$$

where Y represents the DACA implementation rate for each state i , $CBOs$ represent the density of immigrant-serving CBOs per state (per 1,000 population), ICI represents the Immigrants' Climate Index, SES represents state-level economic characteristics specific to the non-citizen population, and $Controls$ is a vector of state-level control factors. We complement the OLS regression with propensity score matching (PSM).¹³

We draw from several sources to capture state-level contextual factors. To evaluate the relationship between immigrant-serving organizations and DACA applications, we compile a list of all such organizations per state, identifying the count (total number). We use Guidestar, a searchable online database that provides information on non-profit organizations across the United States using administrative data from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). We query on category "P84" for "Ethnic and Immigrant Centers, Services." This category includes all organizations — both

¹³See online appendix, which includes (1) table of summary statistics, (2) table of correlations, (3) table of multivariate analysis of count of total DACA applications, and (4) table of multivariate analysis using different measures of CBO density.

old and new — that have registered with the IRS that serves the needs of ethnic and immigrant groups.¹⁴ We then use the count to create two measures of density: the ratio of the total population in a state to the number of organizations in the state and the ratio of the total foreign-born population in a state to the number of organizations. As a robustness check, we also measure the ratio of the estimated undocumented population in a state to the number of organizations. While relying on registered non-profits does not capture the full extent of organizations that provide services and support to immigrants, this approach has two main advantages. First, formal non-profits are much more likely than informal associations to have the staff capacity and minimum legal expertise necessary to assist individuals with the DACA process (Ramakrishnan and Viramontes 2006). Including measures of registered non-profits also provides a level of standardization and comprehensiveness that is difficult to achieve when considering informal associations. Our measure of non-profit density is the most systematic way to evaluate the role that immigrant-serving organizations might play in DACA applications in a nationwide analysis. At the same time, we acknowledge that all registered non-profits may not have DACA-related programs, even if they serve the needs of ethnic and immigrants groups. Nevertheless, we have confidence in our measure, as P84 organizations that do not directly assist DACA applicants are likely able to refer prospective applicants to other organizations that can provide assistance.¹⁵

To analyze the effects of restrictive state-level immigration policy on DACA applications, we use the ICI developed by Pham and Van (2013). The ICI aggregates data from 2005 to 2012 on immigration policies on a state-by-state basis. By assigning either positive or negative values to all policies that are enacted, and then weighting these values, the ICI provides a score for each state that indicates how these subnational immigration laws may impact the everyday lives of immigrants. The score ranges from -60 , which reflects Arizona's restrictive policy climate, to $+38$,

¹⁴Our approach follows methods established by the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII). See Manuel Pastor, Rhonda Ortiz, Vanessa Carter, Justin Scoggins, and Anthony Perez, "California Immigrant Integration Scorecard" (Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2012), available at <http://csii.usc.edu/CAimmSCORECARD.html>.

¹⁵It is possible that our measure of CBOs may not be easily comparable across states, as organizations may have economies of scale, wherein fewer, but larger and longer-tenured organizations, may be as effective, if not more effective, in service provision to immigrants than a large number of smaller, but less experienced, organizations.

which reflects more permissive policies in Illinois (California is second in terms of most permissive policy climates with a score of +33).

Data on state-level socioeconomic factors come from the ACS and the Opportunity Index.¹⁶ The Opportunity Index ranks states based on 16 indicators in three categories: jobs and local economy, education, and community health and civic life. In addition to basic measures of socioeconomic mobility, such as the availability of jobs and affordable housing, it includes measures of social capital and civic ties, such as group membership and volunteerism. In combination with ACS data, the Opportunity Index provides a fuller picture of state-level socioeconomic mobility.

This study, as well as others focused on DACA and regularization programs more generally, would certainly be enhanced by individual-level data that allowed us to model a prospective applicants' decision to apply (or not) based on a menu of key individual-level characteristics. Unfortunately, such information is currently unavailable. It is also important to note that our analyses are unable to speak to the population of DACA-eligible youth who have yet to apply. Existing cohort studies of the 1.5 generation in the United States could be used to explore the experiences of this group. Such an approach would also provide an opportunity to track the longer-term impact that DACA has on the lives of those who receive deferred action.

ANALYZING DACA

The FOIA data provide one of the most detailed and comprehensive looks at DACA applicants. Being a “nation of immigrants” has long been central to America’s founding ethos, and DACA applicants personify this legacy. Coming from 205 countries and territories, 74.9 percent of applicants were born in Mexico, and an additional 18.6 percent were born in Central or South America. About 4.2 percent were born in Asia.¹⁷ Female applicants comprise 51.2 percent of the sample with males making up 48.7 percent. The average age of applicants is 20 years. In addition to these descriptive summaries, Wong et al. (2013) identify (1)

¹⁶The non-profit Opportunity Nation commissioned Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council, to compile the Opportunity Index. For full details on the Index data, see <http://opportunityindex.org/methods-sources/>.

¹⁷For a more detailed analysis and discussion, see Wong et al. 2013.

the systematic underrepresentation of Central Americans, Asians, Europeans, and Africans in the pool of DACA applicants, (2) that males are more likely to have their applications denied than females, and (3) that the likelihood of denial increases with the age of the applicant.

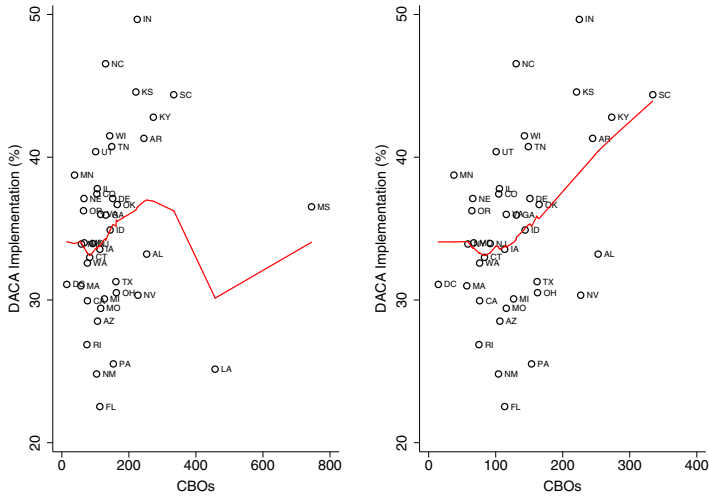
Immigrant-Serving Organizations

How do immigrant-serving organizations affect DACA? As discussed above, such organizations played a critical role during the 1986 IRCA legalization process (Hagan and Baker 1993; Gonzalez-Baker 1997). Immigrant-serving organizations have also been at the forefront of the DACA process, working to raise awareness about the program and supporting eligible youth through outreach, workshops, legal clinics, and even assistance with application fees (Johnson and Foster 2013). Together with studies that link CBOs to enhanced immigrant participation (Wong 2006; Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008), their work and advocacy leads us to expect a positive and significant relationship between immigrant-serving organizations and DACA applications rates.

There is a strong and positive bivariate relationship between the count of immigrant-serving CBOs and DACA applications ($p < 0.001$). In other words, more immigrant-serving organizations in a state are related to higher numbers of DACA applications in that state.¹⁸ This does not come as a surprise. But while more organizations are clearly correlated with more applications, are they also correlated with higher DACA implementation rates? Here, the results are inconclusive. The count of immigrant-serving CBOs is not positively related to DACA implementation. In addition, as the left panel in Figure 1 shows, there is no significant relationship between the density of immigrant-serving CBOs in a state and DACA implementation rates ($p = 0.328$). However, Mississippi and Louisiana stand out as states with very few immigrant-serving organizations per the total population. After removing these two states from the analysis

¹⁸We normalize the distribution of applications to date per state, excluding the states at the bottom 10th percentile as well as states at the 90th percentile. With this normalized distribution, we see that every one additional immigrant-serving organization results in an increase of 70 DACA applications. This result is highly statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). When we include all states in this same analysis rather than normalizing the distribution of applications per state, the results are skewed significantly upward. This is because of states like California, which has the largest number of immigrant-serving organizations and the largest number of DACA applicants.

Figure 1. Left Panel: Relationship between Density of Immigrant-Serving Organizations and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Implementation. Right Panel: Mississippi and Louisiana Excluded



(as seen in the right panel in Figure 1), the data reveal a strong positive relationship, wherein the density of immigrant-serving CBOs in a state is correlated with higher DACA implementation rates ($p = 0.002$).

In addition to the analyses of bivariate relationships, we also examine the relationship between immigrant-serving CBOs and DACA in multivariate contexts. Table 1 reports the results for our primary outcome of interest, DACA implementation. As the results indicate, immigrant-serving CBOs are not significantly related to DACA implementation rates. Acknowledging that there are several different ways to operationalize CBOs, we check these results against a series of alternative measures. The results remain unchanged when evaluating immigrant-serving CBOs by their count, the ratio of organizations to the foreign-born population in a state, as well as by the ratio of organizations to the estimated undocumented population in a state.

The mixed results on the role of immigrant-serving CBOs may be attributable to the overall volume of demand that exists related to DACA. In other words, organizations may be stretched thin in terms of their resources and capacity. During the 1986 IRCA legalization, for example, the ability of immigrant-serving groups to meet the needs of those seeking to apply was, in some cases, problematic (Gonzalez-Baker 1997). Another

TABLE 1
MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS IMPLEMENTATION RATE

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| CBOs | 0.0075 (0.0075) | | | | 0.0095 (0.0109) |
| ICI | | -0.0225 (0.0466) | | -0.0013 (0.0093) | -0.0117 (0.0368) |
| Unemployment % | | | | 0.0306 (0.0468) | |
| Opportunity Index | | | -2.141*** (0.5504) | -1.979** (0.8218) | 0.5641*** (0.1769) |
| English Language Use | | | | 0.1137 (0.1439) | 0.3248** (0.1319) |
| Undocumented | | | | -0.7089 (0.8834) | -1.043 (0.9205) |
| Population (ln) | | | | | |
| Southern State | | | | 0.7795 (2.514) | 3.627 (2.345) |
| Constant | 33.668*** (1.252) | 34.704*** (1.082) | 47.810*** (3.468) | 43.996*** (9.034) | -10.695 (14.538) |
| Observations | 41 | 40 | 40 | 40 | 40 |

Notes: OLS multivariate analysis with robust standard errors.

***Significant at 0.01 level.

**Significant at 0.05 level.

possibility is that in states with many immigrant-serving non-profits, not all may provide DACA-related services, whereas in states with fewer non-profits, the chances (and need) that each organization will provide DACA assistance may be greater. Qualitative work evaluating and comparing the DACA-related services and outreach strategies of immigrant-serving CBOs, as well as organizational surveys, can adjudicate these claims, test for other possibilities, and further clarify the impact that immigrant-serving organizations are having on DACA.

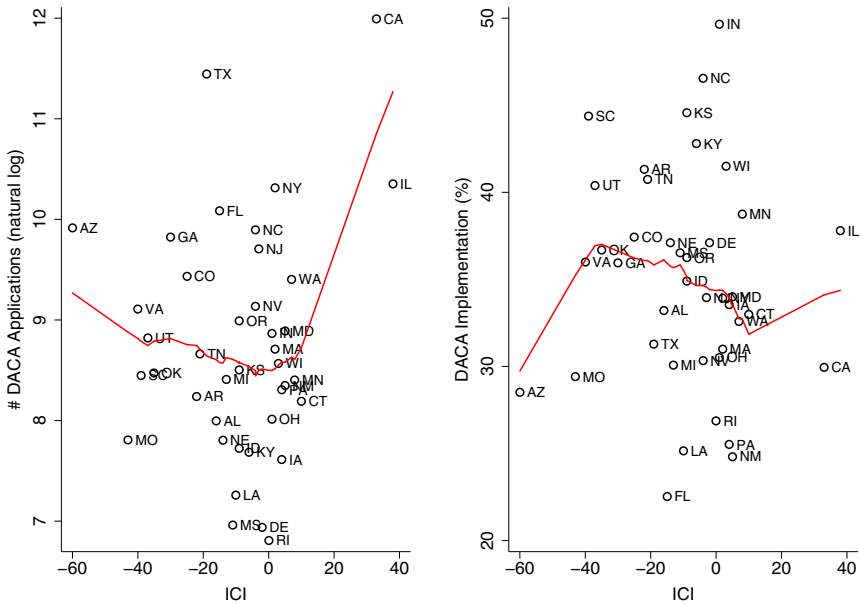
Restrictive Political Contexts

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals has unfolded during a time of tumultuous subnational involvement in immigration activism, with states and localities debating a myriad of laws typically designed to keep undocumented immigrants at the margins of society (Varsanyi 2010). With scholars just beginning to investigate the outcomes of these policies (García 2014) evaluating DACA in relationship to restrictive policy contexts can help demonstrate the practical effects that these laws on the books have on immigrants on the ground. We examine the hypothesis that hostile policy contexts serve as an impediment to DACA by isolating and intimidating eligible youth, as well as the possibility that restrictive laws actually serve as an impetus for this population to regularize their status.

Although restrictive policy contexts are designed to make conditions of living harsh for undocumented immigrants and to disconnect them from public institutions and support, our analysis shows that they are not having this effect with respect to DACA. As the left panel of Figure 2 indicates, states with hostile immigration policies are not significantly related to fewer DACA applications. Here, the logged number of total applications for the state with the most hostile policy context (Arizona) is about the same as the state with the most permissive policy context (Illinois). Moreover, as the right panel in Figure 2 shows, hostile policy contexts are not significantly related to lower DACA implementation rates.

The multivariate results reported in Table 1 confirm the insignificance of the relationship between restrictive policy contexts and DACA implementation. We note here that even if the ICI scores for Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Utah, states that passed copycat laws in the wake of Arizona's restrictive Senate Bill (SB) 1070 (ACLU n.d.), were adjusted to reflect Arizona's score, the bivariate relationship

Figure II. Left Panel: Bivariate Relationship between Hostile Political Context and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Applications (Natural Log). Right Panel: Bivariate Relationship between Hostile Political Context and DACA Implementation Rate

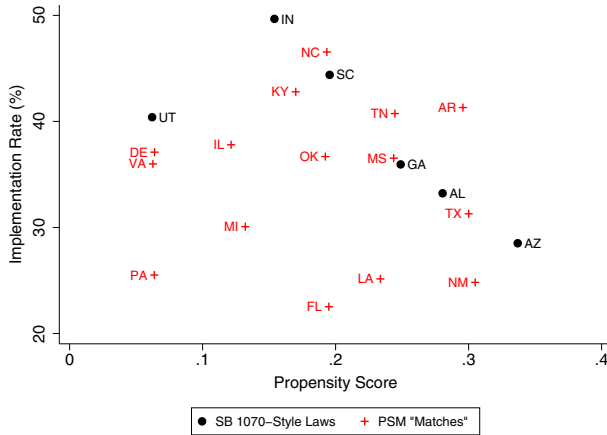


between the ICI and DACA implementation would remain insignificant ($p = 0.133$ in bivariate relationship, $p = 0.174$ in multivariate analysis).¹⁹ The reason for this is that states like Indiana and South Carolina have among the highest DACA implementation rates. In other words, states that followed Arizona's lead after SB 1070 have both very low and very high DACA implementation rates, which serves to nullify a significant relationship.

Given the policy relevance of the relationship between restrictive policy contexts and the behavior of immigrants, it is worth deepening the analysis. To do so, we use PSM to compare Arizona and states that

¹⁹SB 1070 was passed by Arizona legislators and signed into law by Governor Jan Brewer in April 2010 as an "attrition through enforcement" measure designed to push undocumented immigrants out of the state by making their lives exceedingly difficult. Following the federal government's legal challenge, in June 2012, the US Supreme Court ruled that three of four key provisions of the law could not go into effect because they are preempted by federal immigration law. For more details, see <http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/analysis-of-arizonas-immigration-law.aspx>.

Figure III. Propensity Score Matching Results. Nearest-Neighbor (3) Matching. Each of the Six States That Adopted SB 1070-Style Legislation has Common Support. $p > 0.476$ for Difference in Means between Treatment and Control Groups for All Variables



adopted copycat legislation with other states with similar densities of immigrant-serving CBOs, unemployment rates among non-citizens, English language use among non-citizens, geography, and the estimated size of the undocumented population (natural log). The advantage of this method is that it collapses each of the variables in the multivariate analysis into a single dimension in the form of a propensity score. This improves our analysis by zeroing in on comparable cases. In other words, are DACA implementation rates systematically higher or lower in states that have adopted SB 1070-style legislation compared to states that have not *and* have similar propensity scores (i.e., that are comparable with respect to the factors listed above)? Figure 3 shows the results of the PSM analysis using the nearest neighbor (3)-matching method. Only observations with common support are included in the analysis. Observations are balanced across the covariates.²⁰ The PSM analysis confirms the insignificant effect of restrictive policy climates. For example, as the figure shows, the three nearest matches to Arizona, these being New Mexico, Texas, and Arkansas, have both higher and lower DACA implementation rates.

²⁰We note here that as the covariates used in the analysis of DACA implementation, expectedly, do not explain the conditional probability of assignment to treatment (i.e., adopting SB 1070-style legislation), the standard errors for the estimates in the PSM analysis are predictably large.

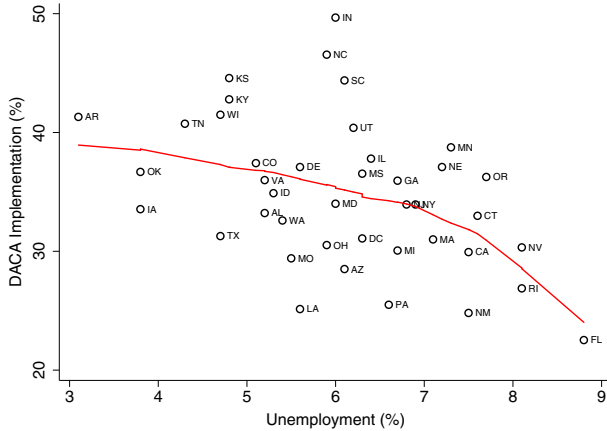
The finding that restrictive policy contexts are not related to lower DACA application and implementation rates may seem counterintuitive. It is reasonable to expect that hostile receiving locales push immigrants into the shadows, disconnecting them from the very institutions and organizations that help facilitate the DACA process. However, our finding is similar to the conclusions of other recent studies of subnational immigration policy threats. We know that such threats promote Latinos' political socialization (Pantoja and Segura 2003) and induce them to naturalize and vote (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001). While Hagan, Rodriguez, and Castro (2011) document pervasive fear in exclusionary destinations, their analysis suggests that some immigrants become more deeply engaged in their receiving locales as a result. Gonzales and Chavez (2012) have comparable findings, showing that while illegality constrains daily life, in other ways, it motivates undocumented youth to engage politically to resist difficult conditions. Likewise, Seif (2009, 2011) argues that undocumented young people become politically active as a way to push back against marginalization. Ultimately, facing a difficult and threatening environment may serve as an important impetus to getting DACA.

Another possibility is that state-level immigration climates — however restrictive or accommodating — are overshadowed by events at the national level, such as ramped up interior enforcement efforts and the unprecedented number of deportations under the Obama administration. Between 2008 and mid-2014, this administration deported over two million people — more in six years of Obama's presidency than all people deported before 1997 (Golash-Boza 2013; Wong 2014). In an analysis on the “chilling effect” hypothesis, which anticipates that certain individuals who qualify for a public program do not participate, Pedraza and Zhu (2014) demonstrate that during 2009–2012, a time when interior deportations surged, Latinos with immigrant parents were more likely to be hesitant to sign up for Medicaid. This finding supports the likelihood that laws passed at the state level, either to accommodate or restrict undocumented immigrants, are negated by the strength of federal immigration policies, at least in terms of decisions to apply to DACA.

Socioeconomic Status Variables

As discussed above, a wealth of literature indicates that higher levels of socioeconomic status — at the individual, family, and the community level — are strongly related to improved mobility and incorporation (Alba and Nee

Figure IV. Relationship between the Unemployment Rate among Non-Citizens in a State and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Implementation Rates



2003; Bean and Stevens 2003; Hao 2007). To analyze the relationship between socioeconomic status and DACA implementation rates, we use the unemployment rate among non-citizens as a proxy for the unemployment rate among undocumented immigrants. Although measurement error is an issue (not all non-citizens are undocumented), given data limitations, we view this approach as an acceptable approximation. In addition to unemployment, we also look at the relationship between the 2013 Opportunity Index and DACA implementation rates to provide a check on the robustness of our results.

The most consistently significant set of results relates to the socioeconomic status variables. Beyond CBOs and political climates, the socioeconomic conditions of the places in which immigrants live are key predictors of DACA implementation. Figure 4 shows that as the unemployment rate among the non-citizen population in a state increases, DACA implementation rates decrease significantly ($p < 0.001$). Again, while measurement error is an issue when using the unemployment rate for non-citizens as a proxy for the unemployment rate for undocumented immigrants, we take this result to reflect the deterrent effect that the \$465 application fee has on prospective DACA applicants. The significance of the result also holds in the multivariate model. We acknowledge that unemployment may proxy for other barriers to applying for DACA beyond the \$465 application fee. But while we are unable to

directly test the mechanism, as the unemployed are generally more likely to experience financial hardship, we have confidence in our interpretation.

In addition to unemployment, we also look at the relationship between the 2013 Opportunity Index and DACA implementation rates. The Opportunity Index, which is a fuller measure of socioeconomic status that encompasses a broader array of indicators, provides a check on the robustness of the unemployment results: If higher unemployment among prospective DACA applicants (or their families) is negatively related to DACA implementation, greater economic “opportunity,” as reflected by higher scores on the Opportunity Index, should be positively related to DACA implementation. The multivariate analysis confirms this expectation.

CONCLUSION

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals offers concrete — though temporary — advantages to eligible youth, including relief from the threat of deportation and legal work authorization. For many undocumented young people, the program is the only legal means available to move forward with life plans, education, and employment. DACA is particularly important for this group given that the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform in the future remain unclear. Nevertheless, the data indicate that a significant portion of DACA-eligible youth have yet to apply to the program.

This study shows that the places in which undocumented youth live have a bearing on DACA implementation. We hypothesized that immigrant-serving organizations facilitated applications, but the results are mixed. While more immigrant-serving organizations in a state translate into more applications, this finding does not remain significant in a multivariate analysis. We adopted two competing hypotheses regarding the role of restrictive state-level immigration policies: That hostile political environments could stymie DACA applications or that they could galvanize them. Our analysis supports the latter, as DACA implementation rates are not statistically significantly lower in states with hostile policy climates. Finally, we anticipated that socioeconomic factors, particularly unemployment, would drive down applications. The data confirm this expectation, as DACA implementation is negatively related to higher unemployment and positively related to greater economic opportunity.

These findings extend the literature on contexts of reception, showing destinations as integral not only to incorporation, but also to individual decisions to regularize immigration status. This conclusion is also supported by past studies of IRCA, which showed the various ways that receiving locales affected application rates. Clearly, this article does not cover all the possible characteristics of immigrant destinations that may facilitate or impede DACA applications, such as the presence of a supportive co-ethnic community. And although we are limited by the data made available on DACA by USCIS, this study is the first to systematically analyze some of the key contextual determinants of DACA applications.

For scholars of immigration and incorporation in the United States, DACA recipients are a key population of interest, as their experiences will shed light on the ways in which educational, occupational, civic, and other trajectories are shaped by changes in legal status. DACA has, however, just begun to unfold, and incorporation by its very nature develops over time. This paper thus contributes a critical first step towards a larger, long-term analysis of the incorporation effects of the DACA program by systematically analyzing the contextual features of receiving locales that facilitate and hinder decisions to apply. These same features — CBOs, political contexts, and socioeconomic variables — may further influence DACA recipients' incorporation trajectories and are likely to play a role in any future regularization efforts.

In addition to these contributions, our analysis on DACA applications has implications for broader themes in migration scholarship. In particular, it links microlevel understandings of migration to macrolevel trends by evaluating the relationship between individual decisions to regularize and the socio-legal environments in which immigrants live. In this way, the study gets below the surface of the broad picture of regularization programs to understand the multiple and often hierarchical influences that make up the critical decision to apply. The article also relates current regularization policy with historical trends by analyzing continuities and discontinuities between the DACA program today and the IRCA legalization program of 1986. Within the social sciences, contemporary scholarship on immigration and immigration law frequently lacks historical perspective or context. Our more comparative and historical approach in organizing this analysis helps to identify structural factors that affect the accessibility and thus the efficacy of immigrant regularization programs across time.

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