

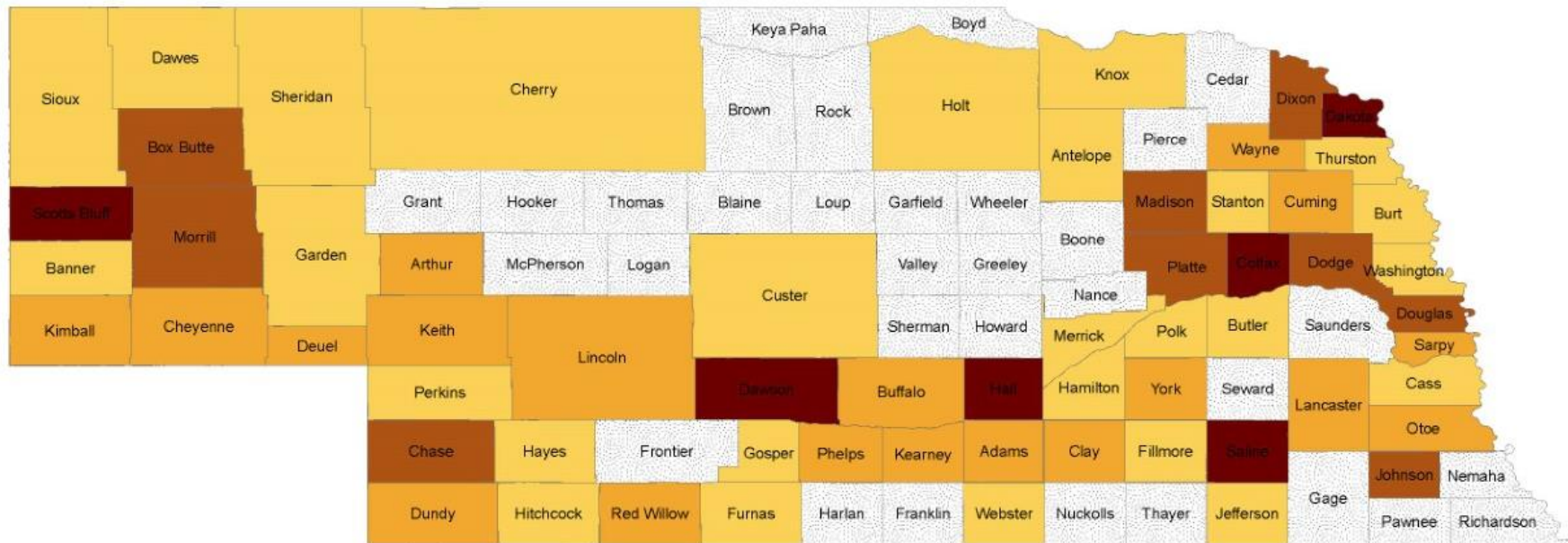
# Nebraska Dreamin': The Lives of Omaha DACA Students

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# A Brief Background of Latinos in Nebraska

- [MY] History of Latinos
  - Geography
  - Methods
  - Timeline

# Nebraska's Latino Population by Counties



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Annual Population Estimates by County 2014.

Note: An interactive distribution map of the Latino population from 1990-present can be explored at our website: [www.unomaha.edu/ollas](http://www.unomaha.edu/ollas)

# Demographics

- 2016 Nebraska Latinos 10% (in 1980 – 1.2%)

1 of every 10 Nebraskans is Latino (it was 1 in every 43 in 1990)

# Nebraska Politics

- The unicameral
- Officially non-partisan
- No Driver's license for DACA recipients until May 2015 with passage of LB 623
- April 2016 passed a bill to grant DACA recipients Professional licenses with passage of LB 947 (both over the governor's veto).

No Driver's License in Nebraska until passage of LB623, January 21, 2015

Lack of Driver's license in Nebraska, especially since it was the ONLY state in the nation with the policy, added to the unwelcome feeling and delegitimization of DACA recipients [whereas receiving DACA added to legitimization.]

# DACA – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

- Announced by the Department of Homeland Security on June of 2012
- Applicants must have arrived in the United States before 16 years of age and must have been younger than 31 when the program began on August 15, 2012
- Must have resided in the US continuously for the past 5 consecutive years
- Must attend High school or a GED program or have a high school diploma or equivalent

# DACA

- Work permit
- 2-year (renewable?) no deportation
- Social security number



# Demographics

- 7 from Mexico, 2 El Salvador, 1 Guatemala
- Age of arrival – 3 months to 11 years old
- 7 female and 3 males
- Age at time of interview – 19 to 26 years old
- 9 current and one college graduate (at time of interview)
- Most of them have younger siblings who are natural-born citizens

# The Journey

- Some came by airplane and overstayed 6 month visas, others used falsified passports or birth certificates.
- Also stories of climbing over and under barb-wire, sneaking through railroad yards and travelling only at night.
- Almost all of them came straight to Omaha (or vicinity) or their families moved here within a few months of arrival in the US.

# The Journey

- *The purpose of this line of questions was really to “warm” them up for the more important questions of identity.*

## In Their Own Words

- **“I tell people that my blood is Mexican, but my heart is American,** because the two work with each other and they would not be able to exist without one another. So, that's the best way that I can answer that question, just because, like I said, I was raised in the US, with US principals and morals, but my culture is Mexicana and they work together to create who I am”.

“My country... the one that I grew up. I feel.. I think I said this before once.. my country or my home is wherever I am with my family”

**“...which one do I belong to?... I feel like, if I could, I mean I love who I am and I love Mexico, but I wish I had papers and so I [could] feel like I'm part of America to be honest.”**

“I have mixed feelings about it like I'm proud to belong to a country where they allow you,..like they give so much more liberty like they offer more security than my home country to other people.. and it's just so it's a rich melting pot that different cultures and different people.”

**“So I feel like I’m part of America, but I’m not like.. in my mind I’m living in this imaginary. This is like a dream. Where I’m like, ‘Oh you’re imagining, like you’re not from here.’ But like I feel like am from here. I feel like it’s just a lie. I don’t know.”**

**“I feel maybe American when I just have the freedom to breath the fresh air that everyone else is breathing.. and I'm on a trip and I'm at the beach and I'm not gonna have the fear that someone is gonna come and take that away from me.”**



# Surprised by Nebraska's Conservative Reputation

- “In one of my classes in high school I was told that Nebraska was one of the most racist states in the United States, and I thought that was pretty funny because I myself never really,...saw myself being discriminated against for being Latino or for having Hispanic descent, however when I found out that Nebraska was the only state left that didn't give drivers' licenses to DACA students, or...people from DACA, I realized that there's just like so much indirect racism.”

“I know there are a lot of Republican senators who really care about us, but then I believe everything is just politics. Maybe they do care about us but their constituents, they, they’re very hard lined anti-immigration and because of that we’re not getting the support that we really deserve in the government but, in that sense I understand but then again I don’t think the Democrats are doing enough for us either, and so it’s really difficult, and, and right now I just have a very negative attitude about what the government is doing for immigrants, especially with the rhetoric that Donald Trump has been spewing all throughout his campaign and continues to do so. It just makes things worse and it doesn’t do anything for immigrants.”

## Desire to stay in Omaha, Nebraska, or the Midwest

- “I want to stay in Omaha. I think this city is amazing. It’s got everything you need. I wouldn’t want to live in a big city like Chicago or LA or anything like that, Omaha is just the perfect size. I don’t know what else I would want in a town?”

# Staying in Nebraska

- “I do plan on staying on Nebraska if it weren't for the weather... The weather is the one thing that I'm still...my skin and bones are still getting used to this weather, but beyond that absolutely. I love Nebraska, and the fact that we are helping change the political landscape and [making] it be a place that welcomes, is very enriching and I'm beyond glad that I'm able to be a part of that with dedicated individuals. So as hard as it is knowing that we are going to be at the forefront of what's happening and the change for our future families and friends...It's of course...I and I love Nebraska and Omaha in general.”

Similarities with previously published research, to illustrate the overall similarities that DACA and/or Dreamer's face across the country despite differences in geography and racial/ethnic demographics of where they live

# SIMILARITIES

- Shame for parents – stigma for Dreamers
- Importance of the Social Security Number
- Unauthorized status not real until High School (usually when applying for colleges)

# Many talked about “coming out”

- “...cause we are hiding a secret from so many people. And then you come out of the closet and it kinda feels good cause you have that identity you know?”
- “we were told to not talk about it, because again in the early 1990s there was a lot of... taboo. There was a lot of fear,..”

“In our home we weren't allow to talk about it actively with other people, because we feared persecution and deportation. So once I was able to talk about it, and **come out of the shadows**.

There's a huge influx of people that I've met that are... ‘Oh my gosh!’ It's almost like a talking point, 'you're DACA too?' ..knowing that there's other people that have...[who] share my journey in a different way it's...it's such a positive and welcoming emotion.”



# Do you feel like a criminal?

- NO (8 times)
- No, Absolutely not
- No, definitely not
  
- Yes, when I was younger (1 time)
- Well, yeah, kind of (1 time)

“I can still travel, but I now have to apply for parole. I feel like when I talk about that parole thing and like that DACA thing it makes me feel like a criminal too sometimes cause I'm like, "why do [I have to do] all these things just to go see a family member or just to go travel.”

“I didn't feel like a criminal and that's what I couldn't understand about people. Like this is my home. I didn't do anything wrong you know I had no choice.”

**“It was never my choice.”**

(this was in response to Nebraska being the last state to issue a Driver's license to DACA recipients)

# Positives???

- “I value, I don't ever take for granted what I do. And I feel like that journey wouldn't have been possible had I not had the status that I did. So it just enables me, helps me appreciate and really understand the significance of what I'm doing for myself and for my community”.

# Positives

- “I feel like I've.. I can do everything that another person can do. I just gotta work maybe twice as hard for it, but it doesn't limit me...”

# Limitations of the Current Research

- All interview subjects are successful college students [or they would not have the scholarships to pay for college]
- Circumstances will be different for non-college Dreamers, those eligible but who, for whatever reason, do not have DACA

## Directions for research

- Non DACA unauthorized youth - Since most DACA eligible did not apply, could create unDACAmented underclass (Gonzales 2014).
- Immigrant youth who came to the US as children with authorization.
- Former DACA who now have either citizenship or a greencard.

# Thank you and Gracias

- The Office of Latino and Latin American Studies (OLLAS) at UNO
- The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Dean Joseph David Boocker for an FDF (sabbatical) to do this research.
- DACA recipients, all Dreamers and all the hardworking immigrants that help make this a great country.



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