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Honors Thesis

THE POLITICS OF DACA: EXPLAINING VARIATION IN REPUBLICAN
SUPPORT FOR DACA

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements
for University Honors

Political Science Department

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF DACA: EXPLAINING VARIATION IN REPUBLICAN SUPPORT FOR DACA

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Bachelor of Arts

This study examines political divisions among Republicans regarding DACA. To begin with, I provide a historical account of the issue and its importance. Then a survey experiment is conducted, surveying 901 Republicans, and randomly assigning half to the Republican treatment and half to the Democratic treatment. Results indicate that exposure to the Republican treatment increased the likelihood of supporting policies for DACA recipients. Furthermore, knowing a DACA recipient positively impacted attitudes toward DACA policy regardless of treatment. These findings shed light on the complexities of political polarization and immigration policy.

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I am also grateful to my mentors, whose encouragement and guidance have been invaluable. Their wisdom and expertise have been instrumental in shaping my perspective on this topic and have motivated me to share my knowledge with others.

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Introduction

In 2012, President Obama issued Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) as a way of protecting undocumented children from being deported by granting them protection status. This policy, eleven years later, has enabled roughly 832,881 immigrants to “work lawfully, attend school, and plan their lives without the constant threat of deportation.” Interestingly, of the 1.3 million eligible candidates, only 64% of undocumented youth have successfully received DACA.¹ While this policy was first strongly contested by the Republican Party, there are some Republicans that are in favor of protecting these undocumented children.

Despite the growing bipartisan support for maintaining and expanding DACA among both political parties, the policy continues to be divisive subject within the Republican Party. The Republican Party’s division on DACA comes from an array of issues such as the tension in ideology, constitutionality of the policy, and demographic changes. Within the last twenty years Republican opinions surrounding illegal immigration and DACA have continued to be contested leading to lack of unity on this subject within the party.

Moreover, with the continued growth of the Latino population in the United States, the importance of DACA is poised to increase even further. Consequently, gaining a better understanding of Republican attitudes towards DACA assumes paramount

¹ Nicole Prchal Svajlenka et al, "The Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Fall 2021 Edition," Center for American Progress, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-demographic-and-economic-impacts-of-daca-recipients-fall-2021-edition/>.

importance, not only for anticipating the trajectory of American politics in the upcoming election but also for gaining greater insights into the future of immigration reform.

In this paper, I focus on two main questions: (1) What is the role of electoral concerns in driving Republican support for DACA, and (2) What are the effects of knowing a DACA recipient? I explore these research questions by first providing background information on why DACA is a critical policy to study. I examine congressional speeches to present a brief history of DACA and its growing importance in American politics. The data for this study comes from the Congressional Record, which contains recorded speeches from the Senate and the House of Representatives on several issues, including DACA.

Secondly, and most importantly, I employ a survey experiment that is administered to 901 Republicans to measure differences in Republican attitudes toward DACA recipients using framework theory. In the survey experiment, participants are randomly assigned one of two vignettes. The first vignette highlights that in some states, 52% of Latinos will vote for the Democratic party, while the second vignette emphasizes that in some states, 48% of Latinos are more likely to vote for the Republican party. I then pose two follow-up questions: (1) Should there be an increase or decrease in the number of DACA recipients? and (2) Should DACA recipients be provided with a pathway towards citizenship?

I found that Republican participants in the Republican treatment were more likely to have positive attitudes toward DACA policy than those in the Democratic treatment. The results also indicate that respondents who know a DACA recipient had more positive feelings toward DACA recipients in general. I measured these attitudes by first asking

whether they knew a DACA recipient and then asking about their opinions on DACA policy. In both the Democratic and Republican treatment, individuals who knew a DACA recipient exhibited more positive feelings than those who did not know a DACA recipient.

Overall, these results suggest that although deep preferences and social norms remain difficult to change, attitudes toward DACA recipients are much more malleable, and can play a role in the future of immigration policy. This study suggests that by emphasizing certain characteristics of DACA recipients to the Republican party, attitudes among elites may change over time. Thus, supporting the idea that electoral concern is of great importance among Republican voters.

Why DACA?

Most individuals hold the preconception that immigration has only recently become a controversial topic at the forefront of American politics. Yet, challenges surrounding immigration policies can be traced back to the 1880s with the Chinese exclusion act, the literacy test of 1917, and the National Origins system of the 1920s, all of which tried to reduce immigration from races considered unfavorable by many politicians at the time. Negative attitudes toward immigrants were most clearly observed in the 1970s and 1980s, when Tichenor stated that “most Americans favored decreases in the number of immigrants and refugees allowed in[to] the country.”²

Yet, one attention-grabbing observation of the 1980s 1990s is that even with the deadlock found within Congress and American attitudes being negative towards

² Daniel J. Tichenor, *The Politics of Immigration Reform in the United States, 1981-1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 334.

immigration, Congress still passed two immigration reforms: the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) and the Immigration Act of 1990, both of which were created under the Republican Party and increased the number of immigrants allowed into the country.

The passing of these immigration reforms raises the questions of what could have motivated a deadlocked Congress to pass immigration reform then, and why does Congress seem further today from passing similar immigration reform? Tichenor argues that the reforms in 1980s and 1990s expressed a significant change in American political values. At the time, some Americans saw immigrants as people who could potentially support their party. While others began to see them as a threat due to the large influx of immigrants coming through the border, thus ultimately leading to the uncertain legacy of recent immigration reform today.

Yet, despite these negative attitudes toward immigrants, politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties tried to appeal to the Latino vote due to the growing demographic of Latinos in the United States. In the early 2000s, President Bush made several promises to create immigration reform with the help of President Vicente Fox. However, as both presidents met to discuss the immigration crisis, the consequences of 9/11 created a large political problem surrounding border security. This "shifted the terrain of debate in the United States, making border security the paramount issue for the Bush administration and the American public,"³ thereby hindering all progress on immigration reform.

³ Ramón Gutiérrez, "George W. Bush and Mexican Immigration Policy," 4.

By the time the Bush administration tried to refocus Republican attention toward the Latino vote in his reelection, the Republican party was no longer the same Republican party before 9/11. At the time, many Republican leaders felt that there should be an increase in security measures, and thus a fragmented Republican party slowly began to divide itself.

In addition, to the security crises that arose after 9/11 it is important to note that many Republicans were dissatisfied with the Bush administration. Many Republicans believed that the immigration reforms that they had signed in the 1980s and 1990s would reduce the influx of immigrants coming to the United States illegally because of the consequences that businesses would face if they hired illegal immigrants. Yet, when looking at immigration trends, The Center for Immigration studies found that of the “40 million immigrants in the country in 2010, 13.9 million arrived in 2000 or later making it the highest decade of immigration in American history.”⁴ These trends show that the policies created by the Republican Party during the early 2000s not only proved wrong when trying to reduce the number of immigrants, but they also seemed to encourage hope in future immigration policies for those illegal immigrants coming after IRCA was implemented.

By the time that President Obama came into power, many promises were made to undocumented immigrants by the Democratic Party. But those promises faced a Republican Congress that prioritized blocking his proposals for their own electoral gains in the future. President Obama faced immense tension on how to proceed with

⁴ Steven A. Camarota, *A Record-Setting Decade of Immigration: 2004*.

immigration given that Congress refused to pass any proposals, and growing unrest among the undocumented population led to several protests.

Two of the biggest marches in 2010 included: the May Day marches, and the Dream Act protests: On May 1, 2010, thousands of people across the country participated in May Day marches to demand immigration reform and workers' rights. Some of the largest marches took place in Los Angeles, where an estimated 60,000 people participated.⁵ In addition, in December 2010, after the Senate failed to pass the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would have provided a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children, there were several protests across the country.⁶ Students and activists staged sit-ins and hunger strikes to demand that Congress pass the legislation, but Congress did not budge on either one of these demands. Thus, seeing how Obama's campaign relied on minority support, he did one of the only things he could do for illegal immigrants. In 2012, President Obama passed DACA. A temporary protection status for undocumented youth.

DACA came at high cost for illegal immigrants. First, candidates would have to prove eligibility for the program by proving that they had arrived at the United States before the age of 16, lived in the United States for five continuous years, and had no series criminal record. Then, they would need to fill out several forms including proof of identity and residency. If the application was approved, then the individual would pay 500 dollars to be granted deferred action, which means they will not be deported and will

⁵ Emily Brooks, "When Did May Day Turn into an Immigrants' Rights Day?," JSTOR Daily, May 1, 2018, <https://daily.jstor.org/when-did-may-day-turn-into-an-immigrants-rights-day/>.

⁶ American Immigration Council, "The Dream Act: An Overview," accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/dream-act-overview>.

be eligible to apply for work authorization for up to two years. In other words, applicants would need to apply for driver's license every two years and pay over 500 dollars in fees for their renewal every two years.⁷

Since the implementation of DACA, approximately 825,000 individuals have benefited from it, allowing them to obtain driver's licenses, higher education, and even buy houses. As of 2021, the Center for American Progress found that "more than 1.3 million people live with a DACA recipient" and that "343,000 people were employed in jobs deemed essential by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency."⁸ DACA has affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals in the United States, and it has been a life-changing opportunity for many undocumented immigrants. While Democrats often focus on DACA and immigration reform as selling points for their party, the Republican Party's complicated history with immigration has led to more complicated views on DACA and how to address immigration. Therefore, it is important to study the Republican Party's perspective on this issue.

While many research papers have given historical accounts on the formation and implementation of DACA. Fewer papers have shown the exact divide among Republicans and how they voted on the latest's bills concerning DACA. The table below captures the roll call vote of legislators in the House of Representatives on bill H.R.6: American Dream and Promise Act of 2021.

⁷ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," last modified March 29, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/DACA>.

⁸ Nicole Prchal Svajlenka et al, "The Demographic and Economic Impacts of DACA Recipients: Fall 2021 Edition," Center for American Progress, accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-demographic-and-economic-impacts-of-daca-recipients-fall-2021-edition/>.

This bill would have allowed illegal immigrants who came into the country as minors to be provided conditional permanent residence for up to ten years if they met certain qualifications. The bill ultimately passed in the House of Representatives but was never taken up by the Senate. The purpose of presenting this bill is to show that while all Democrats voted in favor of it, only nine Republicans voted in favor, and five Republicans chose not to vote on the bill at all. This bill shows that there is a clear partisan line drawn on DACA-related issues, which is in stark contrast to the voter attitude seen in the survey.

Figure 1: Voting on H.R.6

H.R. 6 (117th): American Dream and Promise Act of 2021

Mar 18, 2021 at 6:01 p.m. ET. On Passage of the Bill in the House.

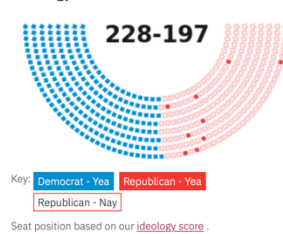
This was a vote to pass [H.R. 6 \(117th\)](#) in the House.

Totals

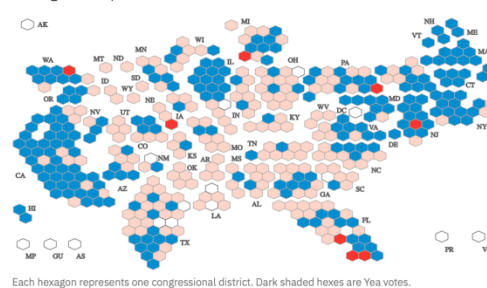
	All Votes	Democrats	Republicans
Yea	54 % 228	219	9
Nay	46 % 197	0	197
Not Voting	5	0	5

Passed. Simple Majority Required. Source: [house.gov](#).

Ideology Vote Chart



Cartogram Map

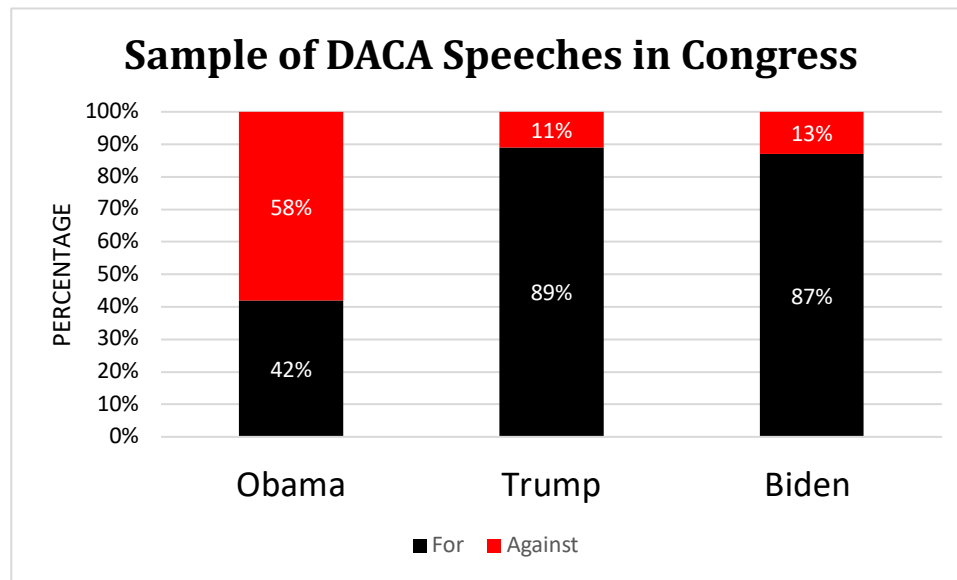


To better understand the behavior of elites around DACA, I examine congressional speech data from 2008-2023. Figure 2 shows a sample of speeches given in Congress during three different presidencies. Speeches were chosen as a way of

measuring the Republican and Democratic attitudes DACA given that they require an investment of time and energy and best reflected support or opposition towards an issue.⁹

Figure 2 presents the percentage of speeches given on for or against DACA and are divided by presidency. Within the Obama presidency I find that there is more division on the issue of DACA when compared to the Trump and Biden administrations. This information is not new, given that DACA, was first created under the Obama presidency. The legality of the executive order and the speeches given during this time also reflect concerns are the legality of DACA and border security.

Figure 2 – Sample of DACA Speeches in Congress



Interestingly, in the Trump administration, there are more positive speeches than there are negative DACA speeches. In fact, 89% of speeches under the Trump administration are in favor of DACA. One explanation for this change in attitude within Congress, is that under the Trump administration, there was a large movement in trying

⁹ Methodology for how congressional speeches found can be found in Appendix I.

to get rid of DACA by the executive branch, and this meant that Republican legislators did not need to voice their negative opinions about the topic and could instead focus on other issues that could help win support among their constituents. This could have also led to more Democrats speaking out against Trump since they felt like DACA recipients should be protected.¹⁰ During this time that there is an increase in Republicans that begin to voice their support for DACA.

However, although President Trump's attempts to bring down DACA failed, the Biden Administration does not show a change in opinions toward DACA. Instead, one finds that the overall high number of positive speeches toward DACA continues to stay high. A possible explanation for this behavior is that since President Trump's attempts to shut down DACA failed, many Republicans felt like it was a waste of time to talk about the legality of DACA, since that was there most popular form of attack. I find that the overall number of positive speeches towards DACA is surprising, given that the Pew research mentioned that one thing that many Republicans waited in anticipation to see was how President Biden would handle the immigration crises.

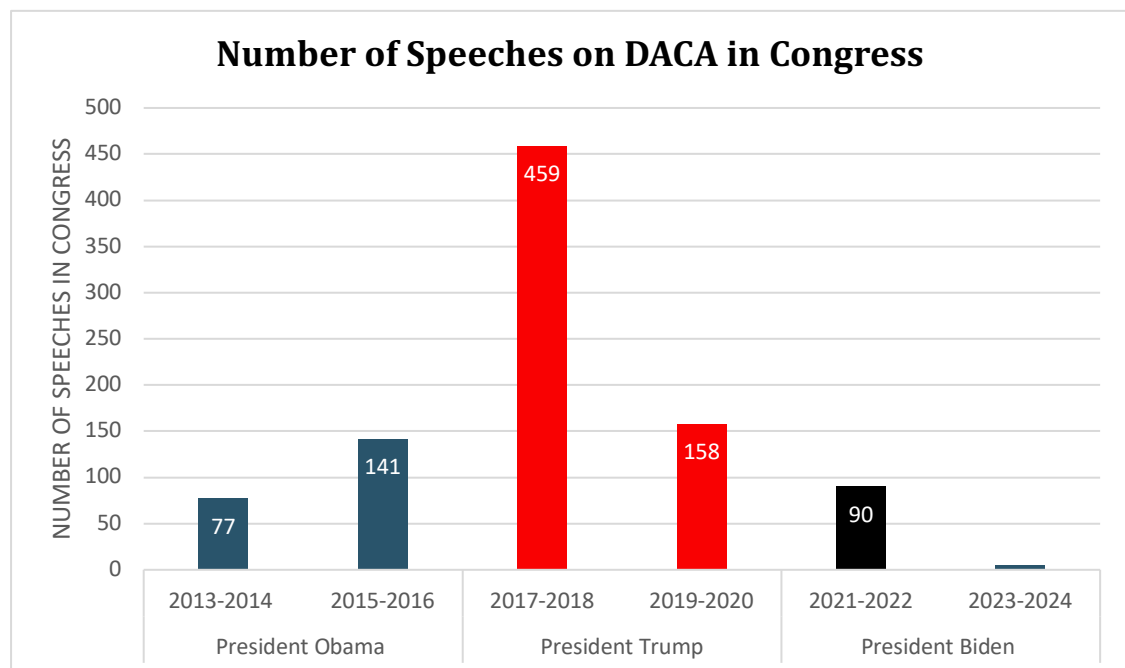
Next, I examine the total number of speeches given on DACA to offer context to Figure 2. By comparing the sample table and the total speeches given on DACA, one can begin to better understand why the sample continues to show many positive speeches in favor of DACA. Figure 3 shows that the largest number of speeches on DACA was given under President Trump's first term. However, under President Biden the number of

¹⁰ Laura Meckler, "The Wall Street Journal," If Trump Ends DACA, Issue Falls to Congress," The Wall Street Journal, September 1, 2017, accessed March 30, 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/if-trump-ends-daca-issue-falls-to-congress-1504267608?mod=article_inline."

speeches given on DACA decreases significantly from 617 speeches to 94 speeches. Yet, of those 94 speeches given under Biden’s presidency, our sample shows that 87% of those speeches are in favor of DACA.

When looking at Figure 3 one first sees that the largest number of speeches on DACA was between 2017 and 2018. During President Obama’s presidency, there were about 212 speeches given. This number rose to over 617 speeches given by the end of President Trump’s presidency, under President Biden there have only been 93 speeches given on DACA. One possible explanation for the lack of negative speeches during the Biden administration is that President Biden has not introduced a new immigration policy and that instead states have taken DACA within their own jurisdiction, as one sees in the DACA vs. Texas case.

Figure 3 – Total Speeches on DACA

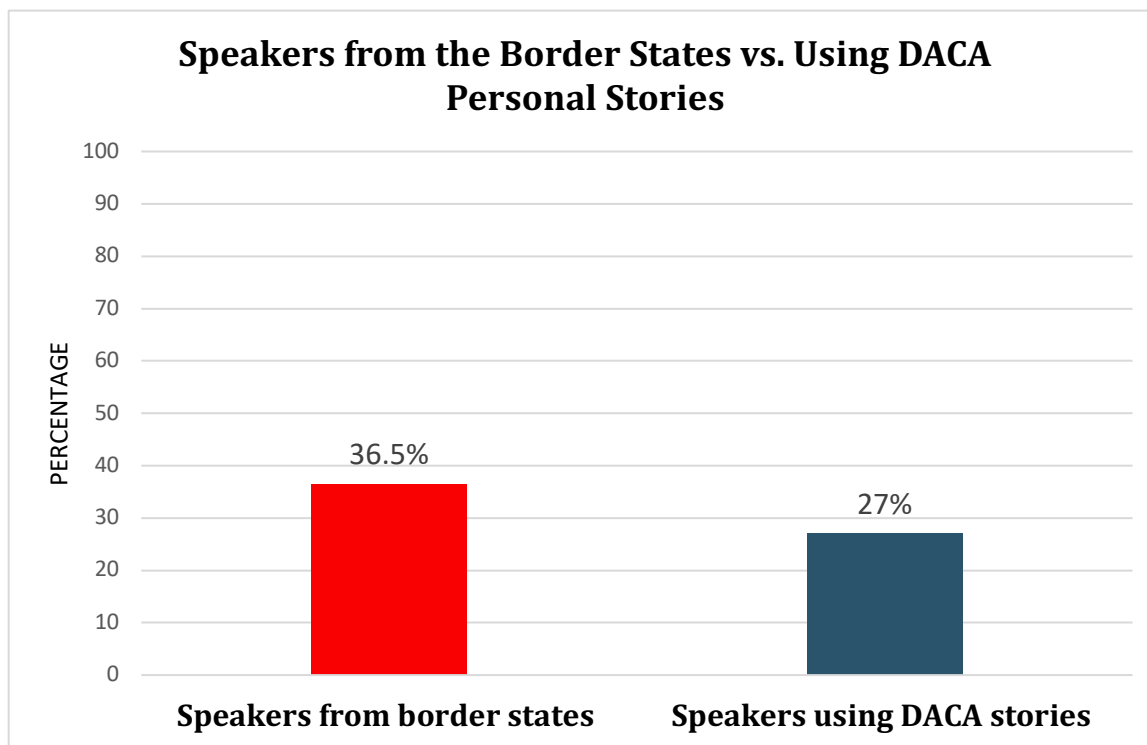


These findings are interesting when comparing it to the Pew research on Biden’s first sixty-day report because even when public opinions continually shows that

immigration is an important national issue to citizens, the table shows that legislators who are against DACA have decreased the number of speeches on immigration.

Of the 85 speeches that were samples in the examination, 36.5% of speakers came from border states, this is interesting given that only four states border Mexico. This means that there is a clear overrepresentation of speakers from border states. This is not surprising given that politicians from these states are most affected by immigration reform, and they are most often pressured by their constituents to speak on immigration reform, whether those policies are in favor of against immigration. However, it is important to point out that some of the most influential speakers on immigration reform are not from borders states.

Figure 3 – Speakers from Border States vs. The use of DACA Personal Stories



Senator Dick Durbin, for example, has delivered more than two hundred speeches in support of DACA, despite representing Illinois. Notably, he strongly advocates for

incorporating personal stories of DACA recipients into his speeches, as evidenced by the numerous personal stories featured on his website. In the Figure 3, it is revealed that 27% of speakers incorporated personal stories of DACA recipients. It is unsurprising that nearly all Democrats in the sample used such personal anecdotes in their speeches, while no Republicans in favor of DACA did so.

Literature Review

Examining the variations within the Republican Party, rather than the Democratic Party, holds significant importance due to two primary reasons. Firstly, there is considerable variation of attitudes within the Republican Party regarding the topic of DACA. Secondly, the highly contested nature of DACA within the last three presidential elections has led to further complexities within the party. As such, the focus of the study is to analyze the divisions within the Republican Party and identify the factors that have contributed to the varying Republican attitudes towards DACA.

The election of President Obama in 2008 marked a significant divide within the Republican Party, as many members felt frustrated with what they saw as their party's tendency to compromise on key issues. This ideological split was exemplified by the emergence of the Tea Party in 2010, which challenged the Republican establishment and promoted a more uncompromising brand of conservatism. In their book, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, Schmitt and Bargoer argue that the Tea Party played a major role in obstructing compromises on immigration that had been negotiated between mainstream Republican leaders in Congress and the Obama administration.¹¹

¹¹ Skocpol and Williamson, *The Tea Party, and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 35.

One reason for the Tea Party's opposition to these compromises was that their agenda was based on four main beliefs: limiting the size of the federal government, reducing government spending, lowering the national debt, and opposing tax increases. Tea Party members felt that mainstream Republicans were compromising too often on these issues. While immigration was not directly included in the Tea Party's list of priorities, it was seen as an economic issue. As Neiman et al. note, Tea Party members' desire to limit immigration "seemed motivated... by a desire to shrink the size of the federal government." However, despite the Tea Party's desire to shrink the federal government, a 2014 Pew report found that 59% of Tea Party Republicans supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.¹²

The changes that have taken place within the Republican Party serve as the starting point for this study, highlighting the importance of examining political views held by the party. The aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of how Republicans perceive the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and what factors have influenced their beliefs. With two years having passed since Trump left office, and his failed attempts to dismantle DACA having left many unanswered questions about the future of immigration reform, this study aims to gauge the current stance of the Republican Party and identify key issues that Republican politicians should focus on.

The emergence of the Tea Party provides some insight into why Republicans remain more divided on immigration reform today than in the past. However, the Pew report on the Tea Party fails to explain why even the most conservative Republicans hold

¹² Michael Dimock, "Tea Parties are not all immigration hawks," Pew Research Center, May 5, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/05/tea-parties-are-not-all-immigration-hawks/>.

differing views on the matter of illegal immigrants. One potential explanation for this can be traced back to Great Replacement Theory, which originated in the 1970s when French nationalists expressed concerns about immigration in France.¹³

This theory made headlines during the Buffalo shooting in May of 2022 because it revealed that the motivation behind the shooting was due to hate towards another race. In essence, the theory argues “that nonwhite individuals are being brought into the United States and other Western countries to ‘replace’ white voters [in order] to achieve a political agenda.”¹⁴ In the Buffalo shooting, investigators claimed that there was sufficient evidence that Gendron’s shooting was motivated by racial animosity. This rhetoric is often found within extreme right-wing supporters and other extremist groups, but it has recently spilled over to more mainstream Republican rhetoric.

While the Great Replacement Theory espouses white supremacist language, it is not my contention that all Republicans adhere to this conspiracy theory. Rather, I posit that its rhetoric has permeated the political arena and produced fear among the Far-right Republican Party. This faction of the party has felt threatened by the influx of non-white people into the United States since before the Bush presidency but has grown in political strength over time. This idea is best presented by in Ashley Jardina’s book, *White Identity Politics*, when she states that some white Americans feel that they are under threat of losing their cultural dominance and becoming strangers in their own land as the white population continues to shrink.¹⁵

¹³ National Immigration Forum, "Explainer: What Is Replacement Theory?" December 2021, accessed March 30, 2023, <https://immigrationforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Replacement-Theory-Explainer-1122.pdf>.

¹⁴ NPR, "What Is The 'Great Replacement' Theory?," accessed May 20, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/16/1099034094/what-is-the-great-replacement-theory>.

¹⁵ Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 44.

One of the effects of the Great Replacement Theory is its influence on immigration rhetoric, which has caused polarization in congressional opinions on immigration policy. While some may attribute the change in immigration rhetoric to the discourse of former President Trump, it is important to note that anti-immigration rhetoric existed before his presidency. The Republican Party's political approach toward the Latino population has undergone a significant transformation between the Bush and Trump administrations. In the political arena, the Great Replacement Theory posits that immigrants and non-white people will vote a certain way, ultimately drowning out the voices of white Americans. This may be a plausible explanation for the change in immigration rhetoric in the 2000s.

During Bush and Obama's administration, both presidents would often describe immigrants coming into the country illegally as hardworking and overachieving individuals that simply wanted to be part of the American dream. Katheryn Stevenson furthers this when she states that the Bush and Obama administration sentiment towards immigration was one that "humanizes migrants, recovering them from dehumanizing counter narratives."¹⁶ This rhetoric while used by both Republicans and Democrats, changes significantly throughout the Trump presidency.

One example of this contrast is found when reading President Bush's own sentiments toward immigrants. In a January 7, 2004, remark, He says "As a Texan, I have known many immigrant families, mainly from Mexico, and I have seen what they add to our country. They bring to America the values of faith in God, love of family, hard work and self-reliance – the values that made us a great nation to begin with." (Bush) Then

¹⁶ Stevenson K., Katheryn. "Felons, Not Families: U.S. Immigration Politics," pp. 158

after 13 years, Trump is found saying “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.”¹⁷ This contrast in languages reveals a gap within the Republican Party and their own separation of political goals within the Latino population. The question is what could have led to such radical views toward immigrants, in the first place?

What is interesting in comparing the 1980s and 1990s on the issue of immigration is that Tichenor’s claims that political deadlock existed all throughout those years and yet there seems to be a more rigid divide today than thirty years ago. It is within Stevenson’s research that some trends become apparent when comparing the presidencies. Stevens claims that there are two trends that more noticeable such as: 1) family discourse among immigrants garnering more empathy around immigration reform, 2) changing the discourse of undocumented immigrants to be cast as criminals “coincides with efforts to install more exclusionary policies,”¹⁸ which eventually leads to divides within the Republican Party to becoming a dichotomous view of immigrants as either “felons” or “families” and this rhetoric contributes to a dynamic change in perceptions among the Republican Party toward immigrants.

However, both Tichenor and Stevenson overlook an important factor that could have influenced the shift in immigration discourse: the global issues that arose after 9/11. Security concerns were paramount, which may have led Republicans to become more anti-immigration. While immigration remained a hotly contested topic in the early 2000s, Republicans were also seeking to win over the Latino vote, as they believed it was crucial for their political survival. According to Gimpel and Kaufmann (2001), the changing

¹⁷ Maya Rhodan, "Donald Trump Insults Mexico With His Latest Immigration Plan," Time, September 1, 2016, accessed April 11, 2023, <https://time.com/4473972/donald-trump-mexico-meeting-insult/>.

¹⁸ Daniel J. Tichenor, *The Politics of Immigration Reform in the United States, 1981-1990* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 334.

demographics of the nation required Republicans to create inroads into the Latino electorate. Cortina and Garza added that Republicans believed Latinos were not ideologically or politically far apart from them, and that they shared similar values, such as social conservatism, work ethic, and entrepreneurial spirit.¹⁹ President Bush even collaborated with Vicente Fox to pursue immigration reform, but all efforts were quickly halted after 9/11.

The Republican Party's shifting views on immigration are exemplified by a series of events. These include the emergence of the Tea Party, the aftermath of 9/11, and a shift in rhetoric towards immigrants. These developments underscore continual rift within the Republican Party, with leaders now attempting to appeal to both economically conservative Republicans like Paul Ryan, and socially conservative Republicans like Donald Trump. However, beyond these factors, I contend that there are two additional considerations that must be considered. Firstly, the role of electoral support within the Republican Party, and secondly, the impact of personal relationships with DACA recipients.

Theory

Over the years, there have been several theories on what shapes political attitudes towards outgroups in social science. Two important theories which are widely used among political scientists are Rational Choice Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory. Rational Choice Theory argues that individuals rank their priorities and then act in a self-interested way to achieve their goals. On the other hand, Intergroup Contact Theory

¹⁹ Rodolfo O. De la Garza and Jeronimo Cortina, "Are Latinos Republicans But Just Don't Know It?: The Latino Vote in the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2007): doi:10.1177/1532673X06294885.

argues that as individuals interact with people of different backgrounds and preferences that prejudices are replaced with empathy and more cooperation. In this paper, I look at Rational Choice Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory because they both help explain the variation among Republican attitudes. The purpose for providing both theories in this study is because there is a tension that is created by these two theories and my research lies within this tension. By exploring how both theories work with each other, I show how these theories best work together to prove the importance of electoral concerns among the Republican Party and how knowing a DACA recipient can change the assumptions under Rational Choice Theory.

Rational Choice Theory

Within Rational Choice Theory that are several key assumptions that are made by political scientists. Those assumptions state that: (1) Individuals are rational actors. This means that as individuals calculate the costs versus benefits of a product or idea that they will naturally choose the thing that provides more benefits than cost. (2) Decisions are based on preferences. This second assumption states that individuals have clear and stable preferences that guide their decision-making. (3) individuals have limited resources such as time, money, or energy and thus they must make trade-offs when making decisions. Lastly, (4) context matters- this means that decisions are made based on social norms, cultural values, and institutional rules.²⁰

Due to the nature of politics, Rational Choice Theory has often been tested in politics. I believe that actors will act rationally and act in a self-interests way because as they prioritize their values, they will act selfishly according to their values to achieve

²⁰ William Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, pp.2

their goals. This is important when learning about Republicans and DACA because one reason that Republicans may vote against DACA is because they believe in the myth that if given a pathway toward citizenship, most DACA recipients would vote for the Democratic Party.

When trying to understand this phenomenon in my own study of Republican political attitudes toward DACA recipients, I argue that the Republican Party is more likely to change their political attitudes toward DACA recipients if they know that DACA recipients will vote for the Republican Party during political elections.

In this study I test this hypothesis by using framing theory. The idea here is that by highlighting certain characteristics of the outgroup- in this case DACA recipients- Republicans will view DACA recipients in a different way than they are normally presented in the media, and this will lead them to change their attitudes toward policy that affects DACA recipients. To provide an individual-level account of how framing rhetoric changes the perception of ingroup, in this case Republican's view on DACA, participants will be shown a vignette and will then be asked two follow-up questions.

I follow the framing theory approach by using a study on populist rhetoric by Busby et al. to test the intergroup theory. In the populist rhetoric paper, Busby suggests "that when forming an attitude or making a choice regarding some object, individuals draw on a variety of evaluation[s] about the object."²¹ In other words, how a person chooses to frame an object, or in this case a group of people, will strongly influence how participants think about that group of people. One reason for choosing this method above others is that by creating a survey based on framing theory, one can easily measure

²¹ Busby, et al. "Framing and Blame Attribution in Populist Rhetoric," 618.

changes in attitude based on participants respond to framed treatment that they receive. This idea allows one to not only measure the effects of the treatment, but to better understand why Republicans may feel positive or negative feelings toward DACA recipients.

Hypothesis 1: Republican participants are more likely to want to increase the number cap of DACA recipients and create a pathway toward citizenship when they are presented with the Republican treatment which states that DACA recipients are more likely to vote for the Republican party.

Intergroup Contact Theory

Intergroup Contact Theory states that when individuals have “extended contact [with outside groups] this allows for learning about the group, an understanding of its circumstances, and the creation of affective ties with its members.”²² In other words, when individuals in the ingroup create personal connections through intentional interactions with people of a different background than themselves, they begin to form social connections that can lead to more welcoming feelings towards individuals in the outgroup.

This idea counters Rational Choice Theory by explaining that individual’s self-interests can be altered when they form connections with members who may not have their same self-interest. One reason for why feelings towards the outgroup improves is because negative stereotypes toward the outgroup begin to be proven wrong.²³ One reason for believing that personal connection can have a positive effect on individuals’ political attitudes is that people, who may at first may see each other skeptically because

²² Andrew Gelman and Yotam Margalit, "Social Penumbra Predict Political Attitudes," *Political Behavior* 43, no. 4 (2021): 950.

²³ Vincent Y. Yzerbyt, Charles M. Judd, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens, "Emotional Prejudice, Essentialism, and Nationalism," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 28, no. 2 (1998): 230.

of their cultural, social, or economic differences, begin to realize that they have common goals, attitudes, and characteristics. This means that people, who may at first feel threatened by an individual of a different culture, begin to understand that they are not that different after all. For example, Boisjoly et al. (2006) show that students who were randomly assigned to an African American roommate in college are more likely to sympathize with African Americans and affirmative action because they explain that “exposure to members of another group [often] creates empathy.”²⁴ This idea has been tested widely among voters.

In a study by Gelman and Margalit, they answer the question: What explains variation in the resonance and political standing of different social groups? This question introduces the idea of social penumbras, which they define “as the set of people who have personal familiarity with member of the group, be it as relatives, friends, or acquaintances.”²⁵ This refined definition takes a person’s social group and regroups relations in order of influence in a person’s life. By reorganizing a person’s social group into different categories, they can test the extent of how certain social penumbra’s affect one’s political attitude. In their findings, they conclude that “partisan differences are mostly larger among friends and acquaintances than among close family.” When testing this idea on economic issues, they find that attitudes on economic issues are more aligned with political ideology and less influenced by personal contacts.

When applying these theories in my own study of DACA, I focus on personal relations or connection to DACA recipients. While proximity to DACA recipients plays

²⁴ Aaron Beaman, Elizabeth R. Levy Paluck, and Gregory Walton, "Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?" *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, no. 4 (2012): 827.

²⁵ Andrew Gelman and Yotam Margalit, "Social Penumbras Predict Political Attitudes," *Political Behavior* 43, no. 4 (2021): 949.

an important role, I specifically focus on the effects of knowing a DACA recipient at the public level.

I test this second hypothesis by asking questions participants if they know a DACA in my survey experiment. Interestingly, Gelman and Margalit's own theory on social penumbras are supported by Mancur Olson's book, *The Logic of Collective Action*. According to Olson, individual members of a group will only participate in collective action if they can obtain benefits that exceed their individual costs. Therefore, he argued that small and homogeneous groups, such as firms or small communities, are more likely to successfully organize collective action than large and diverse groups, such as political parties. This is because small groups have a higher degree of cohesion and face fewer free riders who can take advantage of the group's efforts without contributing to them.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals that know DACA recipients at a personal level, whether Republican or Democratic, will more likely have positive feelings toward DACA recipients, and will want to implement a larger cap of DACA recipients and create a pathway toward citizenship.

Methodology

I test my hypotheses by administering a survey experiment to Republican participants. First, I administered a survey to 901 participants on LUCID²⁶, an online platform used by many political scientists today to gather survey data. Participants were compensated a dollar for their participation in the survey as an incentive for them to take the survey. To enter the survey, respondents had to identify as Republican and then once in the survey they had to reidentify as Republican. Anyone who did not identify as

²⁶ Coppock and McClellan, Validating the demographic, political, psychological, and experimental results obtained from a new source of online survey respondents.

Republican in both instances where drop from the final sample. This resulted in a final sample size of 732.²⁷ The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes among Republican votes around immigration policy generally and DACA specifically. As such, potential respondents had to pass a screener question where only self-identified Republicans could enter the survey. Respondents were again asked their party identification in the survey as a way of ensuring their political affiliation. In the data analysis, respondents that identified as other than Republican were dropped from the analysis.

The first part of the survey asked participants about their own political affiliation and their views on current polarized political topics such as gun control, abortion, and immigration. The purpose of asking this question was to gauge how important immigration is to the participants, overall. Then participants were asked several questions on their understanding of DACA. They were then immediately asked about positive and negative reasons for DACA.

Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of two treatment groups: the Democratic treatment or the Republican treatment. Participants that were placed in the Democratic treatment group received a statement half-way through the survey that stated:

Many people believe that if Latinos were given a pathway towards citizenship that they would vote for the Democratic party. However, recent studies affirm this because in some states 52% of Latinos vote for the Democratic Party.

²⁷ Unfortunately, there was a coding error with the experiment such that the attention check was accidentally brought into the randomization block with the two treatments, such that only 2/3 of the respondents were given a treatment condition. This resulted in a sample of 498 experimental respondents. However, this drop in sample size only applies to the experiments, and all 732 respondents saw all other questions.

Participants that were placed in the Republican treatment group were given a statement half-way through the survey that stated:

Many people believe that if DACA recipients were given a pathway towards citizenship that they would vote for the Democratic party. However, recent studies have shown that in some states 48% of Latinos vote for the Republican Party.

After giving the different treatments to the two treatment groups, two follow-up questions were given to all participants: (1) should there be an increase or decrease in the number of DACA recipients, and (2) should DACA recipients be given a pathway toward citizenship. The survey was constructed to test whether the treatment would affect the political opinions that Republicans had toward DACA policies. In addition to comparing how participants answered the two-follow up questions, participants were also asked if they knew anyone that was a DACA recipient. They could either choose from: Yes, Maybe, or No. All participants that chose (Maybe) were placed in the (No) category for analysis.

One common perception of DACA is that most people think that illegal immigrants come from Mexico, so I wanted to see if this was also true of DACA. I asked this question so that I could gauge what preexisting views participants had already toward immigrants and if that played a role how they viewed the treatment. Next, participants were asked several demographic questions asking them about their gender, education, employment status, and racial identity so that I could be able to include them in my regressions.

Findings and Discussion

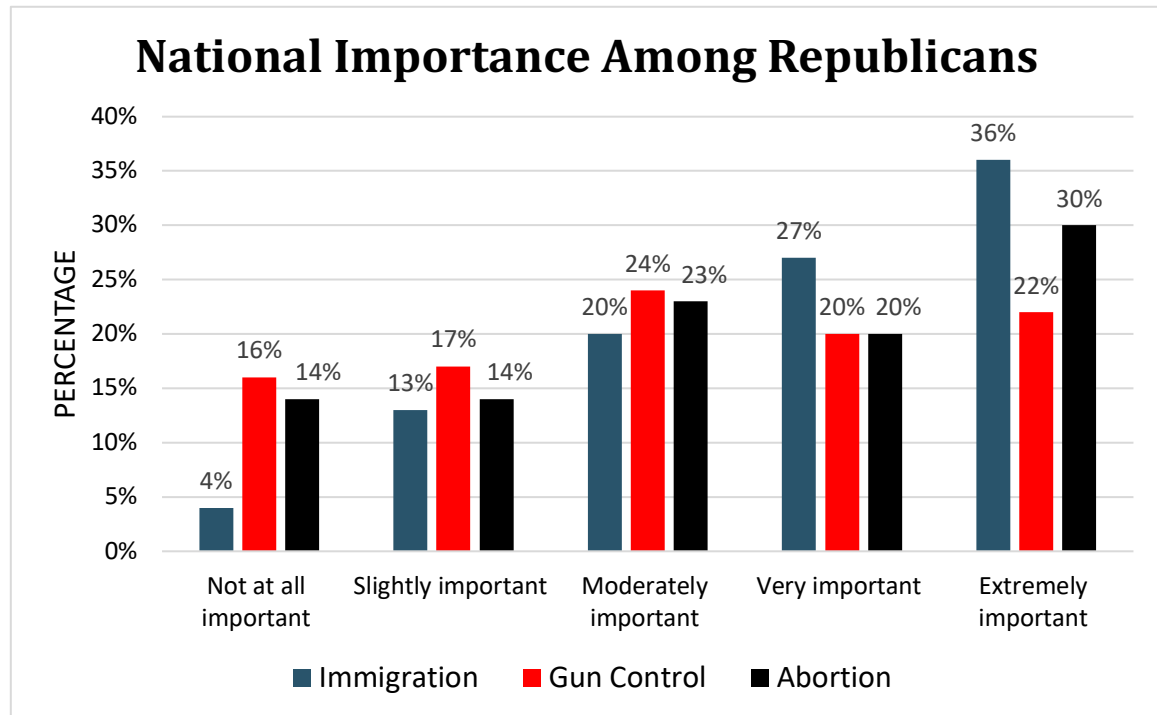
National Importance

In Figure 4, the percentage distribution of national importance given by participants to immigration, gun control, and abortion is shown. Out of the 730 respondents who answered this question, 36% of Republicans considered immigration an extremely important national issue, whereas only 4% believed that it was not important at all. When looking at gun control, 20% of Republicans said that gun control was a “very important” issue and 22% said that it was an “extremely important” national issue. Next, when looking at abortion, 20% of Republicans stated that it was a “very important issue” and that abortion was an “extremely important” issue. This indicates that about one-third of Republicans considered immigration to be a highly important issue, which is significantly higher than their prioritization of gun control and abortion. These results align with the Republican Party's emphasis on national security.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of Republicans who considered immigration an important national issue increased even further when combining the number of participants who chose immigration as a "very important" issue with those who considered it "extremely important." In fact, over 60% of Republicans viewed immigration as an important national issue when these two categories were combined, which is an important finding considering that the media has recently focused extensively on gun control laws following several shootings this year. It is also interesting to note that, despite the recent overturn of *Roe v. Wade* on June 24, 2022, there were more Republicans who prioritized immigration over abortion. This is particularly striking since media outlets were flooded with coverage of the *Roe v. Wade* controversy. These

findings have important implications for our study on Republicans' attitudes toward DACA as they demonstrate the significant role of immigration as a national issue.

Figure 4 – National Importance



The findings discussed above support Olson's Logic of Collective Action, because they highlight the difficulties faced by a large political party such as the Republican Party in achieving unanimity on the most important national issue. Additionally, these findings underscore the significance of examining Republican attitudes toward DACA, given their strong stance on immigration. It is worth noting that our study's results are consistent with those of a Pew Research report that analyzed the first 60 days of President Biden's term. The report found that "immigration was one of the five topics most covered by 25 major news outlets," which further emphasizes the importance of immigration as a key

issue for both political parties and the media.²⁸ Next, I asked respondents to look at the possible positive and negative effects of DACA and select what they believe are the positive and negative effects consequences of DACA.

DACA Outcomes

Table 2 - presents a list of possible positive outcomes that come from DACA.

TABLE 2 POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR DACA	PERCENTAGE
I see no positive outcomes of DACA	38%
More protected children	35%
More educated immigrants	28%
Better economy	25%
Less crime	12%

Note: Participants in this table had the option of selecting multiple positive outcomes of DACA, so the percentages will be higher than a hundred percent. The options for both tables were initially created to allow participants to select multiple options, but in the process of publishing this survey, the selection options were accidentally changed. The difference in selection options of the positive and negative tables were not intended to be different.

The focus now turns to the respondents' perceptions of positive and negative outcomes associated with DACA policy. Prior to the experiment, respondents were asked about their views on DACA's outcomes, so that there was no influence from the treatment. Table 2 presents a significant finding that 38% of Republican respondents held the view that there are no positive outcomes of DACA, suggesting that a significant number of respondents saw no benefits associated with the policy. This proportion is noteworthy considering that they did not think that there were no positive outcomes from the policy at alone.

Another interesting observation from this table is that there is a large variation in responses given by individuals on positive reasons for DACA. So, even though 38% of

²⁸ Amy Mitchell and Mark Jurkowitz, "Immigration Importance," Pew Research Center, August 31, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/08/31/immigration-is-among-top-five-issues-covered-by-major-news-outlets-in-bidens-first-60-days/>.

Republicans believe that there are no positive outcomes for DACA, the second most selected positive reasons for DACA are that 35% of Republicans believe that DACA protects more children. Afterwards, the next several positive reasons for DACA have slightly smaller percentages.

An additional noteworthy result from Table 2 is that the second to last option for a positive reason for DACA is that it creates a better economy. This is interesting given that when examining congressional speeches, many Republican representatives that are in favor of DACA often choose to focus their talks on how DACA recipients benefit the economy. This means that while Republican politicians may think that talking about the economic benefits of DACA recipients is effective in congressional speeches, there may be other more effective ways to connect and persuade other Republican legislators, like talking about how DACA protects children.

Table 3 presents a list of potential negative reasons for DACA.

TABLE 3 NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FOR DACA	PERCENTAGE
More illegal immigration at the border	48%
More competition for jobs	15%
Worse economy	13%
More crime	13%
I see no negative outcomes of DACA	12%

Note: Participants in this table could only select one of the negative outcomes of DACA and these percentages add up to 100%.

Switching from positive outcomes of DACA, Table 3 examines negative outcomes of DACA according to respondents. The first noticeable thing about Table 3 is that 47.54% of Republicans believe that the main negative reason for DACA is that it causes more illegal immigration at the border. This is almost half of the Republican participants that believe that DACA is causing more illegal immigration. This does not

necessarily suggest that participants feel if this is a good consequence but rather a major consequence.

All other possible negative reasons for DACA have significantly smaller percentages when compared to no. But it is interesting that the next most chosen negative reason for DACA is that it causes more competition for jobs with 14.62% of Republicans choosing this option. This is interesting given that Republicans that favor DACA, talk about the positive economic outcomes of DACA recipients' contribution to taxes. One possible explanation for participants choosing economic reasons as a negative outcome of DACA is that many more Republican legislators have used economic reason for getting rid of DACA. This idea can be supported by the third option that Republicans chose as a negative reason for DACA which is a worse economy.

Treatment Effect

Up until this point, I have examined how Republicans think about DACA without any experimental manipulation. Now, we turn to the results of the framing experiment. As a reminder, respondents were randomly assigned to receive information that would suggest that either the Republican or Democratic party would benefit electorally from DACA recipients being allowed to vote if given a pathway toward citizenship.

Hypothesis 1: Rational Choice Motivations

I examine the results of the survey experiment on Republican participants. Figure 5 shows how Republicans attitudes compare when given the Democratic treatment to the Republican treatment on our first dependent variable, whether the cap of DACA recipients should increase or decrease. One of the first noticeable things from Figure 5 is that there is a wide distribution on whether the government should increase or decrease

the cap of DACA recipients among both treatment groups.²⁹ This is noteworthy since news articles often paint DACA as divided on partisan lines, but average voters vary widely in their policy preferences. Second, those given the Republican treatment are more likely to want to increase the number of DACA recipients across most positive categories, like was hypothesized. In other words, when people find out that a policy electorally benefits them, they are more supportive of that policy. These results support much of the literature on Rational Choice theory because individuals having more welcoming feelings towards those who share similar political attitudes because of human's natural self-interest.

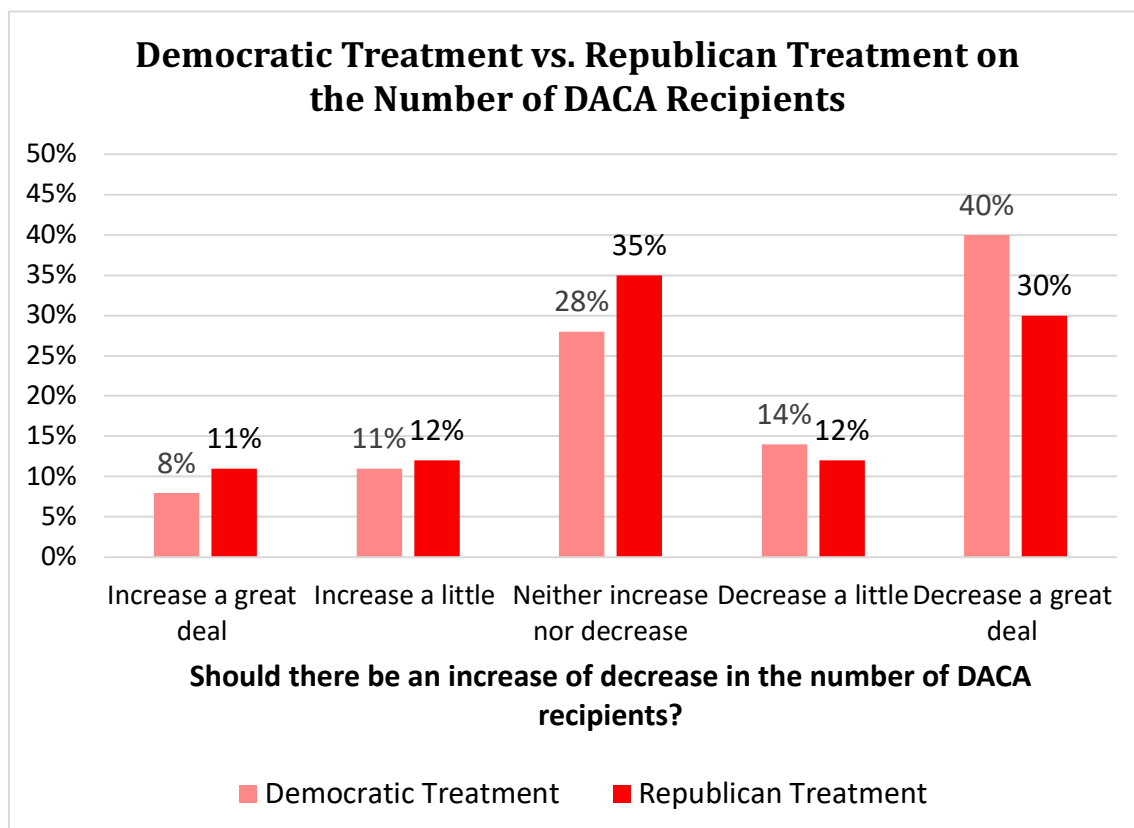
Another interesting component in Figure 5 is that the difference in attitudes towards the number of DACA recipients is apparent in two of the categories: "decrease a great deal," which has a 9%-point difference between the treatment groups, and in the neither increase nor decrease category, which has a 7%-point difference between the treatment groups, while all other categories have much smaller differences between treatment groups. One explanation for the 9%-point difference between the treatment groups is that those who were given the Republican treatment could have thought that DACA recipient are more likely to lean toward the Democrat party than the Republican party, and it is for this reason that they hold negative views toward DACA recipients. However, once they read the treatment, they discovered that 48% of Latinos in some states vote for the Republican party, which led to them feeling less threatened by the

²⁹ Pew Research Center, "Republicans and Democrats have different top priorities for U.S. immigration policy," Pew Research Center, September 8, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/08/republicans-and-democrats-have-different-top-priorities-for-u-s-immigration-policy/>.

presence of DACA recipients in the country. This supports the idea that participants will update their preferences so long as it electorally benefits their party and in turn them.

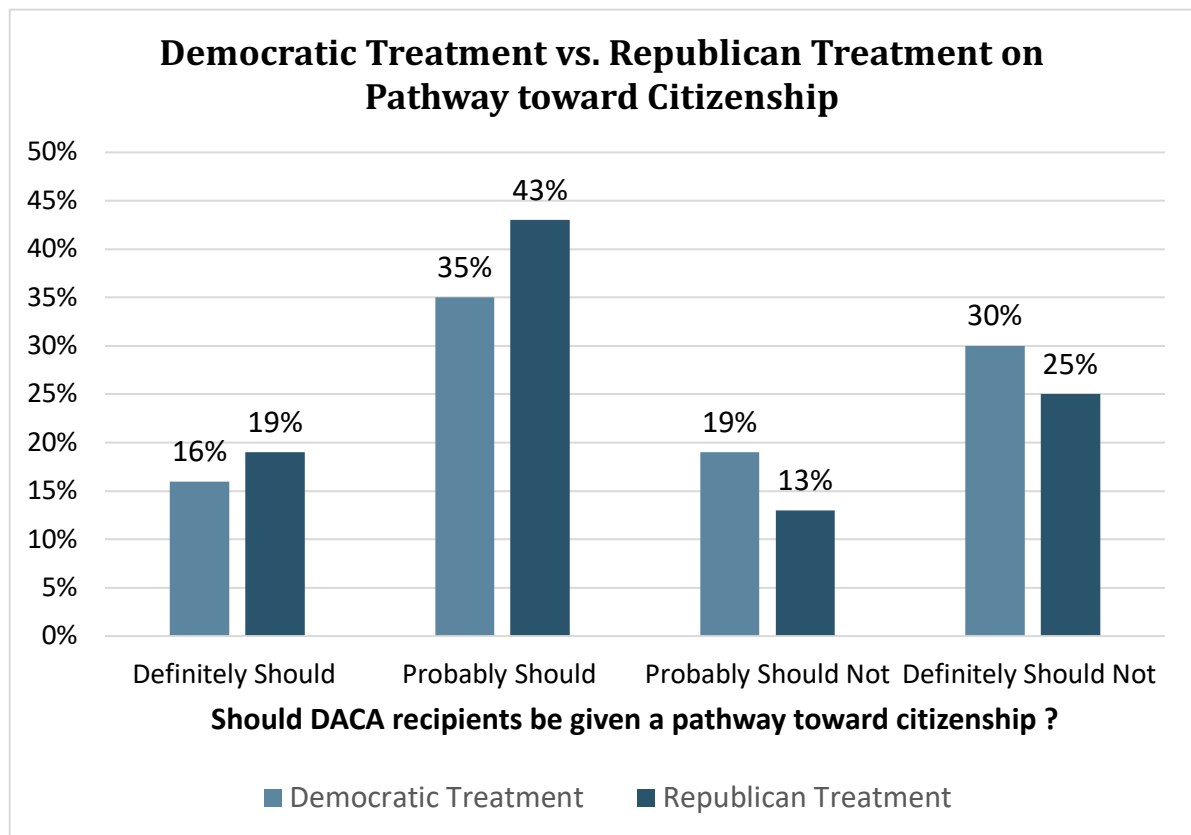
Regarding the “neither increase nor decrease” category, one explanation for the 7%-point difference between the treatment groups is that those who already had negative feelings towards DACA felt confused or had a change in opinion when reading the treatment that said that 48% of Latinos vote for the Republican party. Since this one statement did not convince them to vote in favor of increasing the cap of DACA recipients, they felt neither positive nor negative feelings toward changes in the number of DACA recipients and chose to input no opinion on the matter.

Figure 5 – Democratic Treatment Effects on the Number of DACA Recipient



Regardless of the reasons that Republicans chose the categories that they selected, one important take away from Figure 5 is that the wording in the treatment does influence Republican's view toward DACA recipients and what actions the government should take. Another important take away is that the largest changes in Republican attitudes are found in the more negative categories. In other words, those who already had more positive view towards DACA policies did not need to update their preferences based on the treatment, whereas those viewed DACA policies more negatively were more likely to update.

Figure 6 – Republican Treatment Effects on the Pathway Toward Citizenship



Next, I turn to the second dependent variable, whether DACA recipients should be given a pathway to citizenship. Like Figure 5, Figure 6 shows a wide variation among

Republican attitudes toward DACA.³⁰ Consistent with the first dependent variable, the Republican treatment shifts attitudes towards more positive attitudes towards DACA. Figure 6 shows that when given the Republican treatment, Republicans are more likely to want to give DACA recipients a pathway toward citizenship than those that are given the Democratic treatment. This is consistent across all response options and the difference in attitudes is larger between the treatment groups. One clear explanation for the larger gap between the treatments and the categories they chose is that they had no neutral category. In addition, the gap could also be larger because giving a pathway toward citizenship is a more permanent solution toward immigration policy than in the cap number of DACA recipients and this could lead to showing much stronger feelings toward immigration.

When comparing Figure 6 to Figure 5, Figure 6 shows that there is a larger percentage of Republicans that have more positive views toward DACA. I hypothesize that some Republicans that feel strongly about helping DACA recipients may not want to simply increase the cap of DACA recipients but instead see a more permanent solution to the temporary DACA protection. I find similar trends on the negative end of the spectrum; Republicans that oppose creating a pathway toward citizenship decrease their opposition when they are given the Republican treatment.

Next, because there is no neutral category in this table, if one were to divide Republican attitudes toward positive or negative views on creating a pathway toward Citizenship, the number of positive feelings would increase to 62% of Republicans wanting to create a pathway toward citizenship for DACA recipients and the number of

³⁰ Figure 3 is measures Republican attitudes on DACA differently than Figure 2. Instead of having five categories on different attitudes, Table 3 does not provide a neutral category for participants, instead they are forced to either choose a positive or negative category in addition to asking about a pathway toward citizenship.

negative views on the pathway toward citizenship for DACA recipients would increase to 34%. When comparing this to the Democratic treatment, 51% of Republicans have positive feelings toward the citizenship pathway and 49% of Republicans have negative feelings toward the citizenship pathway. This reveals that the treatment does play a large role in changing Republican attitudes.

Overall, the major takeaway from Figure 6 table is that without the Republican treatment there is a wide range of attitudes among Republicans on increasing the DACA cap and whether DACA recipients should be given a pathway toward citizenship. When they are given the Republican treatment, participants are more likely to want to support the DACA policy. These findings show that Republican attitudes are malleable and can change by using framing theory because not all Republicans hold strong immigration beliefs.

Hypothesis 2: The Effects of Intergroup Contact Theory

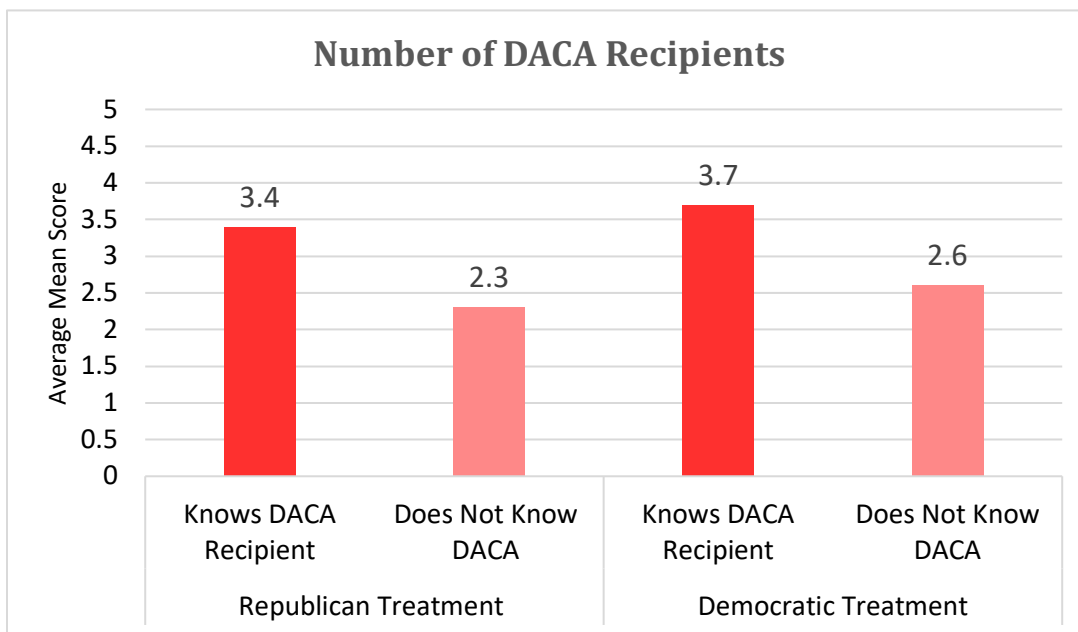
I now transition and look at the effects of knowing a DACA recipient on Republican support for DACA. I originally asked Republican participants to state whether they knew a DACA recipient. I then ran statistical tests to measure the effects.

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the effects of knowing a DACA recipient on Republican's support for DACA policies, depending on the treatment they received. I test Intergroup Contact Theory by asking Republican participants to state whether they personally know a DACA recipient to see if Rational Choice behavior changes among Republicans who state that they know a DACA Recipient. I find that of the 732 Republican participants, only 47 participants stated that they knew a DACA recipient. I

use these results to see if there is an additional effect of knowing a DACA recipient and being given the Democratic and Republican treatment.

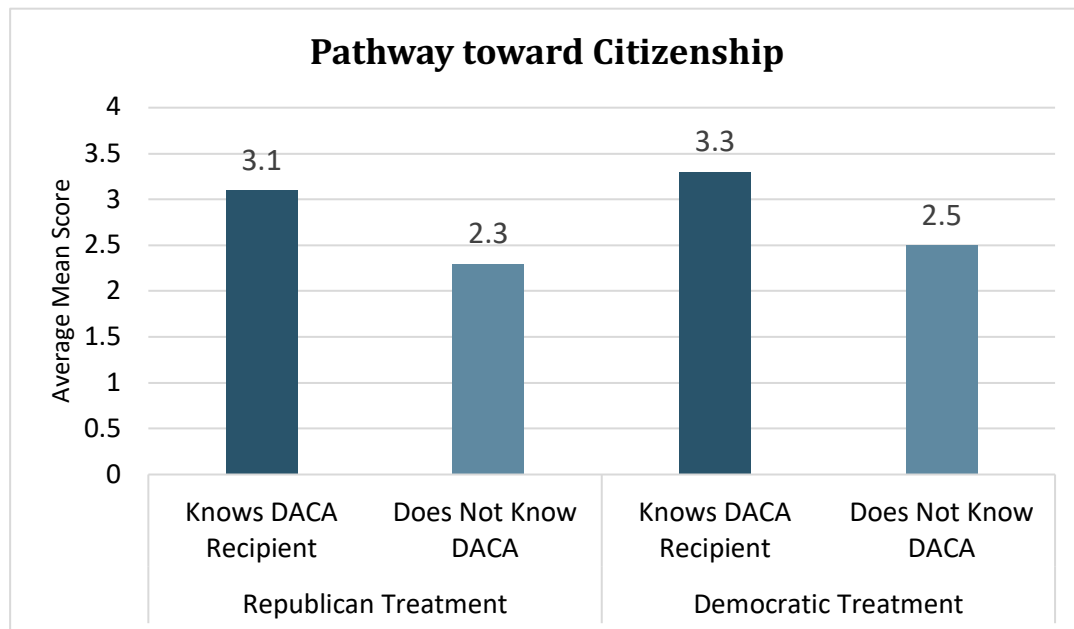
Both Figure 7 and 8 show that Republicans that know DACA recipients have higher positive starting points on their respective scales then compared to participants who do not know DACA recipients. Both figures also show that when Republicans are given the Republican treatment, they are more likely to want to increase the number of DACA recipients and create a pathway toward citizenship.

Figure 7 – The Effects of Knowing a DACA Recipient on the Cap of DACA



Note: The categories in this Figure are weighted differently and affect the size of the standard errors. When looking at the Democratic Treatment, the “Knows DACA Recipient” bar contains only 13 participants, while the “Does Not Know DACA Recipient” contains 229 participants. I am optimistic that while these small samples have large standard errors that these trends would carry over when looking at larger samples because this effect is consistent in both figures.

Figure 8 – The Effects of Knowing a DACA Recipient on Pathway to Citizenship



Note: The “Knows a DACA Recipient” bars have a much larger standard error than the “Does No Know DACA Recipient” bars. When looking at the Republican treatment, the “Knows DACA Recipient” bar only 19 participants fit this category, while the “Does Not Know DACA Recipient” bar contained 236 participants. I am optimistic that while these small samples have large standard errors that these trends would carry over when looking at larger samples because this effect is consistent in both figures.

When looking at the Republican treatment in Figure 7, I find that when a Republican knows a DACA recipient, their average response moves 1.1 points on the scale from 2.3 to 3.4. This approximates to someone moving an entire step in the response options simply for knowing a DACA recipient. In the context of the survey question, this means that Republicans that know a DACA recipient lean towards wanting to increase the number of DACA recipients, while Republicans that do not know a DACA recipient often lean on decreasing the number of DACA recipient.³¹

A similar trend is found in Figure 8. I find that when a Republican knows a DACA recipient and they are given the Republican treatment, their average response moves 0.8 points on the scale from 1- 5 this means that the average mean moves from 2.3

³¹ Appendix II, Figure 9 shows the survey question and the effects of knowing a DACA recipient in the context of the survey.

to 3.1. This approximates to someone moving an entire step in the response option simply for knowing a DACA recipient. In other words, this means that Republicans that know a DACA recipient are more likely to want to create a pathway toward citizenship compared to those that did not know a DACA recipient.

The most important takeaway from Figure 7 and 8 is that knowing a DACA recipient does affect the way Republicans responded to the survey questions, regardless of the treatment effect that they were given. These means that the largest effect on changing Republican attitudes is not coming from the treatments they were given, but rather on knowing a DACA recipient. This confirms that Intergroup theory does affect how Rational Choice Theory works when looking at Republican support toward DACA.

Statistical Significance & Power

In addition to Figures 5-8, I include Table 3- which presents four different regression columns. Column (1) presents the ATE, or average treatments with a simple regression between the treatment and the “Cap on DACA Recipients”, while column (3) presents the ATE with a simple regression between the treatment and a “Pathway toward Citizenship”. Column (2) and (4) presents the experimental results for their respective dependent variable with additional control variables.

In Table 3 column (1), the regression shows that that when a participant was given the Republican treatment, they would respond 0.252 units more positively than a participant that was given the Democratic treatment, which is statistically significant. When we place this finding in the context of the scale that participants were given, respondents would move a quarter-point on the five-point scale. In other words, if a Republican received the Democratic treatment and they chose “neither increase nor

decrease” the cap of DACA recipients, a participant with the Republican treatment would have probably chosen the “increase a little” in comparison.³² Overall this shows that the treatments presented in the survey did not drastically change political opinion on DACA, but rather persuaded Republicans to think about the electoral support they would receive if those DACA recipients supported the Republican party.

Table 3 – Regression Table on DACA

VARIABLES	(1) DACA Cap	(2) DACA Cap	(3) Citizenship	(4) Citizenship
Republican Treatment	0.252** (0.118)	0.222** (0.113)	0.189** (0.0955)	0.165* (0.0933)
Knows DACA Recipient		0.790*** (0.260)		0.674*** (0.191)
Thinks Most Immigrants Comes from Mexico		-0.204 (0.159)		-0.0520 (0.132)
Levels of Education		-0.00176 (0.0386)		0.0350 (0.0304)
White		-0.325** (0.153)		-0.148 (0.132)
Age		-0.232*** (0.0411)		-0.108*** (0.0352)
Female		-0.0622 (0.114)		0.0879 (0.0940)
Constant	2.359*** (0.0825)	4.019*** (0.260)	2.369*** (0.0667)	2.886*** (0.221)
Observations	498	497	497	496
R-squared	0.009	0.150	0.008	0.072

Notes: The Democratic treatment is the baseline category for the treatment variable.

Knows DACA Recipient: I created a binary variable coding those who thought they maybe knew a DACA and did not know a DACA recipient as 0 and those who said they knew a DACA recipient as 1.

Region Immigrants Come From: If participants said that most immigrants came from Mexico then I coded their responses as 1, while other regions were coded as 2, due to the large number of respondents that chose Mexico.

White: I created a binary variable from a categorical list of possible ethnicities, White was coded 1, and all other ethnicities were coded 0.

Female: I created a binary variable from a categorical list of possible genders. Female was coded 1 while all other genders were coded 0.

³² See appendix II, Figure 2.1

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

When comparing Table 3 column (1) to (2) one finds that the treatment coefficient decreases slightly from 0.25 to 0.22, and it continues to be at the 95% confidence interval. This is because as we add other factors such as the participant's demographics, whether they know a DACA recipients, and where they think immigrants from Mexico, the treatment effect decreases slightly.

When looking at Table 3 column (3), the regression table shows that when a participant is given the Republican treatment and no other factors are considered then there is a 5% effect. Then when looking at column (4) this change decrease to a 4% effect change. Column (4) is only marginally significant at the 90% confidence interval. In essence, this shows that while the treatment does change Republican participants responses, it does so only marginally. Unlike the DACA cap question, the effects of being given a Republican treatment on the weather DACA recipients should be given a pathway towards Citizenship is smaller than the number cap of DACA recipients.

In addition to looking at how treatments are affected by the additional factors, the "Knows DACA recipient" variable shows interesting statistical significance in both column (2) and column (4). Both columns show that when a Republican participant knows a DACA recipient, they are more likely to have a positive view on DACA policies. In column (2) when a participant knows a DACA recipient, their view increase from 0.213 to 0.73 and this is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval. What is even more surprising is that when looking at column (4), Republicans who know a DACA recipient go from 0.161 to 0.646 and this is at the 99% confidence interval. This

means that knowing a DACA recipient has a larger influence on incentivizing Republicans to want to create a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients than in increasing the cap of DACA recipients.

Conclusion

In the survey experiment, I find that Republicans that received the Republican treatment were more likely to want to increase the number of DACA recipients and more likely to want to create a pathway toward citizenship. I also find that Republicans that know a DACA recipient are more likely to support DACA policy regardless of the treatment that they received. These results show that there are important takeaways from this study that can help make sense of Republican variation on DACA.

First, messaging matters. By using framing theory, I found that Republicans attitudes toward DACA policy are malleable. This is important when considering how advocates of DACA and immigration reform should go about campaigning. Exposure to positive messages about DACA recipients can influence the way that the public perceives DACA recipients.

Second, while Rational Choice Theory does continue to play a role in how some Republicans make decisions, there are other factors that can affect Rational Choice Theory like the Intergroup Contact Theory. In fact, this study finds that the largest effects on DACA policy among Republicans is due to personal relationships with DACA recipients. This means that it is important for advocates of DACA to connect DACA recipients with Politicians, since exposure leads to changes in perception. Thus proving the effects of Intergroup Contact Theory on Rational Choice Theory.

Overall, these results suggest that although deep preferences and social norms remain difficult to change, attitudes toward DACA recipients are much more malleable, and can play a role in the future of immigration policy. This study suggests that by emphasizing certain characteristics of DACA recipients to the Republican party, attitudes among elites may change over time.

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Appendix I

Qualitative Study: Examination of Congressional Speeches

The second part of the study was a qualitative analysis on congressional speeches given between 2008-2023. I chose this time frame because I wanted to identify any trends around immigration policies before, during, and after DACA's initial implementation in 2012. Using the Congressional Record³³, I randomly sampled 85 speeches from the Obama, Trump, and Biden presidencies. I chose to sample speeches from the Congressional Record because it is the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress. Choosing to make a speech on the chamber floor is a credible signal of a congressperson's investment in the issue due to the many time-constraints they face. While they could be using that time to prepare for and make a speech on a different issue, or not make a speech at all, they are choosing to speak on this issue.

I chose to sample 85 speeches because of the vast number of DACA speeches found on the website. At the time of collection, there were more than 500 speeches on DACA. For each speech, I collected the following information:

- Political party of the speaker
- Presidency at the time the speech was given
- Ethnicity of the speaker
- Name of the speaker
- Where the speech was given (Either from the House of Representatives or Senate)
- The State the speaker represented
- Whether or not the speaker's home state bordered Mexico
- Date the speech was given
- Whether the speech included a personal story of a DACA recipient

I organized the randomized samples into the three presidencies because I wanted to capture speech behavior, during, and after the implementation of DACA. In addition to studying whether speeches are made in support of or against DACA, I also examine two additional content variables for each speech (1) whether the speech included a personal story of a DACA recipient, and (2) whether the speaker represented a state that bordered Mexico.

First, I examined whether the speech included a personal story about a DACA recipient. The purpose for investigating this variable was to test the personal connection theory to garner support among congressional speeches.

Second, I examined whether the speaker represented a state that bordered Mexico to see if there was a relationship between the number of speeches that a speaker gave and the likelihood of them being for or against speeches. In other words, I wanted to see if representing a border state made a speaker more or less likely to support DACA. I expect that congresspeople that represent border states will have increased pressure to talk about immigration-related issues.

³³ Congress.gov, "Congressional Record," accessed March 29, 2023, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record>.

Appendix II

Figure 9: Qualtrics Survey on the Number of DACA Recipients

Do you think that there should be an increase or decrease in the number of DACA recipients?

- ☐ Increase a great deal
- ☐ Increase a little
- ☐ Neither increase nor decrease
- ☐ Decrease a little
- ☐ Decrease a great deal

** Figure 2.1 is coded based on a five-point scale, where one contains the most negative feelings and five contains the most positive feelings. “Decrease a great deal” is coded 1, “Decrease a little” is coded 2, “Neither increase nor decrease” is coded 3, “Increase a little” is coded 4, and “Increase a great deal” is coded 5.

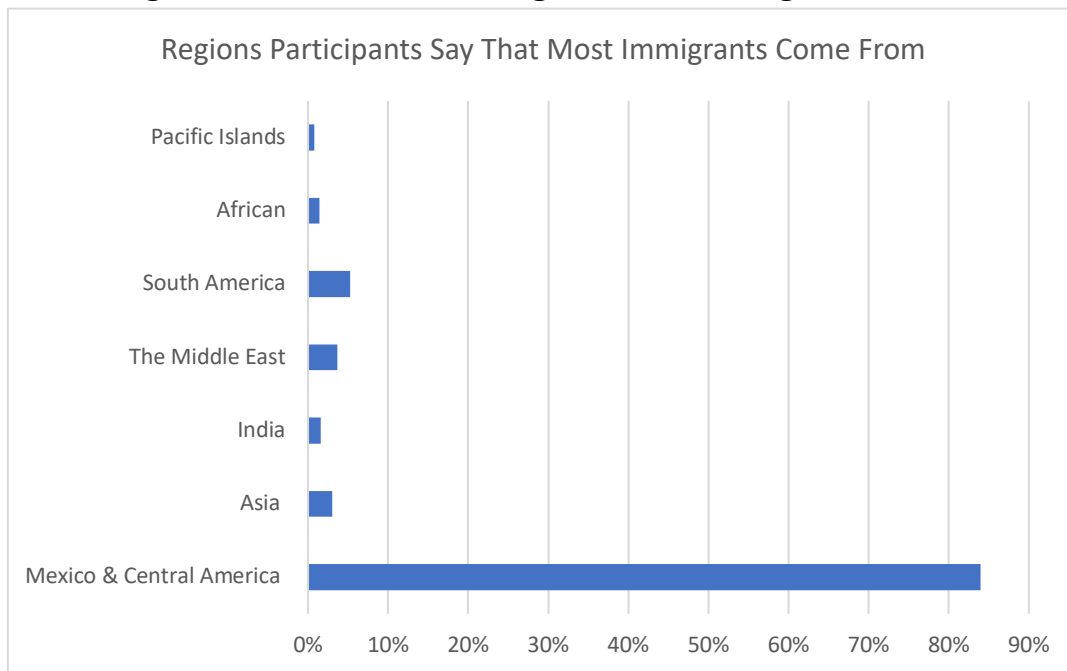
Figure 10: Question on where we should create a Pathway toward Citizenship

Do you think that DACA recipients should be given a pathway toward citizenship?

- ☐ Definitely should be given a pathway toward citizenship
- ☐ Probably should be given a pathway toward citizenship
- ☐ Probably should not be given a pathway toward citizenship
- ☐ Definitely should not be given a pathway toward citizenship

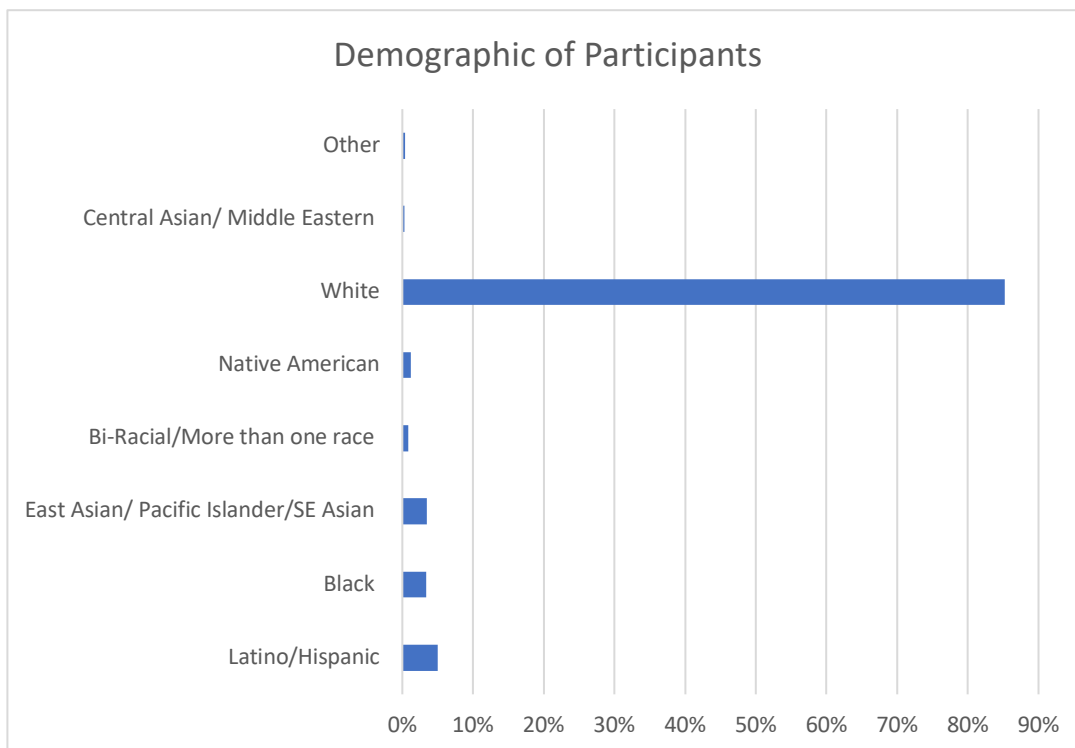
** Figure 2.2 is coded based on a four-point scale, where one contains the most negative feelings and four contains the most positive feelings. “Definitely should not be given a pathway toward citizenship” is coded 1, “Probably should not be given a pathway toward citizenship” is coded 2, “Probably should be given a pathway toward citizenship” is coded 3, and “Definitely should be given a pathway toward citizenship” is coded 4.

Figure 11 – Where Most Immigrants Are Coming From



Note: Of the 732 respondents, 615 of them said that immigrants come from Mexico while 117 said that immigrants come from other places.

Figure 12 – Demographics of Participants Who Took My Survey



Note: Of the 732 respondents, 624 identified as White and 108 identifies as other ethnicities.