
Unaccompanied Minors: How Children of Latin American Immigrants Negotiate High School Choice

CAROLYN SATTIN-BAJAJ

Seton Hall University

The compatibility of school choice policies and educational equity goals is one of the most hotly debated issues in education today. Yet, despite the growing population of children of immigrants in US schools, limited research exists on the relationship between parental nativity and participation in school choice from an equity perspective. This article explores the tensions and alignment between school choice and equity through an examination of children of Latin American immigrants' search for and decisions about high schools in the context of a compulsory choice policy. Drawing on nearly 2 years of ethnographic data collected at one New York City public middle school and interviews with 26 first- and second-generation children of low-income immigrants from across Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, I illuminate some of challenges that Latino immigrant-origin students faced in understanding how to select appropriate, quality high schools. Using these findings, I analyze the ways in which the design and implementation of New York City's mandatory high school choice policy hindered its equity potential and offer recommendations for its improvement.

Introduction

Since the early era of school desegregation, school choice policies have been implemented, in part, to address long-standing inequities in students' access to high-quality educational opportunities. School choice programs were first adopted by school districts en masse after the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* rejecting segregated school systems. During this initial post-*Brown* period many districts, particularly in the South, used choice to retain rather than dismantle segregation by opening up historically white schools in theory but limiting real chances for integration in practice.

Electronically published April 10, 2015

American Journal of Education 121 (May 2015)

© 2015 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

0195-6744/2015/12103-0003\$10.00

However, the federal government and the courts soon took steps to enforce actual integration efforts through the 1964 Civil Rights Act and other judicial decisions (Orfield and Frankenberg 2013). The school choice movement also grew out of some conservatives' push to infuse the "educational marketplace" with private-sector principles and competition (Chubb and Moe 1990; Friedman 1962). Spawning unlikely alliances, school choice has brought together groups that have historically been at odds on many issues and has included an outsized role for the federal government in education.

The decentralized nature of schooling in the United States typically limits federal government input and influence on state and district educational policy. However, the case of school choice has been unique in the extent to which presidents and other federal-level politicians and bureaucrats have been involved in legislation and advocacy. Most recently President Obama required that states lift caps on the number of charter schools in order to be eligible for millions of dollars in grant money through the Race to the Top program; earlier presidents expressed similarly strong support for charter schools and other forms of school choice. School choice policies range from magnet and charter schools to voucher, controlled choice, and open enrollment plans. With some form of school choice currently in place in 46 states and the District of Columbia, more students than ever have school choice as part of their educational experiences (Center for Education Reform 2014; Education Commission of the States 2012).

The compatibility of school choice policies and educational equity goals is hotly debated in education today. Some scholars see choice and equity as fundamentally at odds due to considerable disparities in families' financial resources, cultural capital, social networks, and capacity to comply with schools' often implicit normative expectations of appropriate choice behaviors (Ball 1993; Brantlinger 2003; Fuller et al. 1996). Others have argued in favor of the equity potential of well-designed, carefully implemented school choice programs (Betts and Loveless 2005; Hill 2002; Rofes and Stulberg 2004). Numerous studies examine the possibilities and pitfalls of achieving equity in the context of school choice. Some of the most vociferous critics of school choice policies raised concern about their risk of exacerbating rather than ameliorating patterns of increasing socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and linguistic homogenization in schools and perpetuating unequal access to promising educational op-

CAROLYN SATTIN-BAJAJ is an assistant professor and codirector of the Center for College Readiness in the Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy, which is a part of the College of Education and Human Services at Seton Hall University.

portunities (Fuller et al. 1996; Petrovich 2005; Ravitch 2010; Vasquez Heilig 2013; Vasquez Heilig and Holme 2013; Wells et al. 2000). Research on racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences in choice behaviors has produced mixed findings (Andre-Bechely 2005; Neild 2005; Saporito and Lareau 1999; Smrekar and Goldring 1999; Teske et al. 2007; Wells and Roda 2013). However, the empirical findings have revealed very little about how and why racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences impact people's engagement in school choice or what these differences mean for the equity potential of choice policies. Moreover, almost no consideration has been given to questions of parents' nativity and school choice participation or how immigrant backgrounds may interact with other factors such as income and parental education. This gap in the literature is particularly significant today, considering that children of immigrants are now the fastest-growing segment of the school-age population in the United States (Batalova and Lee 2012).

In this article, I describe how district high school choice practices interact with factors related to students' immigrant and cultural backgrounds—namely, language barriers, family involvement in educational matters, and knowledge of New York City schools—in ways that impede the advancement of educational equity through choice. New York City is an ideal location in which to investigate questions about the relationship between choice and equity because the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), unlike many other urban school districts, requires all eighth-grade students who plan to attend a public high school to participate in a form of school choice. As a result, research in New York City provides an opportunity to capture a population of traditionally underserved students and families often absent from studies of school choice in a voluntary choice context. This is the case since, on average, lower-income and immigrant students have been found to participate less frequently in optional school choice programs when compared to their more advantaged peers (Buckley and Sattin-Bajaj 2011; Buckley and Schneider 2005; Fiske and Ladd 2000; Goldring and Hausman 1999).

The article explores the tensions and alignment between school choice and equity through an examination of children of Latin American immigrants' search for and decisions about high schools in the context of a compulsory choice policy. Drawing on nearly 2 years of ethnographic data collected at one New York City public middle school and interviews with 26 first- and second-generation children of low-income immigrants from across Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, I illuminate some of the challenges that Latino immigrant-origin students faced in understanding how to select appropriate, quality high schools. Using these findings, I analyze the ways in which the design and implementation of New York City's mandatory high school choice policy hindered its equity potential.

This article introduces the question of immigrant background into discussions of school choice, cultural capital, and social reproduction. Like Ball (1993) and other scholars (Brantlinger 2003; Lareau and Shumar 1996; Smrekar and Goldring 1999), I consider the knowledge of how best to take advantage of educational policies as a valuable form of cultural capital. This article identifies the assumptions and expectations about families' knowledge, resources, and parenting behaviors implicitly embedded in the design of New York City's high school choice process and locates instances of correspondence and discontinuity between the demands of the choice policy and the cultural models, social practices, and resources of low-income Latin American immigrant families. In doing so, it extends contemporary arguments about the equity implications of implementing education policies and practices that have been normed to typically white, middle-class families' child-rearing strategies, dispositions, values, and forms of cultural capital in communities of diverse socioeconomic and racial/ethnic makeup (Brantlinger 2003; Lareau 2003).

Related Literature

School choice policies have been identified as both a potential cause of and a remedy to ongoing gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students. For some opponents of choice, unregulated school choice policies create conditions for higher-income and more educated families to further their children's advantages by accessing scarce high-quality schools; choice policies have thus been charged with serving as a mechanism of social reproduction (Fuller et al. 1996; Vasquez Heilig 2013; Vasquez Heilig and Holme 2013; Wells and Roda 2013). Most studies that examine trends in school choice participation have shown that, on average, the most disadvantaged and academically needy students are less likely to be served in schools of choice, although not universally (Buckley and Sattin-Bajaj 2011; Buckley and Schneider 2007; Finnegan and Scarbrough 2013; Fiske and Ladd 2000; Fleming et al. 2013; Goldring and Hausman 1999; Holme et al. 2013; Wells et al. 2000; Wolf et al. 2005). Data comparing charter and district public school enrollment of high-needs populations, such as English-language learners, special education students, and students receiving free or reduced lunch are mixed, and charter schools continue to be one of the most highly contested forms of school choice often criticized for draining public funds away from district public schools and excluding the neediest students (Baker et al. 2012; Buckley and Sattin-Bajaj 2011; Buckley and Schneider 2007; CREDO 2009; Fuller 2012; Hoxby and Murarka 2009; Wells 2002). Yet, this form of school choice is proliferating at a rapid pace bolstered by support from the Obama

administration and other national, state, and local education leaders (Center for Education Reform 2014).

By requiring some degree of active selection of schools, choice policies place demands on students and families that do not exist when students are automatically assigned to schools by the district. Some scholars of choice have argued that to live up to the demands of choice, and, more important, to successfully gain entry to the highest-quality schools available, families require certain knowledge and resources, or cultural capital, and this unnamed requirement furthers the socially reproductive function of choice policies (Bourdieu 1977). In their critiques of school choice, sociologist Stephen Ball and others (Ball et al. 1995; Brantlinger 2003; Smrekar and Goldring 1999) have emphasized class differences in peoples' "capacities to participate in or benefit from the culture of choice—that is to 'decipher and manipulate structures'" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 73; cited in Ball 1993). Ball rejected choice and the idea of a neutral education marketplace in which the consumer public has uniform resources, values, and sensibilities. He argued, "the education market . . . assumes that the skills and predisposition to choice, and cultural capital which may be invested in choice, are generalized . . . certain types and amounts of cultural capital are required in order to be an active and strategic chooser" (Ball 1993, 13).

Some scholars have analyzed possession or lack of cultural capital specific to school choice almost strictly as a function of income and educational background, paying scant attention to variables such as culture and nativity (Ball 1993; Brantlinger 2003; Smrekar and Goldring 1999). For their part, Fuller and colleagues (1996) suggested the importance of cultural background in affecting the school choices people make and their likelihood of participating in an optional choice program. Yet, they made no reference to concrete ways in which cultural factors, socialization experiences, or country of origin differences may interact with school choice policies or how they may help to explain people's school choice decisions and behaviors.

Shifting demographics renders an understanding of the relationships among choice, equity, and parental nativity essential for the development of school choice policies that serve all students. In 2010, 24% of children ages 17 and under lived at home with at least one immigrant parent (Batalova and Lee 2012), and this figure is projected to reach 30% by 2018 (Eamon 2005; NCES 2009). Moreover, 47% of the foreign-born population in 2010 reported having Hispanic or Latino origins (Batalova and Lee 2012). Given their large population share, the experiences of Latino immigrant families with school choice and other education policies should be of particular interest to practitioners and policy makers today.

There is a vast and growing literature on diverse aspects of immigrant-origin students' experiences in the US education system. Some of the earliest studies

of the relationship between immigrant background and student achievement found benefits associated with being a child of immigrant parents, regardless of students' place of birth or parents' countries of origin. Scholars variously attributed these findings to parental optimism, students' motivation and sense of obligation to parents, selective migration, cultural values and practices that emphasize school achievement, and less repeated exposure to discrimination and social exclusion (Feliciano 2005; Fuligni 1997; Gibson 1988; Kao and Tienda 1995; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Matute-Bianchi 1991; Ogbu 1991; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995; Zhou and Bankston 1998). These findings have been shown to hold for immigrant-origin youth across countries of origin ranging from Latin America and the Caribbean to East and South Asia. Other research has found evidence of first-generation immigrant children's relative advantage over their second-generation, US-born peers (Fuligni 1997; Schwartz and Stiefel 2006). Yet, studies have also shown significant challenges that immigrant and immigrant-origin students face in American schools due to their families' legal status; nontraditional parental involvement practices; and other factors related to their cultural, ethnic, and immigrant backgrounds (Ceballos et al. 2010; Delgado-Gaitan 1992; Eamon 2005; Hill 2009; López and López 2010; Olivas 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2009, 2011; Trumbull et al. 2003; Valdés 1996; Valencia and Black 2002). These obstacles have been particularly common in the lives of children of low-income Latin American immigrants and highly disruptive to their educational trajectories.

A large body of scholarship has identified conflicts between students' home cultures, values, and practices, on the one hand, and education policies and expectations, on the other, and revealed how these conflicts may hamper students' emotional, psychological, and academic development. Scholars of home-school conflicts have covered considerable ground in illuminating the ways in which a student's background interacts with the sociocultural context of a school environment, practice, or policy to put him or her at a relative advantage or disadvantage (Delpit 1995; Heath 1983; Menken 2008; Valenzuela 2004). Similar analysis on questions about families' school choice participation is currently missing from the literature. This article interrogates the equity proposition of the high school choice policy in New York City by exploring whether it facilitated low-income, Latino immigrant-origin students' access to higher-performing high schools than those to which they would have automatically been assigned in the absence of such a policy and examining the reasons why or why not. The research questions motivating this study are as follows: How do low-income children of Latin American immigrants engage in high school choice, and how do their school search and decision-making practices conform to or deviate from the district's expectations? What do the areas of alignment and discrepancy

between students' behaviors and district expectations mean for the equity proposition of high school choice?

Research Methodology

The findings presented in this article come from data collected through ethnographic observations of school-based activities related to high school choice at a case study middle school site, document analysis of high school choice publications disseminated by the NYCDOE, and interviews conducted with school personnel and eighth-grade students at the case study site, as well as with two district administrators responsible for overseeing high school choice citywide. The article draws from a larger study of diverse eighth-grade students' and families' experiences with high school choice in New York City that also included observations of citywide high school events, a survey of students at the case study middle school, and interviews with parents from multiple New York City middle schools. The study is presented in its entirety in the book *Unaccompanied Minors: Immigrant Youth, School Choice and the Pursuit of Equity* (Sattin-Bajaj 2014).

A case study approach was most appropriate to answer the questions motivating this project since it provides a way to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,” that is, a middle school setting (Yin 2008, 18). Case studies that incorporate ethnographic methods can be particularly useful in applied fields like education by providing opportunities to generate “thick description” that can lead to important new empirical findings and theoretical insights (Geertz 1973). Ethnography allows the field researcher to see “from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful and how they do so” (Emerson et al. 1995, 2). Focused observations and interviews at the case study middle school allowed me to learn about students' and school staff members' experiences with school choice within a confined context, identify patterns of choice behavior, and relate micro-level processes to larger structural and political events and cultural practices and policies. A single-site case study design was selected for the purposes of intensive exploration of all aspects of choice within one bounded system (a middle school); however, the study included visits to multiple middle schools of various sizes serving students of diverse backgrounds to situate the case study site within the range of schools across the district.

Interviews supplemented observation data and provided direct access to individuals' perspectives on the choice process and descriptions of their experiences with it. Given the focus on students' (and school personnel's) relationships to the mandatory high school choice policy, episodic interviewing was a fitting method to learn about choice-related actions and events from a specific set of

actors: students, parents, and school personnel (Flick 2007). The combination of interviews and observation created a valuable form of triangulation that helped check data reliability and expand data sources (Fielding and Fielding 1986).

Document collection and analysis served as a corollary to the ethnographic fieldwork and interviews and provided a critical piece of the puzzle of high school choice in New York City. Documents can furnish key information, descriptions, and historical understanding not available through alternative means. These “objective” and “unobtrusive” forms of data provided formal evidence of the details of the policy, required procedures, and actions recommended by the district (Webb et al. 1981).

Data Sources

Case Study Site

Site selection is the linchpin of successful case study research. For the purposes of this study, one case study middle school was selected on the basis of its size, the student population served, and its academic offerings. Throughout the course of the study, both before and after selecting the case study site, I visited eight other middle schools serving diverse student populations in different parts of New York City. These additional school visits and the informal interviews that took place with school staff allowed me to understand where IS 725 (pseudonym) fit in the landscape of New York City middle schools and how its approach to working with students and families on high school choice was alike and different from schools serving similar students and schools serving higher income, non-immigrant students. IS 725 was similar to the other large, low-performing middle schools serving predominantly low-income, immigrant-origin, and minority students I visited in terms of the limited resources allocated to choice and the minimal attention it received from school personnel and parents. By contrast, middle schools with more affluent student populations (which also tended to be white, native-born) dedicated substantially more time and personnel hours to hosting workshops, sending e-mail updates, meeting with families, and advising students and parents about high school selections.

IS 725 was selected as the focal middle school primarily because it approximated the type of middle schools that low-income Latino youth living in urban areas have been shown to attend in terms of size, student demographic makeup, and academic outcomes. The Harvard Civil Rights Project reports that black and Latino students are three times as likely as white students to be in high-poverty schools, to attend predominantly minority schools in disproportionate numbers, and are more likely to be enrolled in schools identified as low per-

forming (Orfield et al. 2012; Owens and Sunderman 2006). IS 725 was large (approximately 2,100 students in grades 6–8), historically low-performing (only 45.2% of students scoring at proficiency on the New York State mathematics exam in 2008–9), high poverty (81% of students qualified for free lunch in 2009–10), a high concentration of minority students (98.2% nonwhite), and a high proportion of English language learners (37.9%).

Eighty percent of students enrolled at IS 725 were “Hispanic” in 2009–10, and these students were primarily first- and second-generation children of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Ecuador. The 12% “Asian” population included newly arrived Chinese immigrant students and second-generation children of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese, and Korean origin; the 6% “black” students included African American children born to native-born parents as well as students of West Indian and African origin; and the small “white” student population consisted of both first- and second-generation children from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The range of academic programs offered at IS 725, including Spanish and Chinese bilingual education classes and a gifted and talented magnet program, was another feature that made IS 725 an attractive research site for this study. The middle school was divided into five separate “academies,” each with a dedicated assistant principal and school counselor. One academy housed all of the Spanish bilingual classes, whereas the other four academies included both mainstream and English-as-a-second language classes. The larger study from which these data are derived examined variation in students’ high school choice experiences across academies and racial/ethnic backgrounds. However, given the unparalleled growth in the size of the Latino immigrant-origin student population in the United States, this article focuses exclusively on patterns within the school’s heterogeneous Latino student body and explores differences between first- and second-generation children of Latin American immigrants as well as between recent and nonrecent immigrants. Using the NYCDOE’s classification, “recent” immigrant refers to youth who have been in the United States less than 4 years; “nonrecent” immigrant includes students who arrived 4 or more years ago (prior to the start of the study).

Participant Observation

Between September 2008 and June 2010, I spent roughly 400 hours at IS 725 engaging in participant observation, conducting student and staff interviews, and administering a survey to nearly 500 eighth-grade students. The middle school ethnography focused on understanding school-level implementation of the high school choice policy and eighth-grade students’ participation in the

process. I was specifically interested in identifying which, if any, school resources were allocated to informing students and parents about choice and understanding how school personnel engaged with students and families. I shadowed the five school counselors while they conducted choice-related activities, conducted informal interviews with each school counselor, and observed their interactions with students who sought advice or assistance with the application. I also met with the principal on at least five occasions to learn more about his goals for the school and his perspective on the choice policy, and I interacted with other administrators, school support staff, and eighth-grade teachers on a regular basis.

Interviews

To complement ethnographic observations, I recruited a purposive sample of eighth-grade students at IS 725 to participate in one-on-one, semistructured interviews. Of the 50 total students recruited for participation in the larger study, 46 agreed to be interviewed and returned signed parental consent forms. Recruitment of the Latin American immigrant-origin student subgroup was targeted at students who possessed the characteristics I hypothesized to be correlated with variation in school choice behavior: nativity (first- or second-generation immigrant), time of arrival (recent and nonrecent immigrant according to NYCDOE classification), gender, and country of origin/parents' country of origin (from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean) with the goal of interviewing at least four male and four female students in each nativity "cell" (first generation-recent, first generation nonrecent, and second generation). Students were recruited in the lunchroom, and student interview participants were asked to refer peers who fit the selection criteria. Although the total number of students who agreed to participate met and surpassed the recruitment goal of 24, the gender composition of the sample was weighted slightly higher toward females than intended.

Interviews, which I conducted in either English or Spanish based on the student's preference, centered on identifying students' primary sources of information about high schools in New York City, the factors they considered when selecting high schools, and the people involved in helping them make school choice decisions. A standard protocol guided the interviews and included questions about students' background, approach to choosing high schools, perspectives on the process, and ideas for how to improve it; the semistructured format allowed for unscripted exchanges and follow-up questions. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the student interview participants by key sampling variables.

The final set of interviews was conducted with teachers at IS 725 ($N = 4$) and two district administrators from the NYCDOE office responsible for overseeing

TABLE 1

Sampling Matrix for Student Interviews

Immigrant Generation	Male	Female	Totals by Immigrant Generation
First generation:			13
Recent immigrant	1 EC, 1 DR, 1 EL	1 EC, 4 DR	8
Not recent immigrant	1 MX, 1 COL	1 EL, 2 DR	5
Second generation	2 EC, 1 DR, 3 MX, 1 PE	1 EC, 2 DR, 1 MX, 1 COL, 1 VZ	13
Total by gender	12	14	26

NOTE.—Country codes: COL = Colombia, DR = Dominican Republic, EC = Ecuador, EL = El Salvador, MX = Mexico, PE = Peru, VZ = Venezuela.

high school choice. These were in addition to the series of informal interviews and conversations that took place with school counselors and the middle school principal at IS 725 over the course of nearly 2 years. Teachers who had been named repeatedly by students as particularly influential or instrumental in their high school choice experiences were invited to participate in semistructured interviews about their roles—formal and informal—in the choice process, their interactions with students vis-à-vis high school choice, and their thoughts on the policy. In the end, a Chinese bilingual teacher, a Spanish bilingual-track science teacher, and two regular-track teachers (one for science, the other for English language arts), participated in interviews. In addition, I conducted a joint interview with two senior NYCDOE administrators about the responsibilities of the central district office in the choice process, their contact with middle and high schools throughout the process, and their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the current iteration of the high school choice policy in New York City.

Document Analysis

All of the high school choice-related documents available electronically on the New York Department of Education's website at the time of the study, the 600-page *Directory of New York City Public High Schools* given to each rising eighth-grade student, and any printed material distributed at citywide or school-based high school choice events were included in the sample of documents analyzed in the study. In total, nine documents were analyzed, ranging from the telephone

book-sized *Directory* to short brochures and pamphlets that summarize different school types and offer tips to parents about how to work with their children to select high schools.

Data Analysis

A combination of deductive and inductive techniques was employed to analyze the multiple forms of data collected, and Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software was used throughout to facilitate data storage, organization, and analysis. In the course of the data analysis process, I developed two types of empirical categories, one composed of a priori themes based on the main research questions and the other that included topics and foci emerging directly from the data. The findings presented below include themes and patterns that appeared repeatedly in the data collected and were supported and verified across the various forms of data.

For the observation data, I conducted three readings of the field notes noting patterns, recurrent topics, and emergent themes. I also wrote narrative profiles of each school counselor and other relevant school personnel (principal, community coordinator, and parent coordinator). Using these profiles, I compared and contrasted the school counselors' behaviors, outreach strategies, and perspectives vis-à-vis working with students on high school choice with the NYCDOE administrators' articulated expectations as expressed in interviews and in choice-related literature. Student and school personnel interviews were coded and analyzed using Atlas.ti. A first reading surfaced repeated, prominent, or puzzling topics and identified broad categories of meaning both within and across student subgroups and among the five school counselors (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). Stage 2 of analysis consisted of highlighting the text; examining how topics, categories, and themes related to each other; and determining which ideas required deeper consideration. In the final phase, the most powerful themes and patterns were analyzed with the goal of succinctly capturing the underlying stories and identifying the broad theoretical implications of the data (Strauss and Corbin 2007).

District administrator interviews and public school choice documents created and distributed by the NYCDOE were analyzed together using a similar technique. A multiphase reading and analysis of documents and interview transcripts focused on understanding the rules, procedures, and requirements of the choice policy and identifying the district's assumptions and expectations of students, parents, and school-level staff in the process. For the document analysis specifically, I also considered the type of media used (e.g., electronic vs. print), its accessibility (language, technological requirements), and the content of the information provided. Finally, I tracked the criteria that were emphasized in how to determine appropriate school selections and paid particular attention to the

list of suggested activities for parents and students and the expectations, both articulated and implied, of parents' roles in the choice process.

In what follows, I describe the NYCDOE's approach to informing the public about high school choice and raise questions about the equity and effectiveness of its policies and procedures. Drawing on the middle school observations, I show how school counselors restricted their activities to the bare minimum needed to ensure that students submitted completed applications by the deadline in the absence of instructions, supervision, or incentives to provide comprehensive information and support to students and families choosing high schools. I then explore the diverse ways in which Latino immigrant-origin students chose high schools in the context of partial information and negligible school-based support and identify three distinct choice "pathways" that students took. Under the terms of New York City's controlled choice policy, all students must submit an application (and thus participate in school choice) in order to attend high school. Therefore, participation rates cannot be used to evaluate the equity of the policy, as is done in many of the studies of school choice in voluntary choice contexts discussed earlier. Instead, in this case, measuring students' access to high-quality schools under the choice program and examining variation by background characteristics is another way to determine whether the policy is promoting educational equity, obstructing it, or having no impact at all. Graduation rates constitute only one measure of school quality, but they are a particularly important metric to consider, given the significance of obtaining a high school diploma for lifetime earnings and other outcomes (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010; Levin and Belfield 2007; Pleis et al. 2010). Therefore, I use as a test of equity the effectiveness of the high school choice policy in New York City to facilitate disadvantaged students' access to schools with higher graduation rates than the local zoned high schools to which they would have automatically been assigned in the absence of the choice policy. Using the final high school assignments of the 555 first- and second-generation eighth-grade children of Latin American immigrants enrolled at IS 725 during the 2009–10 school year, I argue that the high school choice policy in its current form is a missed opportunity for advancing educational equity and fostering valuable skills that could be applied in other social, professional, and educational arenas.

Context of the Study

New York City is home to multiple, sizable immigrant communities from Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean (US Census Bureau 2009). The student population in New York City public schools mirrors the geographic, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heterogeneity of the citywide popula-

tion. Serving approximately 1 million students from kindergarten through twelfth grade during the time of the study (2009–10 school year), “Hispanic” students constituted the largest racial/ethnic group (40.77%), followed by black/African American (35.33%), white (12.1%), and Asian/Pacific Islander students (10.68%; NYCDOE 2010). An estimated 42% of students spoke a language other than English at home, and 14.4% of students were classified as English language learners (ELL), over two-thirds of whom identified Spanish as their primary language. Finally, 2.1% of students were considered “recent immigrants”—that is, foreign-born students who had arrived in New York City and enrolled in school in the United States for the first time in the past 3 years (NYCDOE 2008).

In New York City students are not just assigned to a neighborhood high school. Instead, all eighth-grade students who wish to attend a district public high school must submit an application in the fall of eighth grade in which he or she ranks up to 12 high school programs. Charter schools do not participate in the high school choice process and have their own separate lottery systems. Each year, an estimated 80,000 eighth-grade students must choose from among 700 programs in approximately 400 public high schools across the city’s five boroughs. Students may rank up to 12 options on their application forms, and they receive one high school “match” based on a unique matching algorithm modeled after the National Resident Matching Program matching process for American physicians (Abdulkadiroglu et al. 2005).

Beyond differences in size and location, schools and programs vary according to theme/academic focus, eligibility requirements, selection method, student support services, and extracurricular activities, among other characteristics. Due to the dramatic variability in school quality across the district, students’ ultimate school selections and assignments (matches) can have serious implications for their future. According to an analysis conducted by researchers at the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, only 38.3% of schools with graduating classes in 2007 had 4-year graduation rates at 75% or above (Hemphill and Nauer 2009). My calculations of more recent data released by the NYCDOE showed that by 2011, the percentage of high schools with graduation rates of 75% or above had declined slightly to 34% (143 out of a total of 421 high schools); this figure drops to 20.2% of high schools (or a total of 85) when the new Regents diploma requirements are used.¹ Consequently, a student’s high school assignment can have a powerful effect on his or her chances of graduating.

Research on eighth-grade students’ high school assignments by race/ethnicity in New York City shows that students of color are disproportionately enrolled in low-performing schools. Meade and colleagues (2009) found that black and Latino students in New York City were concentrated in high schools that received the worst Progress Report grades from the city.² In addition, black and Latino students are consistently underrepresented in the city’s most elite

public high schools, the so-called specialized high schools that require an examination for admission (Baker 2013; Medina 2010). In the most comprehensive statistical analysis of high school choice in New York City to date, Corcoran and Levin (2011) found that black and Latino students' first-choice schools were higher performing and more racially and economically heterogeneous than the schools to which they were ultimately assigned. They concluded that "these statistics do show . . . that the high school choice process is limited in its success in integrating students by race, ability, and socioeconomic status, beyond what students experience in earlier years of schooling" (Corcoran and Levin 2011, 219). Their research reveals some limits to high school choice as a lever for increased school integration and educational equity as currently implemented in New York City.

The growing body of evidence about the unequal distribution of students in high-performing high schools by racial/ethnic background, family income, English proficiency, and disability status challenges the legitimacy of the district's claims of pursuing equity through choice. At the same time, little is known about the underlying processes by which students' high school choices are made and these ostensibly inequitable high school assignments are produced. This article seeks to respond to this gap by presenting new data about the high school selection process and the experiences of Latino immigrant-origin youth in one New York City middle school.

Findings

Impediments to Accessible Information about High School Choice

The NYCDOE conceptualized the high school choice process as a family endeavor in which students and parents, equipped with information provided by high schools, middle school counselors, and the central administrative office were empowered to identify and apply to schools that most closely matched students' interests and needs. The choice process and delineation of roles were described in the following way on the NYCDOE website: "The high school admissions process is centered on two principles: equity and choice. The student-driven process enables students to rank schools and programs in an order that accurately reflects their preferences. . . . The Department of Education conducts workshops and fairs to help parents and students learn about the high school admissions process and make informed choices" (2013).

The NYCDOE built a set of practices and procedures around these core tenets. Significantly, the NYCDOE narrowly defined its role and responsibilities in the high school choice process in terms of information provision. Consequently, it restricted its activities to explaining the steps of the process and fur-

nishing public information about the vast number of available educational options. Over the course of the school year the central office organized approximately 15 citywide events including a citywide high school fair as well as fairs in each borough and a summer workshop series. It also published at least five different booklets, brochures, and interactive compact discs explaining the choice policy and procedures. Despite the volume of informational materials the NYCDOE produced and the number of events it conducted, the impact and reach of the district's communication efforts were severely hindered by its reliance on electronic resources and by the lack of translated materials available in printed format.

Students and parents who were not literate in English faced the greatest obstacles to accessing information about high school choice. The district made all of its choice-related documents and publications available on the NYCDOE website, and these were translated into the eight most commonly spoken languages in New York City (Spanish, Haitian-Creole, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Urdu, Bengali, and Arabic). However, none of the printed documents were available in languages other than English. This included the most important and comprehensive source of information about high schools in the city, the 600-page *High School Directory*, which contained descriptions of each of the high schools and programs, school contact information, and eligibility requirements. Translated versions of the *Directory* were also available in the form of a compact disc that was distributed at events, but, again, this required computer access. As a result, getting basic information about schools was more difficult for non-English-speaking students and parents without computer or Internet access. What is more, other than the single-page description of each high school in the *Directory*, virtually no school-level information was readily accessible in printed format. The Learning Environment Survey, the Quality Review, Progress Report, and Annual School Report Card—school-level reports containing more detailed information about performance and academic outcomes such as graduation rates, credit accumulation, and student proficiency on state examinations, were accessible solely online and only in English.

The issues of translation and electronic materials comprise only two of the numerous failures on the part of the NYCDOE to ensure that information about the high school choice process was readily and equitably available to all students and parents. The NYCDOE neither established specific requirements for activities and outreach that middle schools must do to inform students and families about high school choice nor monitored what occurred at the school level. In fact, there were no real incentives for middle school principals to invest in high school choice, a reality that one district administrator made note of during an interview: "I'm not convinced that they [middle school principals] are incentivized at all. They are not given any incentives to be more engaged in the process. Of course, they care about their students—they want them to be pro-

moted, to graduate. But beyond that I don't think there is necessarily a focus on getting kids into their top choices or into the screened programs."

This was another significant shortcoming of its implementation of the choice policy from an equity perspective. Research has shown that when searching for information about schools, lower-income, less educated parents as well as black and Latino parents tend to rely more heavily on school-based sources and formal information channels, such as the radio, newspaper, and television than whites and parents with higher education levels (Andre-Bechely 2005; Schneider et al. 2000; Teske et al. 2007). Without minimum standards set by the NYCDOE for what each middle school must do to prepare its students and parents to choose high schools, schools were left to determine what resources and personnel, if any, would be allocated to work with families on the choice process. Importantly, district officials did have a clear idea of what they expected middle school counselors to be doing: "Explain the mechanics of the process. Follow up with families. Do guidance presentations to the classes, to the eighth-grade classes, for example. Work closely with the families. Be proactive in monitoring the applications; look at distance from home—making sure it isn't too far, making sure the student is eligible for the program or that it is a good fit based on what the guidance counselor knows about the student." Yet, they took no steps to communicate these expectations directly to school personnel nor did they develop any system or structures to monitor, oversee, or support school-level activities.

School-Level Information Provision

In the absence of district mandates, middle school leaders were given free rein to develop their own outreach and communications strategy regarding high school choice. Mr. Polo, the principal of IS 725, assigned this task to the five school counselors.³ He remained entirely disconnected from their work and neither instructed them nor inquired about their plans to inform families about the choice process. In fact, when no event was organized for parents in the second year of the study after a well-attended parent night about high school choice the prior year, the principal did not inquire about it, and the school counselors did not appear concerned that they had not fulfilled their duties.⁴ By contrast, Mr. Polo was intimately involved in efforts to increase parental response rates on the Learning Environment Surveys, to get students signed up for tutoring, and other things reflected in school evaluations or that could directly impact test scores.⁵

Without guidelines or supervision from either district- or school-level administrators, each school counselor was left to determine the amount of time he or she would dedicate to the choice process; the information he or she would share; and when, with whom, and in what format it would be dissemi-

nated. In response, the five counselors at IS 725, already struggling to keep up with caseloads of roughly 400 students each, relied on communication methods that would allow them to reach the largest audience in the shortest amount of time. Significantly, none of them engaged in direct outreach to parents nor did they counsel students individually about how to determine suitable high school options. Instead, they focused on two main goals: collecting a completed application from every eighth-grade student by the deadline and limiting the number of future appeals requests. This resulted in their providing superficial, operational information to students, interacting only rarely with parents, and offering negligible personalized advice to the hundreds of low-income and immigrant-origin eighth-grade students at the school.

Mr. Sanchez, a Spanish-English bilingual guidance counselor, met with each of his six eighth-grade classes only once prior to the application deadline. When he distributed their application forms, he spent one class period providing step-by-step instructions about how to use the *High School Directory* to correctly fill out the applications. For many students in Mr. Sanchez's academy, this procedure-focused presentation was the first and only time they heard a school representative formally discuss the high school choice process. He recognized that this one presentation was insufficient to adequately relay information to students and prepare them to make knowledgeable choices: "It's a lot of information. . . . I can never cover it in one period. The kids don't get it but the parents are worse. The kids get the information and bring it home and the parents don't care to look at it." Yet, he took no steps to rectify the problem or pursue other means to provide much-needed guidance.

Another counselor, Mr. Christianson, spent less than 5 minutes with each of his eighth-grade homerooms on the sole occasion he discussed the choice process with them. Mr. Christianson was assigned to cover all of the Spanish bilingual classes despite the fact that two counselors in other academies were native Spanish speakers and Mr. Christianson was unable to speak the language. He distributed their applications one Friday afternoon in October, and as he did so, he rushed through a brief summary in English of the required procedures for submitting the application: "On the back of the application you list your choices. You don't have to put all twelve. . . . In the book they have the name of the school and the address." Many of the students in the bilingual classes, particularly those who had arrived in New York City only weeks or months earlier, left the classroom with an application form in hand but with no comprehension of what it was for or how to complete it. In addition, nearly half of the students in Mr. Christianson's academy informed him that they had not received copies of the *High School Directory* when he referenced it during his hurried overview. However, upon learning this, Mr. Christianson did not distribute the few remaining copies he had. When the December application deadline arrived, almost 20 of the 185 eighth-grade students in Mr. Chris-

tianson's academy had yet to submit a completed form—an indication of how little they understood about the required choice policy. In response, Mr. Christianson resorted to completing these students' applications by listing only the low-performing zoned high school in the neighborhood and calling parents for verbal permission after the fact.

Ms. Perolli offers a third example of the time-saving strategies that middle school counselors at IS 725 employed to inform students about the choice policy. During an assembly held for the entire eighth grade in her academy, Ms. Perolli used overhead slides to review pages of the *High School Directory* and a sample application form. She, like Mr. Sanchez, spent nearly 30 minutes describing the mechanics of the application. In the final moments of her presentation, Ms. Perolli also enumerated strategies for improving one's chances of getting matched to a competitive school such as applying to every program in that school regardless of the program's thematic focus. She followed up with brief review sessions for each eighth-grade class when she distributed the applications a few weeks later.

Only students in Ms. Perolli's academy received formal instructions about the choice process from school personnel on more than one occasion. This was due to an assistant principal who agreed to convene a special assembly for the eighth graders in her academy. However, even with the additional exposure, student interview data indicate that the information furnished by all of the school counselors at IS 725, including Ms. Perolli, was not enough to help them develop a clear understanding of how to identify high-performing schools or how to maximize their likelihood of being matched to them. Furthermore, none of the counselors organized meetings or workshops for parents and family members to explain the choice process, nor did they hold any school-wide informational event.⁶

Any student or parent who wanted personal attention and assistance with the high school application had to seek out a counselor and make explicit requests for recommendations and advice. Interviews showed that few students or their parents took the initiative to do so. In fact, none of the recent immigrant students in the bilingual track mentioned their counselor, Mr. Christianson, as a source of any information or assistance. They did, however, rely heavily on their teachers' impersonal, impromptu commentary about high schools to guide their choices—a phenomenon described in detail below.

By contrast, fewer than half of the second-generation students made reference to receiving assistance in any form from teachers, guidance counselors, or school staff. Those students who did mention school personnel largely described learning operational information about application deadlines and dates of citywide events. A comment from Emilio, a second-generation child of Mexican immigrants, in response to a standard interview question about the role of school counselors in their application process, revealed the minimal impact

of school personnel on how these students made school selections: “Yeah, I think she [counselor] went to classrooms before and talk[ed] about, like, how we have to choose our own schools and don’t choose what your friends choose, choose what you think you’re interested in the most. . . . She said that we can choose what our friends are going to only if you think that they’re gonna do as good as you are.”

Students needed significantly more detailed information to develop anything more than basic awareness of the choice process. Effectively positioning oneself for possible acceptance to a competitive high school requires conducting a realistic assessment of one’s chances for admission based on eligibility criteria, geographic priority, and the number of available seats; carefully considering the rank ordering of schools; and preparing for interviews, essays, auditions, or any additional application procedures. In sum, neither the NYCDOE central administrators nor school-level personnel provided concrete or comprehensive information to students and parents that could help them understand how to strategically pursue high schools superior to those in their neighborhood—high schools in which fewer than 60% of students graduated after 4 years. Instead, the low-income first- and second-generation Latino youth in this study ultimately made school selections on the basis of incomplete information with varying degrees of input, involvement, and assistance from school personnel and family members.

Student Decision Making in the Context of Limited Information and Guidance

Student narratives paint a vivid picture of the challenges associated with deciphering the complex high school choice process in New York City. Both first- and second-generation low-income children of Latin American immigrants received limited instruction or assistance from family members or school personnel about how to identify educational opportunities; create a list of ordered preferences; or apply to the most appropriate high schools for which they were eligible. Instead, they were left virtually alone to research and select from among 700 possible options. Despite differences in these students’ English proficiency and prior knowledge of New York City high schools, data indicate that only a limited number of these youth were able to take advantage of the high school choice process to gain entry to high schools that outperformed the large, failing zoned high schools to which they would have been assigned without the choice policy in place. Their experiences and high school assignments further cast doubt on the equity proposition of the choice policy.

Three Pathways: Solitary, Family-Focused, and School-Guided Choosers

Solitary Choosers

Under conditions of incomplete provision of official school choice information, minimal school-based guidance, and limited parent involvement, the children of Latin American immigrants took one of three pathways when choosing high schools. One group of students, the *solitary choosers*, ultimately negotiated the complex process without any formal adult oversight: they did not consult parents, school personnel, or other community figures when completing applications. Genesis, a first-generation immigrant child of Mexican immigrant parents responded to a standard interview question about the people involved in his school selections by explaining that “no one” helped him. After repeated probing, he indicated the following:

Interviewer: And who was involved in helping you?

Genesis: No one.

Interviewer: No one? Did your parents talk to you about it at all?

Genesis: No.

Interviewer: What did they . . . Did they sign the form? What did they say when they signed?

Genesis: Um, okay, this is okay.

Genesis’s response provides a prototypical example of solitary choosers’ experiences. Nine out of the 13 second-generation students in the interview sample and three out of five first-generation, nonrecent immigrant students described choosing high schools in this way. They relied almost exclusively on the *High School Directory* to learn about schools and focused on a narrow set of characteristics when deciding which schools to list on their application. Geographic location, thematic focus, sports, after-school activities, and grades required for admission were the most frequently cited determinants of these students’ school selections.

Friends also influenced these solitary choosers’ decisions, but they did not furnish any information about schools beyond what was already provided in the *Directory*. Instead, students described coordinating their applications with friends and checking to make sure they had applied to many of the same schools

in order to avoid being assigned a high school in which they did not know anyone. Mercedes, the US-born daughter of Venezuelan immigrants, offered a succinct summary of students' desire to apply to the same schools as friends: "I feel good [about applying] because most of my friends are going there, and I don't want to be alone."

Family-Focused Choosers

Another set of students, the *family-focused choosers*, turned to older siblings and cousins with experience in New York City high schools for assistance with their applications. Reliance on young adult family members could result in students either being encouraged to attend the same zoned high schools that they had or, on the contrary, being warned against or prohibited from applying to the neighborhood schools with perpetually low graduation rates. The case of Estefani, a recently arrived immigrant student from the Dominican Republic, is illustrative of the first type of sibling/relative influence. Her desire to attend the same school as her older brother and sister and her mother's support of this choice, despite the school's record of graduating fewer than 60% of students, are consistent with the strong value of familism found to exist in many Latin American cultures (LeVine and White 1986; Rueschenberg and Buriel 1989). Estefani explained her decision to only list the failing local zoned high school and her mother's support of her decision in the following way: "Well, first of all, I always . . . my sister always told me to pick [local zoned high school] because that way they [siblings] could help me . . . although people have always told me that [school name] is bad. It's a bad school. No, [I only put] that one. Because that's the one that was my zoned school. . . . [My mom] said that it was fine. Because since my brothers, my brother is there and my other siblings have always been good in that school" (author's translation from Spanish).

Examples like Estefani's of following family members, regardless of the school's reputation, poor academic record, or history of violent incidents, were widespread among the students interviewed. This pattern of students defaulting to the familiar, albeit failing, schools in the absence of instruction or guidance to direct them otherwise provides evidence of the inadequacy of the choice policy for interrupting cycles of disadvantage, on the one hand, or advancing an educational equity agenda, on the other.⁷ At the same time, there were also examples of older siblings steering students away from the low-performing high schools they had attended and into schools with a better academic record, although this was reported less frequently. Andrea, a second-generation Colombian student and the youngest of three girls, explained how her sisters monitored her application: "My sisters . . . they did it. They all went through it so they taught me, they were telling me what to pick and all of that. . . .

They didn't want me to go to [names three low-performing zoned high schools in the area] . . . even though I wanted to go to [zoned high school] because there was fashion and stuff and then all my friends [are applying]. . . . I started just looking over the book by myself and then my sisters were like, 'Let me see what you picked.' And when they saw [zoned school] they didn't like it."

School-Guided Choosers

A subset of recent immigrant students took an alternate pathway in the choice process. Like the first group, parents and family members played no part in their school selections; instead, these students, the *school-guided choosers*, relied almost exclusively on vague recommendations from teachers in their bilingual education classes and other Spanish-speaking school support staff. Teachers' impromptu commentary, which generally took the form of blanket recommendations about which schools would be appropriate for all bilingual students, became the guidelines that many of these students followed. Yet, the information they received was in no way personalized to their particular interests, skills, or needs (other than language). There was a void of information and instruction about how to choose high schools that neither family members nor peers were able to fill. Thus, first-generation students depended heavily on teachers' broad suggestions about a finite number of schools. As a result, their applications tended to be virtually identical, including only the international high schools and/or the large zoned high schools in their neighborhoods that had bilingual education programs.

Julisa, a recently arrived immigrant student from the Dominican Republic, described how she learned about the high school choice process and the information provided by her teachers. Her account was representative of those given by nearly every recent immigrant student interviewed: "Really, my teachers instructed me. . . . I don't know one of their names but Mr. González helped a lot. . . . He told me which schools to pick, how to do it. . . . He recommended [name of school], the international one because it is like for recently arrived students. And [name of school] and I think that's it, nothing else" (translated from Spanish by author).

The fact that Julisa could not name one of the teachers she cited as helping her with high school selections indicated the lack of relational support that she (and many of her recent immigrant classmates) received. However, without alternatives, these students seized any bit of information they could, particularly from school personnel, to point them in the direction of sanctioned high schools. What is more, Julisa was actually on the high end of the spectrum in terms of engagement and information among the recent immigrant students, many of whom could not name a single high school and did not complete the

application until the final day when their guidance counselor tracked them down and got their parents' consent to fill in one or two schools.

Overall, recent immigrant students appeared to understand the least about high school choice, how the application process worked, and why high school assignments mattered. The story of how one recent immigrant student from Ecuador, Milton, learned about his high school match provides a poignant illustration of recent immigrant students' weak comprehension of the choice process in general. Unexpected legal battles around school closures delayed the NYCDOE from releasing high school assignment letters in the spring of 2010. As a result, rather than distributing the letters to students at school as was customary in past years, the letters were mailed to students' homes over spring break. Many recent immigrant students did not know to expect these letters at home or had forgotten that they would be receiving their high school assignments at all. More than 2 weeks after the letters had been sent in the mail at least 10 recent immigrant students, including Milton (not all of whom were interviewed), did not know which high school they would be attending in the fall. Finally, Milton's letter arrived. It had been sent to his old address since he had moved in the middle of the school year. Even after receiving the letter, Milton still did not know his high school assignment. When asked if he knew the high school he would be attending, Milton responded: "No, no, no. I read a letter, a letter arrived for me but I also got a new thing [application] to fill out. It didn't say which high school I am going to" (translated from Spanish by the author).

In fact, Milton had not been matched to any high school and therefore had received a blank application for the supplementary round. Because he found out so late about not having been matched in the first round, he had less than a week to review or visit the remaining high schools and complete his application form again. What is more, because some new small schools give admission preference to students who take a tour or attend an orientation session, his chances of attending one of those schools was further compromised. He was not alone in this situation. However, no adult, either at the school level or at home, was monitoring his progress. Dejected and without guidance, for his supplementary round application Milton ended up putting the same local zoned high school he described as wanting to avoid in an interview that had taken place earlier in the year.

High School Assignments

The article thus far has identified the multiple impediments at the district, school, and family levels that can hamper low-income children of Latin American immigrants' effective pursuit of high-quality educational opportu-

TABLE 2

High School Assignments of First- and Second-Generation Children of Latin American Immigrants

	High Performing	International High School	Middle Performing	Low Performing	Supple- mentary Round
Second generation (%) (<i>N</i> = 341)	16.9 (<i>N</i> = 58)	. . .	22.2 (<i>N</i> = 76)	60.5 (<i>N</i> = 207)	12.1 (<i>N</i> = 42)
First generation combined (%) (<i>N</i> = 207)	7.8 (<i>N</i> = 16)	16.5 (<i>N</i> = 34)	22.3 (<i>N</i> = 46)	53.8 (<i>N</i> = 111)	13.6 (<i>N</i> = 28)
Recent immigrant (%) (<i>N</i> = 113)	3.6 (<i>N</i> = 4)	30.6 (<i>N</i> = 34)	15.3 (<i>N</i> = 17)	52.3 (<i>N</i> = 58)	10.7 (<i>N</i> = 12)
Not recent immigrant (%) (<i>N</i> = 94)	12.6 (<i>N</i> = 12)	. . .	30.5 (<i>N</i> = 29)	57.6 (<i>N</i> = 53)	16.8 (<i>N</i> = 16)
Total Latin American immigrant- origin (<i>N</i> = 548)	13.5 (<i>N</i> = 74)	6.2 (<i>N</i> = 34)	22.3 (<i>N</i> = 122)	58.0 (<i>N</i> = 318)	12.6 (<i>N</i> = 70)

NOTE.—Figures in the columns above represent the percentages and total numbers (in parentheses) of students by immigrant generation and for first-generation students; classification as “recent immigrant” matched to each category of high school. These figures include the combined results of the main round and the supplementary round. The first four columns total 100%. The percentages in the “supplementary round” column should not be included in the total calculation. In addition, the base number for percentage calculations for the supplementary round column is larger (*N* = 555) because it includes students whose ultimate high school match was unknown or a school for which performance data was unavailable and therefore could not be classified into a category.

nities in the context of high school choice. The high school assignments of Latin American immigrant-origin students from IS 725, presented in table 2, provide actual evidence of the extent to which New York City’s high school choice policy, as currently conceived and implemented, falls short of its goals of promoting educational equity.

For analytic purposes, high schools were divided into four separate categories: “high performing” (80% or higher 4-year high school graduation rate), “low performing” (65% or lower 4-year high school graduation rate), “middle performing” (high schools with 4-year graduation rates between 65% and 80%), and “international high school.” International high schools were specifically designed to meet the needs of recent immigrant students and only accept stu-

dents who have been in the United States for less than 4 years at the time of admission. There were nine such high schools in New York City accepting students for fall 2010. English-language learners attending international high schools have, on average, outperformed their peers in other New York City high schools with graduation rates at the international high schools in New York City ranging from 15% to 30% higher than those for ELLs at other high schools (Internationals Network for Public Schools 2011). These schools could therefore be considered “high performing” but were separated due to distinct admissions requirements.

The high school assignments of children of Latin American immigrants attending IS 725 in 2009–10 provide evidence of the weakness of the choice policy as an instrument for equity. First, 47.6%, or 261, of the first- and second-generation children of Latin American immigrants at IS 725 were matched to the same zoned high schools they would have attended in the absence of choice, all of which had 4-year graduation rates below 65%. Moreover, a full 58% of students were matched to high schools that graduated less than 65% of students after 4 years, a figure that includes the traditional zoned high schools as well as some of the newer, smaller high schools in New York City. Conversely, only 13.5% of these students were assigned to high schools classified as “high performing.”

A greater proportion of second-generation students were matched to high-performing high schools (16.9%) than the combined first-generation group (7.8%). Among first-generation immigrants, recent immigrant students were nearly four times less likely to have received a high-performing high school placement (3.6%) than students who had been in the United States longer (12.6%). However, if international schools are considered high performing and included in the calculations, 34.4% of recent immigrant students’ assignments would fall into the high-performing high school category.

Second-generation students were also more likely than their first-generation peers to be assigned a school in the low-performing category. More than 60% of second-generation students received a low-performing high school match compared to 53.8% of the combined first-generation category and 52.3% and 57.6% of recent and nonrecent immigrants, respectively. For their part, first-generation students who had been in the United States for more than 4 years were the most likely of any subgroup of being matched to a middle-performing school (30.5%), and recent immigrants were the least likely (15.3%).

Finally, nearly 13%, or 70, of the 555 eighth graders of Latin American immigrant-origin enrolled at IS 725 in spring 2010 did not receive a high school assignment in the first round. This figure far exceeded the district-wide figure reported from the previous year when 8.8% of students were deferred to the supplementary round (Hemphill and Nauer 2009). Only half of schools from the first round had seats available in the supplementary round, and few of the

high-performing schools were still accepting students at that point. More than 75% of Latin American immigrant-origin students from IS 725 who participated in the supplementary round were eventually assigned to high schools in the low-performing category. Recent immigrant students had the lowest rate of deferral to the supplementary round at 10.7% compared to a high of 16.8% for nonrecent immigrant students. Second-generation youth fell in the middle at 12.1% participation in the supplementary round.

Discussion

Data from students at IS 725 show how the bridge between school choice and educational equity can collapse without the necessary foundations of information and guidance. The high school matching results demonstrate these students' limited success overall at converting choice into high-performing school placements. In effect, students' high school assignments were the product of their previous academic performance (affecting eligibility for high-performing screened schools) and their own school selections. However, the fact that the majority of the low-income, immigrant-origin Latino youth were assigned to low-performing high schools also reflects the series of flaws in the district's conceptualization and implementation of the choice policy. In the end, these data demonstrate the education system's current incapacity to make high-quality schools available to all students and the limitations of the choice policy in counteracting inequities in access.

The results highlight a range of problems with New York City's high school choice policy that threaten its equity proposition. These issues reveal the NYCDOE's incomplete understanding of how the diverse students and families it serves respond to the task of choosing high schools and its limited comprehension of day-to-day school-based operations relative to school choice. In essence, the policy was based in large part on a set of inaccurate assumptions about the role parents would play in all eighth-grade students' high school selections, about the degree and intensity of school-level guidance without mandates or incentives, and about student search and decision-making behaviors. These assumptions were reflected in the district's approach to developing and disseminating school choice-related information, in its lack of requirements or oversight of school-level choice activities, and in its overall failure to provide the supports that some students without expected family resources or cultural and social capital might need to effectively negotiate the choice maze.

To start, the modes that the NYCDOE used to circulate information about the choice process constituted a serious challenge to the policy's equity potential. An overreliance on web-based documents and a scarcity of translated

materials in print form resulted in fewer official sources of information for people without Internet access and those who required materials in languages other than English. Next, the absence of guidelines, mandates, and incentives for middle schools to provide, at a minimum, workshops and counseling sessions for students and parents about choice left many students without even basic information or a direction in which to focus their search. The unfounded assumption that parents would play a leading role in all eighth graders' search and decision making was yet another example of the extent to which the policy was disconnected from the reality of many students' lived experiences.

The tendency of educational policies to be normed to typically white, middle-class behaviors, values, and parenting practices—even in districts like New York City that educate majority low-income, minority students—has been well documented in the research literature (Ball 1993; Brantlinger 2003; Lareau and Shumar 1996; Smrekar and Goldring 1999). This study has provided yet another example of such while also presenting evidence of some of the consequences for students of erroneous assumptions and unrealistic expectations built into policies: low-performing high school placements, obstructed access to better educational opportunity for disadvantaged students, and unrealized equity goals for the district.

This study also offers a new perspective on choice by presenting data about how students, with limited information, guidance, or support, responded to an educational marketplace characterized by a restricted supply of high-quality schools. Variation in the proportion of students by immigrant generation/time of arrival assigned to middle-, high-, and low-performing high schools may tell us something about possible points of intervention to facilitate more informed student decision making. In particular, the concentration of recent immigrant students in high-performing international high schools and their lower rates of deferral to the supplementary round relative to their peers provides some indication that school personnel involvement in any capacity, even without personalized counseling and guidance, may help students narrow the field to focus on appropriate, higher-quality options. Their comparative success in accessing better high schools might also be understood as a function of the existence of a discrete set of good schools that were tailored to their unique characteristics.

The results of this study ultimately call into question the relationship between choice and equity in practice in New York City. Moreover, the consequences of the district's failure to mandate school-level assistance with choice transcend issues of equitable access to high schools. High school choice represents a formal occasion in which students (and parents) may develop essential skills, strategies, and awareness of social norms—forms of cultural capital—that that can benefit them across a range of social, educational, and professional

settings (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). However, the students represented in this study needed assistance for this to occur, and it was not made readily available.

To achieve this, the district must envision its role and responsibilities to students and families as it relates to providing information and guidance about high school choice (and other policies and educational processes). As a first step, district officials must develop a more fact-based understanding of the amount and sources of information and support that some students receive at home and, consequently, revise their expectations of the degree and forms of family involvement. Next, district administrators must make all information available in multiple languages and accessible in printed format. At the individual school level, principals and support staff must be encouraged, incentivized, or mandated to provide concrete, comprehensive assistance and instructions to students and their parents about how to negotiate the choice process. This includes providing ongoing training to school personnel, conducting oversight, and establishing benchmarks for success in informing families. Finally, the district must couple the choice policy with explicit actions dedicated to the pursuit of educational equity. This may take the form of allocating additional resources to middle schools serving historically disadvantaged student populations to dedicate to high school choice or planning field trips and recruitment events to expose students to the variety of schooling options outside of their neighborhoods, for example. In essence, the NYCDOE must acknowledge that school choice implemented in isolation is a useless tool for combating historical inequities and take decisive steps to rectify its current misguided approach.

Notes

Portions of this article are adapted from *Unaccompanied Minors: Immigrant Youth, School Choice, and the Pursuit of Equity*, by Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press). Copyright © 2014 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Adapted with permission.

1. Starting with the class entering ninth grade in the fall of 2008, all students in New York State are required to pass five Regents exams with a score of 65 or better in order to graduate.

2. The Progress Report is a school-level report that includes data on student performance on standardized exams, graduation rates, academic progress (credit accumulation and proficiency gains), school environment, and other characteristics. Each school is given a letter grade (A–F) based on various metrics and may receive financial awards or sanctions based on the grade. As of the 2014–15 school year, letter grades will be replaced by six measurements: rigorous instruction, supportive environment, collaborative teachers, effective school leadership, strong family-community ties, and trust. State test scores are one of multiple evaluation criteria.

3. All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

4. For example, when I asked school counselors why there was no parent workshop the second year, one of the counselors, Ms. Perolli, responded, “I’m not going to say anything. If they do it, I’ll go, I’ll help out. But I don’t even know if my parents come. I take care of my own academy.” Another counselor, Mr. Sanchez, attributed it to the fact that “the principal has a lot going on. It’s a lot of pressure.” Neither one of them expressed regret, disappointment, or anxiety that nothing had been done.

5. After a poor response rate (around 16%) from parents on the Learning Environment Survey in the first year of the study, which impacts school evaluations, Mr. Polo decided to enlist all five assistant principals in the task the following year and to offer incentives for students whose parents turned in a completed survey. He led the effort and monitored response rates closely. He was also intimately involved in the school-based campaign to get families to turn in their application forms for Supplementary Education Services (SES), a program that offers low-income students enrolled in SINI schools the opportunity to receive up to 35 hours of individual or small-group test preparation from a variety of private tutoring companies.

6. Mr. Sanchez, Ms. Perolli, and the other counselors did, in fact, have ideas for how they might better inform students and families about the high school admissions process, but there was not enough support or urgency from the administration to invest time, energy, and money into turning these ideas into reality. When explaining why they did not hold a parent workshop in the fall, Mr. Sanchez said, “This year we were talking, all of the guidance counselors, about doing something like parent-teacher conferences just for the high school application—having one day when parents could line up outside and then meet with us individually. It just never happened. I’m not sure why. People just didn’t get it together. And I couldn’t do it all on my own.”

7. This was not just the case for recently arrived immigrant students: US-born second-generation students, low and high achieving alike, all considered the high schools that their older siblings and cousins had attended as viable, if not desirable, options, regardless of the schools’ academic outcomes. For example, Jordan, a high-achieving second-generation child of Mexican immigrant parents who aspired to attend one of the more selective high schools, also included the local zoned high school on his application even after describing it as “not that great but, you know . . . yeah that’s the only thing, there are a lot of bad kids.” His rationale for listing the zoned high school echoed other students’ explanations and parents’ narratives about school selection: “I put it . . . since my brother graduated there, why not me? If he could do it, I could do it.”

References

- Abdulkadiroglu, Atila, Parag A. Pathak, and Alvin E. Roth. 2005. “Practical Market Design: Four Matches; The New York City High School Match.” *American Economic Review* 95 (2): 364–67.
- Andre-Bechely, Lois. 2005. *Could It Be Otherwise? Parents and the Inequities of Public School Choice*. New York: Routledge.
- Baker, Al. 2013. “Girls Excel in the Classroom but Lag in Entry to Eight Elite Schools in the City.” *New York Times*, March 23.

- Baker, Bruce D., Ken Libby, and Kathryn Wiley. 2012. *Spending by the Major Charter Management Organizations: Comparing Charter School and Local Public District Financial Resources*. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center, <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/spending-major-charter>.
- Ball, Stephen J. 1993. "Education Markets, Choice, and Social Class: The Market as a Class Strategy in the UK and the USA." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 14 (1): 3–19.
- Ball, Stephen J., Richard Bowe, and Sharon Gerwitz. 1995. "Circuits of Schooling: A Sociological Exploration of Parental Choice of School in Social Class Contexts." *Sociological Review* 43 (1): 52–78.
- Batalova, Jeanne, and Alicia Lee. 2012. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=886#2>.
- Betts, Julian R., and Tom Loveless. 2005. *Getting Choice Right: Ensuring Equity and Efficiency in Education Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In *Power and Ideology in Education*, ed. Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean Claude Passeron. 1990. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Brantlinger, Ellen. 2003. *Dividing Classes: How the Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage*. New York: Routledge.
- Buckley, Jack, and Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj. 2011. "Are ELL Students Underrepresented in Charter Schools? Demographic Trends in New York City, 2006–2008." *Journal of School Choice* 5 (1): 1–26.
- Buckley, Jack, and Mark Schneider. 2005. "Are Charter School Students Harder to Educate? Evidence from Washington, DC." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 27 (4): 365–80.
- Buckley, Jack, and Mark Schneider. 2007. *Charter Schools: Hope or Hype?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2010. *Employment and Earnings January 2010*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsa2009.pdf>.
- Ceballo, Rosario, Maricela Huerta, and Quyen Epstein-Ngo. 2010. "Parental and School Influences Promoting Academic Success among Latino Students." In *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling, and Human Development*, ed. Judith L. Meece and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. New York: Routledge.
- Center for Education Reform. 2014. *Charter School Law Rankings and Scorecard*. Washington, DC: Center for Education Reform, <https://www.edreform.com/2014/03/2014-charter-school-law-rankings-scorecard/>.
- Chubb, John E., and Terry M. Moe. 1990. *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Corcoran, Sean P., and Henry M. Levin. 2011. "School Choice and Competition in New York City Schools." In *Education Reform in New York City: Ambitious Change in the Nation's Most Complex School System*, ed. Jennifer A. O'Day, Catherine S. Bitter, and Louis M. Gomez. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- CREDO (Center for Research on Education Outcomes). 2009. *Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States*. Stanford, CA: Center for Research on Education Outcomes.
- Delgado-Gaitan, Concha. 1992. "School Matters in the Mexican-American Home: Socializing Children to Education." *American Educational Research Journal* 29 (3): 495–513.

- Delpit, Lisa. 1995. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Eamon, Mary Keegan. 2005. "Social-Demographic, School, Neighborhood, and Parenting Influences on the Academic Achievement of Latino Young Adolescents." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 34 (2): 163–74.
- Education Commission of the States. 2012. *Open Enrollment: 50-State Report*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=268>.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Feliciano, Cynthia. 2005. "Educational Selectivity in US Immigration: How Do Immigrants Compare to Those Left Behind?" *Demography* 41 (1): 131–52.
- Fielding, Nigel, and Jane L. Fielding. 1986. *Linking Data*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Finnegan, Kara S., and Burke Scarbrough. 2013. "Defining (and Denying) Diversity through Interdistrict Choice." *Journal of School Choice* 7 (2): 142–62.
- Fiske, Edward B., and Helen F. Ladd. 2000. *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Fleming, David J., Joshua M. Cowen, John F. Witte, and Patrick J. Wolf. 2013. "Similar Students, Different Choices: Who Uses a School Voucher in an Otherwise Similar Population of Students?" *Education and Urban Society*, December 19, doi: 0013124513511268.
- Flick, Uwe. 2007. *Managing Quality in Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Friedman, Milton. 1962. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fulgini, Andrew J. 1997. "The Academic Achievement of Adolescents from Immigrant Families: The Roles of Family Background, Attitudes, and Behavior." *Child Development* 68 (2): 351–63.
- Fuller, Bruce, Richard F. Elmore, and Gary Orfield. 1996. "Policy-Making in the Dark: Illuminating the School Choice Debate." In *Who Chooses? Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*, ed. Bruce Fuller and Richard F. Elmore. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fuller, Ed. 2012. "Middle School Charters in Texas: An Examination of Student Characteristics and Achievement Levels of Entrants and Leavers." *A "Fuller" Look at Education Issues*, August 23, http://fullerlook.wordpress.com/2012/08/23/tx_ms_charter_study/.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic.
- Gibson, Margaret A. 1988. *Accommodation without Assimilation: Sikh Immigrants in an American High School*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Goldring, Ellen, and Charles S. Hausman. 1999. "Reasons for Parental Choice of Urban Schools." *Journal of Education Policy* 4 (5): 469–90.
- Heath, Shirley B. 1983. *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hemphill, Clara, and Kim Nauer. 2009. *The New Marketplace: How Small-School Reforms and School Choice Have Shaped New York City's High Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, The New School.
- Hill, Nancy E. 2009. "Culturally-Based Worldviews, Family Processes, and Family-School Interactions." In *The Handbook of School-Family Partnerships for Promoting Student Competence*, ed. Sandra L. Christenson and Amy L. Reschly. New York: Routledge.
- Hill, Paul T. 2002. *Choice with Equity*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Holme, Jennifer J., Erica Frankenberg, Sarah Diem, and Anjale D. Welton. 2013. "School Choice in Suburbia: The Impact of Choice Policies on the Potential for Suburban Integration." *Journal of School Choice* 7 (2): 113–41.

- Hoxby, Caroline M., and Sonali Murarka. 2009. "Charter Schools in New York City: Who Enrolls and How They Affect Their Students' Achievement." NBER Working Paper no. 14852. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA.
- Internationals Network for Public Schools. 2011. *Student Results*. New York: Internationals Network for Public Schools, <http://www.internationalsnps.org/our-outcomes/our-outcomes-student-results.html>.
- Kao, Grace, and Marta Tienda. 1995. "Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth." *Social Science Quarterly* 76 (1): 1–19.
- Kasinitz, Philip, Mary C. Waters, John H. Mollenkopf, and Jennifer Holdaway. 2008. *Inheriting the City: The Children of Immigrants Come of Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, Annette, and Wesley Shumar. 1996. "The Problem of Individualism in Family-School Policies," in "Sociology and Educational Policy: Bringing Scholarship and Practice Together," special issue, *Sociology of Education* 69:24–39.
- LeCompte, Margaret D., and Jean J. Schensul. 1999. *Analyzing and Interpreting Ethnographic Data*. New York: Altamira.
- Levin, Henry M., and Clive R. Belfield. 2007. "Educational Interventions to Raise High School Graduation Rates." In *The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education*, ed. Clive R. Belfield and Henry M. Levin. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- LeVine, Robert A., and Merry I. White. 1986. *Human Conditions: The Cultural Basis of Educational Development*. New York: Routledge.
- López, Maria Pabón, and Gerardo R. López. 2010. *Persistent Inequality: Contemporary Realities in the Education of Undocumented Latina/o Students*. New York: Routledge.
- Matute-Bianchi, Maria E. 1991. "Situational Ethnicity and Patterns of School Performance among Immigrants and Non-immigrant Mexican-Descent Students." In *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, ed. John U. Ogbu. New York: Garland.
- Meade, Ben, Frank Gaytan, Edward Fergus, and Pedro Noguera. 2009. *Making the Grade in New York City Schools: Progress Report Grades and Black and Latino Students*. New York: Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, New York University.
- Medina, Jennifer. 2010. "At Top City Schools, Lack of Diversity Persists." *New York Times*, February 5, http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/at-top-city-schools-lack-of-diversity-persist/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0.
- Menken, Kate. 2008. *English Learners Left Behind Standardized Testing as Language Policy*. New York: Multilingual Matters.
- NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). 2009. *Projections of Education Statistics to 2018—Section 1: Elementary and Secondary Enrollment; National*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Neild, Ruth C. 2005. "Parent Management of School Choice in a Large Urban District." *Urban Education* 40 (3): 270–97.
- NYCDOE (New York City Department of Education). 2008. *New York City's English Language Learners: Demographics*. New York: Office of English Language Learners.
- NYCDOE (New York City Department of Education). 2010. *Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) Schools Demographic Snapshot, 2006–2009*. New York: New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/data/default.htm>.

- NYCDOE (New York City Department of Education). 2013. *Admissions Process*. New York: New York City Department of Education, <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/High/Admissions>.
- Ogbu, John U. 1991. "Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities in Comparative Perspective." In *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, ed. Margaret Gibson and John U. Ogbu. New York: Garland.
- Olivas, Michael A. 2010. "Plyler v. Doe: Still Guaranteeing Unauthorized Immigrant Children's Right to Attend US Public Schools." Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/plyler-v-doe-still-guaranteeing-unauthorized-immigrant-childrens-right-attend-us-public>.
- Orfield, Gary, and Erica Frankenberg. 2013. *Educational Delusions? Why Choice Can Deepen Inequality and How to Make Schools Fair*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Orfield, Gary, John Kucsera, and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley. 2012. *E Pluribus . . . Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students*. Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project.
- Owens, Ann, and Gail L. Sunderman. 2006. *School Accountability under NCLB: Aid or Obstacle for Measuring Racial Equity?* Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project.
- Petrovich, Janice. 2005. "The Shifting Terrain of Educational Policy: Why We Must Bring Equity Back." In *Bringing Equity Back: Research for a New Era in American Educational Policy*, ed. Janice Petrovich and Amy S. Wells. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Pleis, John R., Brian W. Ward, and Jacqueline W. Lucas. 2010. *Vital and Health Statistics: Summary Health Statistics for US Adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2009*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén Rumbaut. 1996. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ravitch, Diane. 2010. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic.
- Rofes, Eric E., and Lisa M. Stulberg. 2004. *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Rueschenberg, Erich, and Raymond Buriel. 1989. "Latino Family Functioning and Acculturation: A Family Systems Perspective." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 11 (3): 232–44.
- Saporito, Salvatore, and Annette Lareau. 1999. "School Selection as Process: The Multiple Dimensions of Race in Framing Educational Choice." *Social Problems* 46 (3): 418–39.
- Sattin-Bajaj, Carolyn. 2014. *Unaccompanied Minors: Immigrant Youth, School Choice, and the Pursuit of Equity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Schneider, Mark, Paul Teske, and Melissa Marschall. 2000. *Choosing Schools: Consumer Choice and the Quality of American Schools*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Schwartz, Amy Ellen, and Leanna Stiefel. 2006. "Is There a Nativity Gap? New Evidence on the Academic Performance of Immigrant Students." *Education Finance and Policy* 1 (1): 17–49.
- Smrekar, Claire, and Ellen Goldring. 1999. *School Choice in Urban America: Magnet Schools and the Pursuit of Equity*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Strauss, Anselm L., and Juliet M. Corbin. 2007. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Suárez-Orozco, Carola, Jean Rhodes, and Michael Milburn. 2009. "Unraveling the Immigrant Paradox: Academic Engagement and Disengagement among Recently Arrived Immigrant Youth." *Youth and Society* 41 (2): 151–85.

- Suárez-Orozco, Carola, and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco. 1995. *Transformations: Immigration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation among Latino Adolescents*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, Carola, Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Robert T. Teranishi, and Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco. 2011. "Growing Up in the Shadows: The Developmental Implications of Unauthorized Status." *Harvard Educational Review* 81 (3): 438–72.
- Teske, Paul, Jodi Fitzpatrick, and Gabriel Kaplan. 2007. *Opening Doors: Low-Income Parents Search for the Right School*. Seattle: Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.
- Trumbull, Elise, Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, and Elvia Hernandez. 2003. "Parent Involvement in Schooling: According to Whose Values?" *School Community Journal* 13 (2): 45–72.
- US Census Bureau. 2009. *American Community Survey 2009*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.
- Valdés, Guadalupe. 1996. *Con Respeto: Bridging the Distance between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Valencia, Richard R., and Mary S. Black. 2002. "Mexican Americans Don't Value Education! On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and Debunking." *Journal of Latinos and Education* 1 (2): 81–103.
- Valenzuela, Angela. 2004. *Leaving Children Behind: How "Texas-Style" Accountability Fails Latino Youth*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Vasquez Heilig, Julian. 2013. "Reframing the Refrain: Choice as a Civil Rights Issue." *Texas Education Review* 1 (1): 83–94.
- Vasquez Heilig, Julian, and Jennifer Holme. 2013. "Nearly 50 Years Post-Jim Crow: Persisting and Expansive School Segregation for African American, Latina/o, and ELL Students in Texas." *Education and Urban Society* 45 (5): 609–32.
- Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwartz, Lee Sechrest, and Janet B. Grove. 1981. *Nonreactive Measures in the Social Sciences*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wells, Amy S., ed. 2002. "Why Public Policy Fails to Live Up to the Potential of Charter School Reform: An Introduction." In *Where Charter School Policy Fails: The Problems of Accountability and Equity*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wells, Amy S., Jennifer J. Holme, Alejandra Lopez, and Camille W. Cooper. 2000. "Charter Schools and Racial and Social Class Segregation: Yet Another Sorting Machine?" In *A Notion at Risk: Preserving Education as an Engine for Social Mobility*, ed. Richard D. Kahlenberg. New York: Century Foundation Press.
- Wells, Amy S., and Allison Roda. 2013. "White Parents, Diversity, and School Choice Policies: Where Good Intentions, Anxiety, and Privilege Collide." *American Journal of Education* 119 (2): 261–93.
- Wolf, Patrick, Babette Gutmann, Nada Eissa, Michael Puma, and Marsha Silverberg. 2005. *Evaluation of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program: First Year Report on Participation*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Yin, Robert K. 2008. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zhou, Min, and Carl L. Bankston. 1998. *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage.