

¿Y Ahora Qué? Anticipated Immigration Status Barriers and Latina/o High School Students' Future Expectations

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Latina/o high school students without documentation face a challenging situation when they graduate from high school, with pathways to work and postsecondary education stymied by their immigration status. We examined the effects of anticipated barriers associated with immigration status, age, and sex on the dependent variables of vocational outcome expectations, anticipated external and internal barriers, and postsecondary schooling plans in a sample of 475 Latina/o high school students. Findings include that students anticipating immigration status problems had lower vocational outcome expectations and anticipated more external barriers to pursuing their postsecondary plans. Latina girls and older high school students anticipating immigration status problems were more likely to plan to attend 2-year rather than 4-year colleges, and less likely to plan on postsecondary education, respectively. Implications for practice, policy, and research are discussed.

Keywords: Latina/o, high school students, future expectations, educational plans, vocational development

Graduating from high school is an important milestone that sets the stage for future opportunities. The lifetime economic benefits of earning a high school diploma are significant, and these benefits increase substantially with postsecondary degrees (Day & Newberger, 2002). Education has been a viable route to upward mobility for generations of U.S. immigrants. For Latina/o immigrants, however, a variety of factors limit the extent to which this is true (Hao & Pong, 2008). For every 100 Latina/o elementary school students, about 60 obtain a high school diploma, 13 attain a bachelor's degree, and 0.3% earn a doctoral degree (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). High school graduation rates and educational attainment are lower and dropout rates higher for Latina/os than for Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2011). For immigrant Latina/os, educational attainment is even lower (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008), and those without documentation are far less likely than other Latina/os or the U.S. population as a whole to graduate from high school or to attend college (Gonzales, 2007; Passel & Cohn, 2009).

Little empirical research has focused specifically on undocumented Latina/o youth. The small body of existing research on undocumented college students has revealed strong fears of deportation, loneliness, and depression (Dozier, 1993), experiences of marginalization and institutional neglect (Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortés, 2009; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, &

Coronado, 2010; Pérez Huber & Malagón, 2007) as well as characteristics of resiliency and hope (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2011; Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortés, 2010). These studies make a critical contribution to understanding the experiences of undocumented Latina/o students who have achieved college entry despite the institutional and federal barriers they face. Far less is known about undocumented high school students. The focus of this study is the future educational and vocational expectations of Latina/o high school students, in conjunction with whether or not they anticipate problems with their immigration status.

According to a recent report, 72% of immigrants to the U.S. are considered *legal immigrants* and include naturalized citizens (37%), legal permanent resident "aliens" (including refugees and those granted asylum; 31%), and legal temporary migrants (4%; Passel & Cohn, 2011). The remaining 28% of U.S. immigrants are *unauthorized*, largely made up of individuals who entered the country without legal documents, or who did not depart in accord with the limits of their authorization. Approximately 81% of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are of Latin American origin, with 58% from Mexico and 23% from other parts of Latin America (Passel & Cohn, 2011). Children are considered undocumented when they have no proof that they are U.S. citizens (e.g., a birth certificate), no proof that they are legal permanent residents, or lack a temporary visa. In this article we use the terms "unauthorized," "undocumented," "without documentation," and "without authorization" interchangeably. We refrain from using the terms "legal," "illegal," or "aliens" to describe human beings.

The education and employment of Latina/o immigrants, documented and undocumented, is a focus of concern, debate, and vitriol in U.S. educational and political arenas (Abrego, 2006; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Casas & Cabrera, 2011; Faltis & Valdés, 2010; López, Morin, & Taylor, 2010; Martínez de Castro, 2009; Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2009). Anti-immigrant attitudes are pervasive. Bender (2002) illuminated the backlash

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against Latina/os in post 9/11; the SPLC reported a 40% increase in hate crimes against Latina/os nationally (SPLC, 2009) and a 50% increase in California in 2010 (SPLC, 2011). Untrue negative information about undocumented immigrants, such as higher rates of criminal activity, has been widely circulated in the media (Bierich, 2007; Casas & Cabrera, 2011). This antagonistic context compounds the challenges faced by Latina/o immigrant youth, which include language acquisition, loneliness, depression, feelings of not belonging, and poverty (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Dozier, 1993; García-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Pabón López, & López, 2009; Durán & Padilla, 1995; Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). Undocumented Latina/o youth and children of undocumented parents also face a constant threat of family deportation (Capps, Castañeda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Dozier, 1993; García-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Pabón López & López, 2009; Durán & Padilla, 1995). Since 9/11, deportation rates of undocumented noncriminal Latina/os, including high school and college students raised in the U.S., have increased significantly (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Hernández, 2008; SPLC, 2009). In August of 2012, the Obama administration enacted legislation allowing some undocumented youth to apply for deferrals of deportation as well as permission to work (U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Services, 2012). This new program temporarily reduces the deportation threat for some, but not all, undocumented youth. The threat of deportation has adverse effects on the well-being of the entire family (Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Solís, 2003) and affects both documented and undocumented Latina/os (Arbona et al., 2010).

Undocumented Latina/o students face significant legal and policy barriers to pursuing education beyond high school (Contreras, 2009; Olivos & Mendoza, 2009; Pérez, Cortés, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010; Pérez et al., 2009). Although undocumented students have the legal right to a K–12 education, established in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), their prospects plummet upon graduation. Each year approximately 65,000 undocumented Latina/o high school graduates begin a new stage of their lives; while others pursue work and/or educational options, they face a legal *nepantla* or place-in-between (Anzaldúa, 1999) in which their options are constricted by state laws (Abrego, 2006; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). No federal laws deny a college education to undocumented students, but in most states they are assessed out-of-state or international student tuition, and in a dozen states, laws specifically deny them financial assistance (Díaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011). Given their lack of access to federal financial aid and the restriction of many scholarships to U.S. citizens, college is rendered unaffordable for the majority of undocumented students.

Undocumented students also cannot work, and in most states cannot obtain a driver license. Other activities central to building an economic future are limited to impossible, from establishing credit to purchasing a cell phone (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). The most viable employment option is in low skill, low wage jobs that provide little opportunity for advancement.

Thus, as summarized by Abrego and Gonzales (2010), undocumented youth do not have a legal pathway for the assumption of adult roles of student or worker, and thus, too often recapitulate their parents' poverty. The mechanisms by which previous generations of undocumented immigrants built new lives, achieved upward mobility, and contributed to society are now systematically closed to those who are undocumented.

It is unknown whether constraints on their education and work pathways influence the future expectations of undocumented Latina/o youth. During high school many young people begin to develop more concrete plans and expectations for their future paths. Many begin to explore potential colleges and occupations, pursue part-time jobs, complete initial milestones such as filling out financial aid and scholarship forms, and apply to colleges. These activities are stymied by the lack of a social security number, prompting Gonzales (2011) to describe ages 16 to 18 for unauthorized immigrants as the period of "discovery," characterized by a series of jarring encounters with the limits imposed by their documentation status. Unfortunately, high school teachers and students often misunderstand postsecondary education possibilities for undocumented students (Contreras & Stritikus, 2008). High school students' immediate plans for postsecondary education are an important indicator of their future expectations, especially as they near graduation. Two additional types of future expectations salient to high school students are their vocational outcome expectations, and the barriers that they anticipate they will encounter as they pursue their postsecondary plans.

Outcome Expectations

Hopeful expectations for the future lead to positive youth development outcomes (Schmid, Phelps, & Lerner, 2011; Wyman, Cowan, Work, & Kerley, 1993). Outcome expectations are a specific type of future expectations about the consequences of engaging in specific behaviors; expected outcomes influence the likelihood that people will engage in the associated behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Vocational outcome expectations might include expectations of finding a job, satisfaction with a career, or sufficient income. Only a few studies have examined the role of vocational outcome expectations among non-college Latina/o samples. For example, Latina/o high school students who are more confident in their ability to successfully engage in career-related tasks (e.g., exploring different career possibilities) have more positive expectations about their career-related outcomes (e.g., that they will have satisfying careers; Flores, Navarro, & DeWitz, 2008; Fouad & Smith, 1996; Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). Fouad and Guillen (2006) called for further study of the role of outcome expectations in career-related behavior.

Anticipated Barriers

A study of new Latina/o immigrants in the southern U.S. identified a number of significant barriers to educational attainment: not understanding the U.S. education system, lack of parental involvement in schools, lack of school support for Latina/o students, and lack of immigrant access to higher education (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atilas, 2005). Not only barriers, but the anticipation of barriers, have been linked with school-related outcomes. For example, small but significant associations have been found between Latina/o students' anticipated barriers and educational aspirations or plans (Flores, Navarro, Smith, & Ploszaj, 2006; Gómez et al., 2001; Jackson, Kacanski, Rust, & Beck, 2006; McWhirter, Torres, Salgado, & Valdez, 2007; Ojeda & Flores, 2008; Shinnar, 2007). Other studies have found that Latina/o high school students anticipate more external and internal barriers to their education and career pursuits than their European American counterparts (McWhirter, 1997; McWhirter et al., 2007).

The purpose of the present study was to explore whether there was an association between anticipated immigration status problems and Latina/o high school students' future expectations. Based on the previous literature, we expected that students anticipating immigration status problems would have lower vocational outcome expectations, would anticipate encountering more barriers as they pursued their postsecondary plans, and would be less likely to plan to attend 4-year institutions after high school. We expected an interaction with age, because older high school students are more imminently faced with tasks that highlight the relevance of immigration/documentation status as they consider education and work options (Gonzales, 2011). Finally, we assessed for gender differences in these outcomes in light of findings that Latinas have higher high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation rates than Latino males (Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Method

Participants

A total of 475 questionnaires were completed by 173 males (36.5%) and 297 females (62.5%) from 51 different high schools, ranging in age from 14 to 19 years old ($M = 16.3$, $SD = 1.22$). Five participants did not self-report sex. The majority (87%) completed the measure in English. Four hundred and eighteen ($n = 418$) participants reported their ethnicity as Latina/o, and 57 did not respond to the ethnicity item. The conference at which the data was collected is designated for Latina/os, and conference organizers attest that "99%" of participants are Latina/o. Thus, these 57 surveys were retained.

Procedures

This study is derived from existing anonymous data collected by conference staff in conjunction with a 1-day regional Latina/o leadership conference in the Pacific Northwest during the spring of 2009 and was determined exempt by the University human subjects review board. Conference participation criteria and selection varied across the participating schools, ranging from "first-come, first-serve" to a combination of teacher recommendations and self-nominations. The purpose of the conference was to provide leadership training, foster cultural pride, raise aspirations, and improve resource awareness for Latina/o high school students. Two different brief, anonymous conference evaluation questionnaires were distributed such that participants received either "Form A" or "Form B" of the questionnaire in both English and Spanish, and completed the measure in their preferred language. A total of 959 students out of approximately 1,100 attendees completed either Form A or Form B. The current study is derived from those who completed Form B questionnaires, which included conference satisfaction items and the measures described below.

Measures

Demographics and plans. Participants self-reported sex and age, and indicated their ethnicity and their work and education

plans immediately after high school by selecting all applicable options from a list.

Perceived educational barriers. Anticipated barriers were assessed using a subset of seven items from the Perceived Educational Barriers scale (PEB, McWhirter, 1997). The PEB assesses the students' perceived likelihood that they will encounter specific barriers if they pursue education or training after high school. The 4-point response options range from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 4 (*definitely will*). Prior to testing study hypotheses, the seven items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis to determine whether the underlying factor structure was unidimensional in the present sample. Principal axis factoring with an oblique rotation resulted in a two-factor structure that explained 58% of the item variance with no cross loading items. Based on this finding, we derived two variables from this measure, External and Internal Barriers. Pattern coefficients for the five item External Barriers factor ($\alpha = .72$) ranged from .41 to .77. Items were "family problems," "having to work while going to school," "pregnancy/having children," "school/program very expensive," and "lack of parental access to information." Pattern coefficients for the two item Internal Barriers factor ($\alpha = .77$) were .71 and .83. Items were "not smart enough" and "not confident enough." Factor scores derived from this analysis served as the two dependent variables.

Anticipated immigration status problems. Assessing documentation status in research raises ethical concerns related to protection of the participants and could raise concerns among participants (Lahman, Mendoza, Rodriguez, & Schwartz, 2011). To minimize participant apprehension, documentation status was assessed indirectly on this anonymous questionnaire, via a single item that addresses how likely it is that respondents will encounter the barrier "Problems with immigration status" if they pursue postsecondary education or training after high school. The 4-point response options range from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 4 (*definitely will*). Responses to this item were correlated at .4 and $-.24$ ($p < .01$) with external and internal barriers, respectively, suggesting that it does not significantly overlap with these two variables.

Vocational outcome expectations. The 12-item Vocational Outcome Expectations-Revised scale (VOE-R, McWhirter & Metheny, 2009; Metheny & McWhirter, in press) measures respondents' expectations associated with the outcomes of vocational planning and choices. The original VOE (McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers, 2000) consisted of six items. The revised version includes six additional items intended to reflect Bandura's (1986) three types of outcome expectations, with two items assessing satisfaction, physical, and social outcomes, respectively, of vocational planning and choices. Sample items include "I will be successful in my chosen career/occupation," "I will have a career/occupation that is respected in our society," and "I will achieve my career/occupational goals." Response options range from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Prior to testing study hypotheses, the 12 items were submitted to an exploratory factor analysis to determine whether the underlying factor structure was unidimensional in the present sample. Principal axis factoring with an oblimin rotation resulted in a one factor structure that explained 85% of the item variance. The factor score served as the dependent

variable; internal consistency was $\alpha = .98$ in the present sample.

Results

Missing data ranged from 1% to 6.9% for individual items. Little's MCAR test ($\chi^2 = 2298.0$, $DF = 1810$, $p = .000$) indicated that data were not MCAR. Further analyses indicated that items from the VOE-R were more likely to be missing for boys, older respondents, and those anticipating problems with their immigration status, a finding we addressed with post hoc analyses. All missing values were imputed using the Expectation Maximization (EM) algorithm with the exception of missing data for ethnicity, sex, age, and postsecondary plans. Based on EFA results, anticipated educational barriers was transformed into two variables, external and internal barriers. The continuous dependent variables were correlated as follows: vocational outcome expectations with external barriers ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$), with internal barriers ($r = -.19$, $p < .01$), and internal barriers with external barriers ($r = .69$, $p < .01$).

About half of the participants ($n = 227$; 46.7%) did not anticipate that problems with immigration status would be a barrier if they pursued education after high school, and about 53% ($n = 252$) indicated that they "maybe" (21%), "probably" (18%), or "definitely" (15%) would encounter this barrier, respectively. Most participants planned to attend some type of educational or training program immediately following high school, specifically, 2-year community college program (37.3%, $n = 177$), 4-year bachelor degree program (37.7%, $n = 179$), or specialized training or apprenticeship program (2.8%, $n = 13$). Sixty-four participants (13.5%) did not plan to pursue further education immediately after high school, and seven did not respond to this question.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine whether sex (male vs. female), age (14–17 years vs. 18–20 years old), or immigration status (not anticipated to be a problem vs. maybe, probably, or definitely would be a problem) were related to the three dependent variables of vocational

outcome expectations, anticipated internal barriers, and anticipated external barriers. Exploratory data analysis indicated possible violations of assumptions, thus, Pillai's V was used as the criterion for all hypothesis tests and a more stringent alpha level was adopted (.01; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. There were no significant interaction effects. Analyses revealed two significant multivariate main effects. The largest effect, corresponding to immigration status, $V = 0.09$, $F(3, 462) = 15.66$, $p < .001$, indicated that 9% of the variance in the discriminant function is explained by whether or not the participant anticipates that immigration status may be a problem if they pursue postsecondary education. Standardized discriminant function coefficients indicate that external barriers (0.89) and vocational expectations (0.38) contributed the most to distinguishing between participants. Examination of descriptive statistics indicated that those anticipating immigration status problems expected more external barriers and had lower vocational outcome expectations.

The significant multivariate effect for age, $V = 0.04$, $F(3, 462) = 5.81$, $p = .001$, indicated that 4% of the variance in the discriminant function is explained by participant age. The standardized discriminant function coefficients indicated that two of the dependent variables, external barriers (1.36) and internal barriers (.81), contributed the most to distinguishing between older and younger participants. Examination of descriptive statistics indicated that older participants expected to encounter more external and internal barriers, however, the univariate F test for internal barriers was not significant. Finally, because exploratory analyses indicated differential patterns of missingness on the VOE-R, these analyses were repeated using a composite of the VOE-R items for which there was no pattern of missingness ($n = 5$ items, $\alpha = .96$); this analysis led to identical conclusions. In summary, those anticipating immigration status problems had higher anticipated external barriers to their postsecondary plans and lower voca-

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Factor Scores of Dependent Variables by Participant Sex, Age, and Immigration Status

	Vocational outcome expectations ^b		External barriers ^{a,c}		Internal barriers ^d	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sex						
Female ($n = 301$)	.05	.98	.01	.83	-.00	.85
Male ($n = 173$)	-.05	.97	-.01	.94	.01	.93
Total ($N = 474$)	.01	.97	.00	.87	.00	.88
Age						
14–17 years ($n = 390$)	.02	.96	-.07	.85	-.02	.89
18–19 years ($n = 86$)	-.06	1.06	.28	.94	.04	.86
Total ($N = 476$)	.00	.98	-.00	.88	-.01	.88
Immigration status						
Not a barrier ($n = 227$)	.17	.91	-.27	.86	-.19	.82
May be a barrier ($n = 252$)	-.16	1.03	.24	.82	.17	.91
Total ($N = 479$)	-.00	.99	.00	.88	-.00	.89

^a Main effect for age, $F(1, 472) = 9.88$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .02$. ^b Main effect for Immigration status $F(1, 472) = 15.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$. ^c Main effect for Immigration status, $F(1, 472) = 37.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. ^d Main effect for Immigration status $F(1, 472) = 19.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$.

tional outcome expectations; older students had higher anticipated external barriers.

Next, we tested the effects of immigration status, sex, and age on postsecondary education plans. We used a four-way frequency analysis to develop a loglinear model; model testing began with examination of the saturated model in order to identify significant effects. The final reduced model (which includes the effects described below and their lower-order component effects) provided a satisfactory fit to the data, $\chi^2(6) = 5.63, p = .47$. We hypothesized that Latina/o students' school plans would vary as a function of whether or not they anticipated problems with their immigration status. Thus, the critical test of our hypothesis would be a school plans by immigration status interaction. This interaction was significant, $\chi^2(2) = 11.94, p = .003$. Focused Helmert contrasts were used to break down this interaction. The first contrast was significant ($Z = 2.64, p = .008$), with observed frequencies showing that individuals who did not anticipate immigration status problems were more likely to plan on pursuing postsecondary education (88.6%) as compared with individuals that did anticipate this problem (81.5%). The second contrast was also significant ($Z = 1.93, p = .053$). Examination of the observed frequencies among those planning to pursue postsecondary education showed that individuals who did not anticipate immigration status problems were more likely to pursue a 4-year degree over a 2-year degree (51.0% vs. 37.6%) whereas individuals that did anticipate this problem showed the opposite pattern (34.4% vs. 47.1%; see Table 2).

This two-way interaction of school plans and immigration status was also qualified by two significant higher-order three-way interactions. First, there was a three-way interaction of school plans, immigration status and sex, $\chi^2(2) = 10.22, p = .006$. We again used Helmert contrasts to break down this complex pattern; the second contrast was significant ($Z = 2.67, p = .008$). Examination of the observed frequencies showed that Latina girls who anticipate immigration status problems were more likely to plan on pursuing a 2-year degree than a 4-year degree (54% vs. 32.1%), whereas Latino boys who anticipated this problem were about as likely to plan to pursue a 2-year as a 4-year degree (36.4% vs. 38.6%).

Second, there was a three-way interaction of school plans, immigration status, and age, $\chi^2(2) = 6.10, p = .05$. Helmert

contrasts revealed the first contrast was significant. Examination of the observed frequencies showed that among older students, those who anticipated immigration status problems were less likely to plan on pursuing postsecondary education than those who did not anticipate this problem (70.7% vs. 93.9%). Younger students who anticipated immigration status problems were about as likely to plan on pursuing postsecondary education as those who did not anticipate this problem (84.3% vs. 87.4%). In summary, this analysis indicated that anticipation of immigration status problems was associated with the type of postsecondary education Latina girls planned to pursue, and with whether or not older students planned to pursue postsecondary education.

Discussion

Over the last two decades there has been increasing attention in the career development literature to the educational experiences, attainment levels, career aspirations, and perceived barriers of Latina/o students in the U.S. Attention to the career development of undocumented Latina/o students has been sparse, with only a handful of studies directly addressing this issue, and most focusing on college students (Ortiz & Hinojosa, 2010; Pabón López & López, 2009; Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez, Cortés, et al., 2010). The aim of this study is to understand whether Latina/o high school students' vocational outcome expectations, anticipated barriers, and postsecondary plans varied as a function of their immigration status. We approximated immigration status with an item assessing the extent to which participants expected to encounter problems with their immigration status if they pursued future education and training. In the remainder of this article, we discuss our findings in the context of current literature, and then describe implications of these findings for practice, policy, and research.

Future Expectations

The future expectations assessed in this study were vocational outcome expectations (e.g., expectations of being successful in their chosen career/occupation, achieving their career/occupational goals, and having a career/occupation that is respected in society), and anticipated barriers to postsecondary education, including

Table 2
Postsecondary Education Plans as a Function of Anticipated Immigration Status Barriers, Gender, and Age

		Anticipated immigration status barriers	Postsecondary education plans		
			No school	2 Year	4 Year
Males	Yes	42 (18.5%)	107 (47.1%)	78 (34.4%)	
	No	23 (11.4%)	76 (37.6%)	103 (51.0%)	
Females	Yes	22 (25.0%)	32 (36.4%)	34 (38.6%)	
	No	8 (11.9%)	30 (44.8%)	29 (43.3%)	
Younger	Yes	19 (13.9%)	74 (54.0%)	44 (32.1%)	
	No	15 (11.4%)	44 (33.3%)	73 (55.3%)	
Older	Yes	29 (15.7%)	84 (45.4%)	72 (38.9%)	
	No	21 (12.6%)	56 (33.5%)	90 (53.9%)	
	Yes	12 (29.3%)	23 (56.1%)	6 (14.6%)	
	No	2 (6.1%)	19 (57.6%)	12 (36.4%)	

Note. This table displays frequencies (and percentages within rows) for participants' postsecondary education plans broken down by anticipated immigration status barriers (top section), as well as gender (middle section) and age (bottom section). Rows add to 100%.

external barriers (e.g., family responsibilities, combining work with schooling, lack of parent access to information) and internal barriers (not being smart enough or confident enough). Consistent with our hypotheses, students who thought they might encounter problems with their immigration status anticipated more external barriers and were less optimistic about their future careers. Given the lack of legal vocational pathways for undocumented students, and the challenges of paying for postsecondary education (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Ortiz & Hinojosa, 2010; Pabón López & López, 2009), these more negative future expectations may be realistic. Anticipated immigration status problems were not associated with internal barriers. This may be due in part to undocumented students' resilience, a point we return to shortly.

We did not find gender differences in any of the three future expectations variables. The external barriers that we assessed included family responsibilities and pregnancy/having children, issues salient to gender role expectations. Though some research indicates Latinas are expected to contribute more time to family obligations than Latino males, Hardway and Fuligni (2006) found no gender differences in the (considerable) amount of daily time that Mexican-origin adolescents in the U.S. spent providing help to their families. Pérez et al. (2009) did not find gender differences among undocumented students with respect to risk and protective factors or academic outcomes.

Oftentimes students are unaware of the implications of their documentation status until their final year of high school, when they attempt to complete financial aid forms, college or job applications, and are expected to provide personal identifying information (e.g., a social security number) that they do not possess (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Gonzales, 2011). Indeed, older students expected to encounter more external barriers, but surprisingly, they did not differ from their younger counterparts with respect to internal barriers or vocational outcome expectations. Perhaps this was due to participants' exposure to conference messages of encouragement and information about their postsecondary options; these findings may reflect a conference "treatment effect," but the data do not allow this possibility to be tested.

Postsecondary Schooling

Overall, those who anticipated that immigration status would be a barrier to pursuing their postsecondary plans were less likely to plan on pursuing postsecondary education. Latina girls who anticipated immigration status problems and planned to go to college were more likely to plan to pursue a 2-year rather than a 4-year degree, but their male counterparts were equally likely to plan to pursue 2-year or 4-year degrees. A report by the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (2012) indicates that community colleges are more likely to enroll undocumented students, and to have schedules that accommodate full- and part-time workers, relative to universities. This subsample of girls may have been more realistic and/or less confident about their postsecondary prospects at 4-year institutions than were the boys; the data do not allow this question to be explored. Older students anticipating immigration status barriers were less likely to plan to pursue postsecondary education than younger students, perhaps because they were already encountering barriers as they attempted tasks associated with applying to college.

The growing population of young people ages 16 to 19 in the U.S. who are not U.S. citizens are less likely to be working or going to school than their citizen counterparts (NCES, 2007). The present findings suggest that for Latina/os, education plans may be circumscribed while still in high school when they anticipate immigration status problems. High school students with lower expectations may be more likely to give up on socially sanctioned pathways to economic well-being. Without legal pathways to work or schooling, what will these young people do in order to care for themselves and their families?

The majority of students planned to continue their education immediately after high school, even when they anticipated immigration status problems. Although undocumented Latina/o students face unique challenges relative to other students, they also are resilient (Enriquez, 2011; Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez, Cortés, et al., 2010; Pérez, Espinoza, et al., 2010). For example, Pérez et al. (2009) found that despite social rejection and having to put in long hours at work, undocumented immigrant students who participated in school activities, and who had supportive parents and friends, reported high levels of academic achievement and hope for the future. Many were valedictorians and scholar athletes, and aspired to be doctors and professionals (Pérez et al., 2009). The present sample had just received encouragement and information, and that may have bolstered their future expectations at the time. Unfortunately, in spite of their enormous potential contributions, the undocumented students are unlikely to be able to pursue their education plans.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is one of the first to explore Latina/o high school students' future expectations and plans in relation to anticipated immigration status problems. Limitations include the lack of direct information about participants' immigration status, and use of a single item to assess anticipated immigration status problems. In grouping participants who "maybe," "probably," and "definitely" will encounter immigration status problems if they pursue postsecondary education, we may have masked potential differences between these groups. At the same time, in keeping with Arbona et al.'s (2010) finding that the threat of deportation affects even those *with* documentation, the present findings indicate that simply anticipating immigration status problems is associated with lower expectations. With respect to generalizability, it is possible that our findings would have differed in a sample that had not just received permission for and attended a leadership conference; this may be a subset of Latina/o students who experience greater support and encouragement, are more aware of resources that might help them to overcome barriers, and who feel more optimistic about the future. In addition, we note that the Pacific Northwest region has not passed highly restrictive, anti-immigrant legislation such as in Arizona and Alabama. Anticipated immigration status barriers might have stronger and more negative associations with future expectations and plans in samples of Latina/o students in other regions.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

Prior research has identified the gap between the high educational aspirations and the actual educational and occupational

attainment of U.S. Latinos. This gap is greater for those without documentation. Findings from the present study suggest that Latina/o students who anticipate problems with their immigration status have lower future expectations and postsecondary education plans. A number of these resilient youth will pursue, and obtain, a higher education degree (Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez, Cortés, et al., 2010; Pérez, Espinoza, et al., 2010). Most will not.

In considering the implications for practice at the individual level, we exclude such recommendations as lowering expectations, or advising undocumented students to give up the pursuit of higher education, to accept a life at the margins of society or to leave the country that is their home for one that likely is unfamiliar and unknown. Such a recommendation lacks both morality and practicality, and holds individuals responsible for a situation borne of contradictory and incoherent immigration policies of the past several decades (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Thus, at the individual level, we recommend a response that acknowledges the larger context contributing to the constraints experienced by undocumented Latina/o students, fosters critical consciousness (e.g., Diemer & Blustein, 2006; Diemer, Kauffman, Koenig, Trahan, & Hsieh, 2006), and empowers them to engage in developmentally appropriate vocational and educational tasks.

The developmental consequences of “growing up in the shadows,” without authorization, are described in detail by Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Ternaishi, and Suárez-Orozco (2011) who note that instead of entering into the period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) they enter one of “submerging adulthood” (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 455). Those who work with undocumented students should be educated about their unique and significant stressors. Communicating awareness of challenges, understanding, empathy, and support can provide a significant emotional boost to undocumented students, who typically bear their secret in silence for fear of reprisal (Hernández et al., 2010; Pérez, Cortés, et al., 2010). Undocumented students will have acquired many life skills that should be identified, affirmed, and translated to navigating their futures (Enriquez, 2011). Jackson, Kacanski, Rust, and Beck’s (2006) intervention to help urban minority high school youth increase awareness of supports for facilitating their educational attainment may be particularly useful for students without documentation.

At the level of schools, teachers and guidance counselors need accurate information about unauthorized immigrants to counter fear-based rumors and stereotypes, and to be able to provide appropriate recommendations and guidance (Contreras & Stritikus, 2008). Sources such as the National Immigration Law Center (NILC, 2011; www.nilc.org) provide updated information and resources. Pérez (2010) notes that The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), the University of Southern California Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, and the National Council of La Raza maintain lists of scholarships that are available for undocumented students. Proactive sharing of such information may reduce in some measure the risk of exposure that families without documentation face as they consider their children’s options. Gildersleeve and Ranero’s (2010) recommendations for college student affairs professionals are salient for high school staff as well, and include parent outreach, culturally relevant inclusion practices, and fostering means by which undocumented students can demonstrate their cultural assets and develop as leaders. Changing the larger

school climate may be critical to the optimal educational and vocational attainment of undocumented Latina/o students. As states attempt to or enact legislation that further restricts the rights of people without documentation, and punishes those who do not enforce restrictions, school personnel are faced with greater challenges to protect and support their students.

On the policy front, passage of legislation allowing undocumented immigrant students to pursue higher education, to work, and to obtain citizenship (e.g., the DREAM Act; NILC, 2011) would significantly improve their prospects for achieving their career and educational goals (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2011). The policy enacted by the Obama administration on August 15, 2012 is a small step forward for some undocumented youth, as they can apply for a temporary deferral of deportation and permission to work, but it is not enough. The tremendous social and economic costs of incarceration and deportation of those who are undocumented (Goyle & Jaeger, 2005), and the social costs of failure to provide a legal pathway to adulthood (e.g., Gonzales, 2007), should inform policy-making. Noting the benefits of an “educated, multilingual, multicultural, heterogeneous citizenry” (p. 332), Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2009) recommended that the Obama administration abandon its inherited “sink or swim” approach to immigrants, and instead develop coherent policies that acknowledge the economic and labor agendas underlying the current situation, and promote the integration of immigrant youth and their families into schools and the labor market. They also recommended increasing the availability of preschool and higher education to unauthorized immigrants, expansion of afterschool and mentoring programs, and the development of national sources of college information for immigrant students and their families. Policy change efforts should also include consciousness-raising to help the U.S. public distinguish between fact and fear-driven fictions (Beirich, 2007; Casas & Cabrera, 2011) and to extinguish the appalling trend of hate-crimes directed against Latina/os (SPLC, 2009; 2011).

Future research on the educational and vocational development of undocumented high school students should investigate the role of early awareness of the implications of an undocumented status. Early awareness could lead to better preparation for future challenges; however, it may also discourage students without documentation from pursuing college preparatory coursework. Exploration of resilience among undocumented college students (Pérez et al., 2009; Pérez, Cortés, et al., 2010; Pérez, Espinoza, et al., 2010) should be extended to high school students, along with investigation of the environmental supports most important in facilitating educational success, persistence, and college enrollment. A longitudinal investigation of the relationships between barriers such as lack of documentation, supports, high school retention, and enrollment in college could provide greater insight into the interventions that might be most successful in optimizing the career development of undocumented students. Finally, research investigating the psychological and social consequences of anti-immigration legislation on individuals and communities is critical.

Conclusion

The present study extends previous career development research on Latina/o adolescents and on undocumented college students by

testing associations between an approximation of immigration status and future expectations of Latina/o high school students. The handwritten comments of one conference participant capture well the resilience and optimism evident among many of the conference participants: “(With) education, nothing is impossible, everything I want to do, I can do it.” Multifaceted, multilevel strategies are required on the part of educators, policymakers, and researchers to create pathways by which the future expectations of undocumented Latina/o students can come to fruition.

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