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At The Intersection Of Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals, The Migration Trust Network And Labor

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AT THE INTERSECTION OF DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS, THE
MIGRATION TRUST NETWORK AND LABOR

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DEDICATION

Dearest Scarlet,

I hope that you are well as you read this; also, congratulations since you are now reading. While you were only 18 weeks old the day that I wrote this dedication and Master's thesis, you impacted me in the strongest manner even before you were born. I am indebted to you in many ways and I felt the need to dedicate this work to you while also explaining why.

Several years ago, before your arrival, I heard of an interesting associating between the educational level of parents and the level of education that their children achieve. Basically children are desensitized to their parents' educational levels and therefore it is common for children to reach their parents educational level before they begin to question their educational trajectories. In other words children will at least do as their parents did in school.

I was not sure of my future career and life path the day that I switched degree plans from a focus on high school teaching to sociology. I did however have one thing for certain; I knew that I wanted to be the best father that I could possibly be. With both of these items on my mind I decided to truly focus on my education so that I could begin to impact yours.

That is exactly how much you mean to me and how much I love you Scarlet; you were not yet born and only a couple of weeks old when I was completing this process in my education, yet you already had enough influence to dictate and fuel my goals. I also hope that my work and plans benefit you both directly and through your own life plans. Thank you and I love you!!

DAD

AT THE INTERSECTION OF DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS, THE
MIGRATION TRUST NETWORK AND LABOR

by

MARIO JAVIER CHAVEZ, B.A.

THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced an executive order by President Barack Obama known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This executive action stated that people who came to the U.S. as children, in addition to other criteria, may request consideration for deferred action from deportation, making these individuals eligible for employment in the United States for two years. As a result of the recent inception of DACA any literature focusing on its associated effects are limited. To date, scholars have focused at the national-level measurement, focusing on the broad impacts of this policy on the lives of recipients (Gonzales et al. 2014; Martinez 2014). My study contributes to this body of work by specifically bringing forward the effects of this policy on the labor trajectories and employment conditions experienced by this population via qualitative interviews.

I use Flores-Yeffal's (2013) Migration Trust Networks (MTN) to examine the role of using social networks when finding employment by a person that has been placed in a state of liminal legality. Liminal legality can be defined as an uncertain legal status that delimits the opportunities of persons that are placed between being undocumented and fully documented (Menjivar 2006). The MTN, a social network built on high levels of trust, aids the lives of undocumented Mexican immigrants by allowing them access to different forms of capital during their migratory experience and once they are in the U.S. While Flores-Yeffal's work (2013) focuses on the impact of the MTN on the lives of undocumented immigrants, the focus of this study is on examining whether the MTN will remain intact, or to what extent it will offer assistance for persons that have been placed in a state of liminal legality through DACA.

DACA is a state of liminal legality given its lack of concreteness; it is a two year permit for legal employment and deferral from deportation with the option of renewing for an additional two years. As of yet, there has been no talk of whether this type of legal status will lead to citizenship or if it will remain as a permanent procedure under immigration services. In simple terms, no one knows the future legal status of these recipients or of the policy. Consequently, DACA recipients remain in a state of liminal legality since they are neither undocumented nor fully documented.

Much of the literature focusing on immigrant labor has pointed to the heavy use and reliance of social networking ties in the acquisition of labor (Waldinger 1983). With this in mind, I analyze DACA recipients' experiences to measure the role that social ties play in finding employment when an immigrant is placed in what Menjivar (2006) calls a state of liminal legality. Thus, I ask:

- What happens to the MTN, and immigrants' use of the MTN, when immigrants shift from undocumented status to a state of liminal legality?
- How does a state of liminal legality effect DACA recipient's employment?

I use 9 in-depth qualitative interviews with DACA recipients to answer the proposed questions. Respondents in this study are comprised of two sub-groups of people. One group resides in El Paso County, Texas and the other in a semi-rural city in central Texas (pseudonym = Centralville), which I have left unidentified for purposes of confidentiality. I now introduce the relevant literature review that will help unpack the experiences of recipients.

DACA

“DACA is not the DREAM ACT; it is very short. It is kind of a limbo... you are not documented yet you have papers... makes no sense. So I would say that it’s complicated to understand. I am not happy with it, OK yes I am happy DACA happened but I am not satisfied with DACA. I know what it does and what it doesn’t. It does not give you a path to citizenship or residency.”

- Josie, Centralville

The creation of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was not spontaneous and it is not the DREAM Act. Policy activists and politicians have demanded a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrant youth over the years. Of all the proposals on immigration reform the one that was most likely to pass was establishing legalization for undocumented youth who had been raised in the U.S. The reasoning behind this demand included the argument that undocumented children should not have to pay for the actions of their parents (Flores-Yeffal 2013). First proposed in 2001 the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or what is commonly referred to as the DREAM Act would include an all-inclusive pathway to citizenship. Supporters of the Dream Act demanded a pathway to lawful status that would furnish eligibility to tax credits, Social Security, Medicare benefits, and federal student loans to youth that demonstrated good standing in either school or military service (Chomsky 2014). While many undocumented youth remained hopeful of this policy, it was never passed due to a lack of congressional support.

As indecision led to the end of the DREAM Act, DACA was introduced to the nation. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website (www.uscis.gov), in order to qualify for this status a person must have met the following requirements:

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

Those people who applied and were approved for DACA received deferred action from deportation and were eligible for employment in the United States for two consecutive years.

Early estimates from the Immigration Policy Center and Migration Policy Institute calculated that as many as 1.8 million immigrants would be eligible for DACA (Paral 2012). Scholars have expanded these statistics by suggesting that 1.3 million are completely eligible, while half a million are awaiting their 15th birthday or the acquisition of a GED in order to apply (Batalova and Mittelstadt 2012). Nearly half a million people have applied for DACA and more

than half have been approved (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2013). Notably, reports show that the DACA diaspora has reached all of the states in the US. Texas, the state that is the focus of this study, holds the second highest concentration of possible DACA applicants (US Census 2010). Mexicans, the focus of this study, make up 66 percent of the entire DACA eligible pool (Batalova and Mittelstadt 2012).

DACA recipients offer a unique research opportunity since recipients are transitioning from an undocumented status to a state of liminal legality within a short time span. As mentioned above, liminal legality (Menjivar 2006) can be defined as an uncertain legal status that delimits the opportunities of persons that are placed between being undocumented and fully documented. More specifically Menjivar (2006:1008) describes this process as:

Characterized by its ambiguity, as it is neither an undocumented status nor a documented one, but may have the characteristics of both. Importantly a situation of liminal legality is neither unidirectional nor a linear process, or even a phase from undocumented to documented status, for those who find themselves in it can return to an undocumented status when their temporary statuses end.

While Menjivar (2006) utilized and developed the liminal legality framework to unpack the immigration experiences of Salvadoran and Guatemalan migrants, I use this framework to unpack the labor trajectories of DACA recipients. Menjivar described the legal limbo that Salvadoran and Guatemalan recipients experience

While the outcome of persons who are placed in a state with similar characteristics depends on individual circumstances, there is a general consensus that most immigrants who are placed in states of uncertainty will face constant obstacles and vulnerabilities in their acquisition for full documentation (Menjivar 2006, Coutin 2000). In the U.S., we have witnessed a shift

from undocumented to liminal legality by half a million recipients that applied and were granted deferral since the June 15th 2012 opening. The DACA population is extremely diverse given the different immigrant origins of the population. Still, it resembles the national undocumented immigrant population with its members mirroring the national immigrant diaspora (immigrationpolicy.org). The resemblance can be initially explained by the fact that recipients are children of immigrants. DACA recipients are still relatively young and are most likely still living at home with their parents. The differences between DACA recipients and the national undocumented population are that those with DACA have a right to deferred deportation and legal employment.

As previously mentioned, studies covering DACA and its effects are limited. The National UnDACAmented Research Study (NURP) conducted by Roberto Gonzales, Rebecca Terriquez, and Steven Ruszczyk (2013) is perhaps the largest study focusing on DACA recipients. Gonzales et al. (2014) and Gonzales and Bautista-Chavez (2014) have provided preliminary summaries of the short term benefits of DACA. In particular, the authors point out that newly acquired rights are allowing recipients the possibility of beginning an upward social climb, mostly by “becoming economically and socially integrated into US institutions” (Gonzales et al.2014:1863). Gonzales et al. (2014) point out that 59 percent of recipients experienced a change in employment, 45 percent increased their income, and others have had the opportunity of obtaining internships, bank accounts, or driver’s licenses. However, these positive changes do not apply to all DACA recipients. For example, while those with higher levels of education were able to convert their newly acquired human capital into further human and economic capital, nearly half of the participants of this national sample, did not hold a Bachelor’s degree and had not experienced change in employment. This meant that they have not

experienced the benefits that may arise from such a move (Gonzales et al.2014). Given that the majority of recipients' employment prior to DACA could be categorized as employment in the lower ranks of the labor market, a lack of change in their employment means that recipients have not negotiated their status into better employment positions within the labor market.

The qualitative work of Martinez (2014) allows for an in-depth view into the lives of immigrant youth in Colorado who are either eligible for or have already received DACA. She finds that DACA recipients are now using their newly acquired rights to find ways around the barriers that were set in place prior to DACA. However, Martinez's work (2014:1885) addresses the need for extensive immigration reform since several DACA recipients were "critical of the lack of relief or opportunities for their parents and members of their mixed-status families." While not the focus of her study, Martinez (2014) brings forward issues related to labor capital; specifically, how recipients are now eligible to drive, open bank and credit accounts, and lawfully pursue employment.

LABOR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

It was July of 2010 when Stephen Colbert, Comedy Central Host of the Colbert Report, reported details of the *Please Take Our Jobs Campaign* that was organized by the United Farmworkers Union, during his segment “Fall Back Position 1 and 2”. This campaign offered the job of any agricultural worker to anybody that would take it. Only 3 of the 16 Americans (term used in the video segment) that took the challenge made the cut; Stephen Colbert was not among these individuals. I mention this section of popular media because it highlights an important aspect of immigrant jobs; immigrant jobs are the jobs that the native population will not do. These are bad jobs that according to Colbert cannot be given away, if asked nicely.

The work of Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson (2000) found that jobs held by the Mexican-origin respondents in the Current Population Survey were associated with characteristics of “bad jobs.” These are jobs that are associated with low wages, a lack of health insurance and a lack of pension benefits (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000) and are concentrated in the lower half of service and labor industries (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Further, Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson (2000) found that the three items that they were using to measure bad jobs (wages, lack of health insurance and pension benefits) were correlated, meaning that “a job that is bad in one dimension tends to be bad on other” (p. 261). Other scholars have complimented these findings by discussing jobs sectors that are associated with bad jobs and the negative characteristics that are associated with them.

When examining the earnings of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the U.S. during the early 1990s in the Legalized Population Survey, which consisted of 6,193 random sampled respondents, Rivera-Batiz (1999) found that about three-quarters of the undocumented Mexican

population in the U.S. where employed in service work. Rivera-Batiz (1999) also found that undocumented immigrants earned a little over forty percent less than documented immigrants, a characteristic that can be partially associated with lower levels of education, English proficiency, and time in the U.S.

More recently, the work of Gentsh and Massey (2011) unpacked data in the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) in order to analyze Mexican incorporation in the labor market. Their work found that wage and occupational returns declined after 1996 given stricter policies, a lack of labor rights and internal immigration enforcement, especially for immigrants with higher levels of U.S. experience and English proficiency. Gentsh and Massey (2011) argued that these factors pushed undocumented workers and their employers further into the margins of the labor market and limited the mobility of immigrants, forcing immigrants to compete for few employment opportunities.

One of the main arguments made by Waldinger and Lichter (2003) is that bad jobs (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000), or jobs located at the lower ranks of the job market, behave with similar restrictions to those experienced by women in the U.S. due to the problem of gender segregation in the workplace. Employment in the U.S. has always demanded that certain sexes fill certain jobs. Classic examples of gendered work or occupations include women in clerical/secretarial work and men in construction work.

Employment today operates in a similar fashion, forcing Mexican undocumented immigrants into secondary labor sectors and creating a racially segregated workforce. As Murga (2011) points out, the racialization of Mexican immigrants in the workforce is done by ascribing “social identifiers and connecting them to socially constructed racial categories ... these racial identifiers facilitate the differentiation of groups of people, thus allowing for the continuation of

existing dominant-subordinate relationships in a given society. (p. 24)” One of the main facilitators for this process is the social aspect of work that has been documented by Waldinger and Lichter (2003). The similarity in cultural backgrounds and ethnicities has been used by employers to ease recruitment and eventually an exploitable labor force. Often training is done by the same person that recruited/referred them a newly hired person. This cycle of racially monolithic recruitment reproduces and maintains the unequal relationships leading to employers who prefer racial minorities (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). While this cycle helps undocumented immigrants find quick sustenance, it simultaneously helps employers find cheap disposable labor (Waldinger & Lichter 2003). It is clear that this process of recruitment and training is racialized and shapes the opportunities for the integration of undocumented Mexican immigrants.

Social segregation in the workplace and in Mexican immigrant neighborhoods carries significant weight. As Gentsh and Massey (2011) found, the labor market status of Mexican immigrants is associated with a decline in wages and conditions. This can be coupled with Waldinger and Lichter’s (2003) work describing the importance of social skills on the job, given that having the ability to work well with others and being able to communicate on the job are of special importance because on the job training is more important than formal education (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This on the job training is facilitated by the heavy reliance of employers on finding new employees through the social networks of their current workers.

Overall, the labor conditions that Mexican immigrants endure have been noted as difficult and places immigrants in the face of discrimination. His includes jobs in janitorial and cleaning work as well as work in laborer/helper positons (Rivera-Batiz, 1999), manufacturing and in the carpet industry (Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000), as busboys, cooks, and waiters (Gomberg-Munoz 2010), and in construction and day laborers (Waldinger and Lichter 2003)

continue to be associated with the lowest wages and with no fringe benefits. Hall et al. (2010)

has complimented this body of work by finding that the lowest wages are associated with the

earnings of undocumented women. Conditions are summarized by Waldinger et al (2007):

“Mexican newcomers make up the working poor, with limited job access to jobs beyond the low-wage sector” (p. 2).

STRENGTH OF WEAK TIES

At its root Strength of Weak Ties (SOWT) (Granovetter 1973) analyzes the strength of a relationship in a social network when used in the acquisition of different forms of capital; in this case, employment and the associated possible economic capital gains. SOWT is divided into two categories: 1) weak ties – links with acquaintances and friends of friends, and 2) strong ties – links to close friends and relatives. SOWT was initially presented by Mark S. Granovetter in 1973. In “title of article,” Granovetter defines the “strength” of an interpersonal tie as “a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie. Each of these is somewhat independent of the other, though the set is obviously highly intracorrelated (p. 1361).” In this article and in other work Granovetter (1974, 1982, 1983) stipulated the important role that weak ties and the use of acquaintances played in the diffusion of information. The reasoning behind the strength of weak ties was summarized as followed: information shared between close friends (strong ties) will remain between close friends, never leaving this close circle. On the other hand, acquaintances (weak ties) have the ability of connecting and easing communication (referred to as “bridging”) between unconnected cliques and groups of persons. Therefore, information that passes through weak ties tends to reach the most individuals, easing the diffusion of information (Granovetter 1973:1360-1369). This theoretical tool has also helped analyze any advantages or disadvantages that persons may have during their employment tenure (Green, Tigges & Diaz 1999; Demchenko 2011; Aguilera 2003; Aguilera and Massey 2002).

It is also important to note Granovetter’s focus on the level of similarity between members of a clique that are linked together by strong ties. It is argued that the stronger a tie, the

higher the similarity in network connections between both members of the relationship. Thus, the result is a densely knitted clique. In similar fashion, persons sharing a weak tie will be less similar than they are to their stronger ties (Granovetter 1983:201-202). When analyzing the amount of information that a person receives, we may expect for persons with higher amounts of weak ties to end up with the most diverse amount of information. Those with strong ties will only receive information from persons that are similar to them, resulting in multiple sharing of the same information. Here Granovetter credits the amount of diverse information (a result of a low-density network) with the possibility of providing a person with higher and more prosperous employment possibilities.

In this theoretical endeavor, Granovetter (1973, 1974, 1982, 1983) was able to stipulate and support the strength behind weak ties when sharing and distributing information. While Granovetter did not set out to test the quality of the information that is shared by people he did manage to highlight its possible importance (Tassier 2006). Thus, Granovetter left the sociological audience with the task of measuring the dovetail of information quality/quantity and its associated tie strength. In other words, which tie brings forward the best information and which tie leads to the best outcome? This led to a contemporary theoretical debate among social network theorists, all of whom have successfully tested and defended either the positive or the negative dynamics of this shared information and of SOWT.

There is a lack of consensus in the literature about the influence of weak ties. Scholars have found empirical support for weak ties when searching for employment (Green, Tigges & Diaz 1999, Demchenko 2011, Lin 2000). A main finding in the work by Green, Tigges and Diaz (1999) centered on the detriment of using strong ties when finding employment. This study analyzed data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, which included a randomized

sample of households in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles. Similarly, Demchenko (2011) contributed to the weak tie argument by finding that weak-work related ties are most beneficial for persons with higher levels of education and social status. This is based on the argument that professional job referrals are only shared amongst persons in similar jobs, while persons in service jobs may simply come across a help wanted sign on a window. In other words, a doctor may refer and inform another doctor, leading her to employment in a hospital or clinic, but a person looking for an entry service job tends to receive referrals from strong ties, leading them into employment with low pay that is associated with a lower social status and reproducing this cycle with a lack of upward mobility. Lastly, Lin and Dumin (1986) found support for weak ties, finding that they lead to exposure in areas that friends and relatives are not aware of, thus providing opportunities that may not have been previously known.

However, Aguilera and Massey (2003) found support for strong ties by unpacking data from the MMP. They found that friends and relatives (strong ties) reserve better opportunities for members of their network and act as human resource agents by matching the skills of the network member to the best jobs, resulting in higher wages and employment conditions. Granovetter (1983:209) described a similar strength behind strong ties, arguing that a strong tie would most likely assist an individual in a time of need. My research will deduce the role that social networking ties play in the acquisition of labor by DACA recipients once they are furnished with the legal right to employment.

MIGRATION TRUST NETWORKS

Partially building off of SOWT, Flores-Yeffal (2013) developed a theoretical framework that she coined the Migration Trust Networks (MTN). Flores-Yeffal (2013) argues that for undocumented migrants weak ties quickly resemble strong ties, resulting in similar characteristics embedded in high levels of trust. The MTN was tested and developed to provide details into the process that takes place during and after the act of migrating. Flores-Yeffal (2013) based the MTN on an altruistic foundation where immigrants develop high trust levels given similar places of origin in Mexico, understanding of the difficulties of migrating, and the difficulties found back home. The MTN also involves a rural versus urban dynamic. Rural communities are tightly knit (resembling strong ties), which results in help for *paisanos* (countrymen), as they migrate and settle in the U.S. In contrast, migrants that come from urban settings do not have those strong ties at the community level, but quickly develop this connection once they are on their way to the U.S. and once in the U.S. While a significant portion of social network theorists describe weak-ties as family and friends, Flores-Yeffal (2013) argues that weak-ties:

Are all either strong ties to begin with, or they are converted or transformed into strong ties once the migrants come in contact with each other in the United States and begin to participate in an MTN... strangers for example, may be considered weak ties at the beginning, but once they are incorporated in to the MTN, they also become strong ties.

(p. xviii)

Thus, both strong and weak ties may be treated as highly similar.

Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the MTN is problematic given that it is the perspective of who is doing the assessment that matters (Flores-Yeffal 2013). This is highlighted as Flores-Yeffal (2013) shares:

If the immigrant is making the assessment, he or she may argue that membership in an MTN carries more advantages than disadvantages to the members of the group. On the other hand, if the assessment is made by a nonmember of the MTN, or by a member of the host society, the conclusion may indicate more disadvantages than advantages. (p. 166).

Flores-Yeffal (2013) describes her analysis and perspective on what are advantages and disadvantages under the MTN. Inclusion in a MTN will allow for the use of networking ties endowed with trust, which will lead to safe employment, secure inexpensive housing, and other materials such as access to transportation and access to information from their place of origin. Disadvantages of the MTN tend to focus on opportunities for assimilation. The social segregation that the MTN places immigrants in many times leads to information that lacks diversity, its ability to act as an insulator, keeping immigrants from access to learning English, local laws, and also keeping kids in underperforming schools.

Given the issue in measuring what constitutes a weak-tie or strong-tie, the lack of consensus of which network tie results in better outcomes, and given the main scope of this paper, I utilize the MTN to analyze my findings. Given that there is support for both weak and strong ties (see SOWT section of this paper) and that they both act in a similar pattern for Mexican immigrants (Flores-Yeffal 2013), both ties will be treated as simply employing a network tie. This measurement will also help deduce if using the MTN leads DACA recipients to better employment outcomes when using no social networking.

CONTEXT OF RECEPTION

While illustrating the dynamics of the MTN and its impact on the employment trajectories of DACA recipients after legalization is crucial, it is also important to examine social context, or the "context of reception" (Portes and Borocz 1989). Scholars stress the context of reception along with findings in their research to provide their audience with holistically meaningful results (Zhou 1992). While the context of reception at every immigrant receiving site is unique and subject to its local politics and economy, Portes and Borocz (1989) produce three common descriptions that can be used to measure or predict the impact of the specific site context on the lives of immigrants. The first description in their work is described as 'handicapped,' a site where immigrants are for the most part not received well and where immigrants are most likely to be pushed down into lower ranks of employment with higher levels of discrimination and lower pay. A 'neutral' site is described as somewhat of a middle ground where "immigrants are able to freely compete with the native born on the basis of personal education, achievements and skills" (Portes and Borocz 1989. p. 619). This type of site is mostly seen when white Europeans migrate to non-ethnic spaces in the U.S. The ideal context, termed 'advantaged' provides immigrants with legality coupled with material assistance (Portes and Borocz 1989). The sites in this study, El Paso and Centralville, are located in Texas but are on slightly different tiers of the 'handicapped' context description.

In particular, it is important to note the social and political context that immigrants are facing while attempting to integrate into the U.S. Elaborating on the context of reception is necessary in my study because participants are located in Texas where (and possibly exposed to), dense social, economic, and legal dynamics can impact the livelihood of DACA recipients. I will

focus my attention at the state level, given that all my respondents are from Texas, but provide some discussion on the local-level.

El Paso Context of Reception

El Paso, Texas, is home to the third largest immigrant population along the U.S.-Mexico border after the San Diego and McAllen Metropolitan Statistical Areas (US Census 2012). According to the U.S. Census (2013) the majority (80.7%) of the population in El Paso County identified as Hispanic or Latina/o. Scholars (Spener and Stuardt 1998, Simcox 1993) describe El Paso as a large underserved population that is overwhelmingly Mexican with a large portion of this population employed in the local construction and service sectors.

These are sectors that have recently continued to grow regardless of the last recession, attributed in part to the expansion of the Ft. Bliss military base. However, while El Paso has been able to expand and see growth in some areas of business, it has not been able to attract employment with decent pay (Simcox 1993). Most recently the per-capita income reported in 2013 for El Paso was \$19,669 and 21.5 percent of the population in El Paso reported living under the poverty line (United States Census 2013). Currently, nearly half of the undocumented population in El Paso works in either the service or operator/laborers labor sectors (Center for Migration Studies 2013).

The political and social climate that undocumented persons of Mexican descent have historically experienced in El Paso has been full of conflict given its demographic shifts (Martinez 1994). Until the 1970s, Anglos constituted the largest minority in El Paso, but have seen a steady decline in numerical density. The most current statistics for El Paso show that 80.7 percent of its 674,433 population identifying as either Hispanic or Latina/o, compared to 14.2

percent identifying as Non-Hispanic White (United States Census Bureau 2013). Perhaps due to its relative location to Mexico, 69 percent of households reported speaking Spanish primarily in the home and 55.2 percent of the population in El Paso was not a US citizen in 2013 (United States Census Bureau 2013).

According to a new searchable database based on augmented Public Use Microdata Areas data (PUMAS), the Center for Migration Studies (2013) estimates the unauthorized population to represent 66,894 persons in El Paso, or about 10 percent. The Center for Migration Studies PUMAS (2013) also reports that nearly all of these persons are from Mexico (97.4%), are employed (57%) or not looking for labor (29%), and do not have health insurance (78.5%). DACA eligible persons most currently constitute 17 percent of the undocumented population. This data reveals the homogenous racial and linguistic makeup of El Paso residents.

Centralville Context of Reception

For the purpose of confidentiality, the pseudonym Centralville is used to represent the place of residence of two respondents in this study. Using the same sources (US Census and the Center for Migration Studies PUMAS 2013) we can portray an accurate description of the demographics of Centralville. Centralville has a population of about 178,759, a Hispanic/Latina/o percentage of 24, and a foreign-born percentage of 14 (United States Census Bureau 2013). The Center for Migration Studies (2013) PUMAS estimates the undocumented population in Centralville at 14,986, or about 8 percent of the total population. CMS also estimates that about 64.3 percent of undocumented workers are employed in the service and labor sectors. Of all undocumented workers, 76 percent are employed, 10 percent are unemployed and 14 percent are not looking for labor. Lastly, 2,861 undocumented persons were

eligible for DACA (CMI). In many ways, Centralville can be described as a college town, which may help explain its racial makeup. The United States Census Bureau (2013) estimates that persons who identified as non-Hispanic White make up about 57% of the population while persons who identify as African-American or Black and Asian constitute about 12 and 6 percent, respectively (24% identified as Latino).

Differences under the 'Handicapped' Sphere

As noted above, both of these locations can be described as 'handicapped' spheres, but arguments can be made that they are found at different levels in this sphere. The main difference between these two locations can be attributed to the geographic and racial characteristics that they are associated with these areas. In particular, scholars have described the relationship that El Paso has with its sister city Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México, as leading to a diverse set of identities (Mexican-American, transnational, bi-culturist, commuters, etc.) and endowed with a strong connection to both sides of the border (Martinez 1994). The dense Mexican-origin population in El Paso can be partially attributed to its geographic location. This means that undocumented persons in El Paso are afforded the comfort that is provided from being members of the racial and numerical majority and complimented by being close to the border (Castaneda, Morales, and Ochoa 2014). Coupled with the fact that El Paso has been found as one of the safest during recent years in the U.S. (Balko 2009; Waslin 2009), these dynamics arguably create a feeling of safety and comfort for persons that are undocumented or who may find themselves in a state of liminal legality; in other words, undocumented persons in El Paso may experience a superficial sense of security. It is important to note that while there is some comfort in being a

city that is over 80% Hispanic and Mexican, this does not mean that this group constitutes the political and economic elite.

This feeling of safety is not found in Centralville where immigrants, and especially those that are Mexican and undocumented, are members of a numerical, racial, and political minority. As described above, being a member of this population is problematized by the fact that many of these immigrants hold bad jobs, have low rates of health coverage, and have multiple hurdles to overcome if they wish to reach certain levels of comfort. As a result, both locations may be found in the ‘handicapped’ sphere, but El Paso provides its residents with a superficial sense of security.

Texas Political Context

Eleven states in the U.S. granted undocumented immigrants drivers licenses (Dreby 2015); Texas is not one of these states. Texas has however allowed DACA recipients access to a driving license, which several of the respondents in this study reported. Undocumented residents of Texas are able to apply for financial assistance to cover the cost of their education after high school with the application being called the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TAFSA). Similarly, undocumented students are eligible for in-state tuition as long as they meet Texas’ residence requirements. Both of these education measures were instated under House Bill 1403 or the Texas Education Code 54.052(j), which was passed in 2001 (thecb.state.tx.us). According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the requirements for in-state consideration and state financial aid include:

- Resided in Texas with a parent or guardian while attending high school in Texas
- Graduated from a public or private high school or received a GED in Texas

- Resided in Texas for the three years leading to graduation or receipt of a GED,
and
- Provided their institutions a signed affidavit indicating an intent to apply for
permanent resident status as soon as able to do so

It is important to reiterate that undocumented persons or persons that find themselves in the state of liminal legality (DACA) are not eligible for federal financial aid and are subject to their individual state with their attempts at obtaining a higher education. However, access to the above mentioned educational benefits adds some positivity to the immigrant context of reception in Texas.

METHODOLOGY

The impetus for this study comes from my sociological imagination and from living along the U.S.-Mexico border. When I was five years old and arrived in a *colonia*, what McDonald and Grineski (2012) define as “unplanned semirural subdivisions, primarily located along the US-Mexico border, which are home to socially marginalized residents” (p. 196), outside of El Paso County, Texas, I was an undocumented immigrant. Sometime during middle school I transitioned to a legal permanent resident and soon after I received naturalized citizenship. I have experienced various statuses of legality— undocumented, liminal legality, and citizenship— and the political climate during these times allowed me to go through these processes in a linear fashion.

Scholars (Gonzales 2011; Abrego 2006; Abrego and Gonzales 2010; Menjivar 2008) have found evidence to suggest that young immigrants are protected and not fully aware of their legal position during the K-12 portion of their education. It is when they begin their transition into employment and higher education that they begin to experience the dynamics of being an undocumented immigrant in the U.S. In my case, mostly due to the various forms of human and political capital that my family acquired (my father and grandfather were agricultural seasonal workers in the US) and to the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), I did not have to endure what I would consider to be difficult challenges. Instead, after high school, I transitioned into community college and full-time employment.

While I did not endure undocumented or liminal legal statuses during my transition into adulthood, these dynamics still managed to affect my life. During my late high school and early college years I began to observe and question the legal processes affecting my peers. For

instance, I began to track how immigrant youth sought employment and what type of employment they took part in. Indeed, I still remain a member of the community I grew up in. I have called my neighborhood home for over twenty years and this has given me insight into the lives of people that have been placed in different spheres of legality.

This position in my community gave me access to the initial set of respondents in this study. Subsequent participants were recruited through a snowball sampling method. My positionality allowed me to gain the trust and the opportunities to approach possible respondents and to access this sensitive population. Indeed, my respondents may be considered a “hard to reach” population due to the sensitive nature of their legal status. Many times I was fortunate to be granted the support of the original respondents who contacted my next possible respondent. In this way, interviews with referrals were significantly more successful than the times when I was simply handed a name and phone number. Many times the phone call or message sent by my initial contact immediately granted me access and allowed me to build rapport and trust with my respondents.

A total of nine interviews were collected for this study. Interviews were conducted February through November 2014. Participants were asked to share information focusing on their DACA experience (the application process and the factors that led them to make this decision), family history, employment history/conditions, education, and any additional benefits of the policy. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, or a mixture of both, depending on the preference shown by the respondent. Interviews were digitally recorded and on average lasted about 45 minutes. They took place in locations where the respondent felt the safest, with the majority taking place in the respondents’ homes. IRB approval was granted by The University of Texas at El Paso.

NVIVO qualitative software was used in order to code and analyze data. Specifically, transcribed data is reviewed line by line and categories are generated as they arise. Avoiding the risk of forcing data to fit pre-existing codes, this method allows for analysis that is more open-minded and more context-sensitive. The data then gets molded to the codes that represent them rather than having a generic code prefabricated start list. This allowed for analytically linked themes and patterns. Codes focused on method of labor acquisition, work conditions, benefits [i.e. driver's licenses, bank accounts, credit accounts], and drawbacks. The table below provides a brief demographic overview of my respondents.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents			
Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Location
Juan	Male	18	El Paso
Cynthia	Female	21	El Paso
Adela	Female	24	El Paso
Christian	Male	18	El Paso
Antonio	Male	19	El Paso
Josie	Female	24	Centralville
Angel	Male	27	Centralville
Eddie	Male	18	El Paso
Lucas	Male	26	El Paso

FINDINGS

Migration Trust Networks

An objective of this paper is to deduce the role of MTN in the lives of immigrants once they are placed in a state of liminal legality through DACA, thus adding to the scholarly work on the functionality of MTN for undocumented individuals (Flores-Yeffal 2013) and liminal legality (Menjivar 2006). As noted above, undocumented immigrants rely heavily on the MTN because it is embedded in high levels of trust, which is important for undocumented immigrants who reside in the U.S. and who are in search of safe housing, employment, and other spaces (Flores-Yeffal 2013). However, DACA recipients experience a shift from undocumented status to liminal legality where they are granted deferment from deportation and legal access to employment, thus raising the question of whether the dependency on MTN diminishes or disappears. In this study, I am particularly interested in whether DACA recipients use the MTN to locate employment.

Table 2: Employment Details

Pseudonym	Primary Tie	Job	Job Pre-DACA
Juan	No Tie	Retail	None
Cynthia	Weak Tie	Staffing Agency	None
Adela	No Tie	Retail	Waitress
Christian	Weak Tie	Fast Food	Retail
Antonio	No Tie	Staffing Agency	Landscaping
Josie	Strong Tie	Teaching Assistant	Law Firm
Angel	No Tie	Nurse	Construction
Eddie	No Tie	Fast Food	Landscaping
Lucas	Strong Tie	Construction	Construction

At first glance, using the MTN for employment acquisition purposes seemed to not be a tactic used by DACA recipients as they searched for jobs. As noted in Table 2, slightly over half of the respondents in this study used no social networking tie when they searched for their current employment. The fact that this portion of the sample did not employ a social tie cannot be associated with the MTN at the micro level; it can, however, be associated with the MTN at a macro neighborhood level.

It is argued here that the dovetail or coupling of DACA and the MTN in the respondents' neighborhood is providing recipients with autonomy, access, and trust when applying at a diverse set of new employment spaces. For example, when asked "How did you get that (current) job?," it was not unusual to hear responses revolving around the recipients frequent visits as customers in their now current place of employment. DACA recipients who did not use a direct social networking tie were still utilizing the MTN at the macro level in the form of the level of trust embedded in the community where they reside; they were familiar with the spaces and the people in these spaces were familiar with recipients.

Juan, for instance, worked at the local hardware store at the time that this interview took place. When asked how he found or "got" his current job Juan shared: "*I just walked in.*" Juan and his family have lived in an El Paso *colonia* for 14 years. Although *colonia's* lack of incorporation has resulted in a lack of natural resources, such as clean water and sanitation plumbing (McDonald and Grineski 2012), they have become home to many undocumented immigrants. This is due to a lack of city building codes and regulations that allow for immigrants to build their homes for a low price. I argue that *colonias* are also safe spaces within the MTN and are embedded with trust, facilitating the hiring process for DACA recipients.

The human capital skills that Juan acquired to help his family build their home, such as framing, installing insulation and drywall, roofing and a basic installation of electrical and plumbing work, in combination with his DACA status, and residing in a *colonia* helped him find employment. All of this informal training in construction work involved numerous trips to the hardware store. It was during one of these trips that he noticed the help wanted sign on the window of the store. He applied for the job position and a couple of weeks later received a call for an interview that resulted in his employment. One can speculate that both Juan's frequent visits to this store, and the store's location (it is located in a space embedded with the MTN - i.e. the colonia), encouraged him to apply. This was Juan's second place of employment after receiving DACA. Prior to this Juan worked at a fashion retail store where the non-peak season translated to him going weeks without working. In terms of education, prior to DACA Juan was a student at a local early college/high school program.

In similar fashion, Adela acquired employment at a local convenience store by utilizing the MTN at the neighborhood- level. Prior to this employment and to being a DACA recipient, Adela had worked as a waitress. She shared that she found this waitressing job through her aunt, an act that we can classify as the use of the MTN. As an undocumented waitress, Adela did not earn the minimum wage and was sometimes asked to do tasks not associated with waitressing. While she felt safe at the restaurant and enjoyed sporadic generous tips, she eventually quit because of the increasing pressure to take on more tasks and duties for no additional pay. She remained at a waitressing salary of just over two dollars throughout her entire tenure at this restaurant, in spite of having additional work. Adela also shared that she had applied at a local supermarket that hired undocumented workers, information that she acquired through her cousin, which is also a case of social networking via the MTN. This employment option did not work out

given its competitiveness. Insights from ethnic enclave members suggest that this store and its reliable employment attract many undocumented applicants. Adela was told that she would be put on a list and called if a position opened. When asked how she got her current job at the convenience store, Adela shared: “Por el anuncio, le pregunte a la manejadora (Because of the sign, I asked the manager).” Adela’s status of liminal legality did not prevent her from approaching the manager and asking for a job; similar to Juan this store is located in the colonia where the MTN operates at the community-level.

Eddie found his first job (ever) at a fast-food restaurant near his high school and home as a DACA recipient. Eddie, who lived with his older brother, his brothers’ partner, and her sisters at the time of this interview, does not have reliable transportation. He shared that his brother and his partner use one car to get to work and to take the younger children to elementary school. While he is provided with transportation via the school districts’ transportation system, he usually is left without access to a ride for non-educational purposes. To resolve this issue Eddie decided that he would try and get a job at the fast-food restaurant that is on the way to school; this would ideally place all of the locations that he frequents (home, school, work) within 1 mile of each other.

Eddie shared that the employment application process was simple and led to a funny situation. He shared: “Ya me conocían. El manejador me dijo que me reconocía porque paraba casi todos los días a la misma hora por mi hamburguesa” (They already knew me. The manager told me that he recognized me because I stopped by almost every day for my hamburger). While Eddie was overwhelmed at his first interview, and although he did not know the manager personally he already recognized him as a regular customer. Thus, this fast-food restaurant was a part of Eddie’s MTN at the community-level being that he was already a frequent customer and

the manager recognized him. It is important to note that without DACA, Eddie would not have been eligible for employment at this fast-food restaurant. When asked what his plans were prior to DACA, he shared that he planned to work with his other brother, who is undocumented and employed as a construction laborer. Eddie is a prime example of the positive effects of transitioning from undocumented status to a state of liminal legality and of having access to the MTN at the macro level. Indeed, Eddie was able to accommodate his lifestyle with part-time employment at the place where he felt comfortable while finishing high school. While working in a fast-food restaurant is normally not associated with upward mobility the case of Eddie shows us how this type of employment can be associated as having the potential for upward mobility. This was the case given that it gave him an alternative to hard manual labor, a convenience in location that addressed his lack of transportation, and its job placement in a job that is endowed and found in the formal labor sector.

The above cases of Juan, Adela, and Eddie highlight the association that exists between DACA recipients' labor acquisition method and the MTN at the macro level. While the MTN was not utilized at the individual micro level in terms of using personal ties, the locations where recipients applied for employment are in their respective neighborhoods and in spaces that they frequented as customers prior to DACA. This resulted in a sense of familiarity between recipients, the spaces in which they wished to pursue employment, and the persons that were already employed in those spaces.

The Impact of Higher Education on Employment

Table 3: Educational Intersect with Labor

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Job
Juan	18	AA - Early College *	Retail
Cynthia	21	High School Graduate	Staffing Agency
Adela	24	High School Graduate	Retail
Christian	18	High School Graduate	Fast Food
Antonio	19	High School Graduate	Staffing Agency
Josie	24	Master's Degree	Teaching Assistant
Angel	27	Bachelor's Degree	Nurse
Eddie	18	Senior - High School	Fast Food
Lucas	26	High School Graduate	Construction

* Completed the majority of his associate degree while a high school student enrolled In Early College

As mentioned above, Gonzales et al. (2014) found a significant association between upward mobility and higher levels of education by analyzing data from the NURP. My findings build on this body of literature by both complementing and problematizing this relationship by introducing micro-level insights into these processes. Specifically, at the time of their interview, Josie and Angel were employed as a graduate student assistant at a university and as a nurse, respectively. It is obvious that both of their occupations involve high levels of education. While both of these respondents have high levels of education and positive outcomes associated with being a DACA recipient via attaining good jobs, their access to the MTN shaped their employment acquisition experiences.

Josie's employment can be considered good employment and the antithesis of our term and definition for bad jobs. Josie entered graduate school prior to DACA and was awarded a scholarship with part of the requirements of the scholarship including assisting a professor in her academic department. Indeed, most of the tasks that she was asked to complete were aligned

with that of a teaching or research assistant. Once she was awarded DACA and was legally able to work, the department for which she worked for simply formalized her position and the sources of funding on which she was paid. She associates her good job acquisition with her educational level:

Everything has been pretty good, thankfully. I guess because of my education level, I think that is the thing that has saved me. I think that if I did not have the education that I do, they wouldn't (treat her well), they would just see me as someone that is not educated about her rights, so nobody really has (treated her bad).

After DACA Josie was already in a safe and rewarding space embedded with strong ties and trusts in the MTN. Problematizing the conceptualization of strong versus weak ties, Josie had started her graduate education when offered this employment opportunity regardless of her undocumented status. While there was always a set amount of trust between Josie and her academic department, measuring the conversion of her weak ties upon her entry into the department into strong ties is challenging. Given that our framework treats both ties as similar and part of the MTN, we can argue that Josie's successful transition was facilitated by the spaces that her education furnished her.

While Angel ultimately experienced positive employment results, his lack of access to both Flores-Yeffal's (2013) MTN at the micro-level and to the MTN at the macro-level problematized his job acquisition methods. Prior to his employment as a registered nurse and being a DACA recipient, Angel worked as a construction worker. Thanks to ideal timing Angel was granted DACA soon after his college graduation. He shared that his next step included submitting applications to all of the places where he knew nurses were employed in Centralville.

After a couple of months of waiting, and a couple of unsuccessful interviews, he was finally hired as a registered nurse. When asked how he got that job, Angel shared: “I had applied at many places and they are the ones that hired me.” He also shared that he experienced discrimination due to his legal status, to include employer unfamiliarity with DACA and DACA identification cards.

The differentiating factor between Josie and Angel was access to the MTN who are both in Centralville was to the MTN. Josie was already in a space that could be associated with the MTN and therefore her transition into a formal title and method of payment presented to issue. Angel on the other hand experiences adversity and challenges when searching for employment. Access to the MTN and the trust embedded social networking ties found in the MTN would of have mostly likely lead Angel to a more enjoyable job search and application process.

While education may have the potential to have a positive impact on your economic capital, your economic capital (in this case the economic capital of a family) can have an impact on your education. Antonio, who reported earning a high school diploma, was enlisted in advanced placement and GT (gifted and talented) courses during his early high school years. He shared that a counselor and his parents met to discuss his future. Here his parents received advice from the counselor that it would be best for Antonio to take technical courses instead of the advanced courses. The reasoning being that this would be advantageous for Antonio since he can then search for employment right after high school. In reality this decision process and recommendation by the school counselor resulted in the restriction of Antonio’s access to higher education. It also streamlined Antonio’s employment pathway straight into the labor or service sector. Antonio did not report any use of the mechanical skills that he had learned and seemed to regret this decision as he shared these details. While Antonio shared that he is now able to work,

“did not have to depend on others for his items” and alleviated some of the financial burden that his family is experiencing, he also shared that he has plans to enter the local community college soon. Although his councilor’s advice did not materialize, only time will tell if Antonio would of have benefited from additional advanced courses.

Staffing Agencies

As a couple of respondents in this study shared during the interview process, it is common to see large “NOW HIRING” signs outside of staffing agencies in El Paso, especially those near their homes. These staffing agencies provide many of the local manufacturing and light-industrial plants with a continuous source of low wage labor. They promote their ability to supply companies in need of labor with temporary workers while offering their employees the possibility of converting their temporary status to regular employees in the spaces that they have been assigned to after a certain period of time (www.kellyservices.com; www.southweststaffing.com; www.rmpersonnel.com; www.ttstaff.com). Two of the participants in this study, Antonio and Cynthia, were employed by such agencies when I interviewed them.

By committing as an employee to a staffing agency, recipients are guaranteeing that agency income via the percentage that they charge their customers (local light industrial plants and places with high turnover). In other words, staffing agencies act as employment agents that help people find employment, as long as they receive a portion of the salary. This employment system has resulted in high profits for staffing agencies. Kelly Services, a staffing agency in El Paso, reports that they most currently “provided employment to 555,000 employees in 2014” while producing 5.6 billion dollars during the same year. More significantly for the purpose of

this study, staffing agencies have the potential (and have already done so for the respondents in this study) to replace the role that the MTN played for undocumented persons, although they fall short of translating to economic integration.

I found that staffing agencies allow DACA recipients the ability to navigate employment by acting as a Third Party Connection (TPC), or formal and “safe” connections that can result in multiple offers of employment, which can be used to compliment the lives of DACA recipients. However, there is also a cycle of suppressing workers’ upward mobility, thus TPCs do not fall under the MTN. Although this is beyond the focus of this thesis, insights from residents located in immigrant enclaves and that I spoke with indicate that the same agencies that hire immigrant laborers have developed an employment system that favors a dependency for TPC use. This system includes constant assignment switching, which translates into laborers that are not allowed the opportunity of transferring into formal employee positions. Insight suggests that high turnover rates are a result of this employment system, given that a constant flow of new laborers translates to renewed revenue. If we problematize the staffing agency employment model we can speculate that if the majority of staffing employees remained assigned at one appointment and successfully transferred to formal employees, then the demand for staffing agencies would dramatically decrease.

Antonio, who was noted above for experiencing a barrier due to his families’ financial situation, first employment as a DACA recipient lasted three months at a fast-food restaurant located in his neighborhood. When asked, “How did you find that job?” Antonio shared a short and concise answer: *“I just walked in and applied.”* This is consistent with the employment acquisition methods used by Juan, Adela, and Eddie, whom used the macro level benefits of the MTN. He described this job and his coworkers as both “OK” and as “Eran chidas (They were

cool),” respectively. While he did not report any serious drawbacks, the hours that were allocated to him did not coincide with the hours that we wanted. To aid this lack of work hours he set out to find employment elsewhere.

Curious about the large sign displayed outside of a business park and anxious to find full-time work, Antonio decided to ask about the sign and job. After a series of technical and communication assessments and a formal interview he was assigned to a business in need of labor the next day. The staffing agency that hired Antonio had assigned him to two different businesses by the time that I had interviewed him. He was first assigned to the night shift (8:30pm – 5:00 am) at a local light industrial plant, which included duties aligned with those of maintenance work, mostly cleaning machinery. Antonio’s second assignment, and the employment he held during this interview, was at a warehouse stacking and processing cardboard. He had been at this assignment for only one week and reported that he was now enjoying an 8am-5pm schedule.

Cynthia’s case, while also involving the use of a TPC, differs from Antonio’s trajectory given that she became aware of the opportunity at a TPC via a strong tie. While Antonio witnessed the employment advertisement in person, Cynthia was told of the possibility by her aunt, who had also seen one of these signs. When asked “How did you get that job?” Cynthia shared: “*Me comento una tía y fui y aplique – (My aunt made a comment about it, so I applied).*” Cynthia’s initial trust with her aunt encouraged her to seek out employment at the TPC. Social networking use was then replaced by a TPC once she was hired. Instead of relying on the MTN, Cynthia is utilizing the services of a TPC. By the time of this interview Cynthia had worked at a plastic injection industrial plant and most currently as a cashier at one of the larger supermarkets in El Paso, both were/are assignments of her TPC. Her first assignment lasted 3 months as a

member of the evening (5pm-2am) shift. She shared that currently she was only a month away from being hired as a regular employee at the supermarket after five months of employment.

Both Antonio and Cynthia's trajectories and employment results are mentioned so that we may address the role that TPCs are playing in the lives of recipients. As mentioned above, TPC are not part of the MTN. While TPCs are placing recipients in different employment spaces, they are not endowed with the trust that is associated with the MTN. As Flores-Yeffal (2013) points out, institutions and members of the MTN provide aid to each other in an altruistic fashion. Immigrants are helping each other because they share an ancestry and because they are aware of the conditions back home and or the conditions that they face once in the U.S. This is not the role that TPCs play. TPCs are for-profit agencies that represent their employees because it is how they create revenue, not because they care.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Table 4: Wages

Pseudonym	Age	Primary Tie	Job	Wages	Education
Juan	18	No Tie	Retail	\$8.25	AA - Early College *
Cynthia	21	Weak Tie	Staffing Agency	\$8.00	High School Graduate
Adela	24	No Tie	Retail	\$7.25	High School Graduate
Christian	18	Weak Tie	Fast Food	\$7.75	High School Graduate
Antonio	19	No Tie	Staffing Agency	\$8.50	High School Graduate
Josie	24	Strong Tie	Teaching Assistant	\$16.25	Master's Degree
Angel	27	No Tie	Nurse	Did not share	Bachelor's Degree
Eddie	18	No Tie	Fast Food	\$7.40	Senior - High School
Lucas	26	Strong Tie	Construction	\$7.50	High School Graduate

* Completed the majority of his associate degree while a high school student enrolled in an Early College Program

As noted above, Flores-Yeffal's findings (2015) suggest that unpacking the advantages and disadvantages of using the MTN by undocumented immigrants depends on who is conducting the analysis. Aligned with the findings of Flores-Yeffal (2015), I find that the labor conditions that arise when DACA recipients are placed in a state of liminal legality really depend on whose summarizing the advantages and disadvantages.

My analysis of the employment characteristics that DACA recipients experience, once in a state of liminal legality, can be described as "bad jobs." Utilizing the right to lawful employment has led DACA recipients to employment that was previously inaccessible. However, this employment is still associated with low wages (Table 4) and in service and fast-food sectors. As noted above, only two of the respondents in this study were able to acquire employment that can be considered good jobs, mostly associated with their educational achievements.

The highest weighted negative characteristic that is associated with the type of employment that DACA recipients are experiencing are low wages. DACA recipients in this study reported earning an average of \$8.86 an hour. This average is skewed given Josie's teaching assistant salary that was broken down [\$1,300 monthly divided by 80 hours a month] and resulted in an hourly rate of \$16.25. This also does not include Angel's nurse salary which would most likely be deserving of a high salary; the average salary for a nurse in Centralville is \$26.92 an hour (www.indeed.com). By removing the high salaries of DACA recipients with a higher education degree we can arrive at an accurate representation of what respondents are earning, \$7.80 an hour. While above the state minimum wage of \$7.25, this average is still low and not representative of a living wage in either sites, which according to Massachusetts Institute of Technology's living wage calculator is \$8.76 for one adult with no children (2014).

While the majority of the respondents in this study earn less than a living wage, a characteristic that I find detrimental to their livelihoods, recipients did not express feelings of discontent with their employment. When asked to describe the work that he had been assigned to him as an employee of a staffing agency, Antonio smiled and shared: “The work is calm and I don’t have to work in the sun or do heavy labor. I also know that they are going to pay me, especially for overtime work.” As noted in Table 1, prior to DACA Antonio was employed by a landscaping company, which he described as involving heavy labor and exposure to the sun, heat, and other seasonal elements.

By further analyzing Antonio’s comment we can suspect that an employer had not fully compensated him for his time and effort on the job. His statement is aligned with our main advantage/disadvantage finding that it really does depend on who is doing the analysis. More importantly, this can allow us see the ambiguous relationship that exists between using a TPC and the MTN; analyst perspective is key.

Context of Reception

While DACA seems to be a step in the right direction for the well-being and incorporation of recipients, only further analysis of this population will determine the precise benefits or detriments of being granted deferred action. Sometime after the data collection process concluded for this project, anti-immigrant state bills were written and proposed by Texas politicians Rick Perry, Donna Campbell, Brandon Creighton, and Lois Kolhurst. S.B. No. 185 written by Rick Perry requires law enforcing entities (police officers) to verify the legal status of persons that they have in custody or are questioning. Persons who cannot properly identify their

legal status will be handed over to immigration services for processing. Entities that do abide by these requirements will forfeit state grant funds. S.B. No. 1819, written by Campbell, Creighton and Kolkhurst, also asks for stricter state requirements when determining who qualifies for in-state tuition. The policy would essentially treat undocumented students as non-residents, which would result in undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients paying higher amounts for the cost of their education. More importantly, these bills have the power to transform what are now immigrant friendly safe spaces into ones that are much more anti-immigrant.

The uncertain nature of DACA is expressed in the commentary given by respondents. Even though he is granted deferred action from deportation, Antonio shares that he still thinks of the possibility of deportation:

Yes, I worry that I may be deported after the permit expires. I was also scared when I was involved in a car accident. I had my DACA ID with me, but you still think of the possibility. Either way ‘me sigo cuidando’ – (I take care of myself).

Josie expressed a similar feeling when interviewed. She acknowledges that her positionality has kept her safe, but others that she knows have not been as lucky:

I have a “not letting things get to me” mentality so I try not to think about it (deportation) so much. It hasn’t happened and I have been here since I was five so what is the likelihood that it is going to happen. It didn’t really scare me before DACA. Like yeah it is always on the back of your mind but you never really think that it (deportation) is going to happen to you because it hasn’t happened to you in such a long time. It’s never happened to you. It does happen to people you know, but that is because they were in situations... they were in a work place and stuff like that. But the places that I have

worked aren't places where undocumented persons worked at. So I think that it would be different if I had worked at places like that.

It is troubling to even speculate the problems and issues that will arise if either S.B. 1819 or S.B. 185 pass and come into effect. It is safe to assume that the increase in anti-immigrant policies will only continue to increase undeserved pressure onto the lives of DACA recipients, their families, and friends.

CONCLUSION

On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced the enactment of Differed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This executive action stated that people who came to the U.S. as children and met certain criteria would be granted only two benefits, deferred action from deportation and employment eligibility in the U.S. for two years. This means that DACA recipients are not eligible for federal assistance such as financial aid and healthcare coverage. Although this is an improvement from being subjected to deportation, transitioning individuals out of their undocumented status places them in what Menjivar (2006) refers to as *liminal legality*. Similar to a state of liminal legality, I argue that DACA recipients are in a gray area where they only have a temporary status to reside in the U.S. thus they are neither Legal Permanent Residents nor citizens.

Scholars have found a significant use of social networking ties when searching for employment by undocumented immigrants (Green, Tigges & Diaz 1999; Demchenko 2011; Lin 2000; Waldinger and Lichter 2003), although the quality of those jobs is questionable (Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000; Rivera-Batiz, 1999; Gomberg-Munoz 2010). While the social networking literature mostly defines ties as either weak or strong (Waldinger 1973, 1974, 1982, 1983; Green, Tigges & Diaz 1999; Demchenko 2011; Lin 2000), the recent work of Flores-Yeffal (2013) proposes that social networking ties (both weak and strong) can be treated as similar because weak ties quickly resemble strong ties. This is due to the high level of trust that is ascribed to ties by immigrants given a shared ancestry and understandings of the harsh conditions that they endure in the U.S. and back in Mexico. It is this type of trust embedded social ties, coined *paisano ties* by Flores-Yeffal (2013), which help make up the MTN.

The main focus of this paper is to test the effects of the MTN on the labor acquisition of immigrants when they are transferred from an undocumented legal status to the state of liminal legality that is DACA. Specifically we focus on what happens to the MTN and immigrant use of the MTN after immigrants experience a transfer into liminal legality. We will also measure the effects of being part of a state of liminal legality on DACA recipients' employment outcomes.

The work of Flores-Yeffal (2013) provides us with an in-depth understanding of the micro-level effects of the MTN on Mexicans during their migratory experience and once in the U.S (Lamela 2014). While she mentions how collective efficacy (Sampson 2006, 2008) and trust are needed to develop and expand the MTN, Flores-Yeffal (2013) does not provide insight into how this process might affect labor opportunities at the larger macro-neighborhood level. The first major finding of this study compliments the MTN body of research by providing insights into the MTN at the macro level, as described below.

The first major finding of this study is that the MTN at a micro-level was not utilized at high rates by DACA recipients. We found that recipients in this study involved the MTN at a macro-level when finding work; DACA recipients in this study were able to access the MTN by accessing trusted and safe employment spaces. In particular recipients began submitting applications for employment in spaces that they already frequented (retail stores and fast-food joints), trusted, and were familiar with and in their neighborhoods.

A second major finding relates to the intersection of education and job placement. Individuals with higher levels of education were able to use their academic achievements to aid their job hunt with eventual placement in good jobs, especially when their job hunt involved the use of the MTN. While both of the respondents in this study found good jobs, it was access to the MTN that determined the labor acquisition experience. Respondents who had not completed a

Bachelor's or Master's degree at the time of interview reported employment that could be considered bad jobs (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This finding is aligned with the findings of Gonzales et al (2014), which stated that upward mobility was being experienced by DACA recipients with higher levels of education. Specifically the wages reported by recipients were under the living wage standard for one single adult in Texas of \$8.76 an hour and did not include health coverage or insurance (DACA recipients are not allowed access to health coverage via Affordable Care Acts's market).

A third finding of this study focuses on a possible replacement for the MTN. Two of the respondents in this study opted for a direct line to employment via a Third Party Connection (TPC), an employment liaison or agent that facilitates employment acquisition, in this case staffing agencies. While not in the main scope of this paper, we found that this relationship does not fall under the MTN given that there is no mutual trust between staffing agencies and recipients. This is important to note given the characteristics of TPC's business model which has the possibility of stagnating the any chances of upward mobility by DACA recipients.

Future Studies and Limitations

As noted above, DACA recipients are not eligible for government health coverage programs or have access to purchasing health insurance via the Affordable Care Acts' (ACA) marketplace. This lack of health coverage is problematic even if you only consider the possibilities of on the job related health risks and injuries. What is going to happen when a DACA recipient gets hurts on the job? Are insurance companies and employers going to cover employees that are granted DACA? What will what happen to DACA recipients' injury coverage if they remain in informal employment sectors or are hired by the sub-contractors that hire

undocumented workers? This is a loophole that needs to be addressed; it is also one that my data collection did not cover.

Mostly likely due to the limited sample size of nine recipients and the short time that most recipients have been employed, no respondent reported being injured on the job or a request for treatment in due to work related issues. Future studies should examine the intersection of DACA, labor, health and on-the-job injuries. Studies covering DACA should quantitatively measure the finding and results of this study. Also, given the importance of the context of reception, future studies should compare traditional immigrant receiving cites with contemporary immigrant receiving sites.

Lastly, and possibly one of the most significant issues that should be addressed in future research, is the lack of longitudinal data for this population. Recently the effects of federal public assistance programs and other policies have been noted in a report by Jason Furman (2015) of the New York Times. Furman (2015) reports that government efforts to support low-income families, in the long run, have produced positive effects for children that are found in these homes; supplying underserved persons with items like food, healthcare and housing-assistance has a strong association with removing them from poverty. Furman (2015) expands his argument by bringing forwards the problem with using short-term data to analyze long-term effects. You cannot expect to properly measure the effects of a program a couple of years after they have been implemented.

As noted in Table 4, most respondents in this study are young. This is not surprising given the age requirements that DACA recipients must meet in order to be eligible. While we can categorize respondents into two subgroups, respondents that are 18-21 and respondents that

are 22-27, we are not able to measure the above mentioned relationships with current data.

Longitudinal data would also allow us to test the upward mobility characteristics of persons that are found in the state of liminal legality that is DACA. In other words this data would allow for discussion focusing around DACA and whether effects are long-term or if they are short-term.

While both this study and the work of Gonzales et al (2014) found evidence to suggest that higher levels of education are producing upward mobility for DACA recipients, it is important to measure and unpack the intersection between education, labor, and upward mobility at multiple life stages for all recipients. This would also allow us to measure any changes (and how these changes impact DACA recipients) in the context of reception that recipients are experiencing. Longitudinal data would allow us to properly measure how age is influencing the trajectories (labor and education) of DACA recipients. Similarly it would also allow us to unpack who DACA recipients are competing with as they enter the labor market and also after major life stages such as completing a technical certification or college diploma.

In sum, migrant trust networks remain important for DACA recipients are though in a more indirect and macro-level way than described in Flores-Yeffal (2013). In particular, DACA recipients relied about the collective efficacy embedded within the community to facilitate their job search. Additional, migrant trust networks function differently according to the DACA recipients' level of education, but to fully benefit from the advantages associated with higher education recipients must have access to the migrant trust network.

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CURRICULUM VITA

Mario Javier Chavez was born in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, and was raised in Canutillo, Texas, a colonia located in west El Paso County, Texas. The first son of Carmen Chavez Ramirez and Mario Chavez, she graduated from Canutillo High School in 2004. He continued his education while working full time until graduating from El Paso Community College in July of 2010. Mario became a student at The University of Texas at El Paso the August of 2010 and completed his undergraduate studies in Fall of 2012. It was during this same semester (Fall 2012) that Mario began to conduct research oriented at unpacking the wages and work conditions that marginalized populations may experience. He would continue his research training and education as a graduate student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Texas at El Paso, under the mentorship of Dr. Maria Cristina Morales. As a graduate student Mario was able to contribute in many research projects, presented scholarly work at multiple regional conferences, and was invited to join intra-institutional research writing groups. After graduating with his master's degree in sociology from The University of Texas at El Paso, he will continue his graduate studies in sociology as a doctoral student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he was awarded the UNM Health Policy Excellence Fellowship.

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