

College-Preparatory Advising
in High School:
Who Do Refugee Students Turn to,
and Why?

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Goals of pre-college advising

- * Sharing information about colleges, but also...
- ❖ Encouraging college-positive decisions (early on!)
- ❖ Helping students navigate the decision-making process
- ❖ Reinforcing a student's identity as "college-bound"
- ❖ Teaching students how to build support networks

Cooper & Liou, 2007; McKillip, Rawls, Barry, 2012;
McDonough, 2005; ASCA website

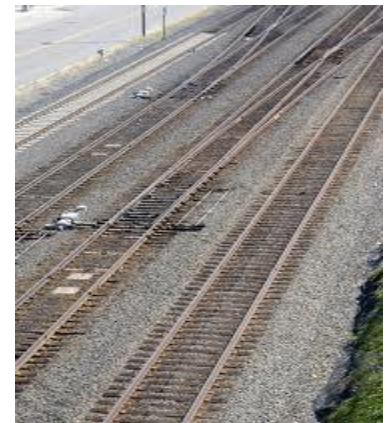


The “advising gap” for first-generation college students

High School Guidance Counselors (GCs)

- * High caseload--up to 500 students (despite ASCA recommendation of 250)
- * Targeted in recent budget cuts
- * Multiple responsibilities (scheduling, psychological/social work, discipline etc.)
- * May not be prepared to assist with financial aid, family expectations, and other “non-academic” issues
- * May operate from implicit biases, creating separate advising “tracks”

Cooper & Liou, 2007; McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012; ASCA website



Resident Immigrant Students and College Attainment

- * Small but growing body of research
- * K-12 “Achievement gap” becomes postsecondary “Access gap”
- * Language not the only barrier to college access
 - * Academic tracking/ lack of rigor in high school
 - * Social isolation -“hyper-segregation”- /lack of belonging (Valdés, 2001)
 - * Financial concerns
 - * Family responsibilities

Callahan, 2005; Kanno & Harklau, 2012; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; [Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009](#)

The current study

Research Questions:

Where, and from whom, do refugee/immigrant students in Laketown¹ get information and guidance about college?

- * What is their experience with guidance counselors (GCs)?
- * Who else plays a major role? (“alternative advisors”)

Methods

Interview with 18 students transitioning to college

- 1) Where did you get information about college?
- 2) Who helped you make decisions related to college?

Other data: Participant observation, newspaper/video footage, other documents

¹ Laketown is a midsized refugee resettlement community in New England

Findings #1: Experiences with guidance counselors (GCs)

A source of information, but not much guidance

- * They give you “a LOT of papers”
- * “They just give you the information, like, this is what you need to do, [but] you don’t know if you’re doing it right.”
- * “What are the steps? ... They don’t offer the ways to be a doctor: You have to take these kind of classes, these kind of tests. You can have this kind of money.”

Gatekeepers rather than advocates

- * “I could have gone further” (if they’d put me in challenging classes)
- * “If you put kids from the same country in the same class, what are you hoping for them to gain?”

Findings #2: Alternative advisors

*E.g., teacher (esp. ESL), coach, family friend,
community service provider, older peers*

- * Long-term relationship

“like family”; “love” ; “knows my siblings, too”

“Everyone needs to have that one person they’re afraid to let down or disappoint.”

- * Availability outside of regular school day

- * Confidence-building: You’re “college material”

- * Holistic guidance : academics + financial aid
+ sports + family expectations +....

Implications

Importance of **relationship**

- * “politics of caring” (Valenzuela, 1999)
- * identity formation (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Kanno & Varghese, 2010)
- * gate-keeping + guidance (Can they co-exist?)

Need for ongoing guidance and feedback

- * 9th grade transition is crucial (Cooper & Liou, 2007)
- * Career goals (mostly “helping professions”) should be taken seriously
- * Family involvement throughout advising process

Possibilities for collaboration

- * Among school staff
- * With community (including colleges/universities)



Are we as L2 writing specialists prepared to be advocates and advisors?

Thank you!!!

These slides and more can be found at
<http://shawnashapiro.com/>

or email sshapiro@middlebury.edu

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