



American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, Inc.

The Role of Higher Education Associations in Shaping Policy That Connects Immigration to Educational Opportunity: A Social Capital Framework

Noe Ortega
University of Michigan

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Introduction

Issues related to immigration have become a growing concern to institutions of higher education around the country. While the issue of immigration is itself very complex and often divisive, the recent public and political discourse challenges the way the higher education community frames the intersections between immigration and postsecondary educational opportunity. This article suggests that policies about immigration and postsecondary access are inherently connected due to the current demographic, social, and political trends throughout the United States. This connection places special attention on the way higher education as a community responds to advance its collective interests and shared values.

Given this nation's changing political environment, a number of higher education associations have begun to strategize in support of changes to state and federal policies surrounding immigration and postsecondary opportunity. As a result, we have seen a renewed interest among scholars in examining the basis for collective agency available to the higher education community, as a primary social institution in a democracy, with a special interest in understanding the power of the collectivity to influence and shape policy. Collective action has long and deep roots in the history of the American political experience and much of the empirical and theoretical literature on this topic is attributed to theories on civic participation and the role of special interest groups (Knoke, 1990; Moe, 1981; Olson, 1965). However the body of literature linking higher education associations to democracy remains incomplete, in part because the operationalization and definition of an "association," especially in the context of the higher education community, does not always provide a clear understanding about why some associations are more successful in shaping their environments than others.

In order to better understand the effectiveness of the embedded resources made available to members of higher education associations and analyze how these resources are utilized to influence higher education policy, we propose a new framework that allows us to examine and reinterpret the way power is situated within the higher education policy community. This study examines the ways in which social capital can be used to explain how collective assets, inherently possessed by the higher education community, can enhance the utility of embedded resources found in the social structures of national higher education associations. Our analysis draws on a specific issue, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) within a current policy context, and the framework developed for this study has applicability for other circumstances in which higher education associations use various spheres of influence to shape the environments in which they attempt to enact their values and advance collective interests. The framework can also be used to help inform and develop strategies to effectively problematize, influence, and mobilize support to help influence and shape other aspects of higher education public policy.

Research Objective

The following sections will examine the literature linking social capital to the political function of associations and describe some of the motives and incentives that encourage individuals to join associations. This will demonstrate how social capital derived from participation is contingent on the benefits and resources made available to its members. Next, we identify characteristics (collective assets) that distinguish the higher education community from other policy arenas and make the claim that it is the interaction between these collective assets and social capital that enhances the utility of collective resources embedded in the social

structures of higher education associations. Then, by establishing the higher education community as one rooted in collective action, we demonstrate how associations leverage the outcome of power through collective action to influence and shape public policy. Finally, by employing an accepted method of qualitative research, content analysis, we examine documents, letters, and statements promulgated on the worldwide web by national higher education associations in support of a specific piece of proposed legislation (the DREAM Act) and, through the mechanisms established in our framework, we re-examine power within the context of this community and their collective actions.

Social & Political Context

The Context of the Current Issue Under Investigation in this Study: Immigration and Access to Higher Education in the United States

The higher education community is no stranger to the issue of immigration, particularly as it relates to postsecondary access for undocumented students. Each year at least 50,000 undocumented immigrants graduate from public high schools in the United States and are denied access to postsecondary education (Gonzales, 2009; Passel, 2005). Most of these students were brought to the United States as young children by their parents, speak English, consider themselves Americans, and will spend the rest of their lives in this country (Gonzales, 2009). Regardless of their demonstrated ability to meet the academic qualifications for college and their desire and motivation to contribute to society, federal legislation passed in 1996 bars these students from obtaining in-state tuition needed to attend college (Olivas, 2008).

Nonetheless, some institutions—out of a commitment to mission or pragmatism—have responded to the growing concerns of undocumented individuals in this country by implementing policies aimed at providing these students with access to higher education, and in some cases offer financial support as well (Flores, 2009). Since 2001 there have been a number of progressive policies put in place to provide in-state resident tuition for undocumented students in several states (Feder, 2008). Between 2001 and 2010, ten states have passed laws that provide undocumented students with in-state benefits (Oklahoma retracted its policy in 2007) and have made postsecondary education more affordable for this population; however, federal legislation has failed to keep pace with this issue (Flores, 2009).

The U.S. has never directly addressed the issue of postsecondary access for undocumented immigrants at the federal level, yet it has considered the issue of undocumented students' access to elementary and secondary education (Olivas, 2004). In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Plyler v. Doe* held that a Texas statute prohibiting undocumented students from receiving free public elementary and secondary education violated the U.S. Constitution (Feder & Attorney, 2008). The Court's ruling on this case determined that undocumented students were entitled to protection under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which claims, "no state shall deny to any person with its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (2008). The argument of the *Plyler* case, however, does not necessarily extend to undocumented students' access to higher education, and unlike elementary and secondary education, higher education has not been deemed essential under law to maintaining the fabric of our society (2008).

The DREAM Act, first proposed in 2001, has been pursued as a means for providing opportunities to undocumented students who were brought to the U.S. as children by providing them with in-state tuition and a pathway to citizenship. While there have been very slight

differences in the versions of subsequent bills introduced over the last eight years, current DREAM Act legislation would permit those students under the age of 30 who entered the United States at the age 15 or younger and graduated from a U.S. high school the opportunity to obtain legal permanent residency status (Gonzales, 2009). It repeals Section 505 of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRIRA) and enables certain unauthorized students to obtain a limited permanent residence status once they have completed at least two years in a program for a bachelor's degree or higher, or who have served in the armed services (or have received an honorable discharge). Estimates suggest that the DREAM Act would provide 360,000 undocumented high school graduates with in-state tuition and the legal means to work (Gonzales, 2009; Passel, 2005). Although Congress has repeatedly introduced the DREAM Act as a solution to addressing the issue of postsecondary access for undocumented students, the measure has failed to garner the votes needed to become law (Olivas, 2008).

Review of Relevant Literature

Defining Social Capital

At the core of the framework for this study is the concept of social capital, defined as the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in networks or other social structures (Portes, 1998). Pierre Bourdieu is credited by a number of scholars (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998) with the first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital in which he defines the concept as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognitions” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). The emphasis of his claim highlights the benefits accruing to the individual by virtue of membership in a group and on the deliberate construction of social networks for the purpose of creating this resource (Portes, 1998). In his analysis, offered twenty years ago, he asserted, “the profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible” (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 249).

While Bourdieu's work places emphasis on social capital as an individual benefit, Coleman's framing of the concept lays the foundation for a second perspective—one that emphasizes social capital as a collective asset (1988). Coleman defines social capital as a “variety of different entities, with two elements in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). In his view, purposive organizations can be actors themselves much in the same way an individual can, and these relations can also result in social capital, which is shared between them as well (1988). Coleman makes a theoretically refined case to support the claim that “like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). Coleman's framing of the concept acknowledges the importance of individuals interacting and networking in an effort to secure the benefits of social capital and his interpretation lends itself to a broader context that allows for the exploration of the elements and processes entailed in the production and maintenance of social capital as a collective asset (Portes, 1998; Lin, 2001).

Coleman is also credited with introducing and giving visibility to the notion of closure in his discussion of social capital. Closure, as defined by Coleman, is the existence of sufficient ties between a certain number of individuals that generate trust and help guarantee the observance of norms (1988). In other words, dense or closed networks may have advantages

over open networks because they are conducive to the maintenance and preservation of the resources acquired by individuals or groups. Although Coleman may have identified closure as a necessary condition for the emergence of social capital, Burt's interpretation of social networks highlights a different scenario. In his view, the relative absence of ties, labeled as "structural holes," highlight the importance of open networks and their ability to enhance opportunities for actors to acquire additional resources (Burt, 1997). Putnam builds on this distinction defining these concepts as bridging and bonding social capital, and identifies different types of networks associated with the two forms of social capital (1995). Whereas bonding social capital refers to networks in which their interactions can be viewed as dense and concentrated on people with similar backgrounds, bridging social capital refers to those networks that bring actors in contact with a variety of individuals from a cross-section of society (Putnam, 1995).

Whether viewed as an individual or a collective asset attributed to open or closed networks, many agree that it is the interaction between actors that makes social capital possible (Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). This fundamental principle is the basis of the framework for this study. For the purposes of this discussion, we define social capital as *an investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to collective resources embedded in the social structures of associations which are then mobilized in purposive actions by their members*. This definition will guide the efficacy of our claim and will be used in our analysis to demonstrate and establish the validity of our claim.

Linking Social Capital to Democracy

The argument linking social capital to the political function of associations is generally found under the concepts of pluralism, civil society and civic culture (Paxton, 2002). This function of social capital in a democracy was exemplified by De Tocqueville's classic description of post-colonial society in the United States and the propensity of citizens to voluntarily participate in forms of civil association (De Tocqueville, 1945). He viewed excessive individualism, which he defined as a preoccupation with one's own private life and an unwillingness to engage in public affairs, as a threat to democracy (De Tocqueville, 1945). Interpretations of Tocqueville's work claim that Americans avoided excessive individualism through the bonds and the broader collective agency that resulted in their propensity for associating with one another in voluntary efforts to pursue common goals or define and act towards a shared view of public benefit (De Tocqueville, Mansfield, & Winthrop, 2000). Gellner is also credited with making the case for the importance of social capital to democracy, claiming that social capital is presumably what produces a dense civil society (Gellner, 1994). In his view, associations are a necessary condition for modern liberal democracy, and in the absence of the collectivity the state often needs to step in to organize individuals who are incapable of organizing themselves (1994). In other words, one benefit of associations is that society organizes itself to maintain a balance of power and protect individuals from the state's power.

Social capital is only one of many possible theoretical constructs that can be used to operationalize the role of associations in influencing and shaping public policy. What makes this concept particularly useful is that it is not constrained to the political functions of associations in relation to democratic decision-making and allows researchers to account in their analysis for the networking relationships of associational members and the context of the particular environments in which they are situated. What we seek to highlight in this study is that certain collective assets (characteristics) attributed to particular environments enhance the effectiveness

of specific resources (collective action) embedded in the social structures of associations, and by identifying these assets we are able to better demonstrate the effectiveness of associations and establish a clearer link to their democratic agency.

National Higher Education Associations as Mechanisms of Social Capital

Associations, as defined for this discussion, are “formally organized named groups, most of whose members—whether persons or organizations—are not financially recompensed for their participation” (Knoke, 1986). The criteria established by this definition allow us to distinguish associations from other primary groups such as families, private-sector firms, and government bureaus (1986). To establish associations as facilitators of social capital, it is important that we make clear the distinction of the level at which the resources and benefits discussed in this analysis are created. The goal of this study is to establish social capital as a relational asset, rooted in interactions and networking, which is measured by the aggregate of valued resources made available to its members at the group level. This framing of the concept allows us to establish associations as mechanisms for institutionalized social relations, which possess resources that are expected to be beneficial to both the individuals and the collective.

One of the ways this can be demonstrated is by inquiring into why individuals choose to get involved in associations. Individuals may decide to join on the basis of rational cost-benefit calculations, a desire to conform to group values and normative beliefs, or for purposes of affective bonding (Knoke, 1990; Moe, 1981; Olson, 1965). We can begin to see these negotiations manifest themselves in the individual concerns regarding the amount of personally controlled resources potential members are willing to relinquish in exchange for the benefits of resources embedded in associations (Knoke, 1990). Coleman reiterates this claim in suggesting that when actors decide “to yield control of their resources to an organization, the expectation is to gain the greater power of combined resources” (Coleman, 1973, p. 3). In other words, the ongoing existence of many of these associations is generally contingent upon the perceptions held by current and potential members that some advantages will be gained by the individual through cooperation with others in the context of the association.

In the case of national higher education associations, which are the primary focus of this study, membership is typically voluntary and may consist of individuals, institutions, and other associations (Cook, 1998). Individuals choose to join these associations because they provide selective benefits including professional development, leadership opportunities, forums, and access to important and relevant research, while others may choose to become members as a result of the networking opportunities provided by the group (or a combination of the two) (Bloland, 1985). Higher education associations have also been described in the literature as tangential organizations defined as “a group in continuing patterns of interaction and functions as a ‘bridge’ between persons in two or more institutionalized groups” (Bloland, 1985; Truman, 1967, p. 40-41). They function as facilitators of social networks made up of individuals organized to pursue similar interests.

Although the provision of selective benefits by associations to their members may encourage them to join and stay, it is their ability to provide access to collective resources (or combined resources) that are mobilized for purposive actions, such as collective action, which are the primary interest in this analysis and the basis for our claim. This is of particular interest given the role that associations serve in helping to build and maintain a political democracy. National higher education associations, many of which are headquartered in Washington, D.C., have been credited with giving voice to the interests of the higher education community (Cook,

1998). The literature on associations provides us with both empirical and theoretical evidence to support the claim that associations provide far greater leverage in the pursuit of interests than would otherwise be possible through individual or unorganized group action (Hrebenar, 1997; Knoke, 1990; Knoke, 1986; Moe, 1981; Olson, 1965).

Collective Assets Inherent in the Higher Education Community

In order to better understand the benefits of social capital as a relational asset of higher education associations and the role they serve as mechanisms for expressing public opinion, this study contends that it is the interaction of social capital with the collective assets inherently possessed by the higher education community that serve to enhance the effectiveness of associations when members act in concert around shared goals. We anchor this argument on previous research conducted on social capital, which claims that “causal propositions may be formulated claiming that collective assets promote relations and networks that enhance the utility of embedded resources” (Lin, 2001, p.33).

The policy arena is often described as an environment that tends to enjoy a great deal of autonomy (Cook, 1998; Parsons, 1997). This does not suggest that it has been immune to challenges; however, throughout its history the higher education policy community has been able to resist and maintain its autonomy (Parsons, 1997). In terms of the organizational make-up and complexity of the arena, its primary actors are often limited to Congressional Committees, The Executive branch, and associations (national, regional, state, and institutional), which is an alliance also termed in the literature as the “iron triangle” of higher education association life (1997). These relatively small groups of actors are quite often personally familiar with one another and many of those who serve on the education subcommittees tend to have education as a primary interest and a long history of commitment to higher education policy issues (1997).

The circulation of personnel, which is common practice in the higher education arena, has been credited with providing a high level of unity (Hamm, 1983; Parsons, 1997). One way in which unity and cooperation have also come to be exemplified is through a common language that pervades among its actors. Terms like “equal educational opportunity” and “access” have fixed meaning in the higher education policy context (Parsons, 1997). The use of common language and the understood values represented by specific words and phrases help provide a coherence, unity, and logic in the policy arena. Given this common language, values, beliefs, and shared history, the culture of the higher education community is certainly one of cooperation that serves to reduce conflict (1997). The exchanges that do occur in the discourse between policy actors help to identify and resolve disputes and ultimately result in a new language that helps guide the arena (Parsons, 1997).

Higher Education Policy Arena as a Community

These characteristics (collective assets) which are unique to the higher education policy arena led Parsons to conclude that the term “policy arena” can be viewed as imprecise—instead he describes the policy arena as a community (1997). Community is also the metaphor that has been used by many of its participants “to define and associate the different elements by which they build and explain their world” (Callon, 1986). This interpretation finds its earliest roots in the work of John Dewey (1954) whose concept of the *communication community* is exemplified in the history of the higher education policy arena functioning as a community bonded by pattern of distinctive communication.

Dewey's theory explains that it is what is spoken and written that bonds a community and further establishes this shared property as essential for group problem solving (Dewey, 1954). Parson's reinterpretation of Dewey's communication theory, constructed for the purposes of describing the higher education community, explains, "communication for problem solving, not force of arms, becomes the mechanism for social order in the higher education community" (Parsons, 1997, p. 95). In his analysis, he describes how power as domination is replaced by power as problem solving (1997). This, he explains, forms the basis of collective action that is inherent in the higher education policy arena and through the experience of collective action policy actors have developed a common language that conveys shared meaning in the community (1997). This interpretation also begins to shed light on the embedded resource (collective action) under investigation in this study and the context in which our framework can be used to interpret power and influence within the community.

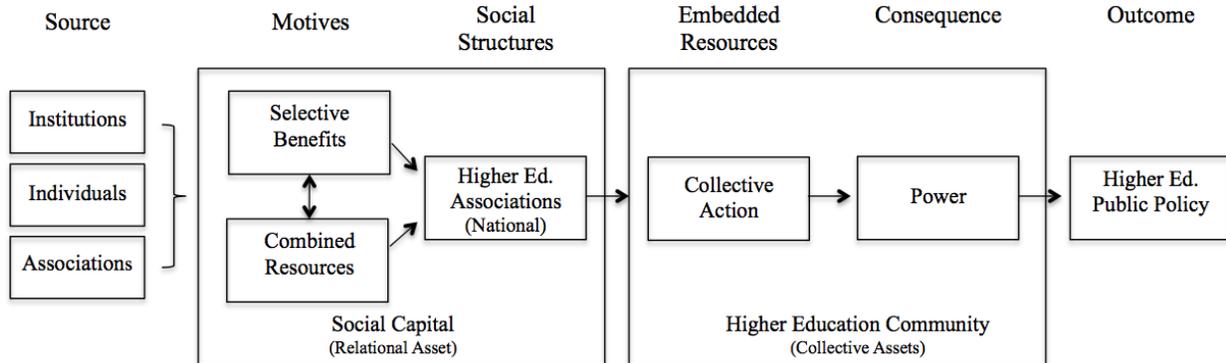
Conceptual Framework

Although social capital alone has been credited in the literature with providing actors with the ability to organize and maintain a balance of power (De Tocqueville, 1945; Gellner, 1994; Parsons, 1997), this interpretation of the concept fails to provide a clear understanding about why some associations are more successful in shaping their environments than others. Some scholars have provided alternative explanations by attributing the proliferation and success of the higher education community to adaptability and the expansion of intensity and array of techniques utilized by its members (Cook, 1998). While improved techniques are important and play a key role in determining the ability of associations to yield power to shape public policy, political activity regardless of its quality or quantity, does not always translate into political influence (Schlozman & Tierney, 1986). It is possible that the activities of a particular organization, regardless of its scale and effective practices, may not have an impact on shaping public policy.

In order to better understand the effectiveness of collective action in the higher education community and provide a clearer explanation for the ability of higher education associations to influence and shape higher education policy, we must develop new frameworks that allow us to examine and reinterpret the way power is situated within the higher education community. The framework developed for this study accomplishes the following:

1. Demonstrates how social capital, as a relational asset, provides individuals with access to resources embedded in the social structures of associations that can be mobilized for purposive actions such as collective action;
2. Identifies collective assets inherently present in the higher education community that enhance the effectiveness of collective action in the higher education policy arena; and
3. Establishes power as a consequence of collective action that serves as mechanisms used by the higher education community to acquire power and set a higher education policy agenda.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Using Social Capital to Interpret the Meaning of Power in the Higher Education Policy Community



Our claim is that traditional discussions of power view the concept as both a cause and effect (Parsons, 1997), meaning that actors pursue membership in associations to yield power or engage in collective action to combat power. The framework provided in Figure 1 offers social capital, rather than power per se, as a motive for entering the collectivity and establishes collective action as an embedded resource that can be accessed by its members and utilized for purposive actions. Once this resource is activated by its members (actors), we can begin to interpret the meaning of power through the historical, social and political context of the higher education community (characteristics we refer to throughout this discussion as collective assets) and use power to summarize the consequences of collective action. Although the process we describe in our model is much more complex and elaborate than suggested by our linear model, the framework demonstrates how higher education associations (facilitators of social capital) interact with the collective assets of the higher education community to help maximize their collective efforts and shape a higher education policy agenda, including but not limited to efforts such as immigration law and provisions for educational access.

Methodology

Data

Our sample of higher education associations included in this study was drawn from a list published by Inside Higher Ed (2010), an online news journal for higher education news, which was then cross checked with the American Council on Education’s online members and associates directory for accuracy. The original sample consisted of 166 higher education associations made up of the following associational groups: institutionally affiliated associations (private, public, liberal arts, comprehensive, two- and four-year colleges and universities), professional development associations that represent the interests of either faculty or institutional personnel (i.e. American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers and the American Association of University Professors), learned societies (i.e. American Philosophical Association), minority-serving associations (i.e. American Association for Hispanics in Higher Education), peripheral organizations (i.e. College Board), student organizations (i.e. United States Student Association), disciplinary affiliated groups (i.e. Association of American Law Schools), and national associations representing state higher education offices and governing boards (i.e. State Higher Education Executive Officers).

In the first phase of our analysis, all regional and state associations were eliminated from the sample in order to restrict our analysis exclusively to national higher education associations. We further restricted the data to only include associations that met our working definition and archived on their website information related to government relations and public policy correspondence for the years of 2006, 2007, and 2009 (no data was uncovered for 2008). This resulted in a final sample of 68 national higher education associations that met the parameters of this study (Appendix: 1). Once the sample was determined, we examined the websites of each of the associations in search of public documentation (in the form of letters or correspondence addressed to outside parties), which outlined in specific terms their support for the federal DREAM Act.

Table 1 presents the descriptive characteristics of all the associations included in this study. Institutionally affiliated associations represent the largest group and encompass 31% of our sample. This category includes national higher education associations representing community colleges (4%), public state colleges and land-grant institutions (4%), private, independent, liberal arts, and comprehensive institutions (16%), major research universities (2%), proprietary and technical schools (3%), and one umbrella organization representing all institutions in the United States (2%). Professional institutional personnel associations represent the next largest group and accounted for 29% of the sample. The membership make up of this group consists primarily of university personnel—a subgroup established in this study to allow for the distinction between associations that represent the interests of institutional staff and those organizations that represent faculty interests. Professional faculty associations and learned societies account for 10% of the sample, while disciplinary associations, student organizations, and peripheral organizations represent 9%, 2%, and 9% of the sample, respectively. Minority-serving associations account for 7% of the sample and national associations representing the interests of state and governing boards represent 3% of the total sample.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics (N=68)
National Higher Education Associations by Type & Groups

<i>Association by Type</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Bridging	17	0.25
Bonding	51	0.75
<i>Associations by Groups</i>		
Major Coordinating	1	0.02
Community and Junior Colleges	3	0.04
Proprietary & Technical	2	0.03
Public State & Land Grant Colleges and Universities	3	0.04
Major Research Universities	1	0.02
Private, Independent, Liberal Arts, Comprehensive Institutions	11	0.16
Professional Faculty and Learned Societies	7	0.10
Minority-Serving	5	0.07
Peripheral	6	0.09
Disciplinary Affiliated	6	0.09
Professional Institutional Personnel	20	0.29
Student Organizations	1	0.02
National- State & Governing Boards	2	0.03

Analytic Strategy

In order to capture the variation in outcomes addressed in our review of the literature regarding the different forms of social capital; we included a variable used to distinguish between bridging and bonding social capital (Burt, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). The inclusion of this variable allows us to interpret our results in two ways: (1) provide results inclusive of all associations without regard to their type and classification; and (2) utilize the two forms of capital in our analysis (bridging and bonding) in an effort to observe whether support for DREAM Act legislation is predominantly associated with one or the other.

To distinguish between bonding and bridging social capital, we first used the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classification system (Carnegie Classification system) to establish a base comparison population to distinguish between bridging and bonding associations. The distinction between the two was determined by the extent to which the membership of a particular association deviated from the base comparison population of higher education institutions. For instance, the Academic Council on Education (ACE) limits its membership exclusively to presidents of institutions and national associations, yet it represents the majority of degree granting institutions in the U.S., qualifying it as a bridging association. On the other hand, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), whose total membership makes it one of the largest associations relative to its size, limits membership primarily to institutions classified as community colleges resulting in a deviation from the base comparison population and qualifying it as a bonding association.

The same held true for associations whose membership consist of institutional professionals (i.e. registrars, financial aid officers, etc.). The distinction between these types of associations was measured on the extent to which their members occupy a role at the institutions included in our base population. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administration (NASFAA) limits membership primarily to those individuals who hold the position of financial aid administrator at their respective campuses; however, these individuals occupy a role in nearly every institution in our base comparison population, qualifying it as a bridging association. Others like the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) limits membership only to librarians housed at research institutions, deviating significantly from the comparison population, qualifying as a bonding association.

Results

Table 2 includes the results for all national higher education associations included in the study and describes the associational support for the DREAM Act between 2006 and 2009. In 2006, only 16% of the associations included in our study provided support for the DREAM Act by submitting letters to members of Congress calling for the passage of this legislation. This number increased to 22% in 2007, and again to 46% in 2009. These figures allow us to conclude that by the end of the three-year period under investigation, nearly half of all associations in this study lent their memberships' support to the DREAM Act and lobbied on behalf of undocumented students.

When we look at the data by individual year, the majority of support in 2006 (45%), was found among associations classified as institutionally affiliated in this study. This group consisted of community and junior colleges, public state and land-grant institutions, and one major association that represented all institutions in the U.S., each of these groups provided 9% of the support for the DREAM Act in 2006. This group also included private, independent,

liberal arts, and comprehensive institutions, which provided 27% of the total support for the DREAM Act in 2006. The next largest percentage of support was attributed to professional associations representing institutional personnel (not holding a faculty position), which represented 27% of the support for this federal legislation in 2006. The remainder of the support for the DREAM Act that year was attributed to minority-serving associations that provided 18% of the support for the federal policy and student organizations, which represented 9% of the support in favor of the DREAM Act in 2006.

In 2007, major research universities and professional faculty & learned societies were added to the list of associations that supported the DREAM Act and represented a combined 14% of the total support that year. Support for this legislation also increased among community colleges and public state & land-grant institutions, each of which increased their level of support from 9% in 2006 to 13% in 2007, respectively. Support from the rest of the associations in 2007 remained relatively unchanged from the previous year. Our results also show that among all public, private, two-and four-year institutions represented by the associations in this study, support for the DREAM Act in 2007 was equally distributed among all three groups—each providing 13% of the support that year.

In 2009, with the exception of national student associations, all associational support for the DREAM Act either remained the same or increased. Support among professional associations representing institutional personnel increased by fifteen percentage points from 20% in 2007 to 35% of the total support in 2009. Peripheral (6%) and disciplinary associations (3%) were added to the list of supporters for the DREAM Act in 2009. Institutional support for the DREAM Act that year was attributed to several institutionally affiliated associations in our study, which represented community colleges (6%), public state and land-grant institutions (10%), private, independent, liberal arts, and comprehensive institutions (13%) and major research universities (3%). The results in Table 2 also show that the total number of associations that lent their support to the DREAM Act more than doubled between 2007 ($n=15$) and 2009 ($n=31$).

Table 2: All Associations (N=68)
Letters of Support for the DREAM Act

Associations	Letter 2006		Letter 2007		Letter 2009	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
All	11	0.16	15	0.22	31	0.46
<i>(By Groups)</i>						
Major Coordinating	1	0.09	1	0.06	1	0.03
Community and Junior Colleges	1	0.09	2	0.13	2	0.06
Public State & Land Grant Colleges and Universities	1	0.09	2	0.13	3	0.10
Private, Independent, Liberal Arts, Comprehensive Institutions	2	0.18	2	0.13	4	0.13
Minority-Serving	2	0.18	2	0.13	4	0.13
Professional Institutional Personnel	3	0.27	3	0.20	11	0.35
Student Organizations	1	0.09	1	0.07	-	-
Major Research Universities	-	-	1	0.07	1	0.03
Professional Faculty and Learned Societies	-	-	1	0.07	2	0.06
Peripheral	-	-	-	-	2	0.06
Disciplinary Affiliated	-	-	-	-	1	0.03

Table 3 shows a breakdown of the percentage of total support for the DREAM Act attributed to bridging and bonding associations between the years of 2006 and 2009. For each of the three years observed in this study, the results show that associations classified as bonding provided the majority of support for this legislation. Bonding associations represented 55% of the support for the DREAM Act in 2006, 67% in 2007, and 71% in 2009. The total support among bonding associations increased by an average of five percentage points for each of the three years included in our analysis. Although support among bridging associations remained relatively constant between 2006 and 2007, the number of bridging associations that lent their support to the DREAM Act increased between 2007 ($n=5$) and 2009 ($n=9$), a total that nearly doubled the level of support demonstrated at the base year of the study. However, the overall percentage distribution of support among bridging associations failed to keep pace with the increase observed among bonding associations in this study.

The results were also examined by associational groupings for both bridging and bonding associations. Among those associations classified as bonding in this study, the majority of support for the DREAM Act in 2006 was attributed to minority-serving associations (33%) and associations representing private, independent, liberal arts, and comprehensive institutions (33%). The remainder of the support provided by bonding associations in 2006 was attributed to community colleges and public state and land-grant institutions, each representing 17% of the total support, respectively. When we compare these results to the results observed among associations classified as bridging in 2006, professional associations representing institutional personnel provided 60% of their total support—the largest base of support among all institutions (bridging or bonding) observed that year. Major coordinating and student organizations were also included in the list of bridging associations that provided support for the DREAM Act in 2006, representing 20% of the total support each, respectively.

In 2007, support for the DREAM Act was heavily weighted in favor of bonding associations (67%), representing more than twice the support demonstrated by those classified as bridging (33%) in this study. Major research universities and professional faculty & learned societies were among the bonding associations added to the list of supporters for the DREAM Act in 2007—these associations represented a combined total of 20% of the support attributed to bonding associations in 2007. Table 3 show that support for the DREAM Act among bridging associations in 2007 can be attributed to professional personnel organizations (60%), major coordinating associations (20%), and student organizations (20%). In 2009, support among bonding associations (71%) continued to outpace the level of support attributed to bridging associations (29%). The results presented in Table 3 also indicate that support provided by bonding associations in 2009 either increased or remained the same. Professional faculty & learned societies as well as professional institutional personnel were added to the list of associations lending their support to the DREAM Act, each representing 5% and 23% of the total support exhibited by bonding associations that year. Among those associations classified as bridging in 2009, peripheral associations were added to the list of DREAM Act supporters and represented 22% of the total support among bridging associations that year. Table 3 demonstrated that professional institutional associations once again outpaced the level of support provided by all types of associations (bridging or bonding), representing 67% of the total support among bridging associations in 2009.

Table 3: Bonding & Bridging Associations (N=68)
Letters of Support for the DREAM Act

Associations	Letter 2006		Letter 2007		Letter 2009	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Bonding	6	0.55	10	0.67	22	0.71
Bridging	5	0.45	5	0.33	9	0.29
<i>Bonding Associations by Group (n=51)</i>						
	<i>(of 55%)</i>		<i>(of 67%)</i>		<i>(of 71%)</i>	
Community and Junior Colleges	1	0.17	2	0.20	2	0.09
Public State & Land Grant Colleges and Universities	1	0.17	2	0.20	3	0.14
Private, Independent, Liberal Arts, Comprehensive Institutions	2	0.33	2	0.20	4	0.18
Minority-Serving	2	0.33	2	0.20	4	0.18
Major Research Universities	-	-	1	0.10	1	0.05
Professional Faculty and Learned Societies	-	-	1	0.10	2	0.09
Disciplinary Affiliated	-	-	-	-	1	0.05
Professional Institutional Personnel	-	-	-	-	5	0.23
<i>Bridging Associations by Group (n=17)</i>						
	<i>(of 45%)</i>		<i>(of 33%)</i>		<i>(of 29%)</i>	
Major Coordinating	1	0.20	1	0.20	1	0.11
Professional Institutional Personnel	3	0.60	3	0.60	6	0.67
Student Organizations	1	0.20	1	0.20	-	-
Peripheral	-	-	-	-	2	0.22

Strategy for Addressing Potential Limitations of the Study

Sources of potential bias that may affect our results and threaten the validity of the claims made in our discussion will also be addressed in our analysis. There is a great deal of variation in institutional representation among the associations that make up the higher education community (Cook, 1998). Many of the associations included in our study may elect not to engage in federal relations, while others may choose to only engage their collective efforts in issue specific lobbying activities (an agenda that may not be inclusive of the DREAM Act). In order to generalize our results and make claims about the normative values and shared beliefs of the higher education community, we conducted a second analysis of our data in order to provide additional empirical evidence for our claim.

To address the issue of variation in representation among associations, we recoded the data and included in our study a new variable designated as “big six.” The “big six” is a term used to describe the set of major associations that serve as the principal voices of the higher education community (Cook, 1998). This core group of national higher education associations consist of one umbrella association (bridging), the American Council on Education (ACE), and five institutionally affiliated associations (bonding) that represent all the colleges and universities in the U.S., which include the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Association of American Universities (AAU) the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), and the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) (1998).

The results from our second analysis, provided in Table 5, show that in 2006, 67% of the major associations in the higher education community provided letters to members of Congress in support of DREAM Act legislation, a number that increased to 100% in 2007 and remained at

that level (100%) in 2009. When we break down our results by individual associations, we observed that in 2006 support for this legislation was attributed to the following four major associations: the American Council on Education (25%), the American Association of Community Colleges (25%), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (25%), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (25%). In 2007 the Association of American Universities and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities were added to the list of supporters for the DREAM Act, which resulted in 100% support among the big six in favor of the DREAM Act in 2007—a level of support that remained unanimous in 2009. These results allow us to conclude that support for the values and beliefs attributed to DREAM Act legislation are widely held among the higher education community.

Table 4: Big Six Associations (N=6)
Letters of Support for the DREAM Act

Associations	Letter 2006		Letter 2007		Letter 2009	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Big Six	4	0.67	6	1.00	6	1.00
<i>By Institutional Affiliation</i>						
American Council on Education	1	0.25	1	0.16	1	0.16
American Association of Community Colleges	1	0.25	1	0.16	1	0.16
American Association of State Colleges and Universities	1	0.25	1	0.16	1	0.16
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities	1	0.25	1	0.16	1	0.16
Associations of American Universities	-	-	1	0.16	1	0.16
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities	-	-	1	0.16	1	0.16

Discussion

Professional associations serve as the principal voice of collective interest for the higher education community and are credited with playing a role in helping to build and maintain democracy in the United States (Cook, 1998). In the context of our study, they also serve as unique social structures that facilitate networking opportunities for members providing them with resources that can be utilized for purposive actions. Our findings allow us to conclude that during the period under investigation, the higher education community maximized its collective efforts and effectively utilized social capital to set DREAM Act legislation as a high priority on their policy agenda. Support for passage of the DREAM Act went from what could be perceived as a relatively low priority among the higher education community in 2006, generating only 13% of the attention of the associations in this study, to 46% in 2009—an increase nearly three times the level of support demonstrated in the base year of our sample.

However, the focus of our analysis is not limited to the benefits of social capital as a relational asset of higher education associations. The framework developed for this study suggests that in order to better understand the effectiveness of the higher education community’s ability to influence and shape policy, we must also examine how social capital interacts with the collective assets inherent to the community—which we claim enhances the collective influence and ability to advance a higher education policy agenda. This can be accomplished by first examining power as a consequence of collective action (a resource we’ve attributed to social

capital in this study) and then interpreting these findings through the context of the characteristics attributed to the higher education policy community.

Dewey's theory of the *communication community* explains that what is spoken and written bonds a community, and further establishes communication as a shared property essential for problem solving (Dewey, 1954). Through the experience of collective action, the members of the higher education community have developed a common language that conveys a shared meaning in the policy community (Parsons, 1997). One of the collective assets attributed to the higher education community and employed as a strategy to generate collective support for the DREAM Act, is reflected in the broadened discourse on immigration which encompasses the shared values and beliefs of the community related to access and opportunity for all students. By reframing the discourse on immigration and higher education, the community was able to build a coalition around the set of solutions proposed by the DREAM Act—solutions that are consistent with the higher education community's general commitment to postsecondary access. This explicit connection was observed in the content of the letters and statements released by the associations to members of Congress, which framed the issue as one of increased access to higher education opportunity and a pathway to prosperity.

Upon closer examination of the shared history of the higher education community, it is evident that the long-standing support and commitment to ensuring access for all students precedes the current issue of immigration under observation in this analysis. The history of collective action in the higher education community also includes building collective support for the issues of financial aid and equal educational opportunity for historically underrepresented students (Bloland, 1985; Cook, 1998; Parsons, 1997). Given an understanding that many of the policy tenets held by the higher education community derive ultimately from recognizing its role as a public good (Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005), these shared values (collective assets) serve to enhance the utility of the resources embedded in higher education associations situated within this community.

The level of cooperation and unity that characterizes the higher education community can also be empirically demonstrated in our findings (See Table 5). Among the six major higher education associations that represent all individuals, institutions, and associational partners that make up the higher education community, demonstrated support for the DREAM Act increased from 67% in 2006 to 100% in 2009. Most of the 3,600 colleges and universities in the U.S. view these six associations as the principle voices of higher education in its federal relations (Cook, 1998, p. 10). The results from our analysis allow us to conclude that the members of the higher education community are likely to support a federal solution to the issues of immigration and higher education that calls for increased access to postsecondary opportunities and a pathway to citizenship and prosperity for all students.

The classification system developed by researchers (King, 1975; Murray, 1976, Parsons, 1997) and used in this analysis to categorize higher education associations, defines them as a community bonded by institutional affiliation, interests, and disciplines. The level of unity inherent in the organizational structure of the higher education community was also observed to have enhanced the ability of associational members to build alliances and win the agents of other actors in support of their policy position on the DREAM Act. Bonding associations, whose interactions can be viewed as dense and concentrated on people with similar backgrounds, represented the largest supporters of the DREAM Act in each of the years we examined in this study. More than half (55%) of the associations classified as bonding in our study supported the DREAM Act in 2006—a number that increased by 16 percentage points to 71% in 2009.

Providing evidence that the level of shared interests and unity that bonds these associations can also enhance their ability to build stable alliances and effectively mobilize their members to demonstrate collective support for higher education policies like the DREAM Act.

Conclusion

The issue of immigration has become a growing concern among institutions of higher education around the country. It has renewed interest among scholars in examining the basis for collective agency available to the higher education community, as a primary social institution in a democracy, with a special interest in understanding the power of the collectivity to influence and shape policy. The findings in our study have both practical and theoretical implications in the field of sociology for understanding how power could be explored from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. This paper elaborates upon the theoretical construct of social capital and our findings provide researchers with some insight as to how we might reinterpret power within the higher education policy community.

There is an essential pragmatism associated with the findings from this study as well. Building support for what may be a divisive issue such as immigration and the status of undocumented students across a system as differentiated and loosely aligned as the American higher education is not easy. In fact, this issue might well offer the clearest test of the higher education community's collective agency in the last forty years. Immigration is a particularly challenging issue for university presidents and boards to address given the very real political divisions at the state and community level—an issue further confounded by varying immigration patterns and demographic shifts.

As the work of the higher education community becomes more closely aligned with economic, social and civic ends, the consequences of the immigration issue become localized, introducing the potential to split the system of higher education in terms of this issue. This study demonstrated how certain unifying values inherent to the higher education community allow the system's representative associations to come together to support common policy positions. In other words, the power of the higher education's policy community to generate continued support for the DREAM Act is contingent on a shared conviction that is vested in the value of opportunity and the continued assertion of the belief that higher education serves both public as well as individual ends—values and beliefs that will serve to enhance its unifying ideals.

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Appendix 1: List of Associations

Community and Junior Colleges

American Association of Community Colleges
 American Association of Community College Trustees
 National Association of Community College Entrepreneurship

Proprietary & Technical

Association of Career and Technical Education
 Career College Association

Public Four-Year State & Land-Grant Colleges and Universities

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
 American Council on Education
 Association for American Colleges and Universities
 Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

Major Research Universities

Association of American Universities

Private, Independent, Liberal Arts, Comprehensive Colleges & Universities

American Academy of Religion
 Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
 Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
 Association Presbyterian Colleges and Universities
 Council of Christian Colleges and Universities
 Council of Independent Colleges
 International Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities
 International Association of Methodist-Related Schools, Colleges, and Universities
 National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

North American Coalition for Christian Admissions Professionals
 Women's College Association

Professional Faculty & Learned Societies

American Association of University Professors
 American Educational Research Association
 American Philosophical Association
 Association for Institutional Research
 Association for the Study of Higher Education
 National Association of Scholars
 National Education Association

Minority Serving

American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education
 American Indian Higher Education Consortium
 Council for Opportunity in Education
 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
 National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

Peripheral

*American Association of Higher Education and Accreditation
 American Association of University Women
 *College Board
 *Council for Higher Education Accreditation
 *EDUCAUSE
 Washington Higher Education Secretariat

Disciplinary Affiliated

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
 American Association of Colleges of Nursing
 American Dental Association
 Association of American Law Schools
 Association of American Medical Colleges

Professional Institutional Personnel

*American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
 American College Personnel Association

Association for Continuing Higher Education
 Association of American University Presses
 *Association of College Administration Professionals
 *Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers
 Association of International Educators
 Association of Research Libraries
 *College and University Personnel for Human Resources
 Council for Advancement and Support of Education
 *National Association for College Admission Counseling
 *National Association for Colleges and University Attorneys
 *National Association for Student Affairs Professionals
 *National Association of College and University Business Officers
 *National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
 National Collegiate Athletic Association
 National Council of University Research Administrators
 *Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
 *The Society for College and University Planning
 University Continuing Education Association

Student Organizations
 *United States Student Association

National—State and Governing Board
 Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
 State Higher Education Executive Officers

Major Coordination Association
 *American Council on Education

**Bridging Associations*

Appendix 2: Letters of Support for the DREAM Act

Letters of Support—2006

*American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
*American Council on Education
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
*National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
*National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
*United States Student Association

Letters of Support—2007

*American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
*American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
*National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
*National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Educational Association
*United States Student Association

Letters of Support—2009

*American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American College Personnel Association
*American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
*Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
*College Board
Council for Opportunity in Education
Council of Christian Colleges and Universities

*EDUCAUSE
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
Association of International Educators
*Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
*National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
*National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
*National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Educational Association
University Continuing Education Association
Women's College Association

**Bridging Associations*