

# *Citizen Advantage, Undocumented Disadvantage, or Both? The Comparative Educational Outcomes of Second and 1.5-Generation Latino Young Adults<sup>1</sup>*

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Recent research theorizes a widening sociopolitical gap between undocumented and documented immigrants — but also between citizens and noncitizens generally — with implications for mobility. How might legal inequality influence educational outcomes? Largely due to data constraints, much existing research is unable to distinguish between legal statuses. Yet, legal status may help explain inconsistent findings of “immigrant advantage” among Latinos. Using survey data from Latino young adults in California, I explore how legal status impacts high school completion, post-secondary enrollment, and labor market expectations. I find evidence of undocumented disadvantage and citizenship advantage in completion and enrollment, but no differences in expectations. Findings suggest that scholars should pay closer attention to the role of legal background in shaping mobility.

Over the past several decades, laws and policies impacting immigrants have significantly expanded the sociopolitical divide not just between undocumented immigrants and those with some kind of legal status, but

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also between citizens and noncitizens more generally (Menjívar 2006; Motomura 2006; Coutin 2011). Scholars argue that noncitizens, including the undocumented as well as some groups of documented immigrants, face a political terrain wherein legal status has become a long-term mark of exclusion, with implications for educational mobility (Menjívar 2006; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). This may be especially true for Latinos, who make up over 80 percent of the nearly 12 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2011), have some of the lowest naturalization rates (Aptekar 2014), and face unique forms of racialization and exclusion (Chavez 2008; Jiménez 2010; Alba, Jiménez, and Marrow 2014).

However, largely due to data constraints, we still know relatively little about the comparative impacts of nativity and legal status on educational outcomes. Several theoretical models have been advanced to explain educational mobility among the children of immigrants, including immigrant advantage (Kao and Tienda 1995), which suggests that immigrants will do better than their native-born counterparts. Yet findings of immigrant advantage have been decidedly inconsistent for Latinos. It is possible that some of this inconsistency may be explained by the diverse legal backgrounds of Latino-origin immigrants. I build on this research by analyzing and comparing the educational outcomes of Latino young adults across diverse legal statuses.

In this way, these analyses also build on a growing body of literature that has examined the intergenerational effects of nativity and legal status on educational outcomes using frameworks of delayed incorporation and membership exclusion (Bean et al. 2011; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). Yet much of the literature measures the legal status of immigrant parents or grandparents, as opposed to controlling for the immigrant child's own status. However, individual legal status may also be a mechanism through which inequality is produced and reproduced within the 1.5 generation. Indeed, a body of qualitative work has documented the detrimental impacts of undocumented status on immigrant youth and young adults (Gonzales 2011). Although the challenges facing undocumented young people are now relatively well established, we still know relatively little about how undocumented youths' experiences compare to other 1.5-generation<sup>2</sup> and native-born Latinos.

<sup>2</sup>The 1.5 generation includes individuals who came to the United States as children or adolescents and are often embedded in US institutions such as schools (Rumbaut 2004).

This paper attempts to fill this gap by analyzing data on educational outcomes among young adults across nativity and legal statuses. To do so, it brings into conversation literature on immigrant integration, educational stratification, and socio-legal theories of citizenship through a consideration of the following research questions: How do varying legal statuses impact the educational outcomes of Latino young adults? Do we observe an *immigrant* advantage (with immigrants doing better than native-born), a *citizen* advantage (with citizens — native-born or naturalized — doing better than noncitizens), or an undocumented *disadvantage* (where undocumented immigrants do worse than all others) in young adults' educational outcomes? What factors mitigate or enhance any observed advantages and disadvantages? Finally, if differences emerge, what are the methodological and theoretical implications of disaggregating Latino young adults' legal and citizenship statuses?

To answer these questions, I use survey data from a random sample of foreign- and native-born Latino young adults in California. This dataset is one of the first to allow an exploration of Latinos' diverse legal backgrounds, beyond the dichotomous divides between legal versus undocumented and immigrant versus non-immigrant. I therefore also aim to make a methodological contribution to research on migration studies and educational stratification by demonstrating what is gained and lost when we analyze legal status in different ways.

## BACKGROUND

This paper proceeds in several steps. First, I provide a theoretical and empirical background to explain the legal disadvantages faced by noncitizens in the United States. Although undocumented immigrants may face the most acute social and legal exclusion, I show that other noncitizens also face barriers to mobility. I then describe several related theories that have been used to explain Latino educational outcomes, including concepts of segmented assimilation, immigrant advantage, delayed incorporation, and membership exclusion. Building on these theories, I provide a background for understanding Latinos' educational outcomes in a more nuanced way that underscores the importance of disaggregating by nativity and legal status. I argue that on the one hand, undocumented youth face the most severe educational disadvantages across the nativity and legal status groups (what I refer to as *undocumented disadvantage*). On the other hand, US-born and naturalized citizens may experience advantages,

compared to both undocumented and other noncitizen groups (what I refer to as *citizenship advantage*). These two scenarios are not mutually exclusive and can coexist simultaneously.

Throughout these analyses, I refer to various legal and citizenship categories. Respondents who were born in the United States to at least one immigrant parent are second generation. Within the 1.5 generation, I distinguish between three legal status groups: naturalized citizens, legal residents with green cards (“legal noncitizens”), and undocumented immigrants.

### *Citizens and Noncitizens in the United States*

Although undocumented immigrants are often at the center of public debate about immigrant inequality, the past several decades can be characterized by the increased rescaling and erosion of constitutional rights of *all* noncitizens (Kanstroom 2007; Coutin 2011). Scholars argue that this legal inequality has made it much more difficult for legal noncitizens to be socially and legally considered “Americans in waiting” (Motomura 2006, 2014). Instead, noncitizens in general experience extensive structural exclusion, with implications for their mobility. Several laws and policies have led to the expansion of the citizen–noncitizen divide. Overhauls to laws governing immigration, crime, and access to public assistance in the mid-1990s further criminalized not just undocumented residents, but noncitizens generally. The Welfare Reform Act, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act were among the most punitive. These laws barred lawful permanent residents from most forms of federal assistance, eliminated many existing venues to challenge deportation for all noncitizens, greatly restricted judicial review of immigration cases, and jettisoned many opportunities for legalization that were previously available to the undocumented (Kanstroom 2007; Eagly 2010; Coutin 2011). Aptekar (2014, 346) argues that these policies were a “signal to all immigrants about the precariousness of permanent resident status and the potential for further curtailment of rights” (see also Cebulko 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this same time period also saw a rise in negative public portrayals of Latino and other immigrant communities (Chavez 2008; Santa Ana 2013).

As a result, *citizenship* — in addition to legal status — has become an important axis of stratification. US citizenship bestows a range of

practical privileges including the ability to vote, run for public office, access certain public benefits, travel on a US passport, and be exempt from deportation. Importantly, citizenship also symbolizes formal membership in a political and social community. Recent research shows that these distinctions are consequential. Noncitizens (especially the undocumented but also other noncitizens) experience wage penalties in the workplace (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015), report greater levels of discrimination (Gee and Ford 2011) and psychological distress (Gee et al. 2016), and receive harsher sentences in federal courts (Light, Massoglia, and King 2014). Although educational resources are largely available to citizens and legal noncitizens alike (although not always to the undocumented), citizenship appears to influence educational outcomes as well. For example, qualitative research finds that noncitizens are less likely than their naturalized citizen counterparts to enroll in four-year colleges (Cebulko 2014). Noncitizen young people (including undocumented immigrants, legal noncitizens, and those in temporary lawful status) also *feel* more precarious, legally insecure, and stigmatized than their US citizen counterparts, which influences their interactions with educational institutions (ibid.). In sum, although undocumented immigrants may face the most severe educational disadvantage, even legal noncitizens may face educational barriers due to their lack of formal citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

### *Theoretical Frameworks*

Several theoretical frameworks have been advanced to explain educational mobility for immigrants and their children. Proponents of *segmented assimilation* argue that multiple educational trajectories are possible for the children of immigrants, depending in part on the contexts of reception faced by different immigrant groups (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Contexts of reception include, but are not limited to, the degree of receptivity of US policies toward certain national origin groups as well as the extent to which that group experiences discrimination. Although the segmented assimilation hypothesis has generally been applied to entire national origin groups with less attention to within-

<sup>3</sup>Of course, in spite of their marginalization, immigrants are not without agency; the very laws and policies that exclude them can also open opportunities for collective resistance and claims-making (see, e.g., Abrego 2008; Patler 2010, 2017; Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2014).

group legal diversity, researchers have used this framework to argue that those who are most legally disadvantaged will fare worse than those who face less legal exclusion (Menjívar 2008). This is consistent with the idea of *delayed incorporation*, in which immigrants achieve incrementally more education as they get further from undocumented status and closer to citizenship (Bean et al. 2011). Following this logic, we might expect to observe a hierarchy of educational success related to legal status, in which undocumented individuals achieve the least and citizens the most, with legal noncitizens somewhere in between.

Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier (2015) have also advanced the framework of *membership exclusion*. This theoretical perspective contends that legal status determines social membership and that those excluded from social membership (primarily the undocumented) will experience “formal and informal exclusion and stigmatization” (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015, 7), leading to delayed incorporation. Although membership exclusion has thus far been applied to intergenerational disadvantage, it may also apply to the 1.5 generation, suggesting educational penalties for those who are most legally excluded.

A parallel body of education literature also addresses issues of educational access and achievement among immigrants. This research has argued that despite facing disadvantages, immigrant children often outperform their later-generation co-ethnic peers (Kao and Tienda 1995; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995; Fuligni 1997; Driscoll 1999; Hirschman 2001; Glick and White 2003; Kao and Thompson 2003; García Coll and Kerivan Marks 2012; Gonzales 2012; Hernández et al. 2012). Scholars have dubbed this phenomenon the “immigrant paradox” and have concluded that, under certain conditions, there is an observable *immigrant advantage* in educational outcomes such as grades, test scores, and enrollment. Yet many studies, while finding strong support for immigrant advantage among the children of Asian immigrants, find only modest — if any — advantage among Latinos (Kao and Tienda 1995; Hirschman 2001; Glick and White 2003; Harris, Jamison, and Trujillo 2008; Crosnoe 2012). For example, Kao and Tienda (1995) analyze data from the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study and find that generational status does not influence educational performance among Latinos, although it does for Asian Americans. Although the immigrant advantage hypothesis predicts educational advantages for immigrant students, compared to those in later generations, it is possible that legal diversity will predict a different scenario for Latinos.

*Complicating the Immigrant Paradox: Disaggregating by Nativity and Legal Status*

The goal of this analysis is to provide evidence that legal status may be a mechanism through which educational mobility is achieved. Largely due to data constraints, studies of immigrants' educational experiences have been largely unable to analyze legal status. Given these constraints, existing research has applied different reference categories upon which to measure educational outcomes. Some studies compare foreign-born students to second and later generations (Fuligni 1997; Driscoll 1999; Crosnoe 2012). Other research (e.g., Kao and Tienda 1995) groups first- and second-generation youth and compares them to later-generation youth, arguing that parents' generation is the strongest predictor of educational outcomes (i.e., parents' immigrant selectivity is the source of the advantage). Still other studies divide the 1.5 generation into groups based on age of arrival (Hirschman 2001; Glick and White 2003). These types of disaggregation take important steps toward explicating some of the diversity within immigrant-origin groups. However, largely due to data constraints, much existing research has been unable to make explicit comparisons across legal statuses. This may still obscure important differences between legal status groupings within the 1.5 generation.

However, two recent studies have compared the educational outcomes of documented and undocumented individuals. Terriquez (2014) analyzes the California Young Adult Study (CYAS) to compare the college enrollment patterns of white and Latino students, controlling for youths' legal status. Terriquez finds that undocumented status does not impact community college enrollment but does predict enrollment in selective universities, when compared to whites. In addition, Greenman and Hall (2013) use the Survey of Income and Program Participation to compare undocumented and documented Mexican and Central American youth. While they do not observe statistically significant differences in high school completion rates by legal status, they argue that the direction of the coefficients suggests a penalty for undocumented youth. They also show that undocumented students are less likely than an aggregated group of all other foreign-born students to enroll in college, suggesting a significant undocumented disadvantage. Greenman and Hall (2013, 1486) conclude that "legal status may act as a stratifying force at multiple stages in the educational pipeline."

The Terriquez (2014) and Greenman and Hall (2013) studies lay an important foundation for future work on educational outcomes for

undocumented young adults, yet both analyses group all documented 1.5-generation immigrants (naturalized citizens and other legally present noncitizens), which may leave out important variation in educational outcomes. It is likely that further disaggregation within the 1.5 generation would lead to additional understandings of the educational experiences of Latino immigrants. Indeed, instead of documenting a clear immigrant advantage among the children of Latino immigrants, we might actually observe two parallel (and not mutually exclusive) findings: *undocumented disadvantage* and *citizenship advantage*. These hypotheses build on and expand existing theories of educational mobility among immigrants. I explicate these hypotheses below.

*Undocumented Disadvantage.* A growing body of qualitative scholarship on undocumented youth has emerged over the past decade that has exposed the negative impacts of undocumented status on the educational experiences, social network formation, psychological well-being, and long-term aspirations of undocumented youth (Abrego 2006 2008 2011; Gonzales 2011; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, and Dedios-Sanguineti 2013; Patler 2014). Primarily due to issues of access and concern about legal vulnerability, this work has generally focused on two very select groups: undocumented university students or youth affiliated with immigrant rights groups. This literature comes to two conclusions: first, that undocumented youth come from relatively similar socio-economic backgrounds and attend the same substandard schools as their documented peers, and second, that undocumented youth are relatively protected in the K-12 educational context<sup>4</sup> and that legal status becomes more salient as undocumented youth transition into adulthood (Gonzales 2011). These conclusions suggest that there will be fewer differences between Latino immigrant youth within the high school setting, although we might expect to see disadvantage in post-secondary educational access for undocumented immigrants. Indeed, survey data analyses document such disadvantages in access to higher education (Greenman and Hall 2013; Terriquez 2014). However, it is also possible that we might observe undocumented

<sup>4</sup>The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* guaranteed undocumented children the right to K-12 education in the United States, yet did not address access to post-secondary education. As of 2012 (the year after the CYAS was completed), 11 US states allow undocumented youth to pay instate tuition at public colleges and universities, while other states have explicitly banned enrollment.

disadvantage during high school, with undocumented students less likely to complete high school (Greenman and Hall 2013), especially among undocumented populations who are not university students or organizational members. For instance, Jefferies' (2014) ethnography of undocumented youth in Boston reveals that fear of discovery and lack of support and information can keep undocumented young men from completing K-12 education (see also Menjívar 2008).

*Citizenship Advantage.* In addition to legal status, citizenship may be increasingly important in determining educational outcomes. Citizenship (via birth or naturalization) comes with privileges that can contribute to educational mobility. Bean et al. (2011) have found that each legal status transition (e.g., from undocumented to legal noncitizen and from legal noncitizen to naturalized citizen) generates an educational premium for the children of Mexican immigrants, with citizenship conferring the greatest educational benefits. Qualitative research on Brazilian immigrants in the United States also suggests a hierarchy of legal status privilege, with undocumented and immigrants and beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program experiencing the greatest educational disadvantages, followed by legal noncitizens, while naturalized citizens are able to achieve the highest educational levels (Cebulko 2014). Additional research on legal status among young adults in Europe (e.g., Kilpi-Jakonen 2013) also reveals a *citizenship* advantage in high school tracking between naturalized and noncitizen teens. We may therefore expect to see evidence of educational advantage for US citizens (by birth and naturalization) in the present study.

## *DATA AND METHODOLOGY*

This paper draws from the 2011 CYAS. The CYAS explores the educational, employment, and civic engagement outcomes of California's diverse 18- to 26-year-old population with the goal of identifying social inequalities and institutional resources that might ameliorate them (Terriquez 2014; Terriquez and Kwon 2014). Respondents were selected using random digit dial telephone surveys of cell phones and landlines across California. The survey included individuals who were between 18 and 26 years old, currently living in California, and had attended at least one year of high school in California before the age of 17. The survey focused on educational attainment, work experiences, civic engagement, and demographic background.

Importantly, the CYAS allows for statistical comparisons across 1.5-generation young adults' legal status, which has not previously been possible with other datasets used to measure immigrant incorporation (e.g., Add Health and the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study). The CYAS included 2,200 respondents, 783 of whom identified as first- or second-generation Latino with at least one parent from Mexico, Central America, or South America. After excluding current high school students, the class of 2011 (the year the survey took place), and two individuals with missing data on post-secondary education, the effective sample size is 658.

### *Survey Measures*

Appendix A lists the survey questions from which I draw dependent and control variables. I examine the predictors of three related outcomes: high school non-completion, post-secondary educational enrollment, and expectations for labor market returns on education. The high school non-completion variable was calculated from a series of questions about the highest degree earned. According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001, 252), not completing high school is the single most important predictor of downward assimilation. Because the survey includes only individuals who attended at least one year of high school, high school non-completion rates are lower than other national studies that may oversample labor migrants who never attend school in the United States (Oropesa and Landale 2009).

The next dependent variable measures what happens after high school. Given the young age of the sample, I focus on post-secondary educational enrollment as opposed to attainment. Following existing analyses of the CYAS, the post-secondary education variable includes enrollment in community college, vocational training, or 4-year university, as opposed to no post-secondary education (Terriquez 2014). Given the sample size, I am unable to analyze these data using more disaggregated educational categories. The final outcome variable is a measure of educational and labor market expectations. I analyze a binary variable for whether respondents expected to have a job requiring a B.A. by the age of 30 (I refer to this measure hereafter as "labor market expectations").

Measuring post-secondary enrollment in addition to high school non-completion is important given the different legal barriers to K-12 versus post-secondary education across legal status groups. The transition from high school to adulthood can be particularly jarring for undocumented youth who must "learn to be illegal," including resigning

themselves to a limited access to jobs and post-high school education (Gonzales 2011). For example, although *Plyler v. Doe* protects access to K-12 for all students, regardless of legal status, it does not address post-secondary education. Although California has an in-state tuition law, college may still be prohibitively expensive for undocumented young people (Terriquez and Patler 2012), especially as these data were collected just prior to DACA and the California Dream Act (which offers limited financial aid to undocumented students). We therefore might expect to see greater disadvantage for undocumented young adults in post-secondary enrollment as opposed to high school non-completion.

The primary independent variable measures nativity and legal status. As Massey and Bartley (2005, 481) argue:

Given the very different prospects for social, economic, and political incorporation experienced by naturalized citizens, legal resident aliens, legal nonimmigrants, and undocumented migrants . . . to be truly valid studies of immigrant adaptation and incorporation must control directly for legal status

In this sample, I divide legal status into four groups: second generation, naturalized citizens, legal noncitizens, and undocumented. Undocumented status was computed deductively from respondents who answered “no” to a two-question series: “Are you a US citizen?” and “Are you a permanent resident with a green card?”<sup>5</sup> Because the CYAS did not collect data on parents’ legal status within the 1.5 generation, I am unable to control for parents’ legal status.<sup>6</sup>

My models also control for individual characteristics such as sex and age, as well as for socioeconomic status via income background and parental educational attainment. I operationalize low-income background by eligibility for free/reduced lunch and/or family’s difficulties paying bills during high

<sup>5</sup>It is possible that the undocumented category could include people in other liminal legal statuses (Menjívar 2006) such as student visa holders or Salvadorans with Temporary Protected Status. However, follow-up interviews completed with the undocumented sample (analyzed elsewhere) triangulated the legal status of over a third of respondents. In addition, when I drop Salvadoran respondents from the undocumented sample who did not participate in follow-up interviews ( $n = 2$ ), substantive results do not change.

<sup>6</sup>The data also do not include measures of time in status. I do, however, have a measure of the age at which each noncitizen respondent “moved to the United States.” The average age of arrival was around six years, and there are no statistically significant differences in age of arrival between legal status groups within the 1.5 generation. Age of arrival also does not significantly predict high school non-completion, post-secondary enrollment, or educational/labor market expectations.

school. Parental education variables include whether a parent(s) did not obtain a high school degree and whether there was at least one parent with a college degree.<sup>7</sup> I also control for whether respondents come from intact families during high school, which could predict higher academic achievement (Zhou 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Kao and Thompson 2003).

Finally, I include measures of educational tracking to account for youth's exposure and access to mentorship, resources and information about college, high-achieving or highly motivated peers, and more experienced teachers (Oakes 1985; Fuligni 1997; Ansalone 2001; Conchas 2001; Carbonaro 2005; Fernández-Kelly 2008; Ream and Rumberger 2008; Smith 2008; Callahan and Muller 2013; Kalogrides, Loeb, and Bêteille 2013). In particular, I include participation in Honors/Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate ("honors") courses on the one hand and participation in English as a Second Language (ESL) on the other hand. I hypothesize that honors classes will predict lower high school non-completion rates and greater post-secondary educational enrollment, with ESL classes having the opposite effect.<sup>8</sup>

The CYAS is an example of a growing effort to measure or impute legal status as a key independent variable in survey research. However, these data also have important limitations. First, the data are geographically specific and cross-sectional, which means that while they can demonstrate differences in educational mobility, they cannot assess the processes through which this inequality may be occurring. In addition, I am only able to make generational comparisons between two generational groups as the dataset does not contain data past the second generation. Although calls for historical comparisons have been made (Waters and Jiménez 2005; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015), I do not have measures beyond parents' educational attainment upon which to further compare youth to their parents. The dataset also does not allow me to test theories of racialization, bilingualism, or co-ethnic community strength found in other

<sup>7</sup>Due to small sample sizes, the data do not allow further disaggregation along parents' educational levels.

<sup>8</sup>I do not suggest that ESL teachers are unsupportive or that students are less motivated; on the contrary, existing research shows that they share similar educational initiative as their non-ESL counterparts (see, e.g., Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). However, when understood as part of a system of academic tracking, ESL and other remedial classes have been found to limit students' access to high-achieving peers or college-specific resources available to students in other tracks (Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato 1991; Ansalone 2001; Conchas 2001; Kao and Thompson 2003; Callahan and Muller 2013).

studies of immigrants' educational outcomes (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2008). The data also do not include information about the length of time respondents have held their respective legal statuses or the location or quality of respondents' schools. However, I am able to do what has been largely absent from studies of immigrant integration: compare across individuals' legal backgrounds. Additional research with more expansive samples could further test the present results.

## *FINDINGS*

Table 1 shows descriptive and bivariate statistics for dependent and control variables, disaggregated by immigrant generation and legal status. Undocumented youth are nearly three times as likely not to complete high school than second-generation or naturalized citizen youth; legal noncitizen youth are about twice as likely not to complete high school. Undocumented and legal noncitizen youth are also much less likely to report post-secondary enrollment than the other groups, in line with existing studies documenting severe barriers to college for undocumented young adults (Abrego 2006; Gonzales 2011; Greenman and Hall 2013; Terriquez 2014). However, in spite of the educational barriers faced by undocumented and legal noncitizen youth, there are no significant bivariate differences in educational and labor market expectations between by nativity/legal status.

Noncitizen youth come from disadvantaged backgrounds: While undocumented respondents are much more likely to come from low-income households than any of the other groups, both undocumented and legal noncitizen respondents are more likely to have at least one parent who did not complete high school. Respondents also appear to face academic tracking (Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato 1991; Kao and Thompson 2003). Undocumented youth are more likely than their documented counterparts to report being in ESL during high school. Undocumented and legal noncitizen youth are both less likely than naturalized citizens and second-generation youth to enroll in honors classes during high school, although these differences are not significant in bivariate analysis.

### *Educational Outcomes and Expectations of Latino Youth*

I now turn to results from logistic regression models of educational attainment and expectations. Table 2 includes three nested models for high

**TABLE 1**  
**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR LATINO YOUNG ADULTS BY NATIVITY AND LEGAL STATUS (AGES 18–26)**

	Total	Second generation	Naturalized citizen	Legal noncitizen	Undocumented	Comparison by legal status
Dependent variables						
HS non-completion	9%	7%	9%	16%	23%	**
At least some post-secondary enrollment	80%	83%	78%	68%	56%	***
Expects job requiring 4-year degree by 30	62%	62%	59%	64%	60%	
Sample characteristics						
Male	46%	46%	52%	39%	51%	
Age (Range 18–26)	21.4	21.2	22.3	22.4	21.6	
Low-income background	72%	70%	74%	70%	91%	*
Parent(s) did not finish HS	38%	35%	41%	48%	53%	*
Parent(s) has a college degree	10%	10%	20%	7%	5%	
Two-parent household	77%	75%	85%	86%	81%	
HS curriculum/tracking						
Honors/AP/IB	50%	52%	52%	43%	40%	
English as a Second Language	29%	25%	30%	41%	63%	***
Legal status						
Total sample	–	80%	7%	7%	7%	
1.5 generation	–	–	35%	33%	32%	

Source: CA Young Adult Study 2011 ( $n = 658$ ). Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (chi-square and Fisher's exact tests).

school non-completion, post-secondary enrollment, and labor market expectations. The first model presents only the impact of legal status on the dependent variable. Models 2 and 3 add control variables in two steps: first for individual and SES background and then for high school tracking.<sup>9</sup> For the sake of parsimony, I focus mostly on Model 3, which likelihood ratio tests reveal is the best fit for the data in each case. Figures I–III show predicted probabilities of the respective dependent variables, by nativity/legal status groups, with control variables held at their observed values.

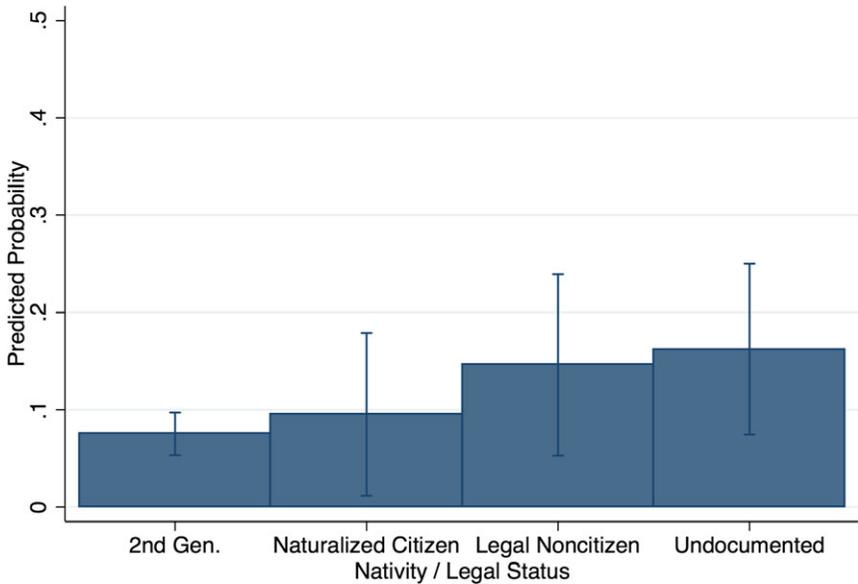
<sup>9</sup>Variance inflation factor scores of no  $>1.23$  indicate that multicollinearity is not a significant concern in the models.

**TABLE 2**  
**ODDS RATIOS FROM LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS AMONG LATINO YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18–26)**

	High school non-completion			Post-secondary enrollment			Labor market expectations		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Legal/citizenship status: Reference group: Second generation									
Naturalized citizen	1.22 (0.67)	1.50 (0.85)	1.34 (0.80)	0.74 (0.28)	0.62 (0.24)	0.66 (0.28)	0.87 (0.27)	0.93 (0.31)	0.96 (0.32)
Legal noncitizen	2.42* (1.08)	2.90* (1.36)	2.37* (1.19)	0.44* (0.15)	0.38** (0.13)	0.44* (0.17)	1.07 (0.35)	1.19 (0.40)	1.39 (0.48)
Undocumented	3.88*** (1.55)	3.37** (1.40)	2.76* (1.23)	0.26*** (0.09)	0.27*** (0.09)	0.35** (0.13)	0.93 (0.30)	0.99 (0.33)	1.29 (0.45)
Control variables									
Male	1.52 (0.44)	1.53 (0.46)	1.53 (0.46)	0.57** (0.12)	0.57** (0.12)	0.55** (0.12)	0.78 (0.13)	0.78 (0.13)	0.81 (0.14)
Age	0.87* (0.06)	0.87* (0.06)	0.86* (0.06)	1.11* (0.05)	1.11* (0.05)	1.13** (0.05)	0.85*** (0.03)	0.85*** (0.03)	0.86*** (0.03)
Low-income background	1.48 (0.59)	1.48 (0.59)	1.53 (0.64)	0.91 (0.23)	0.91 (0.23)	0.95 (0.26)	0.93 (0.18)	0.93 (0.18)	0.95 (0.20)
Parent(s) did not finish HS	2.13** (0.62)	2.13** (0.62)	1.93* (0.59)	0.86 (0.18)	0.86 (0.18)	1.00 (0.23)	1.09 (0.19)	1.09 (0.19)	1.17 (0.22)
Parent(s) has a college degree	0.23 (0.25)	0.23 (0.25)	0.45 (0.49)	3.29* (1.65)	3.29* (1.65)	2.07 (1.08)	1.70* (0.52)	1.70* (0.52)	1.30 (0.41)
Two-parent household	0.68 (0.22)	0.68 (0.22)	0.71 (0.24)	1.24 (0.29)	1.24 (0.29)	1.19 (0.30)	1.73** (0.33)	1.73** (0.33)	1.67* (0.34)
Honors/AP/IB			0.12*** (0.05)			5.03*** (1.23)			2.68*** (0.47)
English as a Second Language			2.19* (0.69)			0.38*** (0.09)			0.62* (0.12)
Constant	0.08*** (0.01)	0.82 (1.19)	1.41 (2.09)	4.83*** (0.56)	0.66 (0.67)	0.29 (0.31)	1.64*** (0.15)	34.21*** (27.79)	23.27*** (19.51)

Source: CA Young Adult Study 2011 ( $n = 658$ ). Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.  
 \*\*\*,  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , + $p < 0.10$ .

Figure I. Predicted Probability of High School Non-Completion with 95 Percent CIs



*High School Non-Completion.* Overall, the results in the first panel of Table 2 suggest a significant penalty for noncitizen respondents in terms of high school completion, with the strongest and most severe penalty for undocumented immigrants, but with a marginally significant penalty for legal noncitizens as well. Model 3 shows that undocumented youths' odds of high school non-completion are 2.76 times higher than those of their second-generation counterparts, with legal noncitizen respondents' odds being 2.37 times higher ( $p = 0.085$ ). To illustrate these findings, Figure I shows that undocumented youth and legal noncitizens have a 16 percent and 14 percent predicted probability of high school non-completion, respectively, while naturalized citizens and second-generation respondents have a 9 percent and 7 percent predicted probability, respectively.

Turning to the control variables, we see that each additional year of age reduces the odds of high school non-completion, perhaps due to the fact that some survey respondents were able to earn a high school degree outside of the traditional school setting. SES background has a mixed effect on high school completion: While low-income status is not statistically significant in any of the models, having a parent with no high school degree nearly doubles the odds of not completing high school. Finally,

participation in honors courses reduces the odds of non-completion and participation in ESL classes increases the odds of non-completion.

*Post-Secondary Enrollment.* The second panel in Table 2 displays odds ratios from logistic regression analysis of post-secondary educational enrollment. Overall, being a noncitizen reduces the odds of enrollment. As Model 3 demonstrates, undocumented youth face the greatest penalty in post-secondary enrollment, followed by legal noncitizens, as compared to second-generation youth. Figure II shows that undocumented youth have a predicted probability of 66 percent of enrolling in post-secondary education, while legal noncitizens have a 70 percent predicted probability. Both of these groups trail behind their second-generation peers (with a predicted probability of 82% post-secondary enrollment). Naturalized citizens are not significantly different from the second generation in terms of enrollment. Overall, these results suggest an advantage for citizens relative to noncitizens.<sup>10</sup>

Turning to the control variables, Models 2 and 3 show that being male significantly reduces the odds of post-secondary enrollment, consistent with overall patterns of enrollment and completion documented in previous studies of immigrants and native-born students alike (Kao and Tienda 1995; Buchmann, DiPrete, and McDaniel 2008; Terriquez 2014). We also see that each additional year of age increases the likelihood of post-secondary enrollment. Notably, Model 3 also reveals that the SES variables (parental education, low-income background, and coming from intact families during high school) do not significantly impact post-secondary educational enrollment. Finally, educational tracking remains significant in this model with ESL negatively predicting post-secondary enrollment and honors positively predicting enrollment.

*Educational Expectations.* The third panel in Table 2 shows logistic regression models for the odds of expecting to have a job requiring a B.A. degree by the age of 30. As we see, nativity and legal status do not significantly

<sup>10</sup>When undocumented immigrants are set as the reference category, the direction and magnitude of the coefficients for both high school non-completion and post-secondary enrollment indicate an ordered experience of educational outcomes (as displayed in Figures I and II), with undocumented immigrants doing worst, legal noncitizens doing just slightly better, and naturalized citizens and second generation doing best. However, the differences between 1.5-generation groups are not statistically significant, likely due to small sample sizes within the three 1.5-generation categories. Further research with larger sample sizes could confirm these patterns.

Figure II. Predicted Probability of Post-Secondary Enrollment with 95 Percent CIs

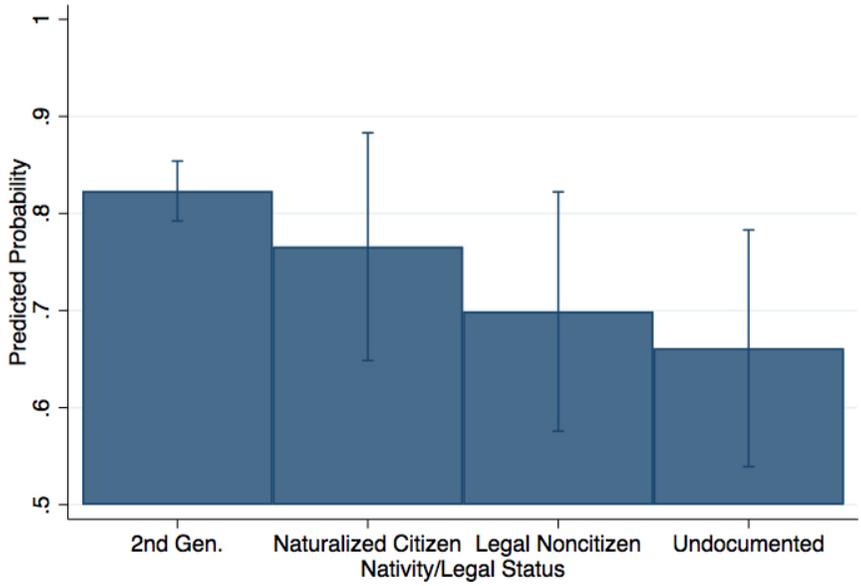
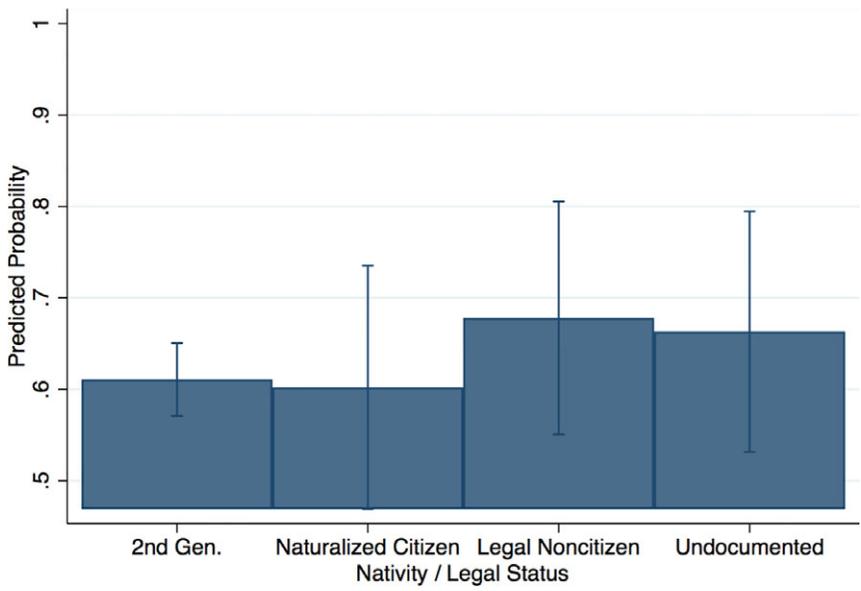


Figure III. Predicted Probability of Labor Market Expectations with 95 Percent CIs



predict expectations across any of the three models. Figure III shows that the predicted probability of expecting a bachelor's degree by the age of 30 stays relatively steady across the nativity/legal status groups, with no statistically significant differences. However, Model 3 shows that as age increases, the odds of expecting a job requiring a B.A. decrease significantly (by around 14% per year). Finally, honors program participation appears to lead to higher expectations while ESL participation has the opposite effect.

### *Educational Outcomes across Different Legal Status Variables*

This paper also aims to assess the implications of varying methodological choices vis-à-vis the development of variables for legal and citizenship status. To that end, Table 3 shows odds ratios for high school non-completion and post-secondary educational enrollment, but using different legal status, citizenship, and generational breakdowns as the primary independent variable. The non-significant findings for expectations do not change when I construct the immigration status variable differently; I therefore do not include these results.

Table 3 makes clear that we could come to different conclusions depending on how the immigration status variable is constructed. For example, if we looked only at Model 1, we might conclude that there is no evidence of immigrant advantage and that second-generation respondents simply do better than all immigrants. Yet the next two models would complicate this picture by demonstrating evidence of citizenship advantage (Model 2) and undocumented disadvantage (Model 3), respectively. Model 4 would indicate that there are gradations of advantage, with undocumented youth experiencing a penalty in high school completion, compared to the second generation, and foreign-born groups in general experiencing a penalty in post-secondary enrollment. However, by relying on Model 4, we would lose the importance of naturalized citizenship within the aggregate 'documented' category. Model 5 in Table 3 (which is identical to Model 3 in Table 2) provides evidence of an advantage for US citizens compared to noncitizens, with the greatest disadvantages faced by undocumented immigrants.

### *DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS*

This study uses survey data from a random sample of second-generation, naturalized citizen, legal noncitizen, and undocumented Latino young

**TABLE 3**  
**ODDS RATIOS FROM LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AMONG LATINO YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18–26), BY NATIVITY AND LEGAL STATUS CATEGORIES**

	High school non-completion					Post-secondary enrollment				
	M1: Immigrant Generation	M2: Citizenship Status	M3: Documentation Status	M4: Generation & Documentation Status	M5: Generation, Citizenship, & Documentation Status	M1: Immigrant Generation	M2: Citizenship Status	M3: Documentation Status	M4: Generation & Documentation Status	M5: Generation, Citizenship, & Documentation Status
Nativity and legal status variables										
2nd generation (Ref: 1st generation)	0.46* (0.15)					2.19** (0.55)				
Citizen (Ref: Noncitizen)		0.40* (0.14)					2.46** (0.69)			
Undocumented (Ref: Documented)			2.40* (1.04)					0.40* (0.14)		
Documented 1.5 generation (Ref: 2nd generation)				1.85 (0.75)					0.53* (0.16)	
Undocumented (Ref: 2nd generation)				2.75* (1.23)					0.35** (0.13)	
Naturalized citizens (Ref: 2nd generation)					1.34 (0.80)					0.66 (0.28)
Legal noncitizen (Ref: 2nd generation)					2.37* (1.19)					0.44* (0.17)
Undocumented (Ref: 2nd generation)					2.76* (1.23)					0.35** (0.13)
Control variables										
Male	1.53 (0.46)	1.54 (0.46)	1.46 (0.44)	1.50 (0.45)	1.53 (0.46)	0.55** (0.12)	0.55** (0.12)	0.57** (0.12)	0.56** (0.12)	0.55** (0.12)
Age	0.86* (0.06)	0.86* (0.06)	0.88* (0.06)	0.87* (0.06)	0.86* (0.06)	1.14** (0.05)	1.13** (0.05)	1.12** (0.05)	1.13** (0.05)	1.13** (0.05)

**TABLE 3 (CONTINUED)**  
**ODDS RATIOS FROM LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AMONG LATINO YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18-26), BY NATIVITY AND LEGAL STATUS CATEGORIES**

	High school non-completion					Post-secondary enrollment				
	M1: Immigrant Generation	M2: Citizenship Status	M3: Documentation Status	M4: Generation & Documentation Status	M5: Generation, Citizenship, & Documentation Status	M1: Immigrant Generation	M2: Citizenship Status	M3: Documentation Status	M4: Generation & Documentation Status	M5: Generation, Citizenship, & Documentation Status
Low-income background	1.58 (0.66)	1.53 (0.64)	1.52 (0.63)	1.54 (0.64)	1.53 (0.64)	0.94 (0.25)	0.95 (0.26)	0.95 (0.26)	0.96 (0.26)	0.95 (0.26)
Parent(s) did not finish HS	1.91* (0.58)	1.94* (0.59)	1.92* (0.58)	1.91* (0.58)	1.93* (0.59)	1.00 (0.23)	0.99 (0.22)	0.98 (0.22)	1.00 (0.23)	1.00 (0.23)
Parent(s) has a college degree	0.45 (0.48)	0.46 (0.50)	0.44 (0.47)	0.44 (0.47)	0.45 (0.49)	2.12 (1.10)	2.00 (1.04)	2.07 (1.08)	2.13 (1.10)	2.07 (1.08)
Two-parent household	0.70 (0.24)	0.72 (0.24)	0.76 (0.25)	0.71 (0.24)	0.71 (0.24)	1.20 (0.30)	1.17 (0.29)	1.13 (0.28)	1.19 (0.30)	1.19 (0.30)
Honors	0.12*** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.05)	5.02*** (1.23)	5.02*** (1.22)	5.06*** (1.23)	5.03*** (1.23)	5.03*** (1.23)
English as a Second Language	2.24* (0.70)	2.22* (0.70)	2.34** (0.73)	2.21* (0.70)	2.19* (0.69)	0.37*** (0.09)	0.38*** (0.09)	0.37*** (0.08)	0.38*** (0.09)	0.38*** (0.09)
Constant	6.43 (10.99)	3.43 (5.41)	1.09 (1.59)	1.35 (2.00)	1.41 (2.09)	0.06* (0.07)	0.12* (0.14)	0.37 (0.40)	0.29 (0.31)	0.29 (0.31)

Source: CA Young Adult Study 2011 (n = 658). Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05, +p < 0.10.

adults in California to explore how nativity and immigrant legal status impact high school completion, post-secondary educational enrollment, and labor market expectations. The central contribution of this work is to demonstrate considerable variation in educational attainment associated with nativity and legal status, even net of socioeconomic controls. I document significant disparities in high school completion and post-secondary enrollment between legal status groups. Undocumented immigrants and legal noncitizens are less likely to enroll in post-secondary education, compared to second-generation respondents, even after controlling for demographic and SES background and educational tracking. In addition, while undocumented youth are least likely to complete high school, compared to second-generation respondents, legal noncitizens' predicted high school non-completion rates are nearly as high, although the coefficient is just marginally significant in this case. However, there are no significant differences between naturalized citizens and their second-generation peers in high school non-completion or post-secondary enrollment. Taken together, these findings suggest that educational outcomes are influenced by a divide not only between legality and "illegality", but also between citizenship and lack of citizenship.

This research contributes to several theoretical and methodological debates. First, the present study joins a growing effort to build on previous research on immigrant integration by assessing the role of laws and legal status. For example, the segmented assimilation framework has generally approached laws and policies as factors that structure the context of reception for entire national origins groups, but has done less to analyze laws as axes of stratification within groups (Menjívar 2008). The present study underscores the importance of the concept of the context of reception within segmented assimilation theory by demonstrating the law's strong influence on integration outcomes. Placing legal status at the center of the analysis provides an analytical tool for examining how laws operate within institutions such as schools to produce and reproduce educational inequality.

With this goal in mind, this research examined the immigrant advantage hypothesis with attention to the role of immigrant legal status. While the immigrant advantage framework suggests that immigrants will outperform their native-born peers, studies have found inconsistent results for Latinos. Instead of confirming the immigrant advantage hypothesis, my findings provide evidence of two parallel outcomes. First, I find evidence of undocumented disadvantage, whereby undocumented immigrants are doing worse, academically, than all other legal status groups. Second,

my results also demonstrate citizenship advantage in two ways. First, noncitizens in general face an educational penalty when compared with second-generation respondents. Second, naturalized citizen respondents do not demonstrate statistically significant differences from second-generation respondents. These results suggest that there is significant heterogeneity within the 1.5 generation that may have been overlooked in previous studies of immigrant advantage.

Of course, while my findings support parallel hypotheses of citizenship advantage and undocumented disadvantage, we cannot rule out an alternative hypothesis that undocumented disadvantage may be impacting noncitizens as a whole. It is possible that some legal noncitizen respondents arrived to the United States as undocumented immigrants and had adjusted status by the time of the survey. They may therefore be experiencing a residual undocumented disadvantage based on the barriers they faced previously as undocumented immigrants.<sup>11</sup> The CYAS did not measure changes to respondents' legal statuses or length in current status; therefore, testing this hypothesis is outside of the scope of this paper. Future research could assess the residual undocumented disadvantage hypothesis by examining the impacts of changes in legal status within the 1.5 generation.

The present study was also grounded in the delayed incorporation and membership exclusion perspectives, which were developed to explicitly center immigrant legal status. Membership exclusion emphasizes the 'negative forces' that undocumented immigration status 'can impose on the mobility prospects of migrants and their descendants' (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015, 20). The idea of delayed incorporation is that as membership exclusion decreases (*vis-à-vis* differences in immigration status), integration becomes less and less delayed. However, these frameworks have thus far been applied solely to parental immigration status. My findings of undocumented disadvantage and citizenship advantage indicate that 1.5-generation noncitizen Latino immigrants may also be experiencing delayed incorporation resulting from membership exclusion.

Beyond nativity and legal status, my findings provide additional evidence that high school tracking impacts educational outcomes and expectations for youth, in line with an extensive body of educational research

<sup>11</sup>Naturalized citizens could also have entered the country as undocumented immigrants, although they would be further from that status than legal noncitizens. In other words, they could have had more time to adjust from any residual disadvantage.

(Oakes 1985; Fuligni 1997; Ansalone 2001; Conchas 2001; Carbonaro 2005; Fernández-Kelly 2008; Ream and Rumberger 2008; Smith 2008; Callahan and Muller 2013; Kalogrides, Loeb, and Bêteille 2013). I find that participation in honors courses is a predictor of educational success, while ESL participation positively predicts high school non-completion and negatively predicts post-secondary enrollment. Although sample sizes are small and should therefore be interpreted with caution, my results suggest that school-based sorting mechanisms may exert a pull on the academic outcomes of Latino students in California. Further research could expose the processes through which educational tracking varies by immigration status to influence access to resources for children.

How might we understand the practically identical labor market expectations across legal status groups, especially when high school completion and post-secondary enrollment are stratified? This null finding contrasts with the hypothesis generated from Gonzales' (2011) work on "learning to be illegal" which suggests reduced expectations among undocumented individuals because of their status. Instead, my results demonstrate a "cooling out" effect (Clark 1960) across the nativity and legal status groups. This finding may be influenced by two mechanisms. To start, it is possible that generally equal labor market expectations can be explained by the fact that all respondents in the sample have immigrant parents whose immigrant optimism is driving the findings, regardless of the young person's own nativity or legal status (Kao and Tienda 1995). However, these findings may also tell a story of collective disillusionment (i.e., the attenuation of immigrant optimism among older respondents) based in shared experiences of discrimination that target all Latinos, regardless of nativity or legal status (Chavez 2008; Menjívar 2008). Further research that explores the subjective understandings of the values and meanings of education among the children of immigrants would be insightful in teasing out the meaning behind the practically identical labor market expectations across nativity and legal status groups (Kao and Thompson 2003).

Finally, this paper aims to make a methodological contribution to research on educational inequality and to migration studies more broadly. Although the sample size is relatively small, the present study is one of only a handful of quantitative studies able to test the impacts of individuals' immigration status on educational outcomes (e.g., Greenman and Hall 2013; Terriquez 2014). Table 3 makes clear that there is much at stake in the ability of survey instruments to disaggregate (or not) among different immigration status categories. The results therefore underscore and

provide empirical evidence for what Massey and Bartley (2005) argued a decade ago: that we cannot assess immigrant incorporation without examining legal diversity.

These methodological nuances are important beyond social science research. On a broader scale, understanding inequality in immigrants' educational outcomes can speak to debates about immigration and educational policy alike. If legal status is a significant predictor of educational outcomes, then it stands to reason that allowing undocumented youth the opportunity to legalize their status could significantly impact their educational outcomes and future mobility. However, with both undocumented *and* legal noncitizen students showing similarly low rates of high school completion and post-secondary enrollment, even temporary legal status may not be enough. Instead, access to citizenship from an early age may be critical to the success of foreign-born students across the board.

## APPENDIX A

TABLE A1  
EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES VARIABLE LIST, CYAS 2011

Dependent variables	Description	Value/Coding
High school non-completion	What type of high school degree have you received? (1) Still in high school, (2) Regular high school degree, (3) G.E.D., (4) No degree.	Binary variable for selection of answer choice (4); coded 0/1.
Post-secondary Enrollment	Respondents were asked if they had attended any school since graduating or leaving high school. If yes, they were asked: Which of the following types of schools have you attended since graduating or leaving high school? (1) Adult school, (2) Vocational or Trade school, (3) Community college, (4) Four-year college or university to earn a Bachelor's degree, (5) Graduate/professional school.	Binary variable for any post-secondary enrollment: 0 = No post-secondary education/adult school. 1 = Vocational, community college, four-year university, graduate school.
Labor market expectations	Respondents were asked what job/type of work they planned to do by the age of 30, followed by: Does this job require you to have a four-year college degree?	Binary variable; coded 0/1.

TABLE A1 (CONTINUED)

Dependent variables	Description	Value/Coding
Independent/Control variables		
Nativity and legal status	Were you born in the United States? [If not US:] Are you a US citizen? Are you a legal resident with a green card?	Second generation = Born in the United States with at least one foreign-born parent. Naturalized citizen = Foreign-born US citizens. Legal noncitizen = Legal residents with green cards. Undocumented = Foreign-born who were not US citizens or legal noncitizen.
Sex	What is your gender?	Binary variable for male; coded 0/1.
Age	In what month and year were you born?	Date of birth subtracted from survey date.
Low-income background	While in high school were you ever eligible for free or reduced lunch? While you were in high school/between the ages of 14–17, was there ever a time when your parents or guardians received any form of public assistance from the government like CALWORKS, public housing, Section 8 housing, MediCal, or food stamps?	Respondents were coded as low-income if they answered yes to one or both of these questions; coded 0/1.
Parent(s) do not have a HS degree	What is the highest level of education completed by your father/mother/the person that acted as a father/mother to you?	Binary variable for respondents who reported at least one parent without a high school degree; coded as 0/1.
Parent(s) has a B.A. degree	What is the highest level of education completed by your father/mother/the person that acted as a father/mother to you?	Binary variable for respondents who reported at least one parent with a B.A. degree; coded as 0/1.
Two-parent household	While in high school/between the ages of 14 and 17, did you live in the same house with both of your biological or adoptive parents?	Binary variable; 0/1.
High school curriculum: honors & English as a Second Language (ESL)	I am going to read a list of courses and programs offered in some high schools. Please tell me if you were (have been) in any of them while in high school. (1) Advanced Placement, (2) International Baccalaureate Program, (3) Honors program, (4) ESL.	Honors: Binary variable included answer choices (1)-(3); coded as 0/1. ESL: Binary variable for answer choice (4); coded as 0/1.

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