Policy Contexts of Immigrant-Origin Youth and Young Adult Employment and Educational Outcomes

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Paper 1: The Effect of College Networks on Immigrant and Minority Employment Outcomes
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In this paper, we investigate the effects of college networks on the annual earnings of students enrolled in one of the institutions within the City University of New York (CUNY) System, New York City’s network of public colleges and universities. Based on previous findings that physical proximity (e.g., sharing the same dorm, classroom, cohort) and race/ethnicity are strong predictors of the friendships that students form in U.S. schools and colleges (e.g., Marmaros and Sacerdote 2006), we define a network as a group of students in the same college, cohort, major, race/ethnicity, and nativity status. We identify the effects of these networks off of variation in the share of classmates that are of the same-race/same-nativity across cohorts within the same college and major. Consistent with the previous literature on networking in predominantly white institutions, we find that white native-born students experience earnings and employment gains when the share of classmates that are also white, native-born students increases. Black native-born and particularly black immigrants also benefit from their same group peers. Black immigrant students' gains from same-group peers significantly exceed the benefits received by other student groups from increased networking opportunities. In contrast, neither immigrants nor native-born Hispanic students experience earnings gains as a result of networking with same-group peers, with estimates suggesting negative effects of same-group peers on Hispanic immigrants' earnings. Combined with the finding that Hispanic immigrants experience an increase in the probability of employment when they have more same-group peers, this result suggests that Hispanic immigrants may encourage their peers to enter the labor force quickly, which may take time away from schooling and lead to lower earnings (because they take lower-paying jobs and/or do not finish their degrees). Our findings suggest that the earnings gaps that are currently observed between white native-born and black native-born are unlikely to be explained by differences in networks and that black immigrant earnings would be lower in settings with fewer same-group peers. For Hispanics, however, the current earnings gaps could be partially explained by poor networking. At a minimum, our results suggest that postsecondary institutions that encourage networking among students might also do more to ensure that students have up-to-date and accurate information about the potential earnings of their respective job opportunities and that information be delivered through structured or formal career counseling.
Immigration and language status are important factors in a student’s likelihood of college success. However, these statuses are also complex, can be temporary, and are often not properly accounted for in the educational trajectory of a student in the United States. For example, we know that it is not immigration status per se that predicts educational attainment but rather origin of country and when a student arrived to the United States (Baum & Flores, 2011). In regard to language, over 50 percent of students identified as English Learners are US citizens and nearly a third of all students are children of immigrants that are also likely to live in mixed citizenship statuses. These students are moving through the education system during which is the one of the greatest interplays of federal, state, and local policy regarding immigrant and English Learner students. Indeed, scholars have noted the devolution of federal immigration policy to state and local jurisdictions creating both highly accepted and contested contexts of reception (Olivas, 2007; Cebulko & Silver, 2016). For example, the years 2006 to 2010 marked a time in which a number of states, primarily in the South, implemented state legislation or postsecondary system policies specifically restricting access to postsecondary institutions (Jones-Correa, 2012). As of 2012, at least five states—Arizona, Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, and Indiana—had barred undocumented students from being allowed to pay in-state resident tuition rates, some through state referenda, others through legislative action (NCSL, 2011). The educational context for immigrant students has thus become highly dependent on geographic and jurisdictional context. In other words, the opportunity to attend college is not only based on where one lives but on particular structures that govern higher education institutions. Moreover, the forthcoming Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides an example of federal regulation and aid to students likely to be immigrant and/or English Learners through increased state decision-making authority. This analysis will provide a review of the latest rigorous research on immigrant students across a variety of state context jurisdictions in the context of a pre- and post- ESSA policy regime. Of interest is that the ESSA requires states to provide sufficient college and career readiness for one’s own state context. This analysis will examine the level of state capacity to address the college transition and ultimate success story of immigrant students of varying statuses by relevant factors such as race/ethnicity, citizenship, and English learner status. In particular, the study will examine the analytic tools that a state has at its disposal to properly evaluate the educational progress of these students across varying state contexts of receptiveness toward immigrant students. Recommendations for improved evaluation and cultural tools will be provided.
I examine how the Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) has impacted undocumented-student educational attainment. Using a difference-in-difference estimation strategy to analyze U.S. Census data, I find that IIRIRA led to sharp declines in attainment among foreign-born non-citizens of Mexican ancestry, a commonly used proxy within these data for likely undocumented youth. IIRIRA, I suggest, transforms undocumented residency status into a master status that makes attending college cost prohibitive, with implications for undocumented students and their communities, law, and our greater society as we enter into the third decade of the law's enactment.