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Identifying Institutional Best Practices: Supporting Undocumented Student Success in a Time of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Due to the sensitive nature of identifying undocumented status, it is difficult to examine the impact of immigration status in the context of higher education and factors crucial to postsecondary and career success. What we do know is that prior to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and for students ineligible for these programs, the biggest structural barriers hindering college success were centered around prohibitive laws restricting access to critical financial resources such as federally-funded supports or any form of work study. Additional research is necessary to address the impact of relatively new and crucial supports in facilitating college success among undocumented youth – especially during a period of uncertainty for programs like DACA,TPS, and the unprecedented impact of COVID-19. TheDream.US is an organization that partners with colleges in 19 states and Washington D.C. to provide approximately 6,500 undocumented students with private scholarships and tailored programming to complete an associate and/or bachelor's degree. This best practices paper draws from TheDream.US's latest survey data of 2,681 undocumented students to identify their specific needs for college completion and career readiness, and institutional supports for equitable access to social mobility.

Keywords: undocumented immigration, college success, social mobility

The inclusion of undocumented immigrants in the discussion of college access and success is crucial for equitable educational and career outcomes in the United States. Recently, programs such a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which has provided approximately 800,000 undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as minors a renewable, two-year period of temporary relief from deportation and eligibility for a work permit, and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which has provided approximately 320,000 individuals unable to return to their home country due to ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other extraordinary conditions with a renewable work permit and temporary relief from deportation, have reduced barriers in accessing educational and economic opportunities for undocumented immigrants (Gonzales et al. 2014; Wong et al., 2018). However, it is important to acknowledge that with or without DACA or TPS, undocumented immigrants have been and will continue to be an integral part of the American education system and workforce. It is essential to identify best practices in supporting undocumented students in college for academic and career success, especially

following a period of heightened uncertainty for immigrant communities during the Trump administration and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Questions regarding the experiences of undocumented immigrants in higher education and the job sector nationally remain unanswered. This is in part due to the limitations of collecting data on the undocumented population and their legal vulnerability (Massey & Capoferro, 2004). The Migration Policy Institute estimates there are almost 98,000 undocumented students graduating from U.S. high schools every year and anywhere between 5 to 49 percent are overcoming steep economic and structural barriers to attend colleges and universities across the country and find gainful employment afterwards (Batalova et al., 2014; Gonzales, 2011; Ortega et al., 2018; Passel & Cohn, 2009; Zong & Batalova, 2019). Yet relatively little is known about the higher education and employment outcomes of undocumented young adults.

A number of qualitative studies conducted in California draw attention to key barriers to college access including prohibitive laws, lack of tuition assistance, and the financial need to prioritize low-wage work over school in the face of their families' low incomes (Abrego, 2006; Chavez et al., 2007; Gonzales, 2010; Perez et al., 2009; Seif, 2004). Studies addressing the experiences of undocumented immigrants in higher education suggest that despite being hyper-selected among their peers, in that they represent the most resilient, high performing undocumented students, their legal status negatively impacts academic performance (Gonzales, 2016; Hsin & Ortega, 2017; Terriquez, 2015).

Drawing from results from TheDream.US[1] Scholar Survey of 2,681 undocumented college students, we identify the specific needs of this population and best practices in supporting their college success and career readiness. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the urgency for institutional, state, and federal laws to ensure equal opportunity and access to higher education, gainful employment, and pathways to permanent status for all undocumented immigrants. This is particularly pressing given the impact of COVID-19. For example, despite undocumented immigrants and students working on the frontlines in essential industries such as healthcare, food and goods provisions, and education, and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on racial and ethnic minority groups – they were excluded from federal financial relief, including higher education funds in the CARES Act (CDC, 2020; Murakami, 2020; NAE, 2020; Wood, 2020; Zamarripa, 2020).

Undocumented Youth and Young Adults

There are approximately 4.6 million undocumented young adults aged 16-34 currently residing in the United States.

[1] TheDream.US is the nation's largest college access and success program serving undocumented immigrants. Over the past seven years, TheDream.US has awarded over 6,500 scholarships for Dreamers – undocumented immigrant students – to pursue a college degree at one of 70+ Partner Colleges in 19 states and Washington D.C.

Considered "illegal," this group accounts for over 40 percent of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants navigating the precariousness of living within a restrictive political system barring their access to federal benefits and civic participation (Gelatt & Zong, 2018; MPI, 2018). Having arrived in the United States before adulthood, these undocumented youth and young adults are attending or have attended public K-12 schools, growing up firmly rooted in American society and developing deep social ties to the country. Not only are they coming of age and pursuing higher education in states historically considered entry points for immigrants, such as California, Texas, and New York, but they are also in newer destinations such as Georgia, Illinois, and Colorado (Passel & Cohn, 2018). Furthermore, the numbers and diversity in countries of origin affected by this experience are at historical highs (Gonzales & Raphael, 2017). While approximately half of all undocumented immigrants are from Mexico, growth rates of undocumented immigrants have been fastest for populations from Asia, Central America, and Africa (Rosenblum & Ruiz Soto, 2015).

Laws and Access Barriers

Undocumented immigrants have been systematically excluded from federal and state government, such as laws restricting access to key forms of financial aid for college and professional licensure for increased economic opportunity, and have navigated life under threat of deportation (Kasinitz, 2012; Varsanyi, 2006). However, there have been notable developments at the national level. According to Plyler v. Doe, all students are guaranteed K-12 education regardless of immigration status. It has provided relative legal invisibility for undocumented children as they do not experience the need to confront their legal status until they try to obtain a driver's license or apply for college (Gonzales et al., 2015; Gonzales, 2016). Today, DACA and TPS provide a select group of undocumented immigrants temporary relief from deportation and eligibility for a work permit once assigned a social security number and the Biden administration has proposed legislation providing pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and a budget proposal expanding the Pell Grant to DACA recipients (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2021; The White House, 2021).[2]

The discussion on college access and social mobility for undocumented students, however, remains at the state-level. Since the rapid growth of the undocumented population in the 1990s and settlement into newer destination states, state governments across the country have implemented individual provisions and laws to extend or withhold benefits for higher education (i.e. access to in-state tuition and state aid), mobility (i.e. access to driver's licenses or other forms of ID), and employment (i.e. access to professional licensure) to

[2] https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FY2022-Discretionary-Request.pdf

undocumented immigrants. Since the Trump administration adopted anti-immigration practices such as rescinding DACA in September 2017 and TPS for certain recipients in October 2018, legal activity at the state level has increased and become more specific to types of undocumented status, oftentimes excluding those without DACA or TPS (Jawetz, 2019; NCSL, 2016).

Currently 17 states and Washington D.C. offer in-state tuition rates at public universities for undocumented students by state law, at least 11 of which also offer state financial aid (NCSL, 2021). The remaining states impose varying levels of exclusion and criminalization with extreme cases such as Georgia where undocumented students are barred from receiving in-state tuition (Perez, 2014; NCSL, 2021). Similar policies shape undocumented access to benefits affecting economic mobility such as driver's licenses, health care, food assistance, and licensure to practice in fields such as law and medicine (Castañeda & Melo, 2014; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Stuesse & Coleman, 2014). This political context means a heterogeneous and uneven landscape of state immigration practices that demonstrate the multitude of undocumented experiences (Gonzales & Raphael, 2017).

Survey

During May and June 2020, TheDream.US administered its second annual "Scholar Survey" to better understand the college experiences of program participants and the contexts in which they navigated their college and career journeys. Given the unprecedented pandemic, questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 were included. The survey was sent via email to approximately 3,850 program participants who were enrolled in college during the 2019-2020 academic year. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted amidst two other significant events – first, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to reject the Trump Administration's attempt to terminate DACA: and second, the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the heightened Black Lives Matter movement and attention to racial justice. According to Scholars, they reported higher levels of anxiety but also resilience as they made their way through college in an increasingly tenuous immigration and social climate.

Participants

There were 2,681 survey participants, resulting in a 70% response rate. Participants were enrolled in 86 colleges throughout 17 states and Washington D.C., with New York (18%), Texas (16%), Florida (13%), and California (11%) accounting for the highest proportions of survey respondents (Table 1). Eighty six percent (n=2,302) of respondents had DACA, 3% had TPS, 11% were undocumented with neither DACA or TPS, and less than 1% were of other undocumented status or had adjusted their status to permanent resident. Eighty percent identified as Latina or Latino, 10% multiracial, 5% black, 3% Asian, and 1% non-Hispanic

Table 1.
Social and Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants.

	N	%
Immigration Status		
DACA	2,302	85.9
Undocumented	281	10.5
TPS	75	2.8
Other undocumented status	16	0.1
Adjusted status	7	0.0
Gender		
Female	1,872	69.8
Male	804	30.0
Prefer not to identify	5	0.0
Ethnoracial Identification		
Latina/o	2,152	80.3
Multiracial	271	10.1
Black	137	5.1
Asian	94	3.5
White – non-Latina/o	27	1.0
First generation college student	2,286	85.3
Year in college		
Freshmen	488	18.2
Sophomore	653	24.3
Junior	755	28.2
Senior	595	22.2
Graduate	190	7.1
States of college attendance		
New York	469	17.5
Texas	433	16.2
Florida	352	13.1
California	292	10.9
Colorado	187	7.0
Arizona	165	6.2
Illinois	140	5.2
Connecticut	117	4.4
Tennessee	115	4.3
Other	411	15.3
Average age of arrival to the U.S.	4	
Average age	22	
Average household income	$29,818	

Source: TheDream.US 2019-2020 Scholar Survey and TheDream.US administrative data, N=2,681

white[3]. Two-thirds of participants were female, which reflects the overall TheDream.US student population. College enrollment included, 18% freshman (n=488), 24% sophomores, 28% juniors, 22% seniors, and 7% of students who graduated in Fall 2019.

The survey participants reflect a self-selected group of high performing undocumented students as they were all enrolled in or recently graduated from college. However, the majority of participants come from low-income family backgrounds. Eighty five percent were the first in their family to attend college and the average household income was approximately $30,000. The majority have also spent most of their lives in the United States, with the average age of arrival to the U.S. being four years old. The average age of respondents at the time of survey was 22.

"Given these uncertainties, higher education institutions, state governments and the federal government must address barriers posed by legal status by extending institutional, financial, and emotional supports to all students regardless of their immigration status."

Key Findings and Best Practices

Overall, anxiety regarding legal status and the financial impact of COVID-19 weighed heavily on students during the 2019-2020 academic year. The economic burden brought on by the loss of their and immediate family members' income was significant. Participants' confidence in achieving their academic goals and sense of community, and belonging in the United States decreased when compared to the previous year's survey. Students had heightened concerns regarding their short and long-term plans and ability to pursue meaningful careers. Remarkedly, despite these challenges, participants reported remaining focused on completing college, giving back to their communities, and pursuing post-undergraduate goals. The findings reflect national conversations on the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on the Black and Hispanic/Latinx communities (CDC, 2021; Tai et al., 2020). Furthermore, the continued volatility of DACA and TPS, and absence of pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants constricts their ability to recover from an ongoing pandemic and stifles mobility in the country that is their home. It also creates high levels of anxiety for their safety and livelihood as well as for their family members, who are often also undocumented. Given these uncertainties, higher education institutions, state governments and the federal government must address barriers posed by legal status by extending institutional, financial, and emotional supports to all students regardless of their immigration status.

[3] Less than 1% preferred not to respond.

The importance of belonging at college

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, all students reported moving to remote learning during the Spring 2020 semester and the majority were satisfied with the supports received from their college in response to the pandemic. Seventy seven percent were "moderately" or "very satisfied" with the support received from faculty and 82% were "moderately" or "very satisfied" with the support received from college staff. However, the frequency and quality of interactions with faculty and college staff decreased when compared to the previous academic year. This reflected student narratives of finding the transition to virtual learning disruptive, isolating, and worrisome for their academic journey. Twenty nine percent expressed "less" or "a lot less" confidence in graduating on-time since COVID-19 and maintaining a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher.

The learning resources students utilized and needed the most were virtual check-ins with their TheDream.US Scholar advisor, academic advisors, faculty, and classmates. Forty four percent also utilized access to free internet and 35% for learning devices. Thus, not only are tangible tools such as consistent access to learning devices and internet crucial for undocumented students, students reported they value interpersonal supports from mentors and peers on-campus. This suggests that feeling a sense of belonging in a college environment is important for undocumented and non-traditional students; especially as belonging varies by institutional and student characteristics and tends to be lower for racial -ethnic minority and first-generation students. Strong networks of social supports and having someone believe in their ability to succeed contributes to increased motivation and engagement on-campus that promote perseverance (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Johnson, 2018; Lei et. al., 2018; Tinto, 2016). Colleges should ensure that faculty and college staff are sensitive and open to the experiences of undocumented students to maintain student engagement in a remote and hybrid-learning environment.

Career readiness and economic livelihood

COVID-19 decreased income significantly and heightened anxiety regarding financial stability for undocumented students and their families. The percentage of students working in addition to school decreased from 70% prior to COVID-19 to 43% post COVID-19. Of those working, 71% were in industries considered "essential" or "front-line" such as food and goods provisions, healthcare, and education. Eighty three percent had an immediate family member whose job was also affected by COVID-19. Sixty one percent stated access to money for rent and utilities was "worse" or "much worse" since COVID-19 and 86% were "more" or "much more" anxious about supporting family members financially. These outcomes suggest that it is imperative for higher education institutions, businesses, state governments, and the federal government to include undocumented immigrants in their response to COVID-19 and to provide sustainable supports for economic recovery and equal opportunity for

social mobility. Colleges must extend institutional aid and raise private funds for emergency grants to undocumented students in light of their exclusion from higher education funds in the CARES Act stimulus package. State governments and the federal government must ensure the inclusion of undocumented immigrants with or without DACA or TPS in all provisions of future COVID-19 relief packages.

Even without the pressures of COVID-19, undocumented college students, especially those without DACA, face steep challenges in building career blocks while in school. For example, securing internships during college is considered an integral part of career readiness and research indicates internships increase employability upon graduation (Callahan & Benzing, 2004; Knouse et. al., 1999; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Saltikoff, 2017). However, during the 2019-2020 academic year, only 30% of TheDream.US students completed internships – half of whom were paid. The most common reason for not participating in internships was difficulty finding paid internships that fit with their existing work and/or class schedule. Furthermore, students with DACA or TPS must navigate awareness of their own employment rights, as employers and recruiters are often hesitant to hire them, unaware that they can be hired legally, or deny applicants on account of legal status (Campbell, 2018; Jordan, 2020; Maurer, 2020). Those with neither DACA or TPS are completely shut out from internship and hiring opportunities in most industries. Sixty six percent of TheDream.US students were looking for a job aligned with their career path. This increased to 75% for senior students and 78% of recent graduates. Addressing the unique institutional challenges undocumented immigrants face in finding job opportunities will allow for career development during and after college. To achieve equitable career readiness for all students in college, higher education institutions should establish income earning opportunities open to all undocumented undergraduate students, with or without DACA or TPS. This could be in the form of fellowships and teaching assistantships that can be disbursed as grant funds. Campus career service centers should include staff trained to provide professional development and job placement opportunities for undocumented immigrants with and without work authorization. For example, for students without work authorization, resources on alternative income opportunities, such as starting a business or worker cooperatives, should be readily accessible.

Businesses should include undocumented college students and graduates in the revitalization of the economy. Businesses should provide paid internships and apprenticeships for undocumented students and graduates with DACA or TPS. They should proactively recruit and hire graduates through their website, social media, job fairs, and opportunity placement firms. Human Resources and hiring managers must be trained and informed of the rights of DACA and TPS applicants and employees.

Another crucial issue that must be addressed by state governments and the federal government is professional or occupational licensure. Fifty seven percent of TheDream.US students are pursuing careers requiring licensure to practice, such as medical, legal, or engineering careers. However, federal law restricts states from extending professional or commercial licenses to aliens and undocumented immigrants (8 U.S. Code § 1621). Currently, only 11 states have passed legislation opting out of the federal restrictions to authorize occupational licensure for certain professions to undocumented immigrants, mostly for those with DACA or TPS (CLINIC, 2019). Extending licensure for all professions in all states to individuals regardless of immigration status provides a means of building a career for undocumented immigrants and is beneficial for the economy and communities in which they are rooted in. Increased wages from immigrant professionals means increased tax revenue and a supply of labor to fills jobs that are in high demand, such as healthcare (NCSL, 2017; State of New Jersey, 2020; Williams, 2019).

Personal well-being and community supports

Racial-ethnic minority and immigrant communities have been harder hit by COVID-19 due to long-standing inequities in the healthcare system and economy. Systemic inequality is associated with a number of factors increasing risk and exposure to the disease (CDC, 2021; Tai et al., 2020). Living in multigenerational households makes quarantine difficult, which is particularly precarious as highly populated homes often include elderly family members. Family members are more likely to work in "essential" jobs such as food and goods provisions where virus transmission has been high. Detainment in an immigration detention center increases exposure. Cultural and language barriers may deter undocumented immigrants from seeking and receiving the right medical assistance. Furthermore, despite federal policies such as the CARES Act and Families First Act expanding health care services such as free COVID-19 testing to undocumented immigrants, fears around immigration enforcement and "public charge"[4] are pushing undocumented immigrants further into the shadows and escalating fears (CDC, 2020; Duncan & Horton, 2020; IDSA, 2020; NILC, 2020).

Almost 90% of TheDream.US students are living with immediate family or relatives and 84% were "more" or "much more" anxious about the health and safety of their family members since the outbreak of COVID-19. The familial and financial strains of living with family have taken a toll on students. Forty six percent reported feelings of loneliness increased "moderately" or "a lot" since COVID-19. 20% reported they needed one-on-one counseling. However, 30% said their access to physical or mental health care worsened since COVID-19. For

[4] "Public charge" is part of an American immigration law that penalizes immigrants for utilizing public assistance (e.g. Medicaid), subsequently making it harder for them to adjust their immigration status.

undocumented students juggling school, work, and living in multigenerational households finding the physical and emotional space and privacy to seek counseling is difficult. Colleges and healthcare providers should provide services and information to help undocumented students access physical and mental healthcare. In particular, they should designate counselors and staff trained to serve immigrant populations to increase the utilization of mental health supports. Institutions should also provide services and information to help undocumented students access physical and mental healthcare Similar to the importance of belonging on-campus, sense of community and belonging in the United States must be taken into consideration for undocumented immigrants who consider America to be their home. Forty three percent of TheDream.US students said their sense of community and belonging in the United States "decreased a lot" or "moderately" since COVID-19. Colleges and state governments can develop social-emotional supports addressing feelings of isolation and loneliness. For example, creating a platform and space such as a Town Hall to share experiences and resources and connect with others.

Legal counsel and reform

Since the Trump administration announced it would end the DACA program in September 2017 and TPS for individuals from certain countries, the undocumented community has been subjected to heightened public scrutiny and life disruptions. For example, the continued volatility of DACA and TPS and increased ICE raids. The added stresses of COVID-19 increased TheDream.US participants' feelings of anxiety. 70% of TheDream.US students were "more" (32%) or "much more" (38%) anxious about their legal status; with 55% seeing their legal status as a "very" or "extremely" significant barrier in achieving their long-term goals. Research suggests that the racialization of undocumented immigration contributes to the view that legal status is the "master status" for undocumented young adults – and that legal exclusion will prevent or severely reduce economic and social capital (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012; Gonzales, 2016).

To alleviate the immediate precariousness of being undocumented, colleges can provide legal and financial assistance for DACA renewals and first time applications, should the Department of Homeland Security be able to approve first time applications[5]. Colleges should raise and extend private funds for the $495 DACA renewal and application fee. They should also provide services and information on accessing pro bono legal assistance for completing DACA renewals and first-time applications, general immigration consultation, and immigrants' rights as it pertains to employment and housing rights. To address the overall

[5] On January 20, 2021, President Joe Biden signed a memorandum ordering that the Secretary of Homeland Security preserve and fortify DACA. However, on July 16, 2021, a Texas federal judge issued an injunction barring the Department of Homeland Security from approving any new DACA applications."

prohibitive laws affecting undocumented immigrants, federal, state, and local policymakers should first, expand eligibility requirements for DACA – for example, allowing those who arrived after June 15, 2007 to apply. Second, congress should pass legislation, such as the DREAM Act providing permanent protections and pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Third, undocumented students should be provided access to federal financial aid and inclusion in stimulus packages for higher education. Fourth, enact federal and state legislation extending provisions key to social mobility including in-statue tuition, state and institutional financial aid, occupational licenses, and driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants.

Resilience and ambition

Despite the incredible challenges imposed on undocumented college students during the 2019-2020 academic year, they remained resilient and ambitious. Students remained committed to paying it forward as 78% "frequently" or "always" felt the importance of giving back to community – constant with last year's survey. Eighty nine percent of TheDream.US students did not change their academic course load since COVID-19 and almost all students who intended to return to school in Fall 2020 re-enrolled. Seventy one percent want to pursue graduate school, of which the majority want to enroll within 2 years of completing their undergraduate studies.

Graduate school has largely been absent from the discussion of undocumented students in postsecondary education (Kennedy, 2021; Mcardle, 2015). The higher costs of pursuing a professional degree, dearth of available graduate scholarships, and restrictions on taking out loans means even steeper barriers for undocumented students to access graduate school. Addressing these barriers is key to the discussion of equitable postsecondary and career outcomes. There has been a steady rise in the share of college graduates overall completing advanced degrees, with 37% of individuals with bachelor's degrees having a completed a graduate degree in 2015 (Baum & Steele, 2017). And those who do, on average earn higher salaries than those with just an undergraduate degree (Baum & Steele, 2017). As such, higher education institutions and policymakers should consider pathways to increasing graduate school access for undocumented students by providing undocu -friendly resources and application supports, raising and extending private funds and institutional aid for graduate scholarships and fellowships, and extending in-state tuition rates for public universities.

Future Research

There is still much to be learned about the undocumented population in the United States and in particular, the diversity in experiences of the undocumented youth and young adults. In regard to higher education, research has historically identified significant variables such as student engagement and

financial aid in association with positive undergraduate outcomes including persistence, graduation, and career readiness (Finn & Rock, 2007; Lei et al., 2018). Findings, however, are more inconclusive when comparing effects for low-income, minority, first-generation students to traditional students (Hu, 2011; Johnson, 2018; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Legal status has yet to be considered in such comparisons.

In regard to undocumented immigration, the research predominantly focuses on the racialized, marginalized, Latinx (mostly Mexican) experience. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Mexicans represent 47 percent of the undocumented population and altogether around 70 percent of the Latinx population. Still, according to the Center for Migration Studies, a substantial proportion of the undocumented are Asian (16%) and a number are black (6%) immigrants, and we know little about their experiences and trajectories (Passel & Cohn, 2019). Second, while the undocumented are typically lumped together as sharing the same legal status, this ignores differences in legal status within the group. While the majority of undocumented immigrants remain excluded from higher education and the formal labor market due to lack of status, legal changes at the federal level, namely DACA and TPS, have extended temporary, renewable work permits and relief from deportation for just over a million undocumented individuals. Thus, access to opportunity structures vary within the larger umbrella of being "undocumented" and must be examined. Third, the experiences of those with DACA, TPS, or the "truly undocumented" vary by state. Thus far, studies have primarily focused individually on California and Texas where there are high concentrations of undocumented immigrants crossing the southern border (Abrego, 2006; Dougherty, 2010; Gonzales, 2016; Terriquez, 2015). However, since the rapid growth of the undocumented population in the 1990s, they are now present in newer destination states and coming from more diverse countries of origin. State governments across the country have implemented their own provisions and laws to extend or withhold benefits for higher education (i.e. access to in-state tuition and state aid), mobility (i.e. access to driver's licenses or other forms of ID), and employment (i.e. access to professional licensure) to undocumented immigrants. Legal activity at the state level has increased and become more specific to types of undocumented status. Furthermore, life disruptions such as federally enforced U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, and supports, such as community-based organizations providing legal, financial, or social resources differ by state. This variation in protections and benefits affecting a state's climate and receptivity of undocumented immigrants makes geographic location a significant variable in understanding diversity in undocumented experiences (Gonzales & Raphael, 2017).

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