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Role of High Schools in Undocumented Students' College Choice

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Abstract: In recent years, some states in the United States have enacted policies that grant some higher education benefits—primarily in-state resident tuition eligibility—to certain undocumented students. While in existence since 2001, little is known of the role of high school institutional agents in implementing such policies. This study describes the efforts of seven New York City high schools to educate their undocumented students about such educational benefits within their college choice process. It details five categories of activities that institutional agents developed to address undocumented students' college choice needs. These college choice activities included: one-on-one counseling, presentations, outreach, scholarship, and curriculum. This study also examined the effects of institutional demographics on the process of educating undocumented students about their college choice. It discovered that those high schools that had higher percentages of undocumented students had a greater number of college choice activities and had organized their implementation in such a way as to make information more available to this student population. This article concludes with a section that is devoted to implications for research and practice.

Keywords: college choice, undocumented immigrants, institutional agents, high schools, educational environment.

Papel de las escuelas secundarias de elegir la universidad a los estudiantes indocumentados

Resumen: En los últimos años, algunos estados de los Estados Unidos han promulgado políticas que otorgan algunos beneficios a ciertos estudiantes indocumentados en relación a la matrícula de educación superior, principalmente en el estado de residencia. Si bien existen desde 2001, se sabe poco sobre el papel de los agentes institucionales que actúan en escuelas secundarias para implementar dichas políticas. Este estudio describe los esfuerzos de siete escuelas secundarias en la ciudad de Nueva York para informar a sus estudiantes indocumentados sobre dichos beneficios educativos dentro de los procesos de selección de estudios universitarios. Se detallan cinco categorías de actividades que desarrollan los agentes institucionales para hacer frente a las necesidades de los estudiantes indocumentados para la selección de universidades. Estas actividades incluyen: asesoramiento individual, presentaciones, promoción, becas y planes de estudio. Este estudio también examinó los efectos de aspectos demográficos institucionales en el proceso de informar a los estudiantes indocumentados sobre cómo seleccionar universidades. Se descubrió que las escuelas que tenían un mayor porcentaje de estudiantes indocumentados tenían un mayor número de actividades para escoger universidades y que habían organizado su aplicación de una manera tal como para hacer la información más accesible a la población estudiantil. Este artículo concluye con una sección que se dedica a las implicaciones para la investigación y la práctica.

Palabras clave: selección universitaria; inmigrantes indocumentados; agentes institucionales; escuelas secundarias; entorno educativo.

Papel das escolas secundárias de escolher a universidade para estudantes indocumentados

Resumo: Nos últimos anos, alguns estados dos EUA aprovaram políticas que dão alguns benefícios a alguns estudantes indocumentados sobre ensino superior, principalmente nos estado de residência. Embora existam desde 2001, pouco se sabe sobre o papel dos atores institucionais que operam em escolas secundárias para implementar essas políticas. Este estudo descreve os esforços de sete escolas de ensino médio na cidade de Nova York para informar os estudantes indocumentados em tais benefícios educacionais no processo de seleção da faculdade. Cinco categorias de atividades se desenvolveram com os atores institucionais para atender às necessidades dos estudantes indocumentados para informar sobre os processos de seleção de universidade. Essas atividades foram: aconselhamento individual, apresentações, promoção, bolsas de estudo e currículo. Este estudo também analisou os efeitos das demografia institucionais no processo de elaboração de programas de informação para os estudantes indocumentados. Verificou-se que as escolas com uma percentagem mais elevada de estudantes indocumentados teve um maior número de atividades para informar sobre como escolher universidades e organizavam a informação de forma mais acessível para a população estudiantil. Este artigo conclui com uma seção dedicada às implicações para a pesquisa e a prática.

Palavras-chave: seleção da faculdade; imigrantes indocumentados, agentes institucionais; escolas secundárias ambiente educacional.

Introduction¹

An estimated 65,000 undocumented students² graduate from high school each year in the United States (Passel, 2003). Some, if not many of these students may desire postsecondary education, yet do not enroll in college because of the many challenges that lay before them as undocumented immigrants. In response, to date, 19 states have begun to address the issue of college access for students without documentation by passing policies to extend some postsecondary education benefits to this population—mostly in the form of in-state tuition rates. In 2002, New York became the fourth state to pass such a policy. Currently, the approximate number of undocumented students that graduate from a New York high school each year is 3,627; however, only about half (1,777) enroll in a public higher education institution (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012). There is little research exploring the role of secondary schools in relation to this disparity or undocumented students' college access more generally (Rodríguez & Cruz, 2009). This study investigated how high school staff in seven New York City (NYC) high schools educated their undocumented students about their rights to in-state college tuition specifically and the college enrollment process more generally. This investigation also describes how institutional demographics shaped this process.

Immigrants Without Documentation and Their Educational Attainment

Undocumented immigrants are individuals who are not United States citizens, do not hold current permanent resident visas, and have not been granted admission under rules for longer-term residence and work permits (Passel & Cohn, 2010). It is estimated that nearly 12 million undocumented immigrants currently reside in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Undocumented students enrolled in this country's K-12 public education system make up a sizeable population estimated at 2 million (Congressional Budget Office, 2007). In the United States, education is the gateway to prosperity and for undocumented youth, it is often the only means available to raise themselves and their families out of poverty. However, for undocumented youth and their families, educational attainment presents a number of unique challenges. Nearly half (47%) of undocumented students in the United States do not complete high school (Author's calculations using Passel & Cohn, 2009). In comparison, for documented youth, the number of students who do not graduate from high school is 22%, and for U.S. born students, the rate of high school drop out is 8% (Author's calculations using Passel & Cohn, 2009). Further, only 25% of undocumented immigrants enroll in college compared to 53% of documented immigrants and 62% of individuals born in the United States (Author's calculations using Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Policies That Affect the Educational Attainment of Undocumented Immigrants

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² The terms undocumented students and students without documentation are used interchangeably. Similarly, undocumented immigrants and immigrants without documentation are used interchangeably.

Since the 1970s at the federal level and more recently at the state level, different policymaking bodies have grappled with what, if any, educational rights and assistance students without documentation should be afforded. Following is a brief synopsis of federal and state policies regarding the education of immigrants without documentation.

Federal Policy

The historic 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* ensures free elementary and secondary public education for all undocumented immigrants (Olivas, 2012a). The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 ruling, essentially extended the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to undocumented immigrant children. Writing for the Court, former Justice Brennan noted that it was undocumented parents, not their children, who chose to come to the United States, and thus, their children should not be punished for a decision beyond their control. Additionally, the majority decision emphasized that the denial of a basic education disengaged undocumented children from society.

[B]y denying these children a basic education, we deny them the ability to live within the structure of our civic institutions, and foreclose any realistic possibility that they will contribute in even the smallest way to the progress of our Nation. (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982, p. 223)

While *Plyler v. Doe* opened the door for undocumented children to freely pursue K-12 education, almost immediately after this decision was rendered the question arose whether these students were guaranteed any postsecondary education rights under that same decision (Olivas, 2012a). The answer to that question was no. Indeed, to date, no federal law has been enacted³ that provides undocumented immigrants with any postsecondary education benefit. Since 2001, however, The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act—federal legislation that provides some postsecondary education benefits and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students who complete two years of college or military service and fulfill other requirements—has been introduced and/or voted on several times in Congress but has yet to pass.

State Policies

Currently, 19 states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington) have in-state tuition policies for their undocumented students. These policies allow undocumented students to pay the reduced in-state tuition rate at some or all of their state's public postsecondary education institutions. In general, only those undocumented students who attend a high school in the state for a specified number of years (between two and four years) and graduate or complete a General Educational Development (GED) program in the state and pass that examination are eligible for in-state tuition. It is important to note, as is the case with the majority of state higher education policies, in-state tuition policies that permit students without documentation to pay in-state tuition rates do not provide instructions on how educational systems and its institutional agents should implement these laws (Nienhusser & Dougherty, 2010).

Among these 19 states, the average annual savings for undocumented immigrants who pay in-state versus out-of-state tuition is \$8,249 (Author's calculations using Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2010). In New York, the difference between in-state and out-of-

³ On June 15, 2012 President Obama detailed his Deferred Action Program, a policy that grants certain undocumented immigrants a reprieve from deportation. However, this program does not guarantee undocumented students with any state or federal postsecondary education benefit (Olivas, 2012b).

state tuition is \$6,304. These figures are stark considering a college education takes at least four years, and nearly 40% of undocumented children who have a parent who is unauthorized live below the federal poverty level (Passel, 2005). Thus, the availability of in-state tuition for undocumented students is a significant factor in their decision to enroll in postsecondary education (Flores, 2010). Further challenging this population's access to higher education is the lack of laws permitting undocumented students to partake in state financial aid programs. Currently, only California, New Mexico, and Texas have enacted such laws.

However, as has been evidenced, the passage alone of state postsecondary education laws does not automatically increase the number of undocumented students enrolling in college (González, 2010). These policies give authority to educational systems and their institutional agents to develop rules and regulations to permit undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2012; Nienhusser & Dougherty, 2010); however, such educational policies are often not implemented uniformly (McLaughlin, 1987). Therefore, the role of institutional agents, the very people charged with the day-to-day implementation of education policies targeting undocumented students, is an important area to investigate, and one often not explored in the literature (McLendon, Mokher, & Flores, 2011; Nienhusser & Dougherty, 2010).

Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws on two theoretical frameworks: college choice (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987) and institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2004, 2011).

College Choice

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) described a three-phase college choice model: predisposition, search, and choice. The first stage, predisposition, typically begins in the seventh grade and follows through until the ninth grade. It refers to plans that students envision for themselves after high school; this is often shaped by encouragement, aspirations, and information. The search stage, which often occurs during the tenth and eleventh grades, involves students' exploration and evaluation of which colleges to apply to. Important individuals who provide information and support youth during this stage are parents, peers, and high school staff (i.e., teachers and counselors; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In high schools, guidance counselors, as will be elaborated later, have a particularly important role in students' college choice. Finally, the choice stage occurs during the eleventh and twelfth grades and is when students select a postsecondary institution from among those considered.

Many aspects of this process, however, are different for underserved minority students (Pérez & McDonough, 2008; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Zimbrot, 2005). In an effort, to better address underserved minority students' college choice, scholars have identified several measures that should be addressed by high schools, some of which include: (a) encourage counselors to focus students on attending college (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McDonough, 2004), (b) increase the accessibility of college entrance and financial aid information (College Board, 2011; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McDonough, 2004; Pathways to College Network, 2007), and (c) engage families as college preparation partners (College Board, 2011; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McDonough, 2004; Pathways to College Network, 2007).

In terms of what is actually being done by high school institutional agents to address students' college choice needs, Perna et al. (2008) conducted a study that examined college counseling activities being coordinated by school counselors in 15 high schools in five U.S. states.

These activities included: (a) one-on-one meetings with students and/or parents, (b) visits to classes to discuss college-related issues, (c) evening programs on financial aid and other topics, (d) visits to the school from representatives of college and universities, and (e) tours of student groups to participating colleges and universities. Further, this study found that college counseling varied across schools based on the characteristics of the students the schools served and the location of schools in particular districts or states.

An important factor in the college choice process is the role of high school staff in providing students with the resources they need to make an informed decision (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; McDonough, 2004; Pathways to College Network, 2007). The literature highlights the important role that school counselors, in particular, have in students' college choice (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011; Calaff, 2008; McDonough, 2004; Perna et al., 2008). In recent years, as college matriculation expectations have grown, the role of school counselors has evolved to include providing information about and assisting more students with their college choice process. This task is especially important in urban school districts where many children may have parents who lack the social and cultural capital to navigate this complicated undertaking (Calaff, 2008; Farmer-Hilton & Adams, 2006; Perna et al., 2008).

Institutional Agents

The role of institutional agents in providing greater educational success of underserved populations has been examined in both the K-12 (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2004, 2011) and higher education (Dowd, Pak, & Bensimon, 2013; Museus & Neville, 2012) literatures. Stanton-Salazar (2011) defined the term institutional agents as individuals who are "high-status, non-kin, agents who occupy relatively high positions in the multiple dimensional stratification system, and who are well positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support" (p. 1066). In high schools, staff such as principals, teachers, social workers, psychologists, and counselors have the potential to shape underserved students' school experiences and academic success, including their college choice process.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) classified the role of institutional agent into four categories: direct support, integrative support, system developer, and system linkage and networking support. The direct and integrative supports typically entail educational staff providing direct services through communication or coordination with students. The system developer role entails institutional agents, perhaps in collaboration with colleagues, coordinating programs or lobbying for resources that benefit students. Lastly, the system linkage and networking support role involves institutional agents serving as "bridging agents" or "institutional brokers" where they connect students with available resources (p. 1081). Most important to this study is the direct support role that institutional agents can serve by knowing what higher education benefits and resources are available to undocumented students and providing this specific student population with information and support with their college choice process.

Stanton-Salazar (2004) highlighted how the success of underserved youth is influenced by the relationships they have with institutional agents.

If . . . academic success is contingent upon engagement with agents who control access to institutional resources vital to educational achievement (as indicated by grades, test scores, etc.) and attainment (graduation, college enrollment), then our paradigm for understanding success and failure in school has to be a relational one. (p. 18)

Thus, it is important to understand the relationship that high school staff have with undocumented immigrants to better understand the college choice process for undocumented students.

Review of the Literature

This study is anchored in two literatures: undocumented students' access to higher education and high school institutional agents and undocumented students' educational experiences. A brief synopsis of each of these literatures follows.

Undocumented Students' Postsecondary Education Access

Undocumented immigrants encounter numerous barriers on their path to postsecondary education: (a) limited availability of outreach efforts and information to assist undocumented students in their college choice process (Contreras, 2009; Enríquez, 2011; Gonzáles, 2009, 2010; Olivas, 2009; Oseguera, Flores, & Burciaga, 2010; Rincón, 2008), (b) discretionary application of complex residency requirements (Gonzáles, 2009; Olivas, 1988; Padilla, 1988; Rincón, 2008), (c) high out-of-state tuition rates in those states that do not offer in-state tuition to undocumented students (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010; López, 2010), (d) little or no access to financial aid programs (Contreras, 2009; Gonzáles, 2010; Olivas, 2009; Pérez, 2010), and (e) fear of being identified as an "illegal" member of society (Contreras, 2009; López, 2010; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2011; Pérez, 2012).

Undocumented immigrants have inadequate access to college-related information (Contreras, 2009; Enríquez, 2011; Gonzáles, 2010; Nienhusser & Dougherty, 2010). Gonzáles (2010), for example, described the college choice process of an undocumented student:

When it came time to apply to college, Karina was without any assistance. None of her teachers ushered her through the process, and nobody within her peer network knew any other undocumented students in college. Unaware of her legal options, Karina did not know where to find the necessary information. (p. 481)

In addition, states have ambiguous definitions of eligibility requirements for in-state tuition (Biswas, 2005; Olivas, 1992). Moreover, college personnel are entrusted with the difficult task of interpreting and carrying out intricate residency requirements (Olivas, 1988, 1992; Padilla, 1988). Nienhusser and Dougherty (2010), noted "inconsistencies in the manner that the [in-state tuition] eligibility criteria were being communicated [to undocumented students]" (p. 10). Residency classifications made by college personnel can be central in an undocumented immigrant's decision to enroll (or not) in postsecondary education due to the differences of in- and out-of-state tuition rates.

The debate in higher education has also focused on undocumented students' eligibility for state financial aid programs (Olivas, 2009). Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for any federal financial aid program, such as Pell Grants (Gonzáles, 2009; Olivas, 2009; Perry, 2006). Additionally, they are not eligible for most state financial aid programs; currently, the only exceptions are California, New Mexico, and Texas (Dougherty, Reid, & Nienhusser, 2006; McGreevy & York, 2011).

The constant fear of deportation—not experienced by any other population—also affects their postsecondary education access (Contreras, 2009; Gonzáles, 2010; Rangel, 2001). This is manifested in undocumented immigrants taking "a non-aggressive role in seeking resources for accessing college" (Rangel, 2001, p. 8).

High School Institutional Agents and Undocumented Students' Educational Experiences

High school staff have an important role in shaping undocumented students' secondary school experiences (García & Tierney, 2011; Gonzáles, 2010; López, 2010; Pérez, 2009; Pérez & Cortés, 2011). Gonzáles (2010), for example, described the role of school structure (e.g., teachers and counselors) in defining undocumented students' educational trajectories. He discovered that students without documentation were being placed into positively (students who succeed in high

school and ultimately enroll in postsecondary education) or negatively (students who dropout of high school, do not enroll in postsecondary education, or both) tracked pathways by these school structures.

Other studies have described the relationships between undocumented students and high school staff. Some of these investigations concluded that the undocumented students they studied encountered largely positive experiences with secondary school staff (García & Tierney, 2011; Pérez & Cortés, 2011). For example, García and Tierney (2011) described favorable attitudes displayed by high school staff toward undocumented students, including in the area of college enrollment: “High school staff and faculty members not only academically and emotionally supported students’ college goals, but they also often personally helped fund their educations” (García & Tierney, 2011, p. 2760). Meanwhile, other studies found both positive and negative experiences exhibited by high school staff toward undocumented students (López, 2010; Pérez, 2009). As an illustration, Pérez (2009) described: “While Ms. S [a teacher] was an excellent role model and mentor for Lucila, her seventh-grade math teacher, Mr. R, was the exact opposite. In fact, he openly questioned her academic abilities” (p. 48).

While these studies analyzed the role that high school staff have in undocumented students’ secondary school experiences, they have not focused on how these institutional agents have addressed the college choice needs of undocumented students. It is precisely that area that this investigation examined.

Research Questions and Significance of Study

The central question that guided this investigation was: How have New York City high school institutional agents addressed undocumented students’ college choice? More specifically, this study answers the following: (a) What activities have institutional agents in New York City high schools pursued to address undocumented students’ college choice? (b) How does a high school’s proportion of undocumented students shape the prevalence and content of these activities?

This is one of the first empirical studies to examine how high schools engage in the college choice needs of undocumented students. To date, it is one of the first to classify and describe undocumented students’ college choice activities. Further, the majority of the undocumented students postsecondary education literature has examined college access issues from the perspective of this student population, not from that of high school institutional agents. It is also one of the first studies to examine how high school demographics (proportion of undocumented students) shape undocumented students’ college choice activities. Lastly, it is one of the earliest empirical studies to examine the issue of undocumented students’ college choice in a Northeastern state.

Methodology

This investigation followed a multiple case study research design (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). A case study research design allows for the investigation of a complex phenomenon (e.g., a particular event, situation, program, or activity; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 16). This approach allowed for a rich description of an activity—college choice activities for students without documentation—in secondary schools. It also permitted the analysis of a situation—school demographics—and how it impacts college choice activities for undocumented students. The examination of multiple cases—in this investigation it is the seven high schools that participated in the study—allows the researcher to explore differences within and between cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548).

Since the focus of this investigation was to explore the implementation of postsecondary education policies for the undocumented student population, a state that had a policy that permits students without documentation to pay in-state tuition rates was purposefully selected. In 2002—with passage of Assembly Bill 9612 and Senate Bill 7784 and the signature of former Governor Pataki—New York became the fourth state to permit certain undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition to attend its State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) systems.

New York City

New York City was the locality selected because of its large and diverse undocumented immigrant population. The approximate number of immigrants without documentation in NYC is 535,000 (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2007). In terms of its racial/ethnic diversity, it is estimated that the NYC undocumented immigrant population is: 27% Central American, 23% South and East Asian, 22% Caribbean, 13% South American, 8% European, 5% African, and 2% Middle Eastern (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2007). Its public K-12 education system serves a large recent-immigrant population—defined as having arrived to the United States within the last three years—estimated at nearly 10% (New York City Department of Education, 2006). In terms of its higher education enrollment, it is estimated that CUNY's undocumented student population is between 4,000 and 4,500 (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012), out of its total enrollment of just over 272,000 students (City University of New York, 2012).

High schools located in two boroughs—Borough A and Borough B—were selected. Borough A is one of the least populated boroughs in NYC, with approximately 1.4 million residents (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Nearly 90% of the residents in Borough A belong to a racial/ethnic minority and over 50% speak a language other than English at home. Approximately 70% of the population age 25 or older has a high school diploma. Over 25% of the residents in this borough live below the poverty level. Borough B is one of the most populated boroughs in NYC at over 2.2 million residents. About 75% of the population is a member of a racial/ethnic minority and about half speak a language other than English at home. About four out of every five residents age 25 or older in Borough B have a high school diploma. Close to 15% of the population in this borough lives below the poverty line.

High Schools

A total of seven high schools located in Boroughs A and B participated in this study. The two boroughs selected in this study contained a total of 207 high schools. Schools were selected primarily based on their demographics—those with very high and very low percentages of undocumented students. Since NYC schools do not collect the immigration status of their student body, a proxy was used to measure the likely level of undocumented students. Those institutions

with elevated percentages of recent immigrants and English-Language Learners (ELLs) would more than likely have higher proportions of undocumented students—a similar premise used by other scholars (e.g., Morse, 2005; Ochi, 2008). On the other hand, those schools with reduced numbers of recent immigrants and ELLs would likely have lower numbers of undocumented students. High school interviewees later corroborated the validity of this selection criterion.

Table 1 provides information on the high schools included in this study. The enrollment levels of the schools varied from 300 students to over 3,000. Most of the students (over 70% at each of the seven schools) belonged to a racial/ethnic minority group. In terms of recent immigrants, the average percentage across the seven schools was just over 18%; one school had less than 1% of this population while another had approximately 75%. The average percentage of ELL students who attended these seven institutions was just over 24%; one school had no ELLs while another school had 100% ELLs.

Data Collection

The data collected in this investigation was interview data. A total of 29 individuals were interviewed. This included: interest group representatives, community-based organization (CBO) officials, and school officials (see Table 2 for a summary of interviewees by category). Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were guided by an interview protocol that contained two main categories of questions: background of interviewees and how postsecondary education policies have been implemented for undocumented students in the high schools. The background section of the protocol was used to place interviewees at ease and permit the researcher to gain insights into interviewees' job responsibilities and level of involvement with issues that affect undocumented immigrants' college choice. The implementation section of the protocol contained questions that solicited information such as: (a) activities schools' have developed to address undocumented students' college choice, (b) challenges in the implementation of postsecondary education policies for undocumented students, and (c) role that institutional demographics have had in how policies have been shaped for this student population at individual institutions. All interviews were subsequently recorded and transcribed. Each transcribed interview was subsequently imported into NVivo for analysis.

Table 1
Demographics of and Information About Participating High Schools

High School	Borough	Enrollment ^a	Racial/Ethnic Composition ^a	Recent Immigrants ^b	ELLs ^b	Category (percent undocumented)	Academic Achievement ^c	NYCDOE Progress Report ^d
HS1	A	300	Latino: 68%; Black: 28%; White: 2%; Asian: 2%	Less than 1%	Less than 5%	Low	English: 60% Math: 80%	A
HS2	A	Over 400	Latino: 80%; Black: 10% White: 5%; Asian: 5%	About 75%	100% ^e	High	English: 30% Math: 60%	A
HS3	B	Over 1,000	Latino: 10%; Black: 5% White: 30%; Asian: 55%	Less than 1%	None	Low	English: 100% Math: 100%	A
HS4	B	Over 2,000	Latino: 60%; Black: 8% White: 10%; Asian: 22%	Less than 2%	Less than 5%	Low	English: 90% Math: 75%	A
HS5	B	Over 2,500	Latino: 55%; Black: 20% White: 5%; Asian: 20%	About 15%	About 25%	High	English: 50% Math: 70%	B
HS6	A	About 200	Latino: 47%; Black: 52% White: 0%; Asian: 1%	Not available	About 10%	Low	English: 75% Math: 30%	B
HS7	B	Over 3,000	Latino: 43%; Black: 22% White: 5%; Asian: 30%	About 15%	About 25%	High	English: 55% Math: 50%	C

Notes:

^a New York City Department of Education, 2007.

^b New York City Department of Education, 2006.

^c Percentage of students who passed (a grade of 65 or higher) on the English and Math A Regents Examinations (New York City Department of Education, 2006).

^d NYC schools are assigned letter grades based on their overall Progress Report score. Schools that get A's and B's are eligible for rewards. Schools that get D's and F's, or three C's in a row face consequences, including change in school leadership or school closure (New York City Department of Education, 2010).

^e HS2 was founded with the goal of educating recent immigrants; it is only open to students who have been in the United States for fewer than four years.

Table 2
Summary of Interview Participants

Category	Category Includes	Count
Interest Groups	Organizations that represent racial/ethnic and undocumented immigrant community interests	4
Local Community-Based Organizations	Organizations that work directly with immigrant and undocumented immigrant populations on issues of college access	3
School Officials	NYCDOE officials and high school staff (principal, assistant principal, counselor, teacher)	22

Selection of interview participants. Interest groups comprised racial/ethnic or undocumented immigrant organizations and were selected because they were outspoken in local media and/or very involved in advocating for undocumented immigrants' college access. Local CBOs were chosen under one of two scenarios: organization had been highlighted in the local media as providing services to undocumented students seeking college choice information or high school officials interviewed in this study mentioned the services that these organizations provided to undocumented students in the area of college choice. In both cases—interest groups and CBOs—the individuals who were primarily involved with undocumented students' college access issues were interviewed. At high schools, the researcher wanted to gather a holistic perspective of the undocumented students' college choice process. Thus, the involvement of individuals who had different foci (administrative, counseling, and teaching) brought richness to the study. The principal in each preselected school was contacted and invited to participate in the study. The principal then agreed to participate or referred the researcher to an assistant principal. The principal or assistant principal who agreed to participate in this investigation was asked to provide names of guidance counselors and/or college advisors who work with students on their college choice. Additionally, the principal or assistant principal was asked to provide the names of teachers who had been particularly concerned about issues that immigrant students face. Table 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the local-level high school officials who were interviewed.

It is important to note that no undocumented students were interviewed in this investigation. The focus of the study was on institutional agents. As described earlier, some studies, though not many, have looked at the experiences of undocumented students as they navigate the college choice process. Few studies, however, have examined this process from the perspective of high school institutional agents. This study begins to address this gap.

Data Analysis

To analyze interview data, a coding scheme was developed. Initially, the coding scheme was developed using the conceptual framework and literature that guided this study to develop a “start list” of codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As more interviews were conducted, adjustments to the coding scheme were made in response to the key concepts raised by participants.

Additionally, the researcher developed a taxonomy to examine the presence of college choice activities specific to undocumented high school students (see Table 4). This instrument builds upon the work done by Perna et al. (2008) that identified six college choice activities that existed in the 15 schools they examined. In the current study, a total of 11 activities were identified and classified into the following five categories: one-on-one counseling, presentations, outreach, scholarship, and curriculum (see Table 4). Each transcript was coded using this instrument. Intercoder reliability was

obtained by having the same three interview transcripts coded independently by the researcher and a colleague. In other words, each researcher reviewed the transcripts to find evidence of the existence or absence of the 11 activities. One hundred percent consensus was reached after the coding done by each researcher was compared.

Table 3

Summary of High School Officials Interviewed

High School	Title of High School Official ^a	Count
HS1	Assistant Principal, Guidance Counselor, Teacher (English)	3
HS2	Principal, Guidance Counselor, Teacher (Social Studies)	3
HS3	Assistant Principal, Guidance Counselor, Teacher (English)	3
HS4	Assistant Principal, College Advisor, Teacher (English)	3
HS5	Assistant Principal, College Advisor, Teacher (Foreign Language)	3
HS6	College Advisor, Teacher (English as a Second Language)	2
HS7	Assistant Principal, Guidance Counselor, College Advisor, Teacher (English as a Second Language)	4

Note: ^a The primary responsibility of the college advisor is to inform students about and help them with the college application process. The guidance counselor is also typically responsible for providing information to students and helping them with the college application process in addition to other responsibilities (e.g., scheduling, career counseling).

Table 4

Taxonomy of High School Activities That Address Undocumented Students' College Choice

Category	Subcategory	Description of Activity
One-on-One Counseling	Admission	Staff provided information to individual students without documentation about admission once students revealed their immigration status.
	Financing	Staff provided information to individual students without documentation about financing college once students revealed their immigration status.
	Parent	Staff had conversations with parents of students without documentation about issues related to college choice.
	Passes	Counselors sent out passes to students in the event students did not seek out counselors due to undocumented status.
Presentations	Student	Issues related to immigration status mentioned by counselors during student presentation sessions that focused on college choice.
	Parent	Issues related to immigration status mentioned by counselors during parent presentation sessions that focused on college choice.
	Outside	Outside speakers brought to school to discuss undocumented students' college choice.
Outreach	Community-based organizations	Staff connected students without documentation with CBOs in NYC that provided assistance with issues related to college access.
	College	Staff contacted college officials and advocated on behalf of students without documentation in seeking admission and/or scholarship.
Scholarship	-	School considered undocumented students for scholarship opportunities.
Curriculum	-	Issues related to immigration status infused in college preparation curriculum.

Results

Activities That Address Undocumented Students' College Choice

There were several activities that schools engaged in to provide information and support to undocumented students in their postsecondary education choice process. The five categories of activities present in the high schools examined included: one-on-one counseling, presentations, external outreach, scholarship, and curriculum. Each effort, in order of frequency, is described followed by a summary of these activities across all schools.

One-on-one counseling. The most common activity referenced was in the area of one-on-one counseling. This activity involved high school staff meeting with individual undocumented students and/or their parents to discuss their particular college choice process. One-on-one counseling was the preferred activity for secondary school staff. Participants from each of the seven high schools in this study discussed how they provided individualized counseling related to college enrollment for undocumented students and their parents. A counselor from HS2, for example, described how she advised students without documentation:

So a lot of it is just providing information. And again, kids that are in this situation feel . . . they're afraid to provide too much [information]. They don't want to give parental information. They don't know what they should give. They don't understand what this means, what that means, and so a lot of it is going step-by-step with them; a lot of hand holding and reassuring them of certain things, and also keeping them away from others so they understand you don't fill that out, you don't put this in. . . . We're going to have that discussion one-on-one . . . so I know how to deal with [their] application.

For the undocumented immigrant population there is a heightened sensitivity about sharing the information required to complete a college application. This increased sensitivity along with a greater lack of general information about college enrollment, contributes to the predominance of one-on-one counseling to assist undocumented high school students with the college choice process.

A counselor from HS1 recounted an instance when she met with the parents of an undocumented student:

I sit down one-on-one [where] I can speak with family members and I did it with this particular [undocumented] student as well and just let them know what is happening, the list of options that they have and see if they have any savings or things of that nature. But just communication, straightforward communication I find it is better than handing someone a piece of paper and say, "Just read about this." And any questions that they have I can try to answer or have somebody in to assist.

Undocumented immigrants live in a precarious situation. They often grapple with familial pressure not to reveal their immigration status to officials due to fear associated with possible deportation. As a result, counselors in HS2, HS5, and HS7 described efforts to deliberately send out passes to meet with students individually, since staff members were aware that some students avoided them because such a meeting would likely expose their undocumented status.

I find that students who are undocumented are the ones that are not seeking me out or not coming into my office. They tend to be a little bit more shy and timid, and those tend to be the students that I have to pull into my office and send out passes. I'm the one that's really kind of reeling them in. . . . I explain to them that whatever [they] tell me is confidential. (Counselor from HS5)

Presentations. Presentations involved staff providing information or coordinating outside speakers to talk to groups of students, parents, or both about college choice for undocumented

students. Some form of this activity took place in five out of the seven high schools. This activity was commonly evidenced as college enrollment information sessions for students held during school hours. Staff in those schools that exhibited this activity described how during these sessions they deliberately mentioned undocumented immigrants' eligibility to pay in-state tuition in New York's public postsecondary institutions. The counselor in HS5 described:

When I go around to the junior and senior classrooms for presentations, I . . . mention that in order to qualify for in-state tuition at either CUNY or SUNY you just have to have resided [in New York] for two years and have graduated from a New York State high school in order to qualify.

Similarly, the counselor from HS7 said:

In my presentations [to students] I make a comment about [undocumented students' eligibility for college] to open the door to them. And I have had some students take that invitation and come in. . . . But it is [made] known, by inviting them in my brief comment in the classroom. Because sometimes you say it, [and students will say:] "What is undocumented? What does that mean?" And then the whole class starts going, "oh. . . ." So I try to do it quickly and discretely so that they can hear me. I will not talk about it too long, because I do not want them to feel uncomfortable.

HS2, HS4, and HS6 officials described how they held evening workshops for parents that detail issues related to college financing and the application process for the undocumented student population. The counselor from HS4, for example, described how she detailed a process (completion of a paper FAFSA) that some CUNY institutions have developed to determine undocumented families' expected family contribution in an effort to provide institutional aid:

I will tell them that they can afford CUNY. That they should not submit the FAFSA, but what I do is download the hard copy [of a FAFSA] and tell them: "Fill it out and when you are ready to go meet with the financial aid office, bring that in and that is how [college officials try to] work something out for the student."

Presentations also involved CBOs. An undocumented immigrant education advocacy group official talked about how her agency coordinated presentations at schools educating undocumented youth about their eligibility for in-state tuition. However, this same representative described the challenges in accessing schools to provide such information:

. . . the difficult part with the mainstream schools is that, you know, it is a very hierarchical and bureaucratic decision making process and so we cannot go to approach, for example, the college advisor, and say we want to share this information with you for your students, and if he or she accepts we can just go right ahead. They have to go through a process of having the principal approve it. . . . It goes through different approval systems, and then we may be able to do something. So it's hard to get through all that process.

Outreach. This activity involved advocating for undocumented students with a representative of a college or CBO. Some type of external outreach activity took place in five out of the seven schools. Outreach to colleges, for example, included counselors exploring what individual institutions could do to provide assistance to individual undocumented students in the application process and with scholarship funds. This took place in HS2, HS4, HS5, and HS7. A counselor from HS7 recalled when she called a college president to advocate on behalf of an undocumented student, "I talk[ed] to the president on the phone. I say . . . 'in this situation, what can you do to help?'" Another counselor from HS2 described how she contacted postsecondary institutions on behalf of undocumented students, "I tend to call [college officials] . . . depending on what the relationship is with the school." In all, those schools where outreach

with colleges was evidenced they were either with a CUNY administrative office or one of its individual institutions.

Staff in HS1, HS2, HS5, and HS7 mentioned advocacy efforts and connecting students without documentation with resources in the community. These resources were typically associated with CBOs. A counselor in one of these schools detailed her efforts to have an undocumented student she had been working with attend a workshop at a local CBO, “I know that there are different workshops that are offered. Primarily, there is a program at Goddard Riverside [Community Center]. . . . We set it up for him to go.” Another counselor, from HS5, also referenced this workshop and how she attended it with some undocumented students from the school.

Scholarship. Four schools (HS2, HS3, HS4, and HS5) described the work they did in the area of scholarship. This included monetary scholarships awarded by the high schools themselves. These funds came from multiple internal and external sources. Staff at HS2, for instance, described how there were opportunities in the past where teachers and staff collected funds and provided them to undocumented students to help finance their college attendance.

Last year we had a student. She was salutatorian and undocumented and ended up in a two-year school. And the teachers were so concerned for her because her family is very, very, very impoverished. . . . And [administrative staff and teachers] pooled [funds] for the first [tuition] installment of five hundred dollars and gave it to her as a scholarship. So things like that happen.

All four schools had some private scholarship funds that they awarded graduating students. When asked if undocumented students were considered for these awards, high school officials from all of these institutions acknowledged that that was indeed the case. The assistant principal at HS5, for example, stated how private scholarship funds that they awarded did not stipulate immigration status requirements and as a result immigration status was not considered in the selection process.

Curriculum. Only one school, HS6, had as part of its curriculum information about college enrollment for undocumented immigrants; it had a mandatory college preparation course whose focus was on issues related to college exploration and enrollment. This course—taken by all students throughout their high school years—equipped students with information related to college, including issues related with application for admission, financial aid opportunities, and what to expect once students arrived on a college campus. One session of this course was devoted to the issue of immigration status and how that may affect an individual’s college selection and application for admission. During this session, counselors, the individuals who instructed this course, detailed undocumented immigrants’ eligibility for in-state tuition at CUNY and SUNY.

Summary. Table 5 notes the existence or absence of activities related to undocumented students’ college choice across the seven high schools. The highest number of activities present in an individual institution was nine (HS2) and the lowest was four (HS1 and HS3). On average, schools engaged in 6.4 activities (58.4% of the maximum number of 11 activities). In terms of the five categories of activities, one-on-one counseling was the most evidenced while curriculum was least observed in the seven high schools.

Table 5

School Activities Related to Undocumented Students' College Choice

	One-on-One Counseling				Presentations			Outreach		Scholarship	Curriculum
High School	Admission	Finance	Parent	Passes	Student	Parent	Outside	CBO	College	-	-
HS1	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
HS2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
HS3	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
HS4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
HS5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
HS6	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
HS7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

Effects of Institutional Demographics

The literature informs us that schools with high percentages of ELLs, and therefore seemingly high percentages of undocumented immigrants, are more likely to have principals who hire bilingual staff and tailor support services for ELL students (Herrity, 1997). Further, Stritikus (2001), for example, found that the implementation of Proposition 227 (a California law that eliminated bilingual education programs) by teachers in classrooms, which undoubtedly affected a large percentage of undocumented immigrants, was not uniform. Namely, one school studied pursued parental waivers and continued its bilingual program, while another school fully implemented the English-only provisions detailed in that legislation. It was discovered that teachers' individual characteristics (i.e., cultural traditions, immigration-related background, experience, and other aspects of their personal history) were largely responsible for these differences.

In this study, several respondents reported that schools with smaller numbers of undocumented students would be less likely to focus on the particular needs surrounding college choice for this population. A teacher from a school that had a small percentage of undocumented students, HS6, said:

I think there would probably be a critical mass [of undocumented students] at which point it would make a huge difference. . . . I think if you were to go to any of these specialty schools that have larger populations [of undocumented students] because they are purposely trying to attract them, I bet every one of those schools would have a lot more access to this information, would have a lot better control of the process, and actually in that respect, I think that they are regularly going to be focusing their attention on making sure that that student is going to have their particular need met because that student is a lot of their population. The same issue would come up over and over so they are going to have the answer for that. . . . Once you have hit that critical mass, I think you would have many more opportunities to [help] this child.

CBOs also reported that high schools with elevated proportions of undocumented students better addressed their college choice needs. For example, a representative from a CBO that advocated on behalf of undocumented immigrants who sought postsecondary education stated:

The better schools in dealing with this have been the international high schools [those schools with nearly all or most of the student body composed of recent immigrants, a fair number that are likely undocumented]. . . . All the population that they work with is pretty much new immigrant students so they have been more receptive for example for us to do workshops and trainings for them, but also there is a lot of interest from the educators to know how they can help their students.

In order to determine differences across schools in relation to their percentage of undocumented students and number of college choice activities present, the undocumented student college choice taxonomy developed for this investigation was utilized to further analyze how student demographics shaped the presence of such activities. Table 6 shows the number of college choice activities that took place at each institution divided along the two demographic categories, high and low proportion undocumented. The table reveals that those schools with elevated percentages of undocumented students had a higher likelihood of having more outreach activities in the area of college choice for that specific student population. In contrast, those institutions with reduced percentages of undocumented students had less outreach activities for these students.

Table 6

Number of Activities Related to Undocumented Students' College Choice (by Proportion Undocumented)

High proportion undocumented		Low proportion undocumented	
Number of activities that took place		Number of activities that took place	
HS2	9	HS1	4
HS5	8	HS3	4
HS7	7	HS4	7
		HS6	6

Interview data further supported the notion that schools with elevated percentages of undocumented students structured their college-related activities differently when compared to schools with reduced proportions of students without documentation. For example, those schools with higher percentages of undocumented students better addressed the college access needs of this student population by making college-related information more available to this population—through presentations and interactions with students—as compared to schools that had a smaller undocumented student body. A counselor from HS5, who worked in a school with a high proportion of immigrant students, stated, “I make it a point to tell each classroom regardless of your [immigration] status if you have been here for two years you get in-state tuition, and regardless of your status you can apply to these [college] opportunity programs.” In a similar fashion, a counselor from HS2 that worked in a similar undocumented student environment stated:

When I go into classrooms and I am talking to eleventh, tenth, and ninth graders I mention the term undocumented. . . . I am just saying in case this is where you stand these are the steps that we are going to take for you. You can still go to college, but we are going to have to do it this way.

Meanwhile, a guidance counselor who worked in a school (HS3) that had a low percentage of undocumented students stated:

I do not have large numbers of [undocumented] students. . . . When they self-identify . . . in other words I do not bring it up in general conversation. And as we are having this conversation, I am thinking well maybe I should [bring it up in general conversation]. And I never thought about doing that because the numbers are not great and it is also a very personal issue with them, and they feel that they do not want to have this discussed in public. . . . So, basically, I can disseminate the information when they come and self-identify themselves to me.

Driven by their student demographics—in direct response to the needs of undocumented students—schools with higher proportions of undocumented students were more forthcoming in the dissemination of information related to the availability of in-state tuition for those without some form of legal status. On the other hand, institutions with reduced percentages of undocumented students, in general, made college-related information less accessible to this population due to the few number of students without documentation present at these schools. For instance, counselors who worked at HS3 chose to wait for undocumented students to reveal their immigration status to them, and at that point staff detailed postsecondary enrollment information that was specific to their needs.

Limitations

This investigation involved a limited number of research sites. Only seven high schools out of NYC's total system of about 400 high schools were examined. This makes generalizability within the single case challenging. The selection of high schools with seemingly high and low proportions of undocumented immigrants was purposeful to permit an analysis of differing demographics across individual institutions. In addition, the issue of undocumented immigrants is marred with controversy, which makes research in this area challenging to conduct. Interviewees are sometimes hesitant to participate in or may be tentative to disclose key information that may inform the study. While the researcher conducted research on this topic in the past and is sensitive to this reality, additional steps were taken to build rapport with interviewees and ensure confidentiality before the start of each interview. The taxonomy used to examine the presence of college choice activities specific to high school students without documentation did not measure the intensity of these efforts. For example, it did not differentiate between schools that had multiple external presenters versus a school that had just one presenter. Last, no undocumented immigrants were interviewed in this investigation. The reason for the exclusion of undocumented immigrants was due to the vulnerable position of this population. As a result, this did not allow for the potential of further data triangulation based on students' experiences and perspectives.

Summary

This investigation contributes to the growing literature in the area of postsecondary education access for undocumented students. This investigation identified the following types of activities present in high schools in the area of undocumented students' college choice: one-on-one counseling, presentations, outreach, scholarship, and curriculum. It was found that the number of these activities varied across the seven high schools examined. However, the most prevalent effort exhibited was in the area of one-on-one counseling.

This study revealed that differences in activities related to undocumented students' college choice existed across institutions. These variances were traced to those efforts by high school institutional agents to offer activities that address undocumented students' unique college choice needs. Indeed the role of high school staff—mainly guidance and college counselors—to provide postsecondary education information to undocumented immigrants is an essential element in this population's college choice process. Thus, this places a significant responsibility on high school staff to be knowledgeable about policies and ways in which they can assist undocumented students in their postsecondary education choice process.

Further, this study concluded that institutional demographics shaped how high schools structured college choice activities for undocumented students. Specifically, schools with higher percentages of undocumented students had a greater number of activities and had organized their implementation in such a way as to make information more available to this student population. Meanwhile, those institutional agents who worked in schools that had reduced proportions of undocumented students often waited for these students to reveal their immigration status before they provided undocumented-specific college choice information. Staff members at these schools were not forthcoming in providing college choice activities for these students. As a result, this often placed the burden on undocumented students to reveal their immigration status before they were able to receive the necessary guidance to inform their college choice process.

Implications

Research

The undocumented student higher education access literature has largely ignored the central role that secondary education professionals have in carrying out policies that involve these students' college choice. As this study highlights, secondary education professionals are an important group to examine in relation with the college access of undocumented students. As such, it is important to further examine the role that these institutional agents have in expanding postsecondary educational opportunities for this student population. For example, how knowledgeable are these institutional agents in the area of undocumented students' college access and how does that in turn shape implementation efforts? How do professional values and personal beliefs held by high school staff toward undocumented immigrants impact the level of assistance provided to these students in the area of college access? What secondary and postsecondary collaborations exist in the area of undocumented students' college access and what makes these collaborations successful?

Also, this study examined the relationship of high school staff and undocumented students during the college choice process from the perspective of institutional agents. It extended Stanton-Salazar's (1997, 2004, 2011) framework to a specific underserved student population (i.e., undocumented) and the involvement of institutional agents in a particular high school process (i.e., college choice). Future investigations should expand the limited literature that exists in the college choice relationship between undocumented students and high school staff, except it should examine it from the perspective of students without documentation. Additional work in this area would further test Stanton-Salazar's framework to examine if undocumented students' interactions with high school institutional agents uncover elements not experienced by other underserved populations.

Further, the taxonomy developed in this study to identify the presence of college choice activities for undocumented students should be used to survey such activities in a larger sample of high schools. This survey could, for example, be administered to institutional agents and/or undocumented students to measure the number and breadth of college choice activities in high schools that are tailored toward this student population. Such data could help identify gaps in college choice activities for undocumented students with the goal of developing resources and/or training programs that can begin to address these issues in high schools. Moreover, while the college access literature has detailed various types of college choice activities that high schools should have to expand students' postsecondary education access (e.g., Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Perna et al., 2008), it could further develop a systematic tool that can measure college choice activities across institutions. Therefore, an adapted college choice taxonomy used in this study could be developed to measure college choice activities across high schools in a district, in a state, and even across the nation. However, an adapted taxonomy would need to be developed to take into account individual needs of certain populations (e.g., undocumented) and contexts (e.g., state and district policies).

Lastly, this study examined how high school institutional agents in one policy environment (a state that provides a postsecondary education benefit to undocumented students) have developed activities to address these students' college choice and how these activities have been shaped by schools' demographics. Thus, the findings of this study may not be suitable to a different policy environment—a state where a postsecondary education benefit does not exist for this student population. Thus, additional research is needed to address how such a policy environment shapes the manner in which high school institutional agents develop activities that address undocumented students' college choice.

Practice

This investigation found a disparity in the number of activities related to undocumented students' college choice present across the high schools examined; meaning some schools devoted a great deal of resources (mostly in the form of staff time) to undocumented students' college access while others did not. Those schools that had a critical mass of undocumented students were more likely to have a higher number of outreach activities. Thus, those undocumented students who attend institutions that do not contain a critical mass of such students will more than likely not receive the breadth of information they need to address their specific college choice needs. In response, high school staff in all institutions—regardless of demographics—should make the issue of college access for this population a priority and make available the necessary resources to best meet these students' postsecondary education college choice needs. One such example of a shift in practice could even build on existing activities by high school counselors requesting that all outside presenters (e.g., college staff, community-based organizations) who speak to students about college also provide information that is tailored for undocumented students. Such information should address the diversity of undocumented families—those that might be entirely undocumented or mixed-status (where at least one member of the family is undocumented)—as different family compositions may likely require different college choice information.

While providing undocumented students with college choice activities is essential, the mere presence of these activities will not guarantee that these students receive the support they need to navigate this complicated process. As detailed earlier, undocumented students' college choice process is more precarious than other students given their limited postsecondary benefits and fear of deportation. What's more, immigration status might be only one of other social stigmas (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality) that this student population may need to face in their plight to access higher education. As such, it is especially important that high school institutional agents are aware of the needs of and develop meaningful relationships with undocumented students so students without documentation feel supported through what can be a challenging moment in their lives (Pérez, 2012).

A third implication for high schools is to make additional efforts to disseminate college enrollment information to the parents of undocumented students. Many undocumented parents have a reduced level of college knowledge (Abrego, 2006; Pérez, 2012)—in areas such as admission application procedures, financial aid availability and processes, tuition costs and policies, and the cost of a college degree. However, it is important to note that many undocumented parents value education and are often involved and support their children in their college choice process (Abrego, 2006; Pérez, 2012). Similar to their children, undocumented parents must also confront the issue of immigration status disclosure with high school staff. Therefore, it is essential that high school staff develop a rapport with undocumented students' parents so parents feel comfortable going to school and speaking openly about college access issues related to documentation status.

Also recommended is the creation and implementation of a college exploratory and readiness curriculum for high school students. Strick (2012), for example, found that such a curriculum had a positive impact on the postsecondary enrollment of low-income students. She discovered that students exposed to this type of curriculum were 1.8 times more likely to enroll in a 4-year versus a 2-year institution versus a similarly representative group of low-income students. HS6 is an example of an institution that had such a program. One topic during this course is focused on issues related to immigration status and college exploration and enrollment. The presence of such a structured program not only encourages greater emphasis on the college choice process, but it sheds light on issues related to immigration status and their impact on college access. Further, it

enables staff to discuss this topic without undocumented students having to endure the anxiety associated with disclosing their immigration status to high school staff.

Lastly, high schools should make better use of outreach services provided by CBOs that focus on the topic of undocumented immigrants' college access, in an effort to better meet the needs of this student population. Numerous groups exist throughout the United States whose work addresses the educational access of undocumented youth. Many of these community organizations give presentations and provide materials that focus on those policies and resources available to undocumented students in their pursuit of higher education. High schools should learn about the resources for undocumented students available to them in their communities, make them accessible to these students, and facilitate the entry of such groups into their buildings.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the vast majority of undocumented students are “practically indistinguishable from their documented and citizen peers” (Enríquez, 2011, p. 482); this includes their dreams and aspirations to attend postsecondary education. However, the college choice process for this population is marked with hurdles. This population is in a precarious position. Undocumented students rely on high school staff to have the necessary information and offer the additional assistance they need to understand the specific circumstances that surround their college choice process. As a result, it is imperative that our secondary schools have the necessary resources and information needed to address the particular needs of undocumented students so they may enroll in college just like their peers. Without this our undocumented students' aspirations of enrolling in college and dreams of succeeding in our society will fade.

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