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"It's Sort of My Calling": The Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility of Latino Immigrant-Origin Young Adults

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The aim of this study was to describe civic patterns of engagement of Latino first- and second-generation (immigrant-origin) young adults and to provide insights into what differentiates these patterns. Based on 58 in-depth interviews with 18- to 25-year-olds of Dominican, Mexican, and Central American origin, the authors first established variations in different levels of civic engagement profiles. The authors then analyzed the characteristics that distinguish these civic profiles, considering demographic variables (generation, gender, education level, and undocumented status) as well as motivations for civic engagement. Two thirds of first- and second-generation participants were actively engaged, though variations in patterns emerged across civic profiles; undocumented status appeared a particularly salient driver of engagement. The authors found that rather than being instrumentally and individually motivated, Latino immigrant-origin young adults were primarily motivated to be civically engaged by social responsibility as well as by social (in)justices.

Today, nearly one fourth of young adults (ages 18–25) in the United States are of immigrant-origin—either first- (foreign-born) or second-generation (U.S.-born with foreign parents) immigrants (Batalova & Fix, 2011). Latino[1] first- and second-generation young adults in particular constitute the largest growing group of young adults in the United States (Rumbaut & Komaie,

[1]Within the heterogeneous Latino group lie the experiences of ethnically, racially, religiously, nationally, and generationally diverse persons. It is important to recognize multiple intersecting identities (e.g., Indigenous and female) as not doing so may lead to cultural misunderstanding and stigmatization (Casanova, 2012). While mindful of such differences and intersectionalities, certain commonalities permit the grouping of Latinos (M. Suárez-Orozco, Paez, & Gaytán, 2008). First, two thirds of Latinos are either immigrants or the children of immigrants (Brown & Patten, 2014). Second, Latinos share a connection to Spanish, the most frequently spoken non-English language in the United States (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013). Lastly, despite identifying with their family's country of origin (e.g., Dominican American, or Salvadoran American), Latinos are forced to adapt to U.S. demographic and census categories (Hispanic/Latino) (Lopez & Krogstad, 2014). Although we recognize the importance of ethnic and racial diversity in our sample of Dominican,

2010). Whether young people engage in their civic societies has fundamental implications for their own positive development as well as for "the enhancement of other people and of society" (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003, p. 179). Understanding whether immigrant-origin Latino young adults participate in their new land, how they participate, and why they participate "will greatly determine the nature of civil society in the United States over the next few decades" (Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008, p. 57).

Lerner et al. (2003) posited that to thrive in the course of their development, young adults need to contribute in culturally valuable ways to others around them. These "generative contributions" (p. 177) move beyond the self to family and community and then to the more abstracted civil society. These contributions are essential for individual growth and prosperity, as well as attainment of culturally meaningful "idealized personhood" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1998). Further, such acts serve to enhance our society in essential ways.

Hirshorn and Settersten (2013) argued that though for older adults, civic engagement is typically generative, for younger adults, it tends to be "an instrumental means to a personal ends" (p. 203). Within a middle-class American individualistic cultural framework, it is assumed that young adults "have relatively few social obligations" (p. 203). This view is partially premised on a model of social values in which individualism is valued more than collective obligations (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013). This view of civic engagement (CE) premises that young adults at this stage of development are slow to take on adult responsibilities (Arnett, 2000). This middle-class cultural model of civic engagement also assumes that young adults are college bound and have the requisite flexible time to dedicate to strategic résumé-building civic engagement (Hirshon & Setterson, 2013). For disadvantaged or working-class youth who do not have disposable time and instead are working or providing support at home for younger siblings or elder care, civic engagement as a means to an ends to build a résumé is less of an option.

Latino Youth Civic Engagement

Some are concerned about whether Latinos are contributing to their new society in meaningful ways (e.g., Huntington, 2004). Looking narrowly at voting patterns as proxy for civic engagement—a particular focus of political scientists and sociologists—one may find reason for concern because the Latino eligible voter turnout rate lags behind those of Asian, Black, and White eligible voters (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013). Further, if CE is narrowly defined by voting, the first generation, many who are ineligible to vote, also appear disengaged (Waters, 2008). In addition to not being able to vote, some Latino youth may not have optimal opportunities for political socialization within either their families or their school contexts (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2007).

Recent research on immigrant-origin youth and Latinos in particular has expanded its focus beyond the political to other types of civic engagement in which Latinos participate. For example, a study conducted in Florida with Latino and Haitian immigrant young adults found that bilingual young adults devoted considerable time to helping other immigrants in civic-related matters such as interpreting, translating, advocating, and filling out official documents (Stepick et al., 2008).

Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan young adults, for the purposes of this study, we present the common experiences they share while also highlighting differences by generation, gender, and educational levels.

Arguably, then, within the social sciences, CE for youth in general but for immigrant-origin youth in particular should be expanded beyond the traditional parameters of voting, understanding civic concepts, political awareness, and attitudes tied to a particular nationality (Seif, 2010). Using narrow political dimensions as proxies to define CE neglects the contributions of those who do not have the benefit of documented/authorized/legal status (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; C. Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011) as well as those who come from low socioeconomic and/or ethnic-minority backgrounds (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Researchers of immigrant-origin youth therefore suggest that definitions of CE for this population should be expanded to include various forms of giving back to the community like translating for others, advocacy work, mentoring, volunteer work, and activism in social causes (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008; Seif, 2010; Stepick et al., 2008). This study contributes to the field of CE by considering an array of forms of civic engagement amongst immigrant origin Latino young adults.

Motivators of Civic Engagement in Latino Young Adults

The existing evidence points to a number of factors that shape immigrant-origin populations' stances toward engagement in civil society.

Social responsibility.   Those who are driven by social responsibility—defined as "a sense of duty or obligation to contribute to the greater good"—can be moved by their "duty to act on moral and prosocial grounds" (Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011, p. 12). For individuals with a sense of social responsibility, two primary drivers are often at the bottom of this social responsibility—relationships with others and a moral sense of social justice (Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011). Social responsibility can lead to civic engagement that is sometimes broadly focused on contributing to society and sometimes more narrowly focused on helping individuals. However, though intentions and values are important stimuli for actions, socioeconomic barriers that require focusing on attaining basic needs, time constraints, and lack of opportunity can impede actions (Verba et al., 1995; Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011). The specific ways in which social responsibility may act as a frame for CE or conversely constrain such engagement remain to be applied to immigrant-origin young adult populations.

Perceptions of unfair treatment.   Experiences of discrimination and marginalization have been linked to civic disengagement and civic mobilization (Jensen, 2008; Stepick et al., 2008). Marginalized populations such as African Americans in the United States are more likely to participate politically in reaction to the history of de jure discrimination of the past as well as to ongoing racial discrimination in daily life (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990). Likewise, Stepick et al. (2008) found that their study of immigrant origin youth participated heavily "in politically related activities in response to discrimination" (p. 55).

In the United States context of unresolved immigration policies, increasing deportations, and high numbers of DREAMers (youth who arrived without documentation, have attended U.S. schools, but are currently ineligible for a pathway to citizenship), immigration controversies have also served as a catalyst for CE (Stepick et al., 2008; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Because 1.5 million youth are undocumented and another 4.5 million are growing up in mixed-status homes (with one or more undocumented immediate family members) (C. Suárez-Orozco et al.,

2011), in recent years many have been propelled to CE by this pressing social issue. In the face of ongoing anti-immigrant sentiment and political actions, Latino youth have mobilized in civic marches and petition drives to protest bills seeking to criminalize those who assist undocumented immigrants and measures seeking to limit health, social, and educational benefits for undocumented immigrants and their children (Gonzales, 2008; Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010; Seif, Ullman, & Nunez-Mchiri, 2014). Notably, much of this work has focused on the participation of Mexican-origin Latino youth (Gonzales, 2008; Perez et al., 2010; Seif et al., 2014).

This Study

The aim of this study was to describe civic patterns of engagement of Latino first-and second-generation (immigrant-origin) young adults and to provide insights into what differentiates these patterns. Using 58 in-depth interviews with 18- to 25-year-old Latino participants representing a range of educational backgrounds, we qualitatively explore their profiles of civic engagement, including their range and levels of CE. Further, we examine the demographic characteristics (gender, generation, education level, and documentation status) that may distinguish those profiles as well as motivational themes emerging from the data.

METHOD

Data are drawn from the Diverse Young Adults Perspectives on Civic Life Project, a mixed-methods study designed to examine how civic trust (in the educational and judicial systems, media, and religious institutions) is related to the CE of immigrant-origin Latino young adults.

Participants

Participants were 58 Latino immigrant-origin young adults residing in northeastern cities; 58.6% were female. Participants included Dominicans (48.3%), Mexicans (27.6%), Salvadorans (10.3%), and Guatemalans (13.8%) ages 18 to 25. About one half of the participants (48.3%) were first generation whereas 51.7 % were second generation. Almost one half of participants (46.5%) had a high school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED), 15.5% had attended college or technical school, 19% had a two-year college degree, 12.1% had a four-year college degree, and only 3.4% had some graduate school credits.

Procedures

We sought to recruit participants with a range of educational levels and immigrant generational statuses.[2] Thus, participants were recruited through churches, community organizations, community colleges, and 4-year universities. A community organization liaison provided information

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[2]We anticipated that some of the first-generation participants might be undocumented but because of the sensitivity of this issue, we did not explicitly make documentation status a part of the recruitment strategy. We never asked directly about status during the interviews, though many participants disclosed this information during the course of the interview once trust was established.

about the study to prospective participants; we also spoke directly with groups of individuals at 2- and 4-year institutions and e-mailed flyers describing the study to electronic mailing lists. We recognize that the most disenfranchised, however, are likely to have been missed through these recruitment efforts. Young adults interested in participating contacted the research team directly and were given more information about the study. All participants completed an online survey to assess their civic engagement and attitudes, after which they participated in a semistructured interview. They gave their consent online before starting the survey and separately gave their verbal consent prior to interviews. Participants received $50 dollars for completing the survey and interview.

Interviews.   All participants completed in-depth, semistructured, in-person interviews. These lasted approximately 2.5 hours and were conducted in English or Spanish, according to the participant's choice. The interviewer asked questions about participants' daily activities (including CE activities), goals, and motivation for CE as well as about issues in society that most concerned them. We also asked them to discuss their notions of what it means to be a "good citizen."

Data Analysis

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Developing the codes for this analysis involved three interrelated and iterative analysis strategies derived from open coding (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In Phase 1, we used open coding to identify significant themes that emerged from the data. The coders read the transcripts multiple times and searched for recurrent categories, themes, words, metaphors, and contradictions in each participant's narrative. During this stage of coding, emergent descriptive themes from all of the transcripts were identified. The initial set of independently identified themes was compared within and across cases and integrated into a comprehensive list of coding categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes were defined, and exemplar codes were included in the manual. Inter-rater agreement rate of at least 0.85 was established for each code (calculated by using the Miles and Huberman–recommended (1994) formula dividing the number of agreement into the total number of agreements + disagreements). Once these "pattern codes" (p. 67) had been established, a second iteration of coding was conducted using the coding manual. In a final phase of pattern coding, similar themes were collapsed, and minor adjustments to the coding scheme were made. We used Dedoose, a qualitative analysis program, to condense and organize the data (Dedoose Version 4.0).

After coding and reading each entire interview, a summary memo was written for each participant describing the person's profile of engagement by drawing on a range of evidence from the interview (from self-described type and frequency of involvement as well as motivations). A spectrum of CE profiles emerged ranging from "no civic engagement" to active levels of CE involving civic leadership roles (see Results section). During the course of coding, a sixth category was added to incorporate several participants who had explicitly referred to their specific selection of the helping professions to give back to others and their communities. Lastly, data was organized into a table by profiles of engagement and various demographic characteristics (gender, generation, and education) and by themes that emerged from our inductive coding (e.g., social responsibility, (in)justice awareness, and social causes) that served to motivate CE. A minimum inter-rater reliability rate of 0.85 was again established.

RESULTS

Civic Profiles of Engagement

The majority of the 58 participants reported considerable levels of CE in varying degrees; 27.6% demonstrated high active CE, and another 17.2% participated in civic leadership. In addition, 10.3% engaged in the civic-minded occupation profile whereas 13.8% were sporadically involved. Fewer than one third demonstrated low CE (17.2%) or no CE (13.8%) (see below for profile descriptions).

Active civic engagement.   We classified active civic participants as those who were involved on a weekly basis in activities intended to help their community or group and/or who actively worked toward change but not in a leadership capacity. More than one fourth of participants demonstrated this kind of commitment. Those classified in the active CE profile were mostly female and first generation; the majority had some high school education or a community college degree (see Table 1).

Yaa,[3] a second-generation Dominican American woman, exemplifies young adults who have ongoing CE in their communities and in organizations on their college campuses. She serves on the executive boards of several college-based organizations; she said, "We just get together and talk about issues going on in the community, or current events, or things that are just relevant to

TABLE 1
Civic Profiles by Gender, Education Level, Generation, and Ethnicity for the 58 Participants

	No CE (n = 8)		Low CE (n = 10)		Sporadic CE (n = 8)		Work CE (n = 6)		Active CE (n = 16)		Civic Leader (n = 10)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender												
Male	2	25.0	6	60.0	3	37.5	2	33.3	6	37.5	5	50.0
Female	6	75.0	4	40.0	5	62.5	4	66.7	10	62.5	5	50.0
Education												
Junior high	2	25.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Some high school	—	—	3	30.0	2	25.0	1	16.7	4	25.0	—	—
High school graduate/Graduate Equivalency Diploma	5	62.5	3	30.0	1	12.5	—	—	3	18.8	3	30.0
Some college/technical	1	12.5	3	30.0	1	12.5	2	33.3	2	12.5	—	—
Community college	—	—	1	10.0	1	12.5	1	16.7	4	25.0	4	40.0
4-year college (BS, BA)	—	—	—	—	2	25.0	2	33.3	1	6.3	2	20.0
Some graduate school	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6.3	1	10.0
Unknown	—	—	—	—	1	12.5	—	—	1	6.3	—	—
Generation												
First	3	37.5	5	50.0	4	50.0	2	33.3	9	56.3	5	50.0
Second	5	62.5	5	50.0	4	50.0	4	66.7	7	43.8	5	50.0

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[3]All participant names are pseudonyms.

students of color." She is also involved in protests to stop tuition hikes to make education more affordable and in rallies through a college-based cultural organization to protest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) discrimination and racism against Latinos and Blacks by local businesses. In this organization she also works to build coalitions between the Black and Latino/a student communities. Within her community, she works with a college prep organization for high school students, speaking to them about her college experiences and coordinating visits to her campus.

For many participants with high levels of CE, their engagement is a central part of their identity. For example, James, an affable first-generation Dominican who is active in campus government as his college's student treasurer, said, "That's me. If you need help with something[,] you [can] always count on me." He said he is trying to "make a change in somebody's life" and is particularly trying to increase campus involvement of Latino students. He is especially motivated to rectify discriminatory acts and unfair treatment. He says that when he sees or hears of such things happening, "I just try to talk to them, be like, we are not living in those time[s] anymore. You have to be a better person than that." For him, helping others is an important part of his self-definition, "I always like to listen and see if I can help in some type of way[,] and if people need help with something. I always like to help."

Civic leaders.   We distinguished active civic participants from civic leaders. To be categorized as a leader, active CE was needed along with the added element of being a social change agent. These individuals typically took on leadership roles through community organizing or developing an organization to generate social change. Ten of the 58 participants met this criterion. Civic leaders were evenly distributed across gender, generations, and educational backgrounds (see Table 1).

Mariana, a first-generation Dominican Latina who came to the United States at age 13, is involved in an array of activities. She is motivated by:

> Things that I care for. They're . . . something personal to me in one way or another where I feel some sort of attachment. It is not an obligation but more like I want to do [these things] . . . [They make] me feel better. . . . It's sort of my calling.

She is currently apprenticing for an organization in "the community organizing unit." There she is involved in a variety of volunteer activities, including leading workshops on tenants' rights and starting an environmental justice campaign. She has participated in AIDS walks and was involved in the Occupy Wall Street movement. She is especially interested in social justice issues like immigrant rights, particularly those involving "the population that grew up here illegally or undocumented," as well as issues of equality, "specifically what's happening with the narrowing of the middle class." She describes her role as:

> [Trying to] find a way to engage these people in the community so they can become members of the organization and then fight for the cause. Or not so much fight but advance the cause and make sure there's a solution . . . and that the goal is achieved.

Emiliano exemplifies how civic leaders' involvement often stems from personal experiences that lead them to seek leadership roles to create social change. Identifying as a "Dreamer," he started the Dream Team club at his campus because he was undocumented and wanted to expand this movement nationally. He had applied to 11 colleges and was accepted by 10; however, he

could not afford to attend because he was ineligible for financial aid due to his undocumented status. Rather than wait for something to happen, he decided to become a change agent. He explains, "I am involved [in the club] because I am undocumented. So I feel like it is my duty to actually help pass the DREAM Act, either at a state or federal level." He is also very involved in a Latino fraternity that focuses on the cultural enrichment of its members and in his community, where he does outreach to high schools by conducting workshops about getting an education:

> What we do is go out to high schools, reach out to students, and basically tell them that although it might seem hard, there is a possibility [of] going to college and that going to college will help you have a better life. But at the same time there is hardship that they have to go through, meaning that you don't get financial aid, none of that. So what we do is inform them how they can gain access to that.

Mariana's and Emiliano's stories highlight the ways that personal experiences or a "calling" to create change in their communities inspired them to take on leadership roles.

Average/sporadic civic engagement. Those whom we categorized in the average/sporadic CE profile had stated their commitment to civic issues. Their engagement tended to be regular but intermittent. They were drawn into a variety of organizations and community activities as issues arose. Most of the eight participants with average/sporadic CE profiles were female and were equally distributed across the first and second generation (see Table 1).

Elena, for example, says, "Every Sunday, I do church activities." This shy, first-generation Guatemalan Latina helps whenever she can. She grew up watching her mother speak out on others' behalf, and she does the same. As she is bilingual, though her English is far from polished, she translates for coworkers and in public spaces. She says she feels compelled to speak out whenever she sees someone treated unfairly. When asked what being a good citizen means to her, she responds, "[F]or me, it's just that you have to contribute even if you are . . . working[,] . . . participate in things that [are] going on that may affect you."

Others expressed intentions to do more but noted time constraints. Julia, a first-generation Mexican-origin woman, currently is involved with the Mexican Consulate, where she engages in surveying and interviewing community members who use the council for their health care access. She has limited her CE to this one organization because her time is restricted. She explains: "A typical week for me is going to school, mostly every day, six days a week and working one day a week. So basically [I am] studying and keeping up with . . . the work and stuff with school." Still, she volunteers: "Right now we just finished the survey thing; we were helping the Mexican Consulate to do interviews on health." She used to be involved with her church and would volunteer for mass practices, and for a while she worked as a hospital volunteer while considering a nursing career. Despite their time limitations and informal CE, sporadic/average participants like Elena and Julia want to contribute to community and society.

Civic-minded occupations. Notably, during the course of the interviews, we noticed that six participants explicitly stated that they had selected a particular occupation in order to help others or give back to their communities. These participants had average CE as defined by their volunteer efforts, but they were engaged in work that involved social service. The participants who engaged in civic occupations typically were second-generation females who had either some college or a four-year college degree (see Table 1).

Zoe, a first-generation Mexican-origin woman, came to the United States at age 13. While pursuing her studies, she volunteers at a community organization helping immigrants learn to use computers. She has marched in anti-Iraq War rallies and has been particularly active in Dreamer work collecting signatures for petitions, persuading skeptics about immigration reform, fundraising, and marching in Washington, DC. She explicitly states, "I want to pursue my career to help those who don't have." Zoe is pursuing urban studies and plans to be an architect. When asked what she does to be a good citizen, she responds:

> I want to be helpful. What I try to do is go to school to educate myself [more] and [in] the end I am going to help others. . . . I actually got into architecture because I want to help people [build a] place to live because I think we all deserve it. I might see people sleeping on the train or especially when it is really cold, sleeping on the streets, . . . so I want to pursue my career to help those who don't have a place to live . . . to help my community and the population in the country.

Others are not as actively involved in civic volunteer work but note their selection of civic occupations to serve their communities. Sandy, a second-generation Mexican American, was affected by her parents' and siblings' undocumented status. She cares passionately about immigration reform (saying that her family members have "lived in constant fear") and education. She particularly rails against low expectations, recalling of her own experience:

> They were having me do things completely below my level, so by saying I was a Spanish speaker[,] they made me feel I was stupid. So the system as a whole [was] . . . holding me to low expectations . . . and not trying to move me up and writing me off as a lost cause[.] [Doing] that wasn't fair to me.

This experience inspired her to become a teacher. She notes, "I can only change what is in my classroom." She, like others in this group, say that this work is so time- and energy-consuming that it leaves little time for outside volunteer CE. Although she occasionally gets involved in the local Teachers Corps and the Occupy the DOE (Department of Education) movement, she explains, "Outside of work, [there is] not much else. . . . Most of my activities are work based recently."

Low civic engagement.   We placed participants in the low CE category if they only occasionally participated in civic activities. These individuals did get involved in their communities or in political causes but did so infrequently or fairly unsystematically. Civic engagement was not a regular part of their lives, and no particular issue tended to inspire their engagement (e.g., they only became involved if required to by parents or by school authorities for a graduation requirement). Social relationships were an underlying cause driving their engagement when it occurred. The majority of those classified in the low CE group were male; otherwise, this group was distributed equally across educational and generation levels (see Table 1.)

The case of Frank, a second-generation Mexican, illustrates how one can drift into civic engagement through social relations. He explains:

> I've actually always wanted to get involved in some sort of capacity[;] I want to be involved in volunteering and doing work with the community. I just never knew how. . . . A friend of mine from high school [told] me about different things that [he was] part of, and [since] I've always wanted to be a part of this[,] . . . I figured, "You know what[;] this would be cool." . . . recently we volunteered at Dia de Los Muertos [an ethnic event].

A second-generation Dominican, Yamira, said she was not involved in any structured civic activities. She noted, however, multiple occasions when she engaged in what we would term "random acts of kindness" such as translating in the street or helping someone unfamiliar with the transit system use it. After a recent hurricane, Yamira, at her mother's urging, donated some of her clothes because, she explains, "Though I am not rich, I still have a fair amount of clothes." She says that her own family has had its fair share of economic struggles and that these have made it hard for her to get more civically involved than she has. She also describes a work experience as an office assistant at a local community center serving people "fresh off the boat." She explains that she had once been a "bad kid" but that mentoring by that program's former director had given her a "second chance" and "basically shaped me into the individual I am now." During summer breaks from college she volunteers teaching English as a Second Language at the center where she previously worked.

No civic engagement. Participants categorized as having no CE had responded that they never became involved in activities that we defined as forms of CE. A few simply had limited civic interest or motivation. Most individuals in the "no civic engagement" profile were second-generation females. This group also had the lowest educational attainment (see Table 1).

Blanca, a second-generation Salvadoran American, revealed that she was not engaged in any civic activities. She has occasional political conversations with her friends, most recently about whether marijuana should be legalized. Her social concerns focus on the economic crisis and bringing U.S. troops home. She noted her fascination with animals and plans to study zoology in college but did not express an interest in animal rights. In response to the question "What do you do to be a good citizen?" she admitted, "I don't do much."

Most participants who were not civically engaged explained that they were consumed by family and work obligations that limited their time for involvement in civic activities. Sendy, a second-generation Guatemalan woman, juggled multiple roles with minimal resources. She said:

> I have two jobs. I work full-time [in] sales and catering admin, and I also work part-time on call. They send me [to] different places—from weddings to doctors to anything in particular. . . . It probably takes me an hour to get from work to go back and forth, an hour to go and then an hour to come back home. . . . I still live with my parents, my mother and my father. They are currently disabled, so I am basically the head of the household. I support them and provide for them.

Motivations for Civic Engagement

Three prominent themes emerged that reveal what drives Latino immigrant-origin young adults to participate in civic activities: social responsibility, awareness of unfair treatment, and creating social change. Overwhelmingly, 87.5% ($n = 42$) reported social responsibility as a motivator. The second motivator, noted by 43.8% ($n = 21$), was awareness of unfair treatment. The third, creating social change, was reported by 12.5% ($n = 6$) (see Table 2).

Social responsibility. Giving back to the community, acting as role models, educating others, choosing civic-minded professions, and providing cultural awareness were subthemes that we initially coded separately. They were then collapsed into the larger conceptual category of social responsibility since they exemplify CE as "a sense of duty or obligation to contribute to the greater good" (Wray-Lake & Syversten, 2011, p. 12). For immigrant-origin emerging

TABLE 2
Civic Motivators by Gender, Education Level, and Generation for the 48 Participants Who Reported Motivators[a]

	Social Responsibility (n = 42)		(In)justice Awareness (Social Justice) (n = 21)		Social Change (n = 6)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Male	20	47.6	8	38.1	2	33.3
Female	22	52.4	13	61.9	4	66.7
Education						
Some high school	9	21.4	6	28.5	1	16.7
High school graduate/Graduate Equivalency Diploma	8	19.0	2	9.5	1	16.7
Some college/technical	5	11.9	5	23.8	1	16.7
Community college	9	21.4	4	19.1	1	16.7
4-year college (BS, BA)	7	16.7	4	19.1	2	33.3
Some graduate school	2	4.2	—	—	—	—
Unknown	2	4.2	—	—	—	—
Generation						
First	20	47.6	8	38.1	4	66.7
Second	22	52.4	13	61.9	2	33.3

[a]The *n* total adds up to more than 48 because 26 participants reported two or three motivators for their civic engagement. Other motivators, which were not as prominent and were not included in the table, were individual benefit, dreamer identity, and other.

adults, relationships with others and a moral sense of justice (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011) seemed prominent as the foundation of their social motivations to participate. Meredith, a second-generation Dominican, describes her driving force to be involved as one that intersects with her joy in helping, giving to the community, but also as her contribution to "something bigger." She shares:

> I like helping—I like being a part of something bigger than who I am, so I like giving to society . . . and to find myself . . . I want to give something to this world. So . . . I want to help out. . . . Community does that for me.

Yesenia, an eighth-grade math teacher, is a second-generation Dominican who exemplifies a civic-minded professional who mentors students and tells them that college can be an attainable goal. As the only Dominican teacher in a school with many Dominican students, she recognizes her significance as a role model:

> I guess I try to be a mentor, and I've always done that, ever since I was in high school. . . . [W]hen I was in college, I mentored girls. . . . And now, even though I'm teaching these kids, I'm trying to mentor them at the same time[,] . . . helping them to see that college is much more a reality than what they think right now. . . . None of their teachers look like them, and they have told me, . . . "You are the only Dominican teacher in this entire school." [This] is sad because it is in a heavily Dominican populated area. All the teachers look white, and that is fine if you are an individual and want to teach and that is great that you are still helping out these students. But it is also important for them to see role models that look like them because if [they don't,] they feel like they can't achieve.

Similarly, Rafael, a first-generation Mexican-origin man, is actively involved in community causes, serving as a role model to other young Latinos. He describes himself as a DREAMer, though he is not actively involved in DREAM work. Instead, he is passionate about helping young people and has taken a leadership role in the community, speaking with families within it. He says:

> I have reached out to people, women, parents [who] basically are ignorant [about] all this stuff[,] and I tell them, "You know, there's things out there for us, for your children. Just help them with their high school, their high school applications." . . . So I think that is what we need. I think that is why I do this[;] that's why I tell my little brothers, "We've got to help out. We've got to help other people because if we don't, . . . nobody is going to help them. If we don't help each other[,] we are never going to come up."

Unfair treatment.   Many participants said the impetus for their civic engagement came from either directly experiencing unfair treatment or witnessing others experience injustices related to race, undocumented status, language, or being an immigrant. Although Frank, a second-generation Mexican-origin youth, denies experiencing unfair treatment himself, he has witnessed his family's experience of it. He explains:

> I personally wasn't treated unfairly. . . . [I]t was my sister . . . . She wasn't allowed to go to school, all because she didn't have the little document. . . . [T]hey see my dad[;] . . . he's darker skinned and he looks like someone [who] doesn't speak good English. It upsets me. What does that have to do with anything? He's still a human being. . . . He pays his taxes, he's a resident[,] and what makes him different? . . . It's inspired me. I want to be an immigration lawyer and hope one day to be in government. I'd like to be a governor or a senator. That's my dream[,] . . . to one day see that these people get the justice that they deserve.

Similarly, Zoe's motivation for CE revolves around her awareness of injustice and search for the "American Dream":

> I always believe in justice[;] . . . I guess you can call it that—[t]hat we should all have the same rights. Even though[,] yes, it's true some people were not born here, but . . . I think they deserve an opportunity to be part of this. . . . . . . I think one of the things [is] that I like people to be treated the same way[,] not just because you are white or black or just because you speak Spanish or speak another language, being discriminated for that.

Creating social change.   A number of participants mentioned a desire to create social change as a motivation for CE. For Latino first- and second-generation immigrants, the cause most often mentioned involved concerns about undocumented status and the DREAMer movement. Notably, for several undocumented Latino emerging adults whose educational opportunities had been stymied and who were unable to work, CE was the only avenue in which they could channel constructive energies to help themselves and their community (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanginoti, 2013).

Although some were propelled by personal experiences, others were inspired after observing the injustices experienced by those around them. Frida, a second-generation Mexican-origin woman, is an example. Realizing that her undocumented peers did not have options after high school that she did, she was called to action:

> In high school I started a petition with . . . 150 signatures. Where I went to high school [there were] a lot of immigrants, but it was not just Hispanics[;] it was South Asians[;] they were from all different parts of the world.

Anita, a second-generation Dominican-origin woman, terms her civic involvement a "moral responsibility":

> I guess it wasn't really a decision[;] it was more— . . . like a calling. It just felt like such a huge moral responsibility and . . . social responsibility, as a human being. I just couldn't stand and watch and not be in solidarity with people.

DISCUSSION

Although there has been a notable decline in civic engagement within the young adult population more broadly in recent years (Flanagan, Levine, & Setterson, 2009), the Latino immigrant-origin young adults in our sample demonstrated active levels of it. Two thirds of participants were considerably involved in their communities, demonstrating a strong commitment to helping others on a variety of issues and in a variety of forms—from being change agents for reform, volunteering regularly, mentoring, or tutoring to choosing professions involving social contributions. Thus, consistent with the findings of others (Jensen, 2008; Rumbaut, 2008; Stepick et al., 2008) who consider broad categories of civic participation, immigrant-origin Latino young adults demonstrated a strong commitment to contribute to society. Although the nature and form of their participation may differ from simple political involvement, we found this commitment to be strong.

These data suggests that Latinos are developing important habits of civic engagement in early adulthood. As such, they appear to be meeting the "developmental imperative" of establishing foundations for a lifelong civic identity as practitioners of CE (Hirshon & Setterson, 2013, p. 203). The majority of these young people demonstrated a moral and behavioral commitment to help others well beyond themselves (Lerner et al., 2003). Indeed, for many, CE is a central and consuming activity in their lives, setting them on a developmental trajectory to "idealized personhood" as they make contributions to their families, communities, and civil society (Lerner et al., 2003).

We found that Latino young adults do not view their CE "as an instrumental means to personal ends" (Hirshon & Setterson, 2013, p. 203). Rather than being motivated by personal gain, two thirds of participants indicated motivations linked to social responsibility (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011) more in keeping with a collectivist orientation (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013). One third had been specifically inspired by a "moral sense of justice" (Wray-Lake & Syvertsen, 2011) in response to injustices. Although several issues motivated their participation, many young adults were driven by issues related to immigration and the DREAM movement.

A few revealing demographic findings emerged. First, to date, much research on CE has focused on Mexican-origin Latinos. Our research, which included a broader sample of Latinos, found that across groups, social responsibility and concerns about injustice emerged as common denominators of motivation. With most profile patterns there were no gender differences;

however, young men were overrepresented in the "low CE" group, and young women were over-represented in the "no CE" group. As with other populations, the data shed light on how the impediments of everyday life block engagement for the least resourced. For Latinas juggling multiple part-time jobs, long commutes, child care, and other family responsibilities, civic engagement, though often desired, rarely happened. Interestingly, our data showed that men and women with varying levels of education were evenly represented, a result running counter to findings in other samples of an association between educational attainment and CE (Sander & Putnam, 2010). In four of the profiles, there were no differences by generational CE. There were more second-generation participants in the "no involvement" group and in civic-oriented professions. Those in the latter though dedicated to helping and working with others, typically reported having no additional time to volunteer and thus might not appear in a survey measure of volunteerism (Ishizawa, 2014).

Additionally, many young adults who revealed themselves as undocumented were civic leaders or active civic participants. In keeping with the findings of others, the undocumented youth in our study were driven to engage civically by unresolved issues related to their documentation status (Perez et al., 2010; Unzueta-Carrasco & Seif, 2014). In the pre-Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) era, during which our data were collected, for undocumented participants age 18 to 25 who could neither work nor afford college, civic participation was an avenue in which to mobilize their energies and contribute to society. Further, concerns with the injustices of immigration policy also emerged as a central motivation for civic engagement for Latino young adults with secure U.S. status.

Limitations and Future Studies

As with all studies, this one has a number of limitations. We made efforts to recruit from a range of sites including community organizations, churches, and neighborhood establishments, as well as from college campuses. Nonetheless, we did not recruit from penal institutions, for example, and as such, the least civically engaged young people are unlikely to have participated in the study. Thus, these findings most likely represent the more civic-minded participants. Our sample size is small, is not random, and is limited to northeastern cities. Future studies should include various regions of the country. They should also include Asians, Caribbeans, and other groups to capture the comparative CE profiles of diverse groups of immigrant-origin populations. Further, issues of undocumented status do not only affect the Latino population (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011); they warrant further exploration among diverse immigrant-origin groups.

Future studies should consider types of CE ranging from political activities to structured volunteer activities, choices of civic occupations, and informal social brokering (Orellana, 2001) that may not typically count but may nonetheless be essential to the formation of immigrant-origin young people's social identities and social responsibilities. Future studies should use mixed methods, including well-designed survey approaches and in-depth ethnographies and interviews, to accurately capture participants' experiences. The ways in which the fastest growing sectors of our youth population are incorporated into what is civically valued have critical implications for both their own well-being and the kind of society we will become (Stepick et al., 2008). Efforts should be made to understand how today's immigrant-origin youth develop their sense of social responsibility, what counts (and does not count), what drives that engagement, and how to recognize and constructively harness those energies in the course of their development.

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