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The College to Workforce Transition for Immigrant Origin Latino/a Young Adults



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Background





Background



Research questions

1. What are the postgraduate experiences of immigrant-origin Latino/a young adults?
2. How, if at all, do immigrant-origin college graduates experience mobility once they enter the labor market full-time?
3. In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic affect immigrant-origin Latino/a young adults' postgraduate experiences?



Immigrant-origin college students

The New York Times

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Children From Immigrant Families Are Increasingly the Face of Higher Education

U.S.-born children of immigrants or immigrant students raised in the United States accounted for nearly 60 percent of the growth in university enrollment since 2000.



Immigrant-origin college students

- Estimates suggest that 5.3 million college students, or nearly 30 percent, come from immigrant families (Batalova & Feldblum 2020).
- College enrollment for children of immigrants has peaked dramatically, a growth of nearly 131 percent between 2000 and 2018 (Batalova & Feldblum 2020).
- The population of immigrant-origin college students has outgrown that of college students from native-born families.



Latino/a immigrant-origin college students

- Most immigrants hail from Latin American countries
 - Most children of immigrants are Latino/a (57%)
- Latinos/as are the largest minority group and the fastest growing population in the U.S.
- Latino/as are more likely to experience unfavorable socioeconomic, political, and legal standing in the U.S.



COVID-19

- Mental health was severely affected (Reyes et al. 2022)
- Increased stress (Hu et al. 2022)
- Ruptured academic lives (Hamlin & Barney 2022)
- Increased family responsibilities (Delgado 2022)
- Immigration status barriers (Delgado 2023)



College to workforce transitions during the pandemic

- Immigrant-origin students are likely to primary contributors to the labor growth in the U.S.



Data and methods

- 90 in-depth longitudinal interviews conducted with Latino/a immigrant-origin young adults between 2018-2023

60

Wave I
2018-2020

30

Wave II
2020

30

Wave III
2023





Table 1. Sample Demographics at Wave III (N=30)

	N	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Women	20	67%
Men	10	33%
<i>Age</i>	25	
<i>Major</i>		
STEM	8	27%
Social Sciences	15	50%
Humanities	3	10%
Other	4	13%
<i>Immigration Status</i>		
Citizen/Lawful Permanent Resident	22	73%
Undocumented with DACA	7	23%
Undocumented without DACA	1	3%
<i>Average Income</i>	\$40,967	
<i>Educational Degree</i>		
Bachelor's (in progress)	3	10%
Bachelor's (completed)	26	87%
Dropped out	1	3%
Pursuing additional schooling	7	23%
<i>Employment Status</i>		
Full-time part	19	63%
Part time	2	7%
Unemployed	3	1%

Wave III

- Interviews at Wave III focused on 5 areas: (1) college graduation, (2) COVID-19 interruptions, (3) family responsibilities, (4) work lives, and (5) attitudes towards adulthood
- I probed for details about how the job was acquired, duties and tasks of each job, compensation, usefulness of college degree, and overall job satisfaction





Findings

1. COVID-19 disruptions
2. Delayed starts and bumpy roads
3. Increased financial pressures
4. Immigration status

COVID-19 disruptions

“I ended up taking an additional year and graduating June 2022. And a large part of that was the pandemic. I was holding on to hope that things would return to some kind of normalcy and I’d be able enjoy my final year in person.”

“I ended up sticking with education. I ended up staying at [her college] to finish a course for that major.”





COVID-19 disruptions

“I graduated and **didn’t have anything set for after graduation.** I spent maybe a month not really doing much...I dreaded graduating because COVID kind of put everyone in a difficult situation so then my graduation plans were kind of thrown all over the place. I felt scared, definitely worried, really stressed because COVID brought on so many other difficulties academically, financially, and emotionally. **After graduation, I didn’t apply to many jobs. I was home.** I came home and lived with my parents because it was the most affordable thing to do.”

COVID-19 disruptions

I helped my mom financially... and with my brother we had doctor's appointments and school... I had to take care of him. Juggling [school], having to work, pay my rent, my bills... all that just took a toll. I entered in a depressive state where I was just like **'I need to go back home, I need to prioritize this [family matters], and then finish school later.'**



Delayed starts and bumpy roads

“I’m not doing what I studied for, to be honest. I graduated with finance and marketing. That’s not what I do...[*What do you do for work?*] I work as an IT auditor for a firm.”



Delayed starts and bumpy roads

“[Graduation] was really exciting because I am the first person in my family to get a degree, to graduate college. At the same time, it was really scary because I feel like there is a lot of expectations to get a really good paying job once you have that degree, you know?”

“It took a while [to get a job]. It was pretty stressful. ‘Cause not a lot of places are hiring people with Chicano Latino Studies degrees. It’s kinda niche. It took a few months honestly, but I found one [a job]



Delayed starts and bumpy roads

“I thought that I had something lined up with the department I was working at for two to three years. I ended up not getting the job on campus so I was unemployed for at least eight months [*pauses*] or a year after graduation.”

“I was working full time [with my mom]. I got really tired. I just was applying. I kept applying and applying. I didn't get anywhere until August 2022. I applied for a coffee shop and I worked at a coffee shop until this year. This year, I got a rare opportunity to be part of a temp position at [university]. They said that I can get an opportunity to become full time if they really like me.”



Increased financial pressures

Vanessa: Are you contributing to rent or bills at your parent's house?

Manny: Basically, now I pay all of those. I pay the water, the trash, the electricity, and the internet and TV bill. From time to time, I help buy groceries, but not a lot at the moment...My mom, for many years, she had a crappy ass car...it was one of those with rust and everything. No A/C, no hot air to blow out, for so many years. I was able to get her a brand new 2021 Jeep.



Increased financial pressures

“I felt bad just being able to save money and not helping my parents. That low-income first gen guilt. So, I decided to start helping my dad pay rent again. It's not a lot, but it's something that I know helps them. So, since I think October, I started helping my dad pay rent on home on top of me paying rent where I live. It's hard honestly having to do all this.”



Increased financial pressures

Vanessa: It seems like you're paying for a lot. How do you deal with all those financial pressures?

Eduardo: Oh my god, I was losing it. So in November, close to December, I did this like very comprehensive budget sheet. Where like it has seven tabs for me to understand where my money is going and like with formulas and everything. So, I was able to like get some clarity with that.



Immigration status

“I wouldn’t be able to have this job without a social [security number].”

“DACA has given me the opportunity to work at [current occupation]. It’s given me the opportunity to work at other jobs that pay pretty well compared to those that do not have that same opportunity.”





Immigration status

“It’s still draining having to do that [renew]. I’m already thinking about how at the end of this year I’m going to have to renew again. Is it the end of this year? I don’t even remember. I have to check my calendar, but I don’t know if the prices are going to go up. The application is ever changing, so it’s super confusing. It’s costly, and it’s exhausting, and it’s stressful. It’s just, although I appreciate it, I just wish it was different. I wish it was four years instead of two years.”

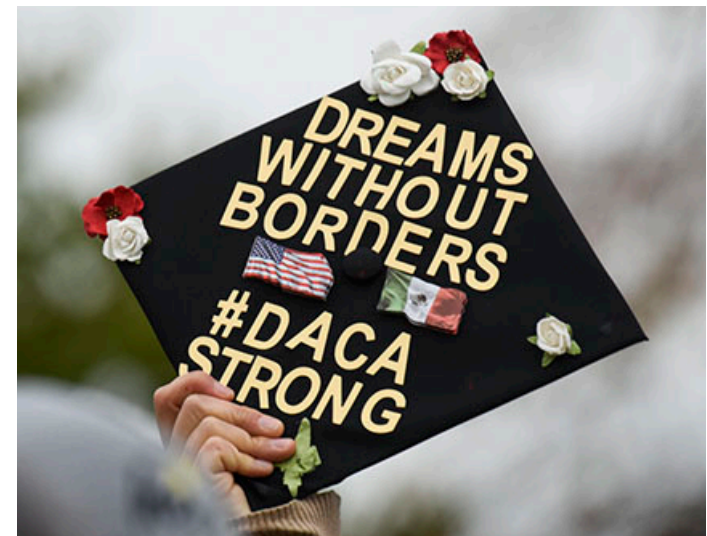


Immigration status

“Working at [juice shop] was really, really hard to accept in the beginning. [After graduation], I refused to work in a low wage job because I felt like ‘I can't believe I went to college and now I'm working in a customer service type of job.’ It was hard for me to accept. Even finding a job, it was not something I can just apply to. I had to find a job through asking a friend. And also making sure the job was safe for me in terms of they're not going to check if I'm undocumented or not.”



Tumultuous transitions



3 ways colleges can help

- 1: Implement a mandatory once a week course “Transitions to the World of Work”
- 2: Provide students access to university resources (including healthcare) for at least one year after graduation
- 3: Create inclusive programming and resources that include immigrant-origin students without social security numbers





Thank you

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