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Addressing Exclusion in Organizations:
Social Desire Paths and Undocumented Students Attending College

ABSTRACT

With data from a national study of a network of 28 private, non-profit colleges in the U.S., I show how individual actions of high school and college staff became collective "social desire paths" to innovate new organizational practices to enroll students who were undocumented. In interviews with staff four factors emerged as important in enrolling students: (1) how social desire paths started as ad hoc processes and then were entrenched through the collective and similar responses of staff, (2) identification of financial, administrative, structural and cultural barriers to inclusion that were the basis for the development of social desire paths, (3) how staff innovated paths by reforming current procedures as well as developing new practices, and (4) the role of organizational values to support social desire paths. Along with uncovering the processes and practices, I also argue that using a social desire path approach can help researchers and managers detect organizational structures that exclude desired populations, and provide a means by which the actions of "street-level bureaucrats" that become collective can address social problems at the organization level.

*"…there is nothing formal to say, 'This is what the procedures are, this is the training'… **I've had to maneuver around the system** to figure out how to really do this, how to make it happen." College Admissions Counselor*

*"I feel a sense of pride that, yes, I work at a place that values these students and that **really desires** to support and resource them." ~College Staff Member*

INTRODUCTION

Staff in colleges dedicated to fair admissions processes and equal access to resources for qualified students struggle to work around laws as well as organizational practices that are barriers to the full enrollment of students who are undocumented. The informal and collective strategies that employees enact to deal with constraints at the organizational level—identifiable as "social desire paths"—and how staff regularize and justify these processes is the focus of this article.

Social desire path analysis is a sociological adaptation of the term "desire paths" or "desire lines" which are the informal paths pedestrians make when there are inadequate or no formal sidewalks. Landscape architects and urban planners sometimes use such paths to design more inclusive public spaces (Luckert 2013; Norman 2011). As Christopher (2010) states, "Desire lines are where the system—the system of people in conjunction with their built environment—asserts itself" (p. 2). Similarly, the identification of workarounds to existing rules and organizational structures as social desire paths can provide a means for social scientists to show how people "assert themselves" to get around barriers that exclude some groups (Sunikka-Blank, Galvin, and Behar 2018).

Understanding how colleges enroll students who are undocumented is an opportunity to examine possible desire paths at the organizational level. Expanding on research that studies agency in organizations and Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level bureaucracy, I show how staff who interact most closely with students create projective, innovative informal practices that

allow for the application to college and subsequent enrollment of students who are undocumented, even within the presence of larger constraints. I also show how, in some cases, these early social desire paths were entrenched from repeated use and ran alongside formal procedures.

APPLYING TO AND ATTENDING COLLEGE WHILE UNDOCUMENTED

Each year approximately 65,000 undocumented youth graduate from U.S. high schools, having been legally protected through public education through 12th grade by federal mandates in Plyler v. Doe.[1] These federal protections end once students graduate from high school (Abrego 2014; Gonzales 2016; McArdle 2015). Referred to as the 1.5 generation because most were brought to the U.S. as young children and spent most if not all of their childhoods in the U.S. school system, many undocumented youth consider themselves fully Americanized (Gleeson and Gonzales 2012), and have excelled in school, are top applicants to colleges, and value the importance of a college education. As colleges actively seek to enroll the most high-achieving students, their ability to enroll undocumented students can be challenged because of federal, state, and organizational rules that limit access (Contreras 2009; Dreby 2015; Flores 2010; Gonzales 2010, 2016; Silver 2018; Storlie and Jach 2012).

One organizational barrier is that students are not classifiable given current immigration policies and designations as they are “neither non-resident aliens nor resident aliens” (Olivas 2009, p. 413). There are often different understandings among college admissions staff, some of whom mistakenly believe it is illegal for students with this status to apply or, when accepted, mistakenly classify students as international applicants. Most institutions bar international students from being considered for financial aid (Reich and Mendoza 2008). As a result, students can be unsure how to fill out college applications, to know if they qualify for any private aid, and

once on campus, are unsure whom to trust as well as if they can work, travel, and participate in internships and other campus sponsored-activities. Colleges can mitigate such issues by promoting a reputation of being supportive of undocumented students as well as providing safe spaces and access to knowledgeable staff (Gonzales, Heredia, Negrón-Gonzales 2015; Suázrez-Orozco et al. 2015).

While research has focused on student experiences and the structures that support and impede the success of students, there is a lack of research on the inner-workings of colleges and how the organizational structure as well as the actions or inaction of staff influence enrollment of students who are undocumented (Gonzales, Heredia, Negrón-Gonzales 2015). An organizational focus is particularly necessary given that even when communities are inclusive to immigrants, there are often “hidden and formal barriers” to inclusion (Marrow 2012, p. 846). These barriers are often only understood as staff attempt to work with excluded groups.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AT THE “STREET-LEVEL”

In the increasing bureaucratization of large organizations, it is presumed that opportunities to reform organizational practices are limited. Yet there are conditions under which workers, in response to larger social problems and issues, can influence change (Moen et al. 2016). Lipsky (1980, 2010) refers to staff who disrupt organizational practices as street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats have the ability to work around as well as mute perceived exclusionary organizational practices or social policies (Collins 2016; Maupin 1993). As Lipsky (1980) notes, “workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions” (Lipsky 1980, p. xi). Street-level employees, even though low in the organizations’ bureaucratic structure, have substantial power to both fulfill as well as undermine the goals of an organization (Prottas 1978).

More recent theorists of street-level bureaucracy have argued that organizational research has not adequately dealt with the process of decision making among street-level bureaucrats (Loyens and Maesschalck 2010) nor has it developed to include an understanding of how the collective practices of street-level bureaucrats can be used to inform organizational and/or policy-level practices and change. This theoretical advancement is necessary to accomplish organizational change in the presence of larger social problems, change that could result in greater inclusion of excluded groups.

In the case of service organizations responding to the needs of new immigrants in the context of federal restrictions, researchers have shown that street-level, front-line workers do exert their power and discretion in either blocking or accessing resources (Roth and Grace 2018; Smith 2016). Marrow (2009) found that in the absence of policy solutions to address barriers to immigrants receiving services, street level bureaucrats in schools and health organizations were more responsive than those in other types of organizations. These workers "consider(ed) their professional roles to be centered on dispensing resources in the name of promoting equity and community well-being" (p. 773), actions driven by staffs "internal professional missions".

This paper expands this research by examining when and how the individual responses of staff move to collective practices as social desire paths, even if informal, and if those actions contribute to organizational change for inclusion. Social desire path analysis identifies when people bypass restrictive structures, usually first as individual pioneers, which are then followed by others leaving an imprint on the social structure (Author 2014). The main research question is: How do college staff create and maintain social desire paths around organizational and federal barriers to enrolling students who are undocumented and what organizational barriers necessitate path creation? Studying this situation at private colleges and universities in the U.S. is a helpful

context in which to examine social desire paths as private institutions are not as constrained as public institutions in the strategies they can use to enroll students.

RESEARCH SITES AND METHODS

This study is part of a larger project, funded by the Ford Foundation, to understand how colleges in the network of 28 Jesuit, Catholic, private nonprofit schools in the United States have responded to students who are undocumented as well as the experiences of students at these schools. Surveys and interviews were conducted over a two-year period starting in 2010. The survey included 110 staff and faculty across the full network of U.S. colleges. The interviews were with 59 staff and community advocates and 26 students at six of the 28 schools.

Context

This network of colleges includes over 215,000 students, 21,000 faculty, and over two million living alumni (AJCU 2016). The schools are located in 18 states and D.C. The six schools in the case study included two in the western region of the U.S., two in the Midwest, and two in the east. The schools have similar histories and missions of educating new immigrants which provides a unique opportunity to hold constant some aspects of applying social desire path analysis at the organizational level that would be difficult to decipher if the institutions were a mix of public, private, and those with different institutional missions. In addition, as Menjívar (2006) finds in her study of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in the U.S., religious organizations are often trusted institutions for new immigrants, and we found that indeed some students received help with questions about college and referrals to this network of schools from leaders at their families' churches.

The study took place during a time of intensified frequency of deportations by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in the Obama administration, increasingly restrictive laws in

some states such as Arizona (a few students grew up in that state), another failed Dream Act in Congress, and rising youth activism (Golash-Boza 2012; Sampaio 2015; Silver 2018). The interviews were conducted just before the implementation of DACA, which, as of this writing is in legal limbo as the Trump administration attempts to cancel the program. DACA allows eligible students, who complete extensive background checks, to hold temporary work permits and protections against deportation. While the focus of this paper is on the analysis of the interview data, some findings from the survey of staff will be included.

Interviews and Analysis

We interviewed staff from admissions, financial aid, student support services, academic departments, as well as a limited number of community advocates at each case study campus.[2] Because staff that work with students who are undocumented are not usually publicized, we first contacted each college president's office for referrals. From there we identified appropriate staff members to interview. Interviewees also suggested interviewees as well as members of the local community who had served as advocates to help students get into college. Table 1 provides a summary of the numbers of interviews with staff and students at each of the six campuses.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

In Table 2 the positions of staff interviewed across the six campuses are identified. The category "Other Staff" includes staff such as Institutional Research, International Students, Career Development, and staff with multiple appointments across their university.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

The interview guide included questions about the history of the college in enrolling and providing support for students who were undocumented as well as organizational practices and the individual actions of staff in working with students who were undocumented.[3] Every

interview was transcribed and uploaded into the NVivo server qualitative analysis program. Inter-rater reliability analyses were run using the "Coding Comparison" function in NVivo. Percent agreement for coding consistency on each node ranged from 70% to 95%. After discussion of the results we refined the coding and added two new codes. Each code was analyzed looking for patterns of agreement as well as disconfirming evidence (Morrow 2005). Results were summarized by node and theoretical and operational memos and notes were written (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

SOCIAL DESIRE PATHS IN ORGANIZATIONS

The existence of possible desire paths became evident in the interviews as admissions officers, advocates, and college staff discussed the enrollment and retention of students who were undocumented. Those interviewed identified similar barriers to enrolling students and some common approaches to getting around the barriers. One admissions officer said that their office had "taken a different path" in order to enroll larger numbers of students who were undocumented. To do so though, as an admissions officer at another university said, "I've had to maneuver around the system."

What emerged from the data as dominant findings were: (1) how social desire paths started in this organizational context and then how the paths became entrenched through collective and similar responses of staff, (2) the identification of organizational barriers to inclusion that became the basis for the development of social desire paths, (3) how staff innovated paths by reforming current procedures as well as developing new practices, and (4) the role of organizational values and mission statements to bolster and support the development of social desire paths. The data also revealed how staff became aware of the limitations of social

desire paths for the full inclusion of undocumented students as federal and state policies continued to be barriers that could not be overcome at the organizational level.

How Social Desire Paths Are Started and Reinforced: From Micro Behaviors to Collective Responses

Desire paths imprinted on the landscape originate from the acts of individuals (or small groups) that are ultimately followed by others. Social desire paths similarly rely on pioneers—people who are the first to challenge formal practices and then make paths by going around barriers. For social desire paths to develop, there must be a large enough group of actors engaging in the same behaviors to make an imprint on the social structure. Admissions staff who took a special interest in the situation of undocumented students usually started as street level bureaucrats in making individual decisions that did not break the law, and included giving advice to applicants and advocates about how to fill out the Common Application as well as to get more information about financial need outside the formal financial aid system. At some campuses, these processes eventually moved to more collective practices.

Moving from ad hoc processes to collective paths. The six colleges studied in-depth were all at different stages of creating social desire paths that formerly had been ad hoc at every school. An example of the early process of social desire path development is expressed by a staff member at a college in a geographic area with few undocumented students and who had little experience working with undocumented students, "it's really a case-by-case basis, and it's really informal. We don't really have any kind of formal structure in place for the students to go to." Said another admissions officer, "In terms of having a map that we broadcast or put out there to undocumented students to say 'Hey, if you want to come to (our college), here's what you need to do.' That doesn't exist right now."

As the numbers of undocumented students applying and asking for consideration increased, colleges began to regularize their processes. A staff member described how they moved from an informal to a more entrenched process: “Well it sort of happened like this: the occasional student would pop up and might get - I might get a letter or an e-mail from a counselor basically saying ‘this kid, this is the kid. So, if ever [private university] were going to step it up in terms of trying to support a student, this is the student.’ And on occasion, we would go to the Jesuit community to ask if there was anything they might be able to do to help this student? So that sort of grew into, as there were more of those requests coming through, the Jesuit community really did try to help the occasional student here or there. But it grew into a greater demand, I guess, or a greater acknowledgment of the demand, and a more formal program.” The Jesuit community, made up of faculty and administrators who were also part of the Jesuit order of priests, with funding separate from the university, supported students financially at three of the six case study campuses. Staff at these schools noted that this practice helped give them “cover” from potential alumni or trustees who might be against the college providing funding out of the general pool of privately-raised scholarship money.

While two of the six schools had developed processes that they implemented every year to enroll students, none had codified the process into formal policies and procedures that were publicly available or written down. The knowledge and practices remained a social desire path, that ran alongside the formal admissions and financial aid system.

Staff had mixed opinions about moving from an individualized to a more regularized process. Said one financial aid officer, who only knew of a few students over his time at the university who were undocumented, “I mean, do you make a policy for some years having no students for years, and then the occasional one or two? I’m going to say no.” This kept their

strategy for working with undocumented students very informal and only activated when they found out that one of their accepted students was undocumented and asking for further financial aid. He acknowledged though that "if we are actively recruiting students, I think it will be our responsibility to have something in place to support these students. Whatever that is. Right now, it's not a population that we are actively recruiting, we are managing them as we receive them, with them initiating interest."

The role of pioneers. Two types of pioneers emerged as important in the development of social desire paths and influenced whether more formalized paths were ultimately formed: (1) advocates and college admissions staff who used their individual relationships to try to find ways to work around current systems, and (2) scholarship donors. A high school counselor with over 25 years of experience working with undocumented students said that in the past "students would just apply with little hope; I mean they weren't very optimistic about their chances…but now more students are getting in (to private institutions), I think it just happened as a spark. One student got in through our good connections and good communication with the admissions offices. I think that was the key right there—having someone in the admissions office." As such, high school college counselors were often early pioneers, calling up the college admissions offices on behalf of their students, asking about how students should fill out application materials and, in some cases, advocating especially for access to the private financial aid of the college. After counselors helped one student, they were better able to assist future students.

As Gonzales and coauthors (2010) found, students had varying levels of help, depending on their high school. Said one college admissions counselor, "But the amount of help available to students differs greatly. Some students come to us highly unaware of what they need, some students come to us with some advocates who are helping them through the process." This

admissions officer gave the example of a high school teacher, an alum of the college, “in our nearby high school, and she is the kind of person who wants to help the students get admission, make sure they are able to enroll. So, she specifically pipelined a handful of students to us every year, to say, ‘can you help them out with their situation?’ Most of the students (she has sent) I’ve worked with on a personal level have come to my desk. So, she’s a real student advocate.”

Before high school counselors could advocate for students, students had to first tell them about their status. As Enriquez (2011) discovered, students were key in that they activated the potential social capital of high school staff to help them navigate the application process while also signaling to other students that college enrollment was possible. High school counselors mentioned the importance of former students serving as role models for current students. Said one educational non-profit staff member, “especially for high school students, just to see someone who has done this and can tell them how hard it was but how much they persevered”.

On the college side, as the number of requests from advocates as well as students grew, the college admission offices assigned one or two admissions officers to handle questions coming from advocates or students about applying while undocumented. Other admissions officers were to refer questions from high school advocates and students to those designees. These staff also became pioneers as some of the first to work with undocumented students.

Staff members talked about working closely with students asking, “how can we make this work?” They gave advice about navigating within current structures and procedures as much as possible, and then finding ways around those that would have been barriers without help from staff. As new processes were developed, they became normative for future undocumented students who applied. In the process, college staff began to feel that they were knowledgeable about how to help students. Said one, “I am acutely aware of the issues of undocumented

students here on campus, because really, we are essentially the front door for those students that are going through the admissions process and when they are ultimately making decisions about how they are going to achieve enrollment, and so in navigating those issues with the student side by side, I really feel that I'm in the trenches with these students."

A second pioneer was donors who provided money for private scholarships for students who were undocumented. At schools with such designated scholarships, staff told of initially asking for permission to sponsor one such student, and the support grew from there. At one school a donation of a scholarship a year specifically for an undocumented student eventually grew to up to ten full scholarships a year. For these colleges, staff were propelled to develop systems that could be used to determine who should get the targeted scholarships. Existing systems did not work as structured for the needs of students who were undocumented. As a result, barriers to enrollment were identified and innovations and workarounds were developed. Pioneers were instrumental in identifying barriers.

Social Desire Paths Form in Response to Barriers in Formal Structures

The "street-level" work of staff allowed for an understanding of the barriers or deficiencies in current structures. Therefore, a crucial step in the creation of social desire paths at the organizational level is identifying the specific barriers to inclusion.

Hidden barriers were only noticed when admissions staff realized that even after getting through the barriers to apply and being very competitive applicants who gained admission based on their own merit, students did not ultimately attend. Staff who had individually worked with students began to understand the main organizational barriers that interfered with the enrollment of a larger number of undocumented students.

Financial barriers. Most of the organizational barriers to inclusion were related to how colleges determined financial need, especially given that tuition was over $30,000 a year at the most inexpensive of the schools. In the survey staff noted that cost and a lack of financial aid options were the most challenging barriers.

Because colleges use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to assess need and undocumented students are not eligible for federal financial aid, most students did not fill out the FAFSA. As this form was used by the colleges to determine both public and private aid, the financial needs of undocumented students was unknown. Said one admissions officer, "We just use the FAFSA. We don't have our own institutional form or profile or anything like that, it's just the FAFSA...So really reestablishing some sort of a form that would help us establish the financial needs of undocumented families, because right now it's a very ad hoc process." Some staff tried to determine need on their own. Said one staff member, "we look to see if there are any documents at all, if there is anything that we can get a sense of what their financial situation is". Said another, "it's the idea of finding a way for the undocumented to be able to demonstrate eligibility."

The exception was merit aid for which all students were eligible, regardless of need and based solely on academic achievement. These merit-based scholarships were generally small, under $10,000, ultimately helpful for students who also qualified for federal and state aid, but not enough for students who were undocumented and low-income. One admissions officer remarked that as their college had enlarged the overall aid available for students, they had been able to enroll more students who were undocumented because there were funds available to make up for federal aid, without affecting the merit or need based aid they could offer citizen students. Yet before that could occur, there needed to be an organizational process to determine need.

For schools with scholarships specifically for students who were undocumented, admissions staff created and used an alternative financial aid system to identify students. The scholarship allowed for a critical mass of students who were undocumented and low-income to attend the school. The development of these new processes was done by admissions staff who cared about this population of students combined with private funding that did not dip into the financial aid pool of resources for all accepted students. But four of the six campuses did not have such a system in place, and considered the financial needs of undocumented students only after they became aware of need on an individual basis.

Structure of admissions and financial aid offices. A second barrier in the enrollment of students who were undocumented was a result of the organizational structure. Admission staff were often divided into those who worked with international students and, the majority, who worked with domestic students. This caused confusion about which admissions staff should be working with applications from students who were potentially undocumented. Students who put in their college application that they were born in a country other than the U.S. were often first referred to staff who worked with international student applicants and enrollees. These staff had to formulate a means to determine if the students were truly international students. For purposes of financial aid, if students who were undocumented were grouped with international students at any part of the process, they could miss the opportunity to be considered for aid. Most schools had no, or very little, private aid for international students.

One admissions officer who handled international student applicants described how she would ascertain if students were her responsibility by "tactfully, as much as I can, will contact the students and find out, 'Are you by any chance one of these categories, so I can best process your file. Are you an international student seeking a student visa? Are you a U.S. citizen or

resident, or other?' And I kind of use the term 'other' because I don't want to basically say, 'Or are you undocumented?" She said if the student said other or undocumented, she would then forward their application and questions to a domestic admissions counselor. She said that this was an important determination to make because it would be unlawful for colleges to support visas for those who were not international students.

Another barrier was the organizational structure at colleges that often separated admissions and financial aid into two departments at some schools. "First it was very informal, I think it started with conversations with my boss. We now have a vice-president for enrollment who also oversees financial aid, so there was discussion there about, what can we do? And this I guess is the very first policy decision that I was told, at the front end, was, well, we will certainly give any undocumented student whatever academic scholarship they are entitled to. And that's that." This staff member credited the organizational change of having admissions and financial aid under the same organizational department that ultimately allowed for the development of a more aligned process. After that change, "step one has been to say, okay, let's make sure we have a point person for this, and you know we mentioned earlier, start to look at, try to evolve a more formal policy. That's one of the steps we just sort of have to make sure we have one person who is aware of all of the cases, and can take it from there." Further, the allowance of private aid for one undocumented student started a path that could then be followed by other students.

Expectations of staff. The typical roles and expectations of staff could get in the way of full inclusion of students who were undocumented. Even staff who know that enrolling undocumented students was part of the mission of their school, they did not always understand the specific barriers to inclusion. As one admissions officer said, "I don't think we are doing anything to actively recruit those students. Only because we have limited resources, so we leave

it open. Those students approach us, then we definitely try to do what we can." Financial aid counselors were trying to balance competing interest and intuitional values in offering aid, "And it's challenging for us, because we can't give them any federal money so the burden falls entirely on the University to provide them with any kind of financial aid package. I guess it's been sort of past practices and seeing what's worked out for students and them (certain high schools and churches) feeling comfortable referring other students to us."

An admissions director acknowledged that most of the staff in his office were not attuned to potential barriers to admission for undocumented students. In regards to staff knowing about how to help undocumented students get around the optional citizenship questions on the Common Application he said, "The people in this office are here to process and so they don't ask a lot of questions about—and I don't think they get a lot of questions from people. So, I don't think they do a lot of thinking about why or why not we're asking the questions (about citizenship status)…So, the only time issues, whether it be an undocumented student issue or an issue about the felony question, the only time when those things come up is when there's an issue."

Social Desire Paths Alter Existing Structures or Create New Processes

As has been discussed, it was mainly after students were accepted to college that social desire paths emerged in response to the presence of undocumented students who needed private financial aid in order to attend. Workarounds were necessary to continue to treat undocumented students similarly in the admissions process and to increase the likelihood that accepted students would enroll. Staff expressed the need to be innovative in using existing systems to enroll students. Said one admissions officer, "We believe in supporting students in receiving an

integrated and transformative Jesuit education, so we are willing to be creative in our approaches."

To get around the fact that undocumented students could not submit the standard forms for state and federal aid, admissions officers had undocumented students fill out the same financial aid forms, but outside of the federal online system. The institution could then treat undocumented students equal to other students, also realizing that they would not be eligible for public aid.

Even though college staff described their systems as informal or ad hoc, they noted that now they did have processes in place to at least consider students who were undocumented. Said one staff member about the system, "It's not going to be that explicit. But internally there is an agreement that this particular pot of money will be made available for these students." At schools with money specifically for undocumented students every admissions cycle, staff implemented more structured systems, known within the admissions staff, "right now, we really ask all of our admission counselors to be attentive, and it used to, that just wasn't the case. And because we weren't paying attention before, maybe there were still students that we just missed. But also, because there wasn't assistance, because that opportunity really didn't exist—so, like (we thought) there's nothing we can do about it anyway so why take the extra time and effort trying to identify students unless we can really offer them something? But right now, the process is that every, in reading an application, every admission counselor is asked to look for those clues if you will, and then for those applications, to give them to one of our staff who really works more closely with the scholarship program."

At schools with scholarships specifically for students who were undocumented, the same social desire paths were used every admissions cycle. First staff needed to devise a system to

identify students who might be eligible for the private scholarships. Staff discussed the types of clues they looked for in college applications that could indicate students were undocumented. Like paths off the formal sidewalk, staff said that not filling out a FAFSA, marking that they were not born in the U.S. but had graduated from U.S. schools and having a U.S. permanent address, and leaving the optional social security question blank (or putting all of one number or zeros) could be evidence of an undocumented student, “Yeah definitely missing an SSN, and that of course because it’s not required is not foolproof. Some students just don’t put it. The other is the question about country of citizenship. And then if they don’t indicate they are U.S. citizens, or are born elsewhere but don’t have a visa type. So, putting all those things together, and making a guess as to whether or not it is a student who might fall into that category.” Staff then needed to take an extra step to contact the student to determine financial need.

This system worked as long as staff were continually trained to be on the lookout for “clues.” However, even after enrollment, an academic advisor talked about the need to have more explicit ways to know the status of students who were struggling financially. She told the story of how the typical college practices combined with the expectations of staff roles impacted an enrolled student,

> I only know of one student in my six years here that was undocumented and that was probably now, five years ago, I imagine. Unfortunately, that student had to stop out because of financial reasons. I was thinking that if that was today, I would have done things differently. It's one of those unfortunate circumstances that I didn't throw my foot down because I don't govern necessarily the Bursars office, the financial aid office, but if I throw my foot down, you know, it can make stuff happen sometimes. And on that one, the student was in her first year and didn't have the resources and was not able to get loans and so, ended up stopping out, and I believe we turned her unpaid bill over to collections...We give away millions of dollars of financial aid every year and there are academic awards and there are need based awards. If we wanted to help any student, we can make anything happen...I think it's really important that if we have somebody in that situation (an undocumented student) that as an institution, I think we have a responsibility in some sense to be responding. Other people don't see that—a person that's charged with collecting the bills sees their responsibility is to get the bill; they don't care about the

> extenuating circumstances. So, I think it takes some people to think at a different level and so, I'm not saying they didn't do their job. They did exactly what they were charged to do but someone has to say some time, you know, that's why I say, 'throw the foot down' cause someone has to say, 'Well, this isn't the way it's going to be, we gotta work it out for the student' and the institution through the staff here, then responds but often times...more often time than not, unless somebody raises awareness or raises concerns, it's just another day, moving on.

This staff member reflected on the need for staff to break out of their formal role and take a more active approach to working with students including creating a more formal process by which undocumented students could be identified. Campuses struggled to balance not identifying students in ways that might put them at legal risk at the same time that they felt that they were not doing enough to support students while they were on campus because they were unaware of their circumstances.

Bolstering Social Desire Paths: Institutional and Individual Values and Goals for Inclusion

Staff justified their actions to work around barriers to enrolling students who were undocumented by appealing to their university's mission. In the survey with college staff, 76% agreed that "admitting, enrolling, and supporting undocumented students fits within the mission" of their institutions, 62% thought that educating students who were undocumented should be a focus of the colleges in the network of 28 schools, and 64% thought that their institutions should be doing more to support students. In spending extra time working with undocumented students, staff felt as if they were fulfilling their campuses' ultimate mission: providing access to education for those who meritoriously deserved it for their hard work in high school. This was especially the case at institutions where the president of the university had publicly stated the institution's support for students who were undocumented.

Staff also realized that being at a private college allowed for more flexibility to provide tuition support for students, but that this ability was not usually fully realized by the colleges, "In

the enrollment practices, the messages that we send out predominately say, ‘Si Se Puede’, you know, ‘Yes We Can’. But the fact of the matter is many of these students, unless you’re in a state that has tuition equity, you can’t receive financial aid. A private institution however, has the power to be able to make some of those things happen where public institutions cannot.” Another explained the role of their college in responding to undocumented students as “understanding that the university stands for something more than the systems that influence that structure—that we can respond outside of that as an institution.”

Many staff mentioned the Jesuit emphasis on the Latin term “cura personalis”, referring to the mission of their colleges to care for the whole person, the whole student, “Yes, the mission, cura personalis you know, I strongly believe in it, and if our moral conscience helps us to do that, then we’re not doing anything wrong (by helping undocumented students), we are helping, we are serving.” Another staff member expressed it this way, “We really want to put our money where our mouth is and know that ultimately by trying to educate one student at a time and have that level of cura personalis with everything we do, that this is one more extension of how we’re going to do that, that even if our actions don’t match what is happening on a state or federal level yet, that we should take up the cause to be pioneers in this area.”

Staff also linked working closely with students to the historical founding of their colleges, “We really, as Jesuit institutions, we really do need to be pioneers in this cause because I look at how our college was founded to initially be a source of learning, for at that time, immigrant men, now first-generation men and women, as well as second and third generation college students, but I think that is intrinsic to our heritage and our mission as a college that we take a look at, even in this current political climate, what we are responsible for in advocating for these students.” Said one admissions officer, “I think we are willfully under-utilizing our mission

as a Jesuit institution that seeks justice, that seeks fairness...there is no God in the immigration system that's fair to these students." This staff member bemoaned that even though there were many very high-achieving students who were undocumented and more than eligible for admission to his college, "We don't have the infrastructure, I don't even think we have the institutional knowledge to (admit students)."

Staff who believed enrolling students was reflective of the school's mission and had developed desire paths to enroll students felt pride in their work and workplace:

> The fact that there is a formal program and people have said they are dedicated to putting money into the scholarship program, we have identified that these are the students who are going to need it...It's the mission and I come at it from my faith, as well as in terms of, 'well, this makes sense that we would be able to do this.' That's where I feel like, okay, this is a good place to be because you can do stuff like this, and it's something that I can do in my work, that people in different parts of the campus can reach out to students. So, having a formal program for me it's almost like I feel a sense of pride that, yes, I work at a place who values these students and that really desires to support and resource them.

Working with undocumented students caused some staff to form very deep relationships with students, and that reinforced their desire to help more students. A long-time admissions officer said:

> staff tend to take on more of a parental role if you will and I've seen that happen, and usually that's not a bad thing as long as they realize you can't fix it, because the piece that really needs to be fixed you have no power to fix. But also, I think that they really, they really join the students in their accomplishments, and so feel like 'Okay, we did this together.' And that they have been a part of watching the student – and working in Admissions, that happens a lot regardless of the student. You see them come in, and especially if they are in contact with them throughout the four years and you see them prepare for graduation and actually walk across the stage, you do feel like: 'These are my kids. These are my kids.' But oftentimes with students who are undocumented and you have insight into what's happening with their family and the struggles that they have outside of the classroom, you tend to be even more connected I think, the highs are really high and the lows are really low, and where the student is, you tend to be, in that particular phase of their lives.

Staff were especially sensitive to the potential of trustees or alumni speaking out against actively helping students if their work was made too public, “Now I know there's always this line whenever you, well not whenever—sometimes, when you are working on social justice issues. Sometimes I’ve butted heads with this, where the concern has always brought up, 'well, but people are alumni, donors, what do they think?' so we have to be quiet, like 'we agree with you, but,’ you know what I mean? So how do they be more effective on getting the word out, that this is a safe place, a place where were we encourage everyone to come and learn?”

Other staff saw their work as an opportunity to be part of a larger societal mission:

> I think Jesuit schools could become, you know, the model of what higher education should be for the students. Just because of the way that we are and are not affected by state policies, we have such a different point of opportunity than other state schools do. I think if we can all unite and then send out a great message of ‘hey, I don’t care who you are, education is important and look at all these amazing scholars.’ Imagine if we took every Jesuit university and everybody committed to ten students, that’s 280 students that would graduate in one year, and that’s 280 engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, whatever, that these kids could fulfill. It would be a huge impact.

But not all staff supported creating social desire paths for inclusion. Said one financial aid officer, “I guess my recommendation, from the perspective of the financial aid office, would be that we continue to follow the lead of the federal and the state...I think the university just needs to keep doing what it’s doing and be able to assist students just as we would any other student.” By the university following procedures that assumed that federal aid forms provide the best way for colleges to know the financial need of their applicants, colleges were systematically denying private aid to accepted undocumented students who were low-income without even realizing it. At these schools the approach to enrolling students was not a well-worn path, but rather continued to be an intermittent practice that was activated only when staff were approached by a student, advocate, or higher-level administrator.

Limitations of Social Desire Paths at the Organizational Level

Once students were enrolled, staff in positions across the college noted that many federal laws created barriers for students that they could not overcome within their organizations. Most barriers had to do with the ability of students to be paid for work on campus, to travel for international programs, enroll in majors where fingerprinting or other types of background checks were required for practicum or other reasons, and especially career planning. Staff noted that these macro structural barriers meant that students who were undocumented had different college experiences than documented students and that they could not engage in all of the opportunities of the college. Acknowledged one staff member, echoing the sentiments expressed by others: "There is only so much we can do." In the end, it was up to the students to figure it out on their own, or with the help of outside support systems and their families.

Many staff said that they had no idea how to help students navigate state and federal barriers that affected them on campus, or even if there was anything they could do to help them. Said one frustrated staff member, "I don't know. I don't even know." Staff felt responsible for providing the same experience for undocumented and documented students, and students themselves expected the university to help them as it did other students on campus, "There's a lot of frustration. I was talking to a student last week and she was telling me how her program requires an internship and internships do background checks. And she says, 'how am I going to negotiate all this?' And she says to me 'don't you think the university has an obligation to help us?' She's not even on a scholarship. So, she's paying all this money, thousands of dollars of tuition. And because of that, doesn't the university have an obligation to help her meet the criteria for graduation, as long as she is willing to do the work? But again, there is no (university) policy on this."

Some staff began to advocate for the passage of federal policies, "Really, when I reflect on the experience of working with these students, it's a humbling one, and it also really drives me to action, not only on the individual level for those students, but also really wanting to make sure that my legislators are in agreement with my opinions and you know really advocating for what I believe which is that the Dream Act is really a way for students to be able to have a pathway to citizenship…it's a very powerful experience working with the students, and getting on the ground level with them." Some even encouraged their campus presidents to make public statements in support of the Dream Act.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The case of this network of colleges enrolling students who are undocumented provides an opportunity to understand how the individual actions of street-level bureaucrats become collective processes in organizations. To develop social desire paths to include more undocumented students required that high school students and their teachers/counselors act as pioneers by approaching college admissions staff about how to fill out applications and be considered for financial aid. In working individually with students and being "in the trenches" with them, college staff became aware of the hidden barriers to enrollment. Then college staff had to "throw their foot down," "break down barriers," and "chart a new path". As more students and advocates contacted admissions staff and dedicated scholarships became available, staff worked collectively to build informal desire paths for inclusion. These social desire paths did not change the formal admissions process, but ran alongside it and, at some schools, was reinforced each admissions cycle.

This study adds to and reaffirms the work of Lipsky (1980, 2010) as well as Marrow (2009, 2012) in understanding both the processes of and barriers to inclusion at the

organizational and community levels. As Marrow (2009) found in the healthcare context, in this study street-level admissions and financial aid staff navigated around barriers to enroll undocumented students by working with applicants and high school advocates, supported by their individual beliefs as well as the university's mission. Theoretically this research also advances the micro-focus of studies of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980, 2010) to provide an understanding of how individual actions can become collective processes in organizations as social desire paths. Although still not codified as formal procedures, social desire paths existed in organizations similar to the informal paths on the physical landscape, enacted by a few and then reinforced over time. Private schools, driven by their missions, were able to do more than their public counter-parts, which relied on policy changes at the state-level so undocumented students could pay in-state tuition and accept state-level aid.

As many of the barriers to enrollment of undocumented students were the result of enrollment offices being organized around federal policies to determine financial aid and student type (domestic or international), new paths were created and entrenched. In particular, designated scholarships for undocumented students propelled colleges to develop collective, sustained social desire paths that could be used every year. Staff felt free to engage in these behaviors because they had internalized larger institutional values of inclusion for this group of students, and worked to meet those greater ends despite formal practices that were initially barriers. For campuses without financial support specifically for undocumented students, the social desire paths were not as entrenched, and only enacted on a case-by-case basis. At these campuses, the hidden barriers to admission continued to be addressed on an ad hoc basis, only if students had a strong enough advocate to have their individual case put forward.

Although greater inclusion was accomplished by the creation of social desire paths in the enrollment process of the colleges studied here, there were still significant structural barriers that students faced while in college including finances, transportation, employment, completing major or course requirements that mandated fingerprinting or licensure, etc. (Author et al. 2017; Contreras 2009; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, and Cortes 2009). In the absence of DACA, only some of these barriers could be worked around, others were macro-level structural barriers that caused students to drop courses and internships as well as change majors (Author et al. 2017). Staff were thus limited in how much they could do and were not able to accomplish full inclusion and the same college opportunities for all students. Given that DACA is temporary and, as of this writing, trying to be abolished by the current presidential administration, the experiences of students and college staff profiled here provides guidance as to how colleges can actively respond if they desire to help more students facing increasing federal barriers to inclusion.

Beyond the implications of these findings at the organizational level, this research also has implications at the community level, especially related to initiatives that are attempting to include groups that are often left out of visioning and decision-making processes. Participatory attempts to involve a greater proportion of community members usually conduct surveys, focus, groups, or hold town hall meetings. However, these methods frequently miss those for whom current structures are not working and these methods often collect information based more on attitudes, than behaviors. Social desire path analysis provides a means to include the wants and desires of those often under-represented in participatory approaches by observing patterned behaviors as they are formed into social desire paths (Author 2014; Galvin and Sunikka-Blank 2015; Sunikka-Blank, Galvin, and Behar 2018). As Cochran (2017) notes, “others must follow

the same path for a line to develop" (p. 158). More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of a social desire path approach in other types of organizations as well as in the policy context.

These findings expand research on organizations as dynamic entities and delineate a process by which organizations can institutionalize change started by street-level bureaucrats. The identification of social desire paths provides a means by which hidden barriers to inclusion can be revealed by looking for street-level actions that become collective processes. Then organizations can decide if they want to block, allow, or restructure formal process for greater inclusion.

While addressing social problems occurs at many different systems levels, social desire path analysis provides a specific strategy by which policies and organizational practices that are not working for some groups can be identified, understood from the perspective of those most affected, and changed if greater inclusion is a value and goal. As such, social desire path analysis is a tool by which the findings of social scientists can be more actively applied to inform program planning and organizational functioning.

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Table 1. Number of Staff/Advocate and Student Interviews Conducted at Each Campus

Campus	Number of Staff/Advocate Interviewees	Student Interviewees
Eastern University One	9	5
Eastern University Two	8	3
Midwestern University One	12	2
Midwestern University Two	11	6
Western University One	10	5
Western University Two	9*	5
TOTAL INTERVIEWS	59	26

*One of the interviews at this campus was a group interview with four individuals. All the rest of the interviews were individual, one-on-one interviews.

Table 2. Number of Staff/Advocates Interviewed by Position

Position	Number Interviewed
Enrollment Management	4
Admissions	13
Financial Aid	5
Campus Ministry	6
Diversity or Diversity & Retention	6
Academic Support/Dean	4
Student Development or Student Life	4
Faculty	2
Other Staff	6
Community Advocates	9
TOTAL INTERVIEWED	59

ENDNOTES

[1] The terms “undocumented” and “unauthorized” will be used interchangeably to refer to students who, at the time of this research, did not have legal permission to live in the United States.
[2] While this paper focuses mainly on the results from the institutional case studies and interviews with staff and high school advocates, I also reference the findings from the larger study and some parts of the in-depth interviews with students.
[3] Please contact the author for a copy of the interview guide.