

The Political Effects of Having Undocumented Parents¹

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Abstract:

The current US undocumented population is large and settled. As a result, millions of US-born citizens are growing up in mixed-status households. In this paper we use original survey data to study the politics of the US-born offspring of undocumented migrants. We test theories of parental political socialization, which imply that having undocumented parents may have chilling effects on political engagement. We also test theories of social activism, which predict that the offspring of the undocumented may be motivated to make use of their rights as US citizens by protesting on behalf of their parents. We find no evidence of lower political engagement among those with undocumented parents. Instead, we find that the offspring of the undocumented are more politically active on immigration issues, and more optimistic that popular protest can induce political change. We use an instrumental variables design to test whether these differences warrant a causal interpretation, and find tentative evidence that having undocumented parents does indeed have energizing political effects.

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In the United States in recent decades the mismatch between immigration laws and the factors that push and pull people across borders has created a perverse situation, which political scientists are only just starting to understand. The US is now home to around eleven million undocumented residents, many of whom have been settled in the country for years. Undocumented migration used to be heavily seasonal, but the securitized US-Mexico border means that return migration is now risky (Massey 2013). Many of those who have been able to cross the border have opted to remain in the US. Not only do today's undocumented migrants typically have jobs and close ties to the US economy, they also have social bonds that often include US-born or other US-citizen family members. Although a great deal of research has addressed the causes and consequences of anti-immigrant attitudes in this era of "illegal" migration (e.g. Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Wright, Levy and Citrin 2016), we know much less about the politics of the undocumented, or the political implications of this regime of mass illegality for the many American citizens with undocumented friends, neighbors or family members.

This gap in our knowledge is one strong reason to study the political effects of undocumented migration. In addition, the perverse politics of mass illegality provides new opportunities for theory testing and development. A generation of US citizens is growing up with undocumented parents, siblings or other family members. The political context is marked by fear over deportation, but also by outbursts of protest such as the immigrants' rights marches in the spring of 2006 or the self-exposure of activists who are coming out as "undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic" (Beltrán 2015; Nicholls 2013). These patterns present new versions of old questions, about the mechanisms by which interpersonal ties affect political identities and behavior, and about the conditions under which collective

action emerges. In this paper we cast new light on these issues by illuminating the political effects of having undocumented parents. To do so we draw on a unique survey of young US-born Latinos, some of whose parents are unauthorized migrants. In other words, we focus on a stark intergenerational contrast: all of our survey participants are US citizens, but some grew up with undocumented parents.

To frame the political effects of mass undocumented migration on the US-born second generation we draw together theories and findings from several literatures. One prediction, following from research on parental socialization and on immigrant political incorporation, is that having undocumented parents has chilling effects on political engagement. Alternatively, other research on social movements and on responses to political threats implies that those with undocumented parents might be pushed towards certain forms of activism. Our data provide scant evidence of chilling effects, but more support for the idea that family exposure to the risk of deportation serves to activate the US-born offspring of the undocumented. Our results call into question the assumption that (undocumented) immigrants are politically inert, and reaffirm the insight that individual political behavior is shaped by personal and, especially, by family ties.

Building on previous research

In order to assess the political effects of having undocumented parents, in this paper we build a framework that draws on several strands of prior research: on parental socialization, on immigrant political incorporation, on cohort effects in politics, and on social movements. A natural place to start is the literature on how parents “socialize” their children into political life (Jennings and Niemi 1981). Much of this research is based on social learning theory (Bandura 1969, 1971), which posits that people learn not only from their own experiences,

but also by modeling the behavior of others, especially their parents. In a recent study using data spanning several decades, Jennings, Stoker and Bowers (2009) reaffirm that parents transmit party identities to their children, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, also affect their offspring's rates of political engagement.

Scholars have also found, however, that political socialization can differ for racial and ethnic minorities, who may be exposed to conflicting signals. Writing in the Civil Rights era, Langton (1969) argued that black youth were less trusting than whites because they received positive messages about the US political system at school, but more skeptical messages at home (see also Abramson 1972, 1977; Garcia 1973). This research on alternative paths of parental socialization is potentially relevant for our research, since the undocumented population is over 80% Latino, as are almost all deportees (ICE 2013; Passel and Cohn 2014). Undocumented migration is a racialized phenomenon (Chavez 2013a; Zepeda-Millán 2014a). In our case, one possibility is that undocumented parents may (perhaps unconsciously) teach their offspring to avoid state agents and public activity. Scholars have found that undocumented residents tend to avoid the police (Zatz and Smith 2012), and even avoid educational and public health programs for which the undocumented or their US-born offspring are eligible (Yoshikawa 2012). This “socialized avoidance” effect is one way in which undocumented parents could distinctively shape the political behavior of their US-born offspring.

Another possible path for intergenerational effects is via lack of parental political experience. Research on political incorporation shows that immigrants typically take years to get used to the institutions, organizations and ideologies that structure politics in the new homeland (Fraga et al. 2012; Hajnal and Lee 2011; White et al. 2008). Following this logic, Terriquez and Kwon (2015: 425) argue that “barriers to immigrant parents’ political

engagement suppress the civic and political participation” of the US-born second generation. In this paper we test whether parental legal status acts as a barrier that interrupts the typical processes of parental socialization. Parents who are not eligible to vote or contribute to political parties or campaigns may be less able to model political engagement for their US-born offspring.

However, it is important to recognize that these predictions about parental socialization effects are contingent upon evidence on undocumented parents themselves. Yet little is known about this group; undocumented migrants are notoriously difficult to study. It is possible that they exhibit low levels of political engagement. But, since large numbers of undocumented migrants have been living in the country for many years, it is also possible that their political incorporation has been proceeding apace. Some scholars argue that processes of political incorporation start well before immigrants naturalize, even among the undocumented (Jones-Correa and McCann 2013). In this paper we gather information about both parents and offspring, to test the following hypotheses:

H1, Parental Socialization: Parents and their offspring show similar levels of political interest and engagement.

H2, Differential Socialization: Undocumented parents show lower rates of political engagement than other immigrant parents, and so the offspring of undocumented migrants also exhibit lower rates of political engagement.

H3, Socialized Avoidance: The offspring of undocumented migrants are more likely to avoid state actors, compared to the offspring of other migrants.

Another literature on political socialization places less emphasis on parents, and more on peers. Theories of cohort effects build on Mannheim's (1952) observation that generations are marked by the political context they experience in the "formative years" of adolescence and early adulthood (Bartels and Jackman 2014; Carlsson and Karlsson 1970). Cohort effects are most evident in turbulent periods such as the Great Depression, but can also reflect narrower events such as the Watergate scandal (Dinas 2013) or an election cycle (Sears and Valentino 1997). There is also evidence that contextual effects differ across ethnic and racial minorities (Abrajano and Lundgren 2014), especially when racial politics is at stake, as in the civil rights era (Schuman and Scott 1989).

We can apply this theory of contextual socialization to the cohort of Latinos that has grown up in the US in the recent period of mass undocumented immigration. This period dates back to the late 1980s, after the last major immigration reform was passed, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). IRCA allowed over three million undocumented migrants to regularize their status. But IRCA did not put an end to undocumented migration. Subsequently, not only undocumented migrants but also other Latinos were politicized by anti-immigrant activism, such as Proposition 187 in California (Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001). Proposals to criminalize the undocumented and their family members also prompted the marches of 2006, which brought millions of immigrants and their US-born relatives onto the streets (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2014a). Recently, young activists have pushed for reform using innovative tactics such as occupying congressional offices and getting arrested in graduation garb, or even self-deporting and then applying for asylum (Zimmerman 2012; Carrasco and Seif 2014; Patler and Gonzales 2015).

The number of true immigration activists may be small, compared to the cohort of Latinos that has grown up in this era. But this kind of political climate can have wider effects, thanks to media coverage (Merolla et al. 2013) or to social exposure. As Cohen-Marks, Nuño and Sanchez (2009: 713) wrote in the wake of the 2006 protests, the strongest effects of immigrant activism may yet be found among “the countless children who will grow up hearing tales of the day millions emerged from the shadows to declare their determination to pursue the American dream.”

Although many young Latinos have been influenced by this activist context, we expect that such effects are stronger for those who have more at stake because of their undocumented parents. This prediction builds on prior research on activism. Following Durkheim (1997 [1897]), social movements were long believed to result from anomie and the breakdown of social order. This view was critiqued by scholars who pointed out that activists are often well-connected rather than socially isolated, and that some level of disorder is almost always present; constant disorder cannot explain varying levels of activism (Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1981). But recent research provides a more specific account of how movements arise from the disruption of norms and routines. Snow et al. (1998: 9) argue that “actual or threatened intrusions into culturally defined zones of privacy,” such as the family, can inspire people to mass action. People are strongly motivated by threats or losses (Marcus 2000; Tversky and Kahneman 1991). Intense concerns over threats to “culturally inviolable zones” such as the family can help people overcome collective action problems by increasing the perceived costs of inaction (Snow et al. 1998: 17). Especially if concern over family members is known to be shared by many Latinos, this should increase confidence that collective action will emerge and may succeed. In line with these predictions, messages like “Stop Separating Families” are common at immigration protests (Pallares 2014; Pallares and

Flores-González 2010), and many Latinos report that have undocumented friends or family (Barreto 2013).

Based on these ideas, we test two further hypotheses. The first is that the combination of a context of activism plus exposure via family members makes second generation Latinos with undocumented parents more likely to become activists. The second is that even if this combination does not turn people into activists, it makes them more likely to believe that activism is an effective way to pursue policy change.

H4, Activism: The offspring of undocumented migrants are more likely to participate in immigrant rights activism than the offspring of other migrants.

H5, Protest Efficacy: The offspring of undocumented migrants are more likely to think that protests are an effective way to push for political change, compared to the offspring of other migrants.

To summarize, theories of parental socialization and immigrant incorporation may predict chilling political effects on the US-born children of the undocumented, although this prediction is contingent upon evidence on the politics of the parents. In contrast, theories of political cohorts and social movements imply that young Latinos who have grown up in the recent era of activism are open to mobilization on immigration issues, and we expect this pattern to be even stronger for those with undocumented parents.

Data and methods

This paper uses original survey data to study the civic and political behavior of the US-born children of regular and irregular migrants. Since the undocumented population is heavily Latino, we focus on Latinos. In order to avoid only polling people whose parents were able to regularize through IRCA, we recruited Latinos born in the US after 1982.² In early 2013 we used Current Population Survey (CPS) data to estimate that the population of interest includes 3.1 million US-born citizens with immigrant parents and at least one parent born in Latin America. This is about one percent of the US population. Such a small group cannot be reached efficiently through random sampling, which is one of the reasons so little is known about the group.

In an effort to overcome some of the data problems that have limited research on this topic, we combined two sources of evidence. First, we drew from the Latino panel run by GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks), which uses mail addresses and random digit dialing to recruit a national probability sample of self-identified Latinos that it taps for online surveys. Though sizeable, we knew that this panel contained only a few hundred people who met our sampling criteria. GfK therefore arranged to recruit extra participants online via English and Spanish-language websites.³ Combining the probability and the opt-in samples is more costly than an internet-only sample, but allows for comparisons across sample types and for more reliable weighting (DiSogra et al. 2011). One third of the subjects are from the GfK probability sample, and the rest are opt-in recruits, for a total of 1050 people. Table S2, in the Supplemental Information, shows that our unweighted sample is more educated and more female than the CPS data, but that the probability and opt-in

² IRCA had provisions for those who entered the U.S. before 1982 (1.8 million people regularized), and for those who worked at least 90 days on farms in 1986 (1.2 million).

³ Opt-in subjects were recruited by the firms Cada Cabeza and Offerwise. 34% of those asked to participate (after screening questions on migration history) took the survey.

samples are demographically similar. The survey was fielded online in July and August 2013. In this paper we present our results with design and post-stratification weights, based on the sampling procedures and CPS demographic data. Missing data were replaced by multiple imputation (van Buuren 2014); we find stable results over 5 sets of imputations.

We asked the second generation Latinos in our survey to answer questions about the immigration history, civic and political behavior of their parents. It would be preferable to ask the parents themselves, to avoid the risk of children projecting from their own experience onto that of their parents, or simply misremembering their parents' habits. But surveying both undocumented residents and their children presents great logistical difficulties. In an effort to limit the risk of respondents projecting their own values, we mostly asked about specific actions rather than parental attitudes. We found that 45 percent of respondents have at least one parent who lived for a period as an undocumented migrant in the U.S., one third of who were still undocumented at the time of the survey (see the Supporting Information, SI, for details on how we established the legal status of the parents).⁴ As in prior research, we find signs of socio-economic disadvantage among the US-born offspring of the undocumented, compared to the offspring of other immigrants (Bean et al. 2011). Those with at least one parent who is still undocumented are more likely to have a high school education or lower ($p=0.04$), and are less likely to hold a college degree ($p<0.01$; see SI Figure S1).

We use a set of standard questions to study civic behavior and to test hypotheses H1 and H2. Specifically, we asked about participation in the following activities: attending PTA or school group meetings, attending community meetings, giving blood, donating money to

⁴ Some undocumented migrants are able to regularize their status (Jasso et al. 2008). Especially if they are able to afford lawyers, those who entered with a visa, but overstayed, may regularize by marrying a US citizen or by being sponsored as an immigrant by US-citizen family members. This is harder for those who crossed the border without any papers, since specific barriers on re-entry apply to such people.

charity, working for a charity or church, working with others in the community to solve a problem, organizing an event in the community, participating in an ethnic organization, or in an organization linked to the country of origin, participating in a sports league, or in a labor union, or a professional association, or in an organization that supports candidates in elections. In answering these questions about their parents, we told the second generation Latinos in our survey to think back to the time when they were 16 years old, so as to focus on the “formative years” and to avoid casting too far back into the past. We also asked survey participants to answer the same questions about themselves, at the time of the survey. In addition, we used three measures of offspring political engagement. The first reports the strength of political interest, the second the frequency of political discussions in a range of settings, and the third reports consumption of political information from various media (see SI for details of questions and coding).

To test whether the offspring of undocumented migrants avoid state actors (H3), we use questions about trusting, or avoiding contact with, the government and the police. To test for mobilizing effects of having undocumented parents in an era of Latino activism (H4), we use measures of participation in rallies or marches about immigration. Finally, to test for broader effects on the perceived efficacy of protest (H5), we asked survey participants, “What kind of activities do you think are effective in pushing for political change?” The list of options is: voting, participating in legal protests, participating in illegal protests or damaging property, taking issues to the courts, and lobbying politicians such as the President, Congress members, or state representatives.

When comparing survey participants by parental legal status, we use statistical models to control for socio-economic factors that may be related both to legal status and to political behavior. This is important because undocumented migrants tend to be poorer, less

educated, and concentrated in certain regions, and there is a risk of conflating such broader differences with the effects of parental legal status. Specifically, we control for the education of the survey participant and parents, the survey participant's age and gender, whether the parent(s) come from Mexico, whether the survey participant is fluent in Spanish, whether the parents held white-collar jobs when the survey respondent was young, and region of residence in the US (see SI for more on these items).

However, when working with observational data, including control variables only yields valid estimates of cause and effect if some stringent assumptions are met (Angrist and Pischke 2009). Therefore, to further test the credibility of a causal connection between parental legal status and the civic and political behavior of the US-born offspring, we use another strategy. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allowed three million undocumented migrants to regularize their status. Some of our survey respondents have parents who arrived before or during 1986, and who were thus more likely to be able to escape from illegality. Others have parents who arrived thereafter. The timing of the reform does not impose a sharp cut-off, since not everyone who arrived by 1986 was able to regularize. But, as is clear from Figure 1, many more of the parents who arrived after 1986 were still undocumented at the time of our survey.⁵

[Figure 1 about here]

The change in the legal context due to IRCA provides an exogenous source of variation in parental status. Although survey participants whose parents arrived after IRCA are on average slightly younger, there is no reason to expect a sharp break that coincided with IRCA in the other variables that might confound the effect of parental legal status.⁶ We

⁵ Results in Figure 1 are grouped in five-year periods, due to the limited sample size.

⁶ It is possible that people tried to select into eligibility for regularization through IRCA, but we see this as a minor concern because people have imperfect control over the timing of migration and because there was

thus include time trends to capture smoothly changing characteristics, and use indicators of whether the parents arrived after 1986 as instrumental variables (IVs) to estimate the effect of having undocumented parent(s). More specifically, following the logic of estimation by two-stage least squares, in our case the first-stage regression is a model of having one or more undocumented parents, as predicted by demographic controls, linear controls for parental year of arrival, and the indicators for parents arriving in the US after 1986. The second-stage regression is a model of offspring politics using the predicted values for parental legal status from the first-stage model, plus the same set of controls.

Results

We begin with results on parental civic behavior. Our data support the prediction that parents' civic behavior is strongly related to that of their offspring (H1). Comparing those with parents at the minimum and maximum levels of civic behavior, the mean level of civic activity among the children increases by half of the range of the scale. The relationship is highly statistically significant, with and without controls ($p < 0.01$). There is no significant interaction between parental legal status and the predictor based on parental civic engagement ($p = 0.2$); parents appear to influence their offspring to similar degrees, regardless of legal status.

We also find similar levels of civic engagement for both documented and undocumented parents. The points in Figure 2 show the share of parents reported to have engaged in each activity, by parental legal status. The horizontal lines through each point show 95% confidence intervals, based on robust standard errors. Overall Figure 2 reveals

uncertainty over the deadlines for eligibility until very late in the legislative process (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

few differences by legal status.⁷ Furthermore, summing civic activity across all domains, we find no significant difference by parental legal status in either a bivariate model ($p=0.49$), or a model with demographic controls ($p=0.64$).⁸ We also asked survey participants about the frequency of political discussions at home when they were aged 16, and find no significant difference by parental legal status ($p=0.94$).

[Figure 2 about here]

Since there is no sign that undocumented status had a chilling effect on the civic and political behavior of undocumented parents, theories of socialization by parental transmission imply that we should find no adverse effects on the behavior of the US-born offspring. And indeed, this is the pattern that we see in Figure 3. If anything, the children of the undocumented appear *more* active in the civic and political domain, and statistical models of the total amount of activity across domains provide some support for this pattern ($p=0.08$ in bivariate comparison, and $p=0.1$ with controls).

[Figure 3 about here]

In line with these findings, it does not appear that the US-born children of undocumented migrants are less interested in, or engaged with, politics. Table 1 shows results from models with controls for background characteristics. The first three outcomes in Table 1 are interest in politics, consumption of political information from various media, and frequency of political discussions. The coefficient on the measure of political legal status is consistently close to zero and non-significant. Overall, our data lead us to support H1 (parental socialization) but reject H2 (differential socialization).

⁷ Some of the percentages in Figures 2 and 3 are unrealistically high, a common problem with self-reported measures. Note, however, that this would only be a problem for our core questions if there were *differential* rates of over-reporting among respondents with documented and undocumented parents. We see no reason to expect this.

⁸ For these calculations our outcome is the log of the number of forms of civic activity per person (rescaled to range from zero to one) since the raw distribution is quite skewed.

The last two outcomes in Table 1 are indices of distrust of the federal government and police, and a desire to avoid the government and police. Again, we see no significant correlation with parental legal status. We thus reject H3 (socialized avoidance).

[Table 1 about here]

We now turn to the possibility that young US-born Latinos with undocumented parents are *more* involved in or optimistic about political activism on immigration issues. We find that the offspring of undocumented migrants are more likely to have attended an immigration march or rally in the past year ($p=0.03$), and are more likely to have family members who joined the large 2006 immigrants' rights marches ($p=0.05$), although they are not significantly more likely to have joined the marches themselves ($p=0.17$; see SI Table S3 for detailed results). These results provide initial support for H4 (activism).

The results for optimism about the effects of a range of activities, in pushing for political change, are displayed in Figure 4. We find that the children of undocumented migrants are more likely to see both legal protests, and “illegal protests or damaging property,” as politically effective (both at $p=0.01$ or less, with controls). There are no significant differences by parental legal status for the other items. This evidence supports H5 (protest efficacy).

[Figure 4 about here]

In addition to these aggregate results, we also investigated the possibility that people might show different responses in states that are more or less friendly toward immigrants. Perhaps Latinos with undocumented parents, stigmatized by the association with illegality, are more likely to “fight” and become politically active in permissive climates (e.g. California), but more likely to “take flight” and withdraw from civic and political life in

hostile contexts (e.g. Arizona).⁹ To test for differential effects, we interacted the indicator for having undocumented parent(s) with an index of “state-created immigration climate” that measures state and local policies such as English-only laws, and policies on whether law enforcement should cooperate (or refuse to cooperate) with federal officials to deport people who get arrested (Pham and Van 2013). States such as Illinois and California receive positive scores, while states such as Alabama and Arizona get negative scores. We tested for effects on parental and offspring civic behavior, offspring political engagement and trust, activism on immigration issues, and optimism about activism (12 outcomes), and found only one significant interaction (for offspring civic behavior). As such, there is little support for the idea that our aggregate results could mask different state-level effects.

Finally, we present results from the IV analysis. We include controls for parental length of residence in the US, and indicators for whether each parent arrived after 1986. These two indicators, one for each parent, are used to instrument the effect of having undocumented parent(s). Table 2 presents results for two outcome measures. The first is an index (scaled from zero to one) that sums participation in the 2006 marches, having a close family member who joined the marches, and having rallied on immigration issues within the past year. The second is a simple index (scaled from zero to one) that sums the responses “legal protest” and “illegal protest or damaging property” to the question about effective measures for political advocacy. We estimate a marginally significant positive effect of having undocumented parents on participation in immigration rallies ($p=0.09$) and optimism about the effects of such activism ($p=0.1$).

[Table 2 about here]

⁹ We are grateful to a conference audience member for suggesting this comparison.

Our data suggest that significant numbers of people *were* deterred from regularizing by having missed the IRCA deadline; we reject the null in a test for weak instruments ($p < 0.01$). One can think of the estimates in Table 2 as the Local Average Treatment Effects for people whose parents were induced to remain undocumented by the fact that they missed the IRCA deadline. Put another way, this provides a measure of the effects of having the chance to regularize. The estimated effect is “local” in the sense that it applies to people whose parents complied, but not everyone complies with a regularization program. Some migrants already hold legal status, and others fail to legalize even when this is possible. But from the policy perspective this is the relevant estimate, since eligibility is what lawmakers control.

Discussion

Our results on the politics of young US-born Latinos are consistent with prior research on parental socialization: levels of political engagement among parents are strongly correlated with levels of engagement among their offspring. But we have found little evidence that undocumented status leads to differential patterns of socialization, as some scholars suspect (e.g. Terriquez and Kwon 2015). Our data suggest that undocumented parents are able to engage in a range of civic and political activities that correlate with and can precede more direct engagement with the formal political system. As such, undocumented parents can serve as role models for their children. Although this may come as something of a surprise, it does fit with emerging evidence that processes of immigrant political incorporation can proceed even among those who face legal barriers to full participation (Jones-Correa and McCann 2013). Our paper may show a relatively strong case of this, since undocumented parents of US-born citizens are probably among the most socially integrated members of the

undocumented population. But again, this reflects the new reality. Unlike previous eras, much of the current undocumented population is highly integrated in US society (Donato and Armenta 2011).

We have also found support for predictions based on theories of political cohorts and social activism. Having undocumented parents, at a time of prolonged and contentious debates over immigration policies, appears to push young US-born Latinos toward protesting, and enhances their belief in the efficacy of protests. Other political scientists find that “threats” from anti-immigrant policies or elite rhetoric can mobilize Latinos via a heightened sense of group identity (Bowler, Nicholson and Segura 2006; Pérez 2015). White (2015) argues that policies which increase the risk of deportation boost Latino turnout by prompting Latino organizations to get out the vote. The mechanism that we have studied is more intimate, focusing on threats to family members, which motive people to protest and make them more confident about collective action.

More broadly, our results fall within the literature on social dynamics in political behavior (Campbell 2013). This is an area to watch in a period of high immigration and a diversifying electorate. Migration scholars stress that family ties help to explain social and economic outcomes, in part thanks to the powerful story of the “immigrant bargain” in which first generation sacrifice must be redeemed and validated by upward mobility in later generations (Smith 2006: 194). Such expectations may help explain why US-citizen Latinos would take political responsibility for their undocumented parents and other relatives. These ties may provide a bottom-up source of social and political identity for the young Latinos who are now coming of age as potential voters (half of Latino eligible voters are 35 or younger; see Krogstad et al. 2016). In other words, undocumented immigration may help to sustain Latino solidarity and Latino politics.

In addition to the substantive implications, we believe that our study also makes a methodological contribution. In addition to multivariate comparisons, we used a research design with instrumental variables to check whether observed differences by parental legal status are likely to have been *caused* by the fact of having undocumented parents. In our case, the IV results point in the same direction as the observational data, but yield somewhat higher *p*-values and imply a need for caution and, ideally, more research. We believe that future research on immigrant politics should make greater use of IV and similar designs. Immigration and citizenship law is riddled with arbitrary cutoffs such as the IRCA deadlines that we have discussed or, more recently, the decision to provide temporary protection against deportation to immigrants who arrived as children and were aged 30 or under when the executive order was issued.¹⁰ Such cutoffs are plausibly unrelated to other differences that might confound estimates of the effects of legal status, providing neat opportunities for future research.

Conclusions

Although our findings run parallel with some earlier scholarship, our core results—on the lack of chilling effects and on the activating impact of having undocumented parents—seem at odds with much of the previous research on undocumented migrants. Many sociologists are concerned that there is not just a single, upwards trajectory of immigrant integration, but a risk of “segmented assimilation” whereby certain sets of migrants prosper while others are left behind (Portes and Zhou 1993). There is growing evidence that parents’ undocumented experience hurts their US-born offspring in various ways (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011; Dreby 2012). In a recent overview, Suro, Suárez-Orozco and Canizales (2015) list adverse effects

¹⁰ This is the program known as DACA, or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

on the US-citizen children of undocumented parents under the headings of education and development, income, health and nutrition, and psychology. Massey (2013: 13) goes so far as to argue: “lack of legal status constitutes an insurmountable barrier to social and economic mobility, not only for the undocumented immigrants themselves, but also for their citizen family members.”

We think such talk of “insurmountable” barriers is too strong. The picture is mixed. For instance, Bean et al. (2011) provide credible evidence that the offspring of undocumented migrants suffer an educational penalty, but also find clear signs of upward mobility: second generation migrants typically achieve several years more schooling than their parents (see also Alba, Kasinitz and Waters 2011). There is scope for first and second generation migrants to take matters into their own hands, perhaps most evidently in the political domain where we have seen high levels of activism from resource-poor and vulnerable communities, a puzzling result according to standard theories of activism (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2014b). This paper has revealed some of the civic and political activities, and the mechanisms of solidarity, that may help to explain this puzzle of multigenerational immigrant activism under adverse conditions.

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Tables

Table 1. Parental legal status as a predictor of political trust or alienation.

	Model 1: political interest	Model 2: political media	Model 3: political discussions	Model 4: distrust authorities	Model 5: avoid authorities
Intercept	0.54** (0.08)	0.42** (0.06)	0.46** (0.05)	0.57** (0.05)	0.51** (0.05)
Parent(s) undocumented	-0.04 (0.05)	0 (0.03)	0 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)
Age (starting at 18)	-0.003 (0.005)	0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.003)	-0.01 ⁺ (0.003)	0.001 (0.004)
Education	0.15** (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0 (0.04)
Female	0.01 (0.03)	0 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.05* (0.03)
Fluent in Spanish	0 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.03)
Parent(s) from Mexico	0.05 (0.05)	0.12** (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.06 ⁺ (0.03)
Mother's education	-0.09 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.05)
Father's education	0.08 (0.06)	0.02 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.06 (0.05)
Parent(s) white collar	0.05 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Region control	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ** means $p < 0.01$, * means $p < 0.05$, ⁺ means $p < 0.1$.

Table 2. Instrumenting the effect of parental legal status by arrival after 1986.

	IV Model 1: protest participation index	IV Model 2: protest efficacy index
Intercept	0.07 (0.05)	0.41** (0.06)
Parent(s) undocumented, instrumented	0.24 ⁺ (0.14)	0.39 ⁺ (0.24)
Years since mother's arrival in US	0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.002)
Years since father's arrival in US	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)
Age (starting at 18)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.01* (0.005)
Education	0.1** (0.03)	0.1* (0.05)
Female	0.01 (0.02)	-0.06* (0.03)
Fluent in Spanish	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.04)
Parent(s) from Mexico	0.05* (0.02)	-0.004 (0.04)
Mother's education	0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)
Father's education	0.04 ⁺ (0.02)	0.01 (0.04)
Parent(s) white collar	0.001 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.04)
Region controls	yes	yes
N	1050	1050

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ** means $p < 0.01$, * means $p < 0.05$, ⁺ means $p < 0.1$.

Figures

Figure 1. Legal status of parents, by their year of arrival in the United States

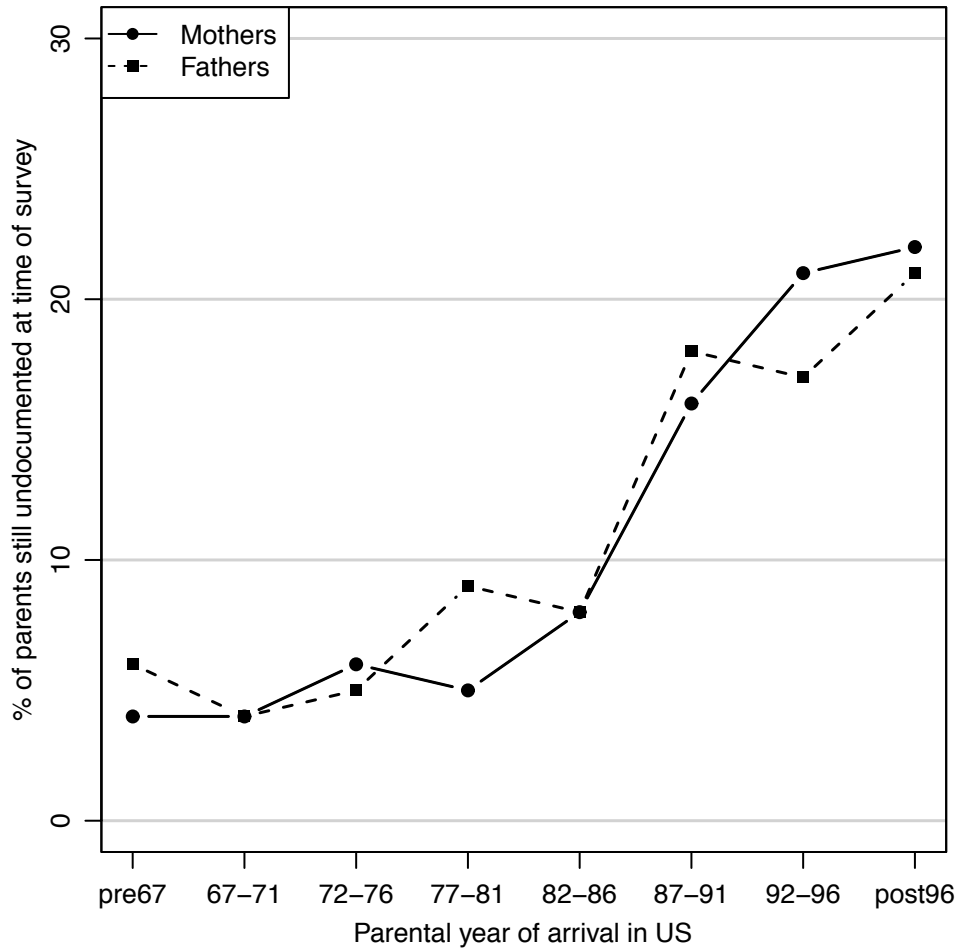


Figure 2. Parental civic behavior, by legal status

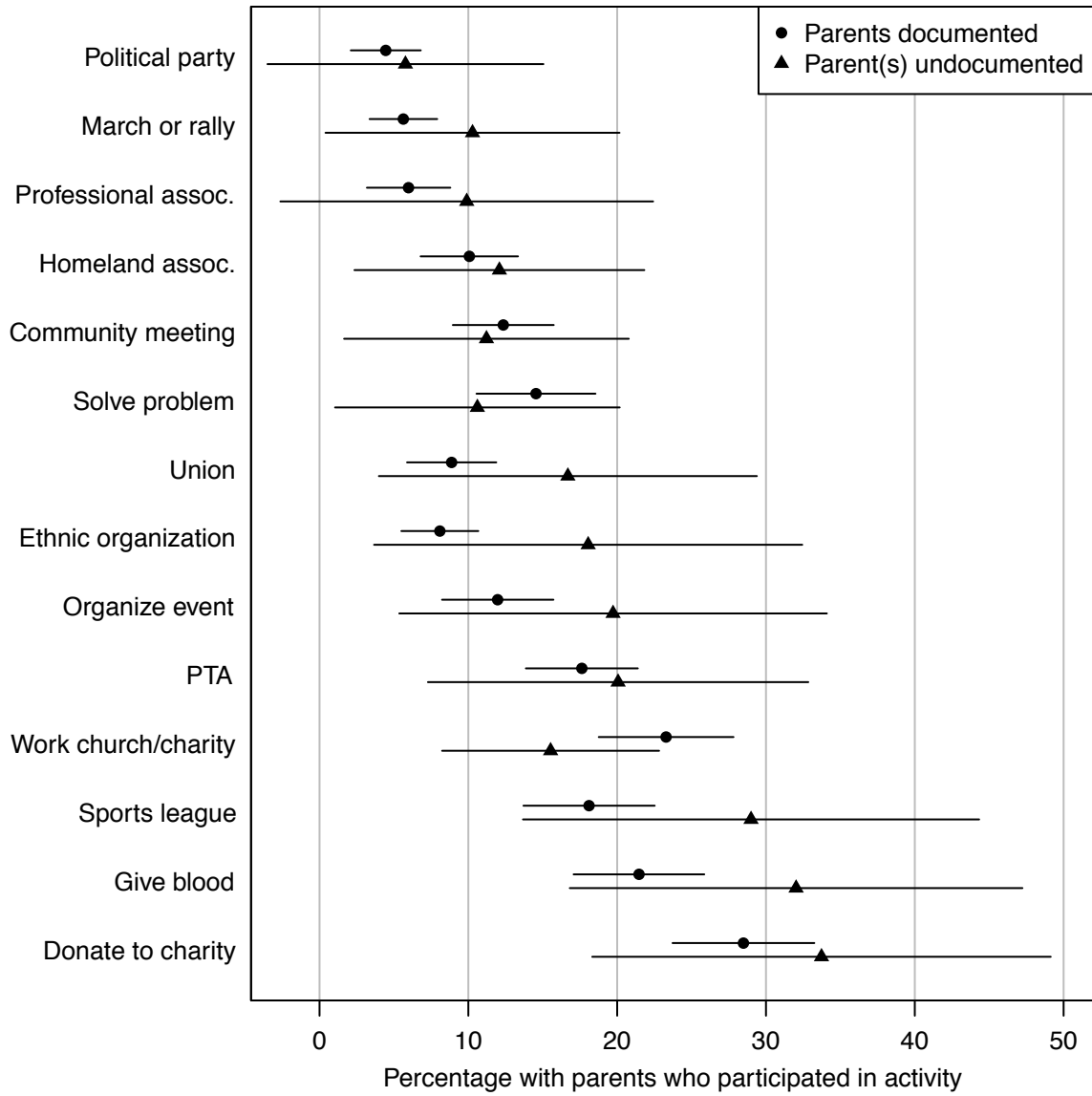


Figure 3. Offspring civic behavior, by parental legal status

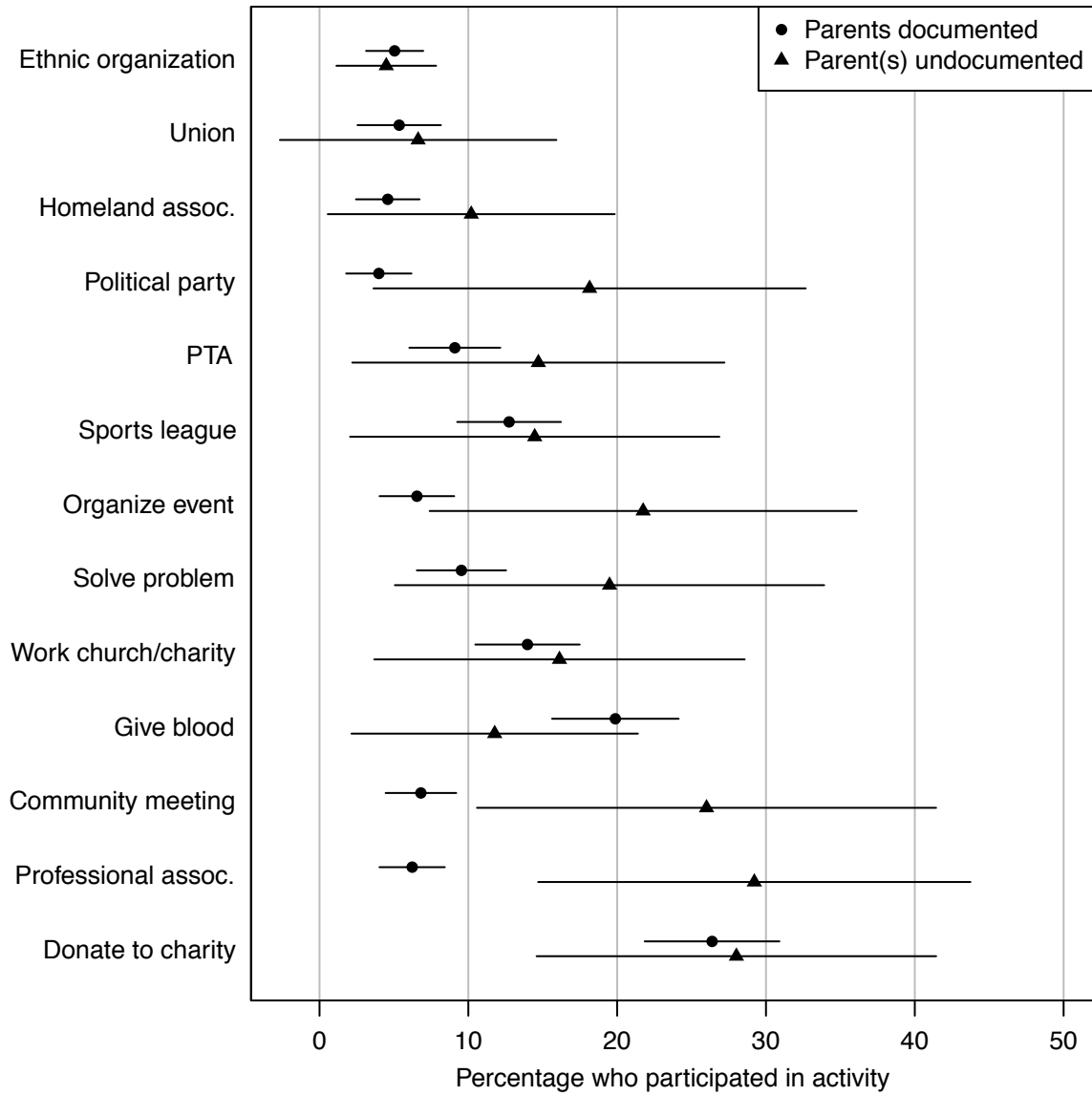
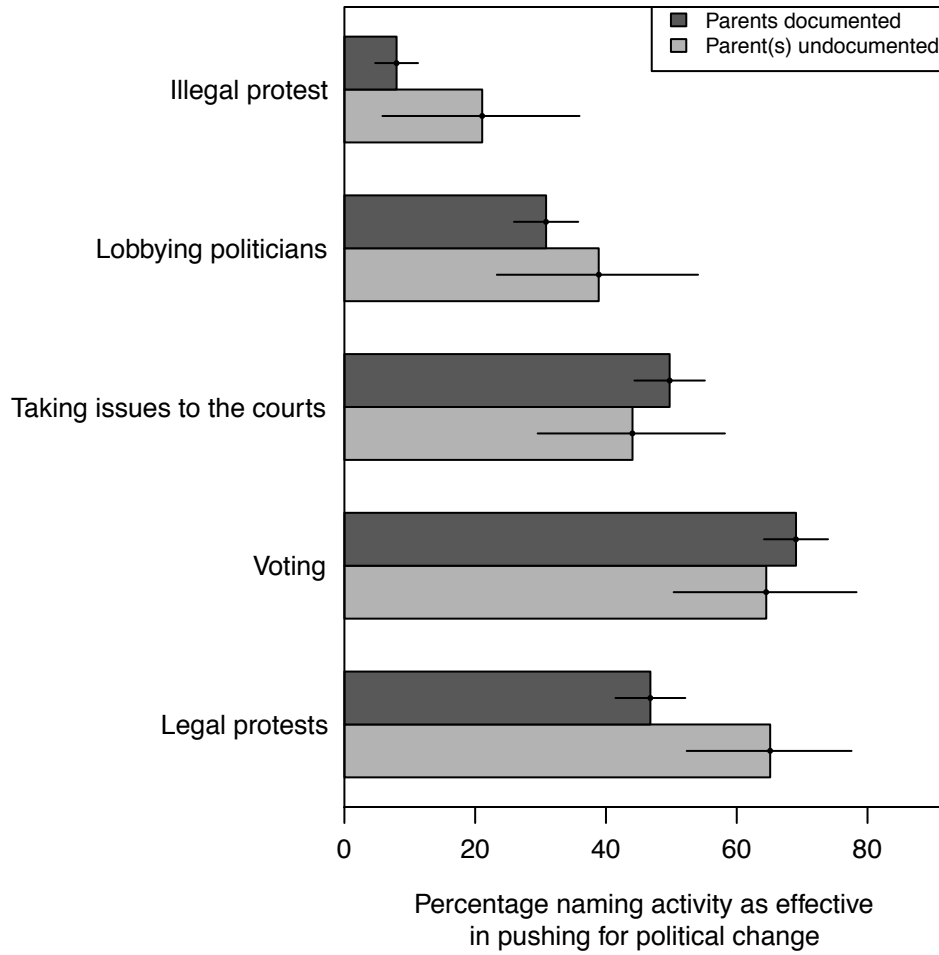


Figure 4. Perceived efficacy of activism, by parental legal status



Supporting Information

SI Part 1: Identifying Undocumented Migrants

We established the legal status of parents based on a series of questions, asked separately about mothers and fathers. The first was: “When your mother/father moved to the U.S., did she/he enter the country... As a U.S. citizen / As a permanent resident (with a Green card) / With a temporary visa for work, study or tourism / As a refugee or asylum seeker / Other (please specify).” We then asked whether the parent in question had subsequently naturalized, or had otherwise changed his or her legal status, and if so, how. The options were: “Became a U.S. citizen / Became a permanent resident (got a green card) / Got Temporary Protected Status / Other (please specify).” As Bachmeier, Van Hook and Bean (2014) discuss, measuring legal status with survey questions does not appear to lead to unusual problems with non-response, or to affect responses to subsequent items.

We identified those who were reported to have entered without documents, but to have since changed legal status (by obtaining citizenship, permanent resident status or Temporary Protected Status, TPS), as having undocumented experience. We also used knowledge of the U.S. immigration system to infer undocumented status in a small number of other cases. Specifically, we identified those who entered with a visa but did not subsequently change legal status as undocumented, on the assumption that such visas eventually expired. When survey participants answered the question on status at entry, but did not answer the question on subsequent changes in status, we classed the parents as undocumented if they entered as undocumented migrants, as refugees or with visas. When survey participants did not answer the question about status at entry, but did answer the question about subsequent changes in legal status, we classed the parents as having entered

without documents if they only received TPS. We also assumed that all parents from Puerto Rico entered as U.S. citizens. After this manual coding we were left with some missing data: no data on status at entry for 16% of mothers and 21% of fathers, and no data on subsequent changes in status for 8% of mothers and 15% of fathers. We excluded from the analysis people who indicated very little knowledge of their parents, suggesting weak relationships. Specifically, we excluded those who failed to answer questions on parental legal status, *and* on their parents' ages, *and* questions on their parents' occupations during the respondent's childhood. These cases made up 3% of the full sample.

We used multiple imputation to replace the missing values in the other cases. In this procedure we imputed parental legal status based on: parental country of origin, parental occupational category when respondents were young, parental age, parental year of migration to the U.S., parental education, respondents' household size, respondents' household income, respondents' rental vs. owner-occupation, respondents' state of residence, respondents' gender, respondents' age, respondents' education, respondents' self-assessed English and Spanish language ability, respondents' choice to answer the survey in English or Spanish, and whether the respondents know people who have been deported from the U.S. (with separate measures for close family members, distant family members, friends, neighbors or others). Our approach is similar to that used in other research, although we opted to use multivariate imputation and to test for stable results across imputations, rather than relying on particular variables to infer undocumented status (for instance, Bean *et al.* 2011 follow a similar procedure, but replace missing data by classifying as undocumented any parents who did not complete high school and had been resident more than five years at the time of the survey). Table S1 presents the resulting distributions of parents across legal

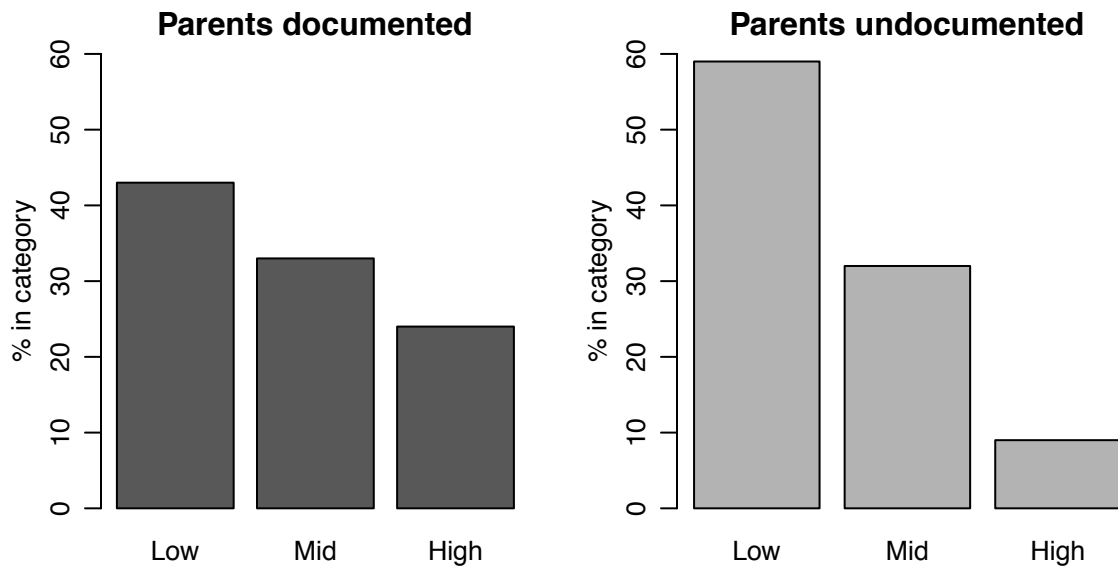
statuses, with (weighted) raw numbers of respondents, and the percentage of the sample in parentheses.

Table S1: Parents of survey respondents, by legal status.

	U.S. citizen, no undoc. experience	Legal resident, no undoc. experience	Undoc. experience, no longer undoc.	Still undoc. at time of survey	Missing
Mothers	482 (46%)	176 (17%)	275 (26%)	114 (11%)	3 (0.3%)
Fathers	467 (44%)	188 (18%)	252 (24%)	111 (11%)	32 (3%)

Source: 2013 Second Generation Survey. Note that “undoc.” is short for undocumented.

SI Figure S1. Educational attainment by parental legal status



Note: “low” means high school or less, “mid” means some college, “high” means some certificate of higher education.

Educational attainment is also substantially lower ($p=0.02$) among those with undocumented parent(s) in models with controls for age and demographic characteristics.

SI Part 2: Descriptive information on our survey samples

Table S2. Comparing demographics from Current Population Survey (CPS) data and our probability and opt-in samples of young second generation Latinos

	CPS, weighted	Probability sample, unweighted	Opt-in sample, unweighted	Probability sample, weighted	Opt-in sample, weighted
Mean age (18-31 year olds)	23	24	23	24	23
% Female	52%	63%	60%	44%	52%
Education: High school or lower	50%	29%	35%	47%	44%
Education: Some college	36%	40%	39%	33%	33%
Education: College degree or higher	15%	31%	26%	20%	23%
State of residence: California	43%	38%	41%	43%	43%
State of residence: Texas	19%	18%	16%	14%	13%
Chose to take survey in Spanish	-	15%	14%	13%	13%
Parent(s) undocumented	-	14%	15%	17%	13%

SI Part 3: Question wording and coding

A) Civic behavior, self

“In the last 12 months, have you ...?”

- 1 *Attended a PTA/ school group meeting*
- 2 *Attended a community group meeting*
- 3 *Donated blood*
- 4 *Given money to charity*
- 5 *Worked for a charity or for your church*
- 6 *Worked with others in your community to solve a problem*
- 7 *Organized an event in your community*
- 8 *Participated in an ethnic organization*
- 9 *Participated in an organization linked to your parents’ country of origin*
- 10 *Participated in a sports league*
- 11 *Participated in a labor union*
- 12 *Participated in a professional association*
- 13 *Participated in an organization that supports candidates for election, such as a political party*

Note: Since a count of these activities provides a skewed distribution, we model average differences by parental legal status using a log-transformed outcome variable.

B) Civic behavior, parents

“Now thinking back to when you were 16, did your parents or the people who raised you take part in these kinds of activities? Please say yes if any of the adults who raised you did this, and check all that apply. Would you say that they ...?”

- 1 *Attended PTA/ school group meetings*
- 2 *Attended community group meetings*
- 3 *Donated blood*
- 4 *Gave money to charity*
- 5 *Worked for a charity or for their church*
- 6 *Worked with others in their community to solve a problem*
- 7 *Organized an event in their community*
- 8 *Participated in an ethnic organization*
- 9 *Participated in an organization linked to their country of origin*
- 10 *Participated in a sports league*
- 11 *Participated in a labor union*
- 12 *Participated in a professional association*
- 13 *Participated in an organization that supports candidates for election, such as a political party*
- 14 *Took part in a political demonstration, march or rally*

Note: Since a count of these activities provides a skewed distribution, we model average differences by parental legal status using a log-transformed outcome variable.

C) Frequency of political discussions at home when growing up

“At the time you were 16 years old, how frequent were political discussions at home?”

Several times a week (1) / A few times a month (0.67) / Once or twice a year (0.33) / Never (0)

Note: This outcome was modeled on a linear scale ranging from zero to one, as above.

D) Political interest

“In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs?”

Very interested (1) / Somewhat interested (0.67) / Slightly interested (0.33) / Not at all interested (0).

Note: For statistical models we use a linear scale, coded from zero to one as above.

E) Consumption of political media

“How often do you get information about politics from each of the following sources: radio, internet news sites, paper newspapers, television, magazines, internet/blogs?” Every day (1) / Three times a week or more (0.8) / Almost every week (0.6) / One to three times a month (0.4) / Less than once a month (0.2) / never (0).

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of values assigned to each level of political media consumption, across the various sources, scaled from zero to one. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.87.

F) Discussing politics

“We’re interested in the different ways people hear or talk about politics. How often does the subject of politics come up in each of the following: at work, at your church or place of worship, in conversations with friends, in conversations with family, on an internet message board or blog, in conversation with your spouse or partner?”

A lot (1) / Some (0.67) / Hardly ever (0.33) / Never (0).

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of values assigned to each level of activity, across these venues, scaled from zero to one. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.83.

G) Distrusting the government and police

“How much of the time do you think you can trust the [federal government in Washington DC / the police] to do what is right? Would you say ...?”

Just about always (0) / Most of the time (0.33) / Some of the time (0.67) / Almost never (1).

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of values for the questions about trust in the government and the police. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.58.

H) Avoiding the government and police

“How do you respond to the statement: “In general, it is better to avoid contact with the [government / police].” Do you ...?”

Agree strongly (1) / Agree somewhat (0.75) / Neither agree nor disagree (0.5) / Disagree somewhat (0.25) / Disagree strongly (0).

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of values for the questions about avoiding the government and the police. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.64.

I) Rallying

“In the last twelve months have you participated in meetings, rallies, marches or demonstrations related to any of the following?”

- 1 *The tea party*
- 2 *The environment*
- 3 *Women’s rights*
- 4 *Racial equality and civil rights*
- 5 *Right to life*
- 6 *Peace/anti-war*
- 7 *LGBT rights*
- 8 *Immigrant’s rights*

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of activity across these issues, scaled from zero to one. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.77. We also log-transform this variable because it is right-skewed.

J) Effects of political actions

“What kinds of activity do you think are effective in pushing for political change?”

- 1 *Voting*
- 2 *Abstaining from voting*
- 3 *Participating in legal protests such as rallies*
- 4 *Participating in illegal protests or damaging property*
- 5 *Taking issues to the courts*
- 6 *Lobbying politicians such as the President, Congress, the Senate, or local political bodies*

Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the number of activities that the survey participant selected, scaled from zero to one. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.53.

K) Education

Based on the grade completed, high-school graduation, or higher education, up to professional or doctorate degree. We simplified the scale to three levels: high school or less (-0.5), some college (0), or completed some higher education (0.5). When using education as a control we used a simple linear scale, centered on the middle category, as above.

L) Parental occupation

Based on an open-ended question about the work that the parents did, when the survey participant was a child. We categorized these responses. The White Collar category covers office work, from secretaries to lawyers, teachers and bankers. This is a somewhat imprecise measure of parental economic status.

Table S3: Distributions of outcome and control variables (weighted data)

One or more undocumented parents at time of survey	15%
Mean number of areas of parental civic activity	2
Mean number of areas of respondent civic activity	1.4
Frequency of political discussion at home when young	28% never 26% once or twice a year 29% a few times a month 17% a few times a week
Interested in politics	20% not at all 25% slightly 37% somewhat 19% very
Index of political information from various media	Min 0, Max 1, Mean 0.49
Index of current political discussions in a range of contexts	Min 0, Max 1, Mean 0.43
Trust federal government to do what is right	18% never 53% sometimes 23% mostly 6% always
Trust police to do what is right	17% never 40% sometimes 33% mostly 11% always
Better to avoid the government	13% strongly disagree 18% somewhat disagree 39% neither agree nor dis. 20% somewhat agree 11% strongly agree
Better to avoid the police	15% strongly disagree 14% somewhat disagree 30% neither agree nor dis. 20% somewhat agree 21% strongly agree
Age	Mean 23
Education	45% high school or less 33% some college 22% college degree
Mother's education	75% high school or less 10% some college 15% college degree
Father's education	77% high school or less 10% some college 13% college degree
Female	49%
Fluent in Spanish	74%
Parent(s) from Mexico	70%
Parent(s) white collar	26%

Table S2 (continued): Distributions of outcome and control variables (weighted)

Region of residence	8% Midwest 14% Northeast 25% South 53% West
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Table S3. Models of activism by parental legal status

	Model S1: Rally on immigration (logit model)	Model S2: Marched 2006, self (logit model)	Model S3: Marched 2006, family (logit model)
Intercept	-2.36** (0.65)	-2.75** (0.81)	-2.25** (0.54)
Parent(s) undocumented	0.72* (0.34)	0.47 (0.35)	0.73* (0.38)
Age (starting at 18)	-0.15** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Education	0.45 (0.4)	1.24** (0.39)	1.21** (0.4)
Female	-0.04 (0.29)	-0.01 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.29)
Fluent in Spanish	1.44** (0.35)	0.09 (0.33)	0.68 ⁺ (0.37)
Parent(s) from Mexico	0.9** (0.35)	0.91 ⁺ (0.51)	0.46 (0.39)
Mother's education	-0.49 (0.42)	0.27 (0.39)	-0.28 (0.41)
Father's education	1.19** (0.42)	0.2 (0.37)	-0.01 (0.45)
Parent(s) white collar	0.08 (0.39)	-0.31 (0.34)	0.17 (0.38)
N	1050	1050	1050

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ** means $p < 0.01$, * means $p < 0.05$, ⁺ means $p < 0.1$. Source: 2013 Second Generation Survey.

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