The Use of Twitter to #DefendDACA & DREAMers

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Abstract: The future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, as well as the welfare of its recipients, in the United State has become a constant feature in the news since President Trump announced his intentions to end the program in September 2017. In response, a social movement of significance was engineered utilizing social media as one of its core pillars to support the program. This study analyzes the content of tweets with the #DefendDACA hashtag, tweeted within 30 days of Trump's initial announcement, in order to understand the intersection of digital activism and DACA, including functions, purpose, and tone. Results from the analysis found tweets primarily centered on call-to-action, asking participants to defend DACA. Tweets also disseminated vital information, particularly with a positive tone. These findings aid in explaining the movement's strength.

Keywords: Digital activism, DACA, DREAMers, Twitter, social media, digital media.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is an Obama-era program that prevented eligible young undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. when they were children (under the age of 16 at time of arrival and had lived in the U.S. as of 15 June 2007) from deportation. On September 5, 2017, the Trump administration announced the end of DACA, citing President Barack Obama's executive order as an 'open-ended circumvention of immigration laws was an unconstitutional exercise of authority by the Executive Branch' (Sessions, 2017). The renouncement generated a wave of anxiety and fear around the country as the program's recipients, DREAMers, realized their status and presence in the U.S. were at risk. Scholars have hypothesized that a complete repeal of DACA without a permanent solution would have dire consequences. For example, recipients could lose their work permits, impacting formal employment, which would then affect their ability to afford higher education (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Martinez & Salazar, 2018). Feelings of anger and shock permeated throughout communities where undocumented immigrants lived and organizations serving DACA programs operated (Uwemedimo et al., 2017). The end of DACA generated a deep economic impact across the nation (Stone, 2017; Svajlenka et al., 2017). The renouncement also generated commentary on social media, particularly on Twitter, where DACA recipients and supporters utilized the hashtag #DefendDACA to express their disdain, share their stories, and highlight the U.S. as the only home they knew.

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In times where social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are under extreme scrutiny for data breaches (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018; Kushwah & Verma, 2021; Tromble, 2021) and intervention of bots and trolls in elections (Boichak et al., 2021; McGill, 2016; Nonnecke et al., 2021), the examination of discourse on social media seems both timely and all the more relevant because the movement that begun in social media later found an expression out on the streets (O'Connor, 2017). The use of the #DefendDACA hashtag among DREAMers and its supporters creates an opportunity to examine the use of Twitter for digital activism. It is hard to establish the precise contribution of social media and the internet to collective action, but it is clear that, to some degree, they facilitate and support traditional ways of offline activism through the distribution of information, or calls to action (Boulianne, 2015; Skoric et al., 2016; Svajlenka et al., 2017; Valenzuela, 2013; Valenzuela et al., 2012; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). The purpose of the current study is to examine the tweets surrounding the initial renouncement of DACA that utilized the #DefendDACA hashtag, as well as the tone of the tweets and the differences and similarities between those who tweeted. To address these questions, the researchers employed the lens of digital activism to analyze 1,550 tweets that were tweeted in a 30-day period following the 5 September 2017 renouncement of DACA by the Trump administration.

Background

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program

In June 2012, by executive order, Obama signed DACA into federal law. The primary objective of the order was to provide temporary, but renewable, deportation relief for children of undocumented immigrants (Mayorkas, 2012). Obama's executive order was in response to a long and tumultuous battle by immigrants and immigrant rights activists demanding immigration reform (Abrego, 2018). In 2010, activists and politicians were pushing for both Comprehensive Immigration Reform and the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act (Nicholls, 2013; Unzueta Carrasco & Seif, 2014). Only the latter made it to Congress for a vote, which failed by a small margin in December 2010.

DACA has provided many educational benefits to almost 800,000 individuals since its inception (Abrego, 2018). DACA has not only afforded recipients the opportunity for higher education (Hooker et al., 2015), but research has also found DACA recipients to place a more significant value on higher education (Kevane & Schmalzbauer, 2016). The program has promoted civic engagement in local communities (Wong & Valdivia, 2014) and motivated recipients to avoid any unlawful or illicit behavior, as doing so would jeopardize their DACA status (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018). Research has argued that, for DACA recipients, higher educational institutions, coupled with social justice organizations and cultural programs, promote the development of youth activists through the fostering of oppositional consciousness (Martinez & Salazar, 2018).

In a similar fashion, DACA has contributed to economic development through employment opportunities, affordable health insurance, and access to bank accounts and credit cards (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Gonzales et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2013). Many DACA recipients experience stressful financial situations or household poverty, and the ability to gain employment through the program reduced the level of economic stress (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018). Along the rest of the population, gender identity is a barrier to DREAMers. Undocumented queer immigrants, referred to as *undocuqueer*, continue to encounter difficulties regarding family acceptance and encounter employment discrimination (Cisneros & Bracho, 2019).

Moreover, most of the research on DACA, both academic and pragmatic, explicitly showcase its educational and economic successes. However, there are also studies that highlight the legal ramifications for recipients and their families. The instability of DACA has threatened recipients and their family members who were often of mixed immigration status. Abrego (2018) highlighted negative consequences and limitations associated with DACA. "Having access to new resources and possibilities emphasized for recipients the family's internal stratification as some members still lacked protections" (Abrego, 2018, p. 14).

On 15 August 2017, just a few days before Trump's announcement, immigrants' rights advocates and DREAMers organized protests and rallies in 40 cities across the United States demanding lawmakers to uphold DACA. As part of this movement, the #DefendDACA hashtag, among others, was used to disseminate information and as a call to action (Conley, 2017; Johnson, 2017). Several lawsuits were filed against the Trump administration immediately following DACA's termination. The Trump administration immediately petitioned the Supreme Court for review and the court agreed. On 18 June 2020, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the way in which DACA was rescinded by the Trump administration was unlawful, restoring the program completely. The ruling, however, left open the possibility for the Trump administration to end DACA in the future, provided they give proper justification.

Therefore, the goal of the current study is to examine the social media engagement around the initial termination of the Program in 2017. This was when the hashtag #DefendDACA was created and went viral. Examining tweets surrounding this decision and timeframe will help understand the ways in which digital activism was employed by both proponents and opponents of DACA.

Literature Review

Digital Activism

The process of citizens using digital tools to affect social and political change is known as digital activism, cyber activism, or e-activism (Amin, 2010). Digital activism has been used to address political, social, and religious inequities and injustices all around the world, modifying the ways in which media is used to capture information and disseminate it to global citizens (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015).

In recent years, social media has played a more critical role within grassroots social movements and protests (Calvo, 2015; Howard & Hussain, 2011; Young et al., 2019). The interconnectedness and mass number of users on social media facilitates the development of large social movements (Marwell & Oliver, 1993). Movements on social media help mobilize and organize protests (Raynauld et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2020). Many of these social movements, such as Occupy Wall Street and Spain's Indignados, have relied heavily on social media and the internet to coordinate their activities to promote and support their development (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Social media expands the potential of these movements (Hopke, 2012) and allows users to reach broader audiences with whom they establish a connection (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Digital media, and the social movements generated and fostered on these platforms, have significantly contributed to promoting political activism (Howard et al., 2012).

When young adults are involved in social movements on digital media, specifically, young activists become more critically involved in political participation (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Owen, 2006; Park et al., 2009; Raynes-Goldie & Walke, 2008; Valenzuela et al., 2012). Young people are more likely to engage in protests if they participate in these sites (Dalton et al., 2010;

Maher & Earl, 2019). In Chile, Scherman et al. (2012) found that online platforms were significantly influential on political participation. Similar results were found across countries (Bakker & de Vreese, 2011).

The most optimistic scholars argue that democracy could be revitalized through participation in social activism — people who would not, otherwise, take part in political conversations (Bekkers et al., 2011; Copeland & Römmele, 2014; Raynauld & Greenberg, 2014). Social media have contributed to the erosion of political power from large media trusts and stakeholders through a process of segmentation and decentralization (Gibson, 2015; Kavada, 2015; Raynauld, 2014; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). Social media provide people with different social and political concerns, thus increasing the flow of information among participants (Neuman et al., 2011; Theocharis et al., 2015; Turcotte & Raynauld, 2014). Social media also facilitates the organization of people who care about similar issues (Bimber et al., 2012; Shirky, 2008; Tye et al., 2018).

Digital activism has been criticized for its lack of physical action (Cabrera et al., 2017; Gladwell, 2010) and for little political or social impact (Morozov, 2009; Stekelenburg et al., 2013; Vissers & Stolle, 2013). Others have argued that it diverts attention away from the more genuine types of collective action (Dean, 2005; White, 2010). Nonetheless, digital activism continues to be utilized by millions of minorities and grassroots movements. Hence, this paper will examine the primary and secondary functions (purpose) of tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag to understand how DREAMers and their supporters organized online as a reaction to the Trump's Administration announcement of the end of DACA.

Twitter and Immigration

One platform in particular that has been extensively utilized and studied for digital activism is Twitter. Valenzuela et al. (2018) explored the effectiveness of Twitter on weak-tie networks and the political participation of young people in Chile. People who belong to a social network site can stay informed of the group's activities, exchange timely information, and thus increase their opportunity for activism (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). Social media also promote, largely, socialization and interaction with family, friends, and peers (Valenzuela et al., 2012).

One of the many forms of digital activism Twitter has been utilized for is that of immigration reform. Activists and DREAMers have harnessed the power of networked communication to advocate for social and civil rights. Twitter has been used as a means to facilitate, motivate, and supplement on-the-ground organizing (Zimmerman, 2016).

Harlow and Guo (2014) used Twitter and Facebook to examine how activists, rather than undocumented immigrants themselves, employ the social media platforms in activism. Twitter was used to generate public awareness on issues of immigration, recruitment, and mobilization, and to coordinate actions both online and offline. Research has also shown Twitter to be a site of political intervention on behalf of nonprofit organizations (NGOs). Li et al. (2018) examined tweets by, and conducted interviews with, immigrant-focused NGOs post the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. The NGOs used Twitter to disseminate information on immigration-related issues and policies, recruit participation to influence political change, and engage in conversations with external stakeholders.

Zimmerman (2016) uses the term transmedia testimonio to describe "a personal narrative that represents a collective experience, and that is shared across various media platforms," in which undocumented youth activists reveal their legal status, provide accounts of their immigration experiences, and document their participation in civil disobedience (p. 1887). Declarations are strategically made through social media in the form of videos and podcasts and supplement of

physical real-word protests and meetings. Transmedia testimonios are not separate from other forms of activism and are a form of political agency used "as a way for undocumented students to participate in counter public spaces where they can invent and circulate discourses and formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Zimmerman, 2016, p. 1887).

This paper does not limit the analysis to only DREAMers and other undocumented individuals but extends it to anyone and everyone who utilized the #DefendDACA hashtag on Twitter. These individuals may be undocumented, allies, or opponents of DACA. As previous research has documented, a Latino cyber-moral panic promotes "dehumanization, discrimination, oppression, and racial profiling of all Latinos who live in the U.S." (Flores-Yeffal et al., 2011, p. 583). Therefore, there may be adverse sentiment toward #DefendDACA expressed on social media. Digital activism encompasses all participants in a given digital space. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look at social movements through the voice of actual immigrants. Utilizing the theoretical lenses of digital activism, as well as guidance by transmedia testimonios, we offer the following research questions:

RQ1. What were the primary functions of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag?
RQ2. What were the secondary functions of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag?
RQ3. What was the tone of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag?
RQ4. Were there differences between users' purpose in the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag?

Method

To examine the content generated by #DefendDACA tweeters after the Trump administration announced it was going to end the program, a content analysis was conducted. The sample was selected in a two-step process. First, all the tweets with at least one #DefendDACA hashtag tweeted between 5 September 2017 (the day the Trump administration announced the end of DACA) and 5 October 2017 (30 days after the announcement) were collected. A total of 116,349 tweets were collected during this process. Second, following Raynauld et al. (2018) the sample was narrowed by randomly selecting 50 tweets posted on each day. A total of 1550 was selected from the total to analyze for the present study.

All tweets containing the #DefendDACA hashtag were collected via Tweet Archivist, a web-based Twitter analytics platform that has been used by other scholars studying political communication and participation via Twitter (Boynton et al., 2014; Croeser & Highfield, 2014; Raynauld et al., 2016, 2018). Tweet Archivist is used to search, archive, analyze, visualize, and export tweets based on a search term or #hashtag. Hashtags have been used to collect tweets by several scholars researching digital activism (Dubois & Ford, 2015; Gruzd & Roy, 2014; Harlow & Benbrook, 2019). Tweet Archivist does not have access to the historical records of all tweets ever tweeted. Rather, tweets need to be collected in real time through their platform, but once the collection starts, they assure that all tweets related to a keyword, phrase or a hashtag will be collected (Tweet Archivist, n.d.). Upon activation, Tweet Archivist collected Twitter content with the #DefendDACA hashtag, creating a database of content specific that was then downloaded into a Microsoft Excel file.

Coding Instrument

Tweet Archivist automatically assigns an ID number to each tweet, and that number was used to identify each tweet — the unit of analysis. Each tweet was coded for the primary and secondary function of the tweet (information/dissemination, call to action/mobilization, consequences, coming out, attacks, accolades, others), tone of the tweet, original tweet or retweet, hashtags used, hyperlinks used, mentions, date and who posted the tweet. The codebook was developed considering recent studies on digital activism on Twitter (Agarwal et al., 2014; Raynauld et al., 2016, 2018; Valenzuela et al., 2012).

Coder Training and Intercoder Reliability

This study calculates Krippendorff's alpha to determine the degree of agreement among coders. The floor for intercoder reliability was set at .8 — the level that is largely considered acceptable in mass communication research for non-exploratory content analysis (Lombard et al., 2002). Three coders participated in a training session and then independently coded 10% of the sample for intercoder reliability testing. All of them worked independently. A timeline was given to each coder to promote a prompt completion.

Every tweet analyzed was coded for eleven variables: primary function (Krippendorff's α was 0.811), secondary (Krippendorff's α was 0.825), tone (Krippendorff's α was 0.867), original tweet or retweet (Krippendorff's α was 1), date (Krippendorff's α was 1), presence of hashtags (Krippendorff's α was 0.825), amount of hashtags used (Krippendorff's α was 0.871), presence of hyperlinks (Krippendorff's α was 0.822), use of hyperlinks (Krippendorff's α was 0.842), mentions in tweets (Krippendorff's α was 0.912), and who posted the tweet (Krippendorff's α was 1).

Findings

The content analysis of the sample of 1,550 tweets between 5 September and 5 October 2017, revealed reoccurring trends in the tweets utilizing the #DefendDACA hashtag. The majority of the tweets (62.6%) that contained #DefendDACA also included other hashtags, between zero (not counting #DefendDACA) and 11. In descending order, tweets had only one (23%), followed by two hashtags (21.5%), four hashtags (7.9%), three hashtags (4.4%), five hashtags (2%), and six or more hashtags (3.9%). A total of 2,381 hashtags were used and 423 were unique, including #DACA (287 mentions), #HereToStay (273 mentions), #DREAMers (188 mentions), #CleanDreamAct (150 mentions), #DefendDREAMers (93 mentions), and #TheResistance (66 mentions).

Tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag also included hyperlinks, making up 34% of the sample coded. These hyperlinks pointed to a variety of media platforms, including social media (14.7%), news media websites (6.2%), online petition websites (5.7%), advocacy groups (4.3%), and others (3.1%). Most of the sampled tweets were retweets (74.5%). Additionally, 28.5% of the tweets utilized the @mention function. Mentions included mostly politicians, activists, immigrant organizations, and citizen supporters. The profiles that got the greatest number of mentions were @realDonaldTrump (34 mentions), @NancyPelosi (33 mentions), @ SenSchumer (30 mentions), @SteveKnight25 (19 mentions), @CREDOMobile (17 mentions), @RepMimiWalters (16 mentions), @DarrellIssa and @HurdOnTheHill (14 mentions), @RepEdRoyce and @SpeakerRyan (13 mentions), and @happyhippiefdn and @womensmarch (10 mentions).

RQ1 inquired about the primary functions – information/dissemination, call to action/mobilization, consequences, coming out or attacks – of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag. The three primary functions of the tweets were call to action or mobilization, dissemination of information, and consequences (see Table 1).

Table 1
Primary Function of the @DefendDACA tweets

Primary function	*Frequency*	*%*
Call to action/mobilization	767	49.5
Dissemination of information	511	33
Consequences	167	10.8
Unclear	71	4.6
Accolades	16	1
Coming out	10	0.6
Attacks	8	0.5
	1550	100

Data revealed that the most important primary function of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag was to call participants to take action to either defend or attack DACA; 49.5% of them were in this category. Examples of tweets whose primary function was to call to action or mobilization included:

- A user tweeted: 'Sign the petition, #DefendDACA and #TPS. https://t.co/R2mCZCd82Q.'
- Organizations tweeted and retweeted: 'Swipe left for 3 ways to #DefendDACA. #signofresistance #defenddreamers #heretostay https://t.co/XY01YE76ca'
- An activist tweeted: 'Rally 2 #DefendDACA 9/11/17 @ 9am Statehouse in Topeka. Bring a sign!! They need us/We them. RSVP below… https://t.co/bAceksooen.'

The second most important function of these tweets was to disseminate information among participants; 33% of them were in this category. Examples of tweets whose primary function was to disseminate information included:

- A user tweeted: 'this account stands with immigrant families who worked hard to be in US and to the children on the DACA program. https://t.co/BLtTJCyals'
- And many activist organizations retweeted a popular singer: 'They should be free to laugh and live without walls, borders, bans or repeals #DefendDACA #IStandWithTheDreamers #DACA.'

In third place, 10.8%, were the tweets that alerted participants to the consequences of eliminating DACA. Among these tweets, some examples became viral:

- A DREAMer tweeted: 'I paid $400,000 in taxes last year and all I got was a free trip back to Slovakia#DefendDACA.'

- A user tweeted: 'Illinois can't afford to lose DACA. Ending DACA would cost the state $2.2 billion in annual GDP loss. #DefendDACA;' and a politician similarly tweeted 'Colorado can't afford to lose its 17,000 DREAMers. Ending DACA would cost the state $850 million in annual GDP. #DefendDACA'

Finally, a small percentage of the tweets, 1%, were dedicated to congratulating or acknowledge the support or endorsement of famous artists and only .5% of the tweets, 8 out of 1550 tweets, were dedicated to negatively attack DACA. An example of an attack tweet is one is '!!I refuse to #DefendDACA There are too many Americans with dreams that are neglected. #AmericanKidsHaveDreamsToo.'

RQ2 asked about the secondary functions of the tweets using the #DefendDACA hashtag. Results indicated that information dissemination was the most used secondary function, 58.1% of them were dedicated to informing participants about DACA. On the other hand, 24.4% of the tweets did not seem to have a clear secondary motive, while 14.5% called participants to take action to either support of reject DACA and only 1.8% of the tweets' secondary functions were dedicated to note some of the consequences from rejecting DACA (See Table 2).

Table 2
Secondary Function of the @DefendDACA tweets

Secondary function	Frequency	%
Dissemination of information	901	58.1
Unclear	378	24.4
Call to action/mobilization	224	14.5
Consequences	28	0.6
Accolades	10	1
Coming out	7	0.5
Attacks	2	0.1
Total	1550	100

RQ3 asked about the tone of the tweets that used the #DefendDACA hashtag. Most of the tweets, 93.3% of them, had a positive tone towards DACA. In 4.8% of the tweets the tone was unclear while in .8% of them the tone was negative.

RQ4 inquired about whether there were differences between different types of users regarding the purpose of tweeting. A large number (61.1%) of tweeters were individuals who were concerned with the future of DACA. On the other hand, 8.3% of the tweets were posted anonymously and 14.9% were posted by users whose accounts have been suspended or do no longer exist. Together, these participants posted 84.3% of the total number of tweets. Moreover, organizations, other than news organizations, posted 5.5% of the tweets. Immigrant organizations were responsible for 3.4% of the tweets.

Tweeters and Primary Purpose of Tweet

Individuals supporting DACA posted 51.5% of their tweets with the primary purpose of calling participants to take action, to get involved. While 31.4% of the time they posted tweets to disseminate information about DACA. On the other hand, 12.2% of the postings were to call

attention to the potential socioeconomic consequences of revoking DACA. The remaining 4.9% were dedicated to other purposes.

Of those who posted their tweets anonymously, 49.2% of them called on participants to take action, to get involved. On the other hand, 35.2% posted their tweets to disseminate information and 10.2% called the participants' attention to the possible consequences of rejecting DACA. The reminding 5.5% of tweets were dedicated to other primary sources.

From those tweets posted by participants whose accounts cannot be verified, 45.9% of the tweets call participants into action, 34.2% disseminated information, 12.1% highlighting consequences for the end of DACA, and 6.1% were posted without a clear primary purpose. The reminding 1.7% of the postings' purposes are divided into less relevant categories.

Tweets posted by immigrant organizations were in its majority about some type of call to action (67.3%), disseminating information (21.2%) or highlighting the consequences of the elimination of DACA (7.7%). Journalists, news organizations and other organizations focused mostly on disseminating information. Tweets posted by organizations had mostly the purpose of dissemination of information (48.2%), call to action (41.2%), or highlight consequences of the elimination of DACA (5.9%). Journalists and news organizations posted information about the program (50%), calls to action (45.5%), and consequences for the end of DACA (4.5%).

Tweeters and Secondary Purpose of the Tweet

Individual participants supporting DACA posted 61.7% of their tweets with the secondary purpose of disseminating information about DACA; whereas 24.6% of the tweets are of unclear purpose, and 12.1% were posted to call participants into action. The remaining 1.6% is divided into .8% noting potential consequences and the rest into other categories.

Anonymous participants posted 59.4% of their tweets to disseminate information; 18.8% posted to call participants intro action and 18% were of unclear secondary purpose. The reminding 3.9% was divided among accolades (2.3%), consequences of revoking DACA (.8%), and coming out as a DREAMer (.8%).

Postings from those individuals whose accounts could not be verified revealed that the secondary purpose of their tweets was to disseminate information (53.2%) or call into action and the rest for accolades (17.7%). However, there was an important number of tweets with unclear secondary purpose (23.4%). The secondary purposed of tweets posted by immigrant organizations was mostly to disseminate information (65.4%), some type of call to action (9.6%), or highlighting the consequences of the elimination of DACA (9.6%). In this category, there was also an number of tweets with unclear secondary purpose (15.4%).

Tweets posted by journalists and news organizations had mostly the secondary purpose of dissemination of information (45.5%) or call to action (13.6%), also in this category a good number of tweets with unclear secondary purpose was present (36.4%). Other organizations posted tweets with a secondary purpose of disseminating information (47.1%), calls to action (25.9%), consequences for the end of DACA (3.5%), and coming out as an undocumented immigrant (1.2%). This was also a category with an important number of tweets with unclear secondary purpose (21.2%).

Discussion

Digital technology and social media are transforming how grassroots movements, such as #DefendDACA, can organize and disseminate information, and even influence media coverage. Young people, in particular, are attracted by social media and their structures and modes of interaction foster some of the conditions needed to build social movements (Bennett, 2008; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Dalton et al., 2010; Shen et al., 2020).

The current study examined the primary purpose of the tweets containing the #DefendDACA hashtag following the renouncement of DACA on 5 September 2017. It also examined the tone of the tweets and the differences and similarities between those who tweeted. Results indicated the most important primary function of the tweets was to call participants into action and supplement on-the-ground organizing as found in previous movements (Zimmerman, 2016). The hashtag itself, is a call to defend the program. Tweets asked citizens to protest and call lawmakers and almost 30% of the tweets directly mentioned politicians, asking them to vote and intervene on behalf of DREAMers. As with previous social movements, social media not only help mobilize and organize but also force formal political actors to acknowledge their presence (Raynauld et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2020). The most important secondary function was to disseminate information about DACA, primarily educating the public on the program. These findings align with previous research that online activism facilitates and supports traditional ways of offline activism through the distribution of information and calls to action (Boulianne, 2015; Skoric et al., 2016; Valenzuela, 2013; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). In the case of DACA, the findings evidence that both functions go hand-in-hand. Proponents of DACA educated Twitter users about the program, its recipient (the DREAMers), and its economic impact in hopes that they would in-turn defend the program.

The tone used in most of the tweets using #DefendDACA were positive, evidencing this was a hashtag created and disseminated by DREAMers and immigrant activists. When taken in conjunction with the findings of disseminating information, the tweets highlighted the many positive benefits of the DACA program, which is also aligned with previous research on the benefits of the program in regards to education (Abrego, 2018; Hooker et al., 2015; Kevane & Schmalzbauer, 2016), civic engagement (Wong & Valdivia, 2014), the avoidance of illegal activities (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018), and the economy (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018; Gonzales et al., 2014; Martinez & Salazar, 2018; Wong et al., 2013). What this study adds to this previous research is the use of tweets to emphasize the consequences of terminating DACA. Almost 11% of the tweets warned of the impact on the economy and national workforce, as well as underscored the humanitarian and ethical ramifications on DREAMers themselves. There were very few negative-valenced tweets that used #DefendDACA. Rationale for this could be attributed to the wording of the hashtag itself, it stresses defense of the program. Opponents of the program used the hashtags #DefundDACA and #DACAshame, among others. Future research should also examine the counter-position.

Above and beyond policy outcomes, it would be interesting to further explore the impact that social media have in promoting other social movements and to what extent this question will continue to be relevant in the academic analysis of social movements. Nonetheless, the findings from the study reinforce the importance of social media and hashtags, particularly on Twitter, in digital activism surrounding a specific national event as demonstrated in previous research. Twitter continues to be used as a space to encourage political participation (Gil de Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Valenzuela et al., 2018), immigration reform (Zimmerman, 2016), and provide outlets and interventions for activists (Harlow & Guo, 2014) and NGOs (Li et al., 2018). Whereas a previous

Latino cyber-moral panic has promoted a 'dehumanization, discrimination, oppression, and racial profiling of all Latinos who currently live in the United States,' (Flores-Yeffal et al., 2011, p. 15), this study highlights the use of #DefendDACA to humanize, indiscriminate, support, and contextualize immigrants, many of whom are Latinos.

The findings from this study have broader global implications. The study evidences social media, particularly Twitter, as a space for fostering not only civil discourse and activism, but also empathy and humanization. It provides academics and governing bodies a better understanding of the effects of policy on migrants' lived experiences, safety, and well-being. The study also highlights that online social movements are not monolithic, but rather intersectional and encompass call-to-actions, education, affect, and humanity. Polices similar to DACA in other global regions are most likely just as litigious and the implications of their cessation should be viewed in regard to economic and humanitarian implications. The hashtag #DefendDACA demonstrated such implications in the voice of those directly affected by the policy. Previous studies highlight immigrant social justice movements on social media instigated by activists and NGO's online (Harlow & Guo, 2014; Li et al., 2018), whereas this study's findings highlight personal narratives from immigrants themselves on social media, very similar to transmedia testimonios (see Zimmerman, 2019), in addition to activists.

The movement to #DefendDACA has built its own momentum and will continue to be of both political and social importance as its stability continues to be in limbo. At the time of writing, the Biden administration introduced a new proposal under the Build Back Better Plan to preserve aspects of DACA, however, many legislatures and government bodies continue to argue for congressional action on the policy. Immigration continues to be an enduring and salient issue not only the U.S., but in the world at-large. The current study highlights the weight that Twitter, and its hashtags, have on social justice issues. Social media continue to instigate action and influence political mobilization in physical-tangible spaces.

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