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Critical Civic Engagement of Immigrant-Origin Latinx Youth

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LATINX IMMIGRANT-ORIGIN CRITICAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Critical Civic Engagement of Immigrant-Origin Latinx Youth

A Dissertation

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By

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April, 2023

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Biography

Wendy de los Reyes Moore was born in Havana, Cuba, on September 25, 1989. She graduated from Coral Gables High School, in Miami, FL, in 2008. She received her B.S.Ed. from the University of Miami in 2013 and her M.S.Ed. from the University of Miami in 2016.

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Abstract

During adolescence, youth gain sociocognitive skills to think abstractly about inequalities which may propel critical civic engagement (CCE, i.e., civically engaged behaviors aimed to transform systems of inequality). Latinx immigrant-origin youth must uniquely decipher their place within U.S. political contexts, considering their hyphenated multi-national identities and potential familial obligations, which may differ drastically from the experiences typically captured in the civic engagement literature that are often based on non-immigrant, White, middle-class American young adults. Additionally, previous research on the Latinx immigrant community has bypassed nuances of their civic engagement by failing to consider within-group differences (e.g., nationality, generational status), or by primarily focusing on civic engagement as an outcome and little on its developmental processes. Further, only a small number of studies have focused on the role of supportive non-parental adults, such as mentors, in facilitating civic engagement, with even less focusing on Latinx youth.

This study employed a qualitative approach, Constructivist Grounded Theory, to explore the CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth through the framework of youth sociopolitical development. I examined the following research questions: (1) How do Latinx immigrant-origin youth conceptualize and participate in critical civic engagement? (2) How do mentors shape the critical civic engagement of immigrant-origin Latinx youth? (3) How do adults hinder critical civic engagement? Participants were recruited from U.S. regions with large but varying Latinx populations in collaboration with two large universities and the affiliate offices of a national mentoring organization, which is a resource and advocate for mentoring. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse sample of Latinx immigrant-origin youth ($N = 21$) between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Interview data were analyzed by three coders. Results

revealed that Latinx immigrant-origin youth's critical civic engagement encompassed actions that raised social consciousness and established collective pressure. Participants' CCE was positively shaped by natural mentors who modeled community engagement and activism, provided emotional support, equipped youth through instrumental support, provided space for reflection and dialogue, and arranged opportunities for action. Findings also revealed that adults can be an impediment to CCE by discouraging the discussion of social issues or creating a difficult environment for frank conversations, minimizing youth concerns about social issues, and becoming barriers for youth to take action. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the critical civic engagement of this population. Additionally, through a deeper understanding of the role of mentors, future interventions can be developed to better equip, support, and mobilize Latinx immigrant-origin youth in creating structural change for the betterment of their community.

Introduction

The civic engagement of Latinx¹ immigrant-origin youth have challenged notions of basic rights and definitions of citizenship and deportability (Carrasco & Seif, 2014; Wides-Muñoz, 2018). Yet, little is known about the critical civic engagement (CCE) of Latinx adolescents and young adults from immigrant backgrounds. As a group, Latinx youth descend from a vastly pluralistic region that is multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-lingual (Montero & Varas Díaz, 2007), and past studies have found that Latinx youth, broadly, differ in their expressions of civic engagement from other youth of color (e.g., non-Latinx Black youth; Bañales et al., 2019; Diemer & Rapa, 2016). Additionally, immigrant-origin youth (i.e., U.S.-born and foreign-born children of immigrants) must uniquely decipher their place within the U.S. civic and political context, at times hearing contradicting messages about their belonging (Flores-González, 2017). Previous research has missed some of these nuances by not considering within-group differences, such as generational-status among Latinx youth or primarily focusing on civic engagement as an outcome and little on its developmental process. Further, minoritized youth often have less opportunities for civic engagement, but non-parental adults, such as mentors, may expand opportunities and resources to make engagement more accessible or perhaps hinder it. However, only a limited number of studies have focused on how mentors shape CCE. To fill these gaps, this study examined the CCE of Latinx-immigrant origin youth and the role of mentors and other adults through the framework of youth sociopolitical development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

¹ The term “Latinx” is used throughout the text to be gender inclusive and not perpetuate the notion that gender is binary. For further discussion of the term see Santos (2017).

Youth Civic Engagement

Youth is a broad term, at times simply defined as a period between childhood and maturity in which one is young (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) while others have prescribed specific age parameters: 10 to 24-years-old (Youth & Society, n.d.) or 15 to 24-years-old (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). This study focused on youth from the ages of 18- to 24-years-old. This age range also captures emerging adulthood, in which some young people have a heightened period of change and identity exploration as various life possibilities are considered (e.g., worldviews, relationships, work; Arnett, 2007). Within the United States, youth at this age are typically finishing high school, pursuing post-secondary education, and/or entering the workforce. In particular, college has been described as an ideal place (Flanagan & Levine, 2010) and time for civic engagement: “little is stopping them, costs are modest, and they have time on their hands” (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008, p. 510). Further, within adolescence, youth gain the sociocognitive skills necessary to think more abstractly and deeply about inequalities (McLoyd, 2019), which may propel social action (Freire, 1973; Watts et al., 2011). As a result, this is an ideal developmental period to study civic engagement.

Types of Civic Engagement and Citizenship

From the founding of the United States, civic engagement has been a defining component of American democracy, although democratic institutions were initially constructed to only include affluent White men (Dalton, 2020). Broad civic engagement refers to both individual and collective action aimed to address issues of public concern (American Psychological Association, 2009). Typical examples include volunteering in a soup kitchen, participating in a neighborhood association, voting, or writing a letter to a public official. Youth civic engagement

is an overarching goal of social studies education and part of the broad civic mission of U.S. public education (Gutmann & Ben-Porath, 2015).

Research focusing on expanding youth civic engagement is part of a shift away from the “youth-at-risk” to the “youth-as-asset” paradigm—deviating to a more strengths-based approach to youth development (Flanagan, 2004, p. 735). The focus of civic engagement research is on how youth make contributions to their community in the present day rather than waiting until they are “old enough” to act as citizens (i.e., inhabitants of a location, not the legal status; Flanagan & Van Horn, 2003). Youth have been indispensable to every social movement in the last 60 years, many of which mobilized young people in high school and university campuses (Earl et al., 2017). In the 1960s alone, examples include the free-speech movement at the University of California, Berkeley, lunch counter sit-ins pushing towards desegregation, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the women’s movement.

Several scholars at the end of the 20th century warned against the steady decline of civic engagement (e.g., Delli Carpini, 2000; Gwinn Wilkins, 2000; Putnam, 2000) attributing it to diminished social capital and broad disengagement in community life (Putnam, 1996, 2000). One study concluded that compared to Baby Boomers (born 1946-1961) and GenX (born 1962-1981), Millennials (born 1982-1996) were too self-involved to care about their community, using the moniker “Generation Me” (Twenge et al., 2012). These narratives often focused on youth as the source of the problem. Other scholars instead have argued that present day youth are participating civically in new ways, rather than disengaging, through expanding beyond traditional behaviors and focusing on structural barriers they may face and how adults themselves may infringe upon youth’s involvement (Dalton, 2020; Earl et al., 2017; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Jensen, 2008; Stepick et al., 2008; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Dalton (2020) found

that Millennials were more engaged in their community, more supportive of social justice than previous generations, and created new norms within civic engagement. The biggest generational shift was a move away from infrequent and institutionalized forms of participation, such as voting or working on a political campaign, to participation in broader options to influence their community and the government at-large (e.g., directly contact city officials, protest, circulate a petition, online political contributions; Dalton, 2020).

Based on theory and practice, Westheimer and Kahne (2002) identified the three kinds of “good citizens” in which youth in the United States are typically educated: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The personally responsible citizen makes individually-based positive choices in their community (e.g., gives blood, recycles, picks up litter, obeys laws, volunteers at a senior center). The participatory citizen is actively engaged in civic affairs within their community at local, state, and national levels, with education emphasizing that students engage in community-based and collective efforts. For example, the personally responsible citizen would contribute to a canned food drive, but the participatory citizen would organize it. Lastly, the justice-oriented citizen critically analyzes the political, social, and economic structures that lead to inequalities and aims to address root causes of the problems (i.e., seeks social change). In the canned food example, the justice-oriented citizen would instead challenge the structural causes of poverty and collectively work to develop potential solutions. U.S. civic education has predominately focused on efforts to teach children and adolescents to engage in ameliorative solutions to social issues (e.g., canned food drives), rather than critically analyze and seek to change the structural causes for poverty (i.e., justice oriented; Westheimer & Kahne, 2002). Although all three forms of citizenship have value and

importance, I am most interested in how youth engage in and are supported to be justice-oriented citizens, instead of the personally responsible citizen.

Youth Critical Civic Engagement

CCE encompasses individual and collective action and places the emphasis on civically engaged behaviors aimed to *transform systems of inequality* (Christophe et al., 2021). CCE is rooted in critical consciousness (i.e., conscientization, conscientização in the original Portuguese language; Freire, 1968), which captures how marginalized people analyze social conditions and take action to redress their own oppression, leading to individual and collective impact (Diemer et al., 2016; Freire, 1968). Modern conceptualizations of critical consciousness include three components: (1) critical reflection (i.e., analysis of societal inequities and injustices), critical motivation (i.e., perceived capacity to address structural inequities), and critical action (i.e., individual or collective engagement to change inequities; Diemer et al., 2016). CCE is similar to the critical action (i.e., social action) component of critical consciousness (Christophe et al., 2021; Diemer et al., 2020), which is the focus of this study.

Components of critical consciousness are related to one another (e.g., increased critical reflection leading to increased critical action leading to critical reflection). A qualitative study of predominately (90%) Latino youth organizers ($N = 20$; ages 16-20) found that engaging in critical action through community organizing led to increased critical reflection of structural inequities in their community as well as increased critical motivation and political efficacy (Christens & Dolan, 2011). Diemer and Rapa (2016) found that an aspect of critical reflection (i.e., perceived societal inequalities) was positively associated with critical action in a quantitative, cross-sectional study of low-income Latino/a and African American ninth graders ($N = 761$). A similar association was also found in an older sample of youth. Specifically, a

quantitative, cross-sectional study of Latinx young adults' pathways to civic/political engagement ($N = 354$; $M_{age} = 26.08$) found that critical reflection was positively associated with sociopolitical action (Bañales et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, scholars have recently emphasized the need to study critical action because of the disproportionate past focus on critical reflection (Diemer et al., 2021; Heberle et al., 2020). Although reflection is important and an essential part of critical consciousness (Freire, 1968), as Watts and Hipolito-Delgado (2015, p. 853) put it: "we cannot think ourselves to liberation." There are a broad range of behaviors under CCE, from low-risk engagement (e.g., boycotting certain products) to high-risk activities, such as attending a protest which could eventually lead to arrest (Corning & Myers, 2002; Hope et al., 2019). Further, approaches to change systems of inequalities may be conducted in person and/or online (e.g., Wong et al., 2019).

Researchers have found that knowledge (Diemer & Li, 2011) and past experiences of oppression (Roy et al., 2019) are associated with increased critical action. More specifically, a quantitative study of African American, Latino, and Asian American youth ($N = 665$; ages 15-25) found a small to medium association between civic and political knowledge and social action (i.e., critical action; Diemer & Li, 2011). Additionally, in a quantitative study ($N = 461$; $M_{age} = 15$ years old) of primarily African American (86%) and Latino (25%) youth in Chicago, Illinois, greater exposure to neighborhood income inequality and violence were associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in critical action (Roy et al., 2019). Thus, civic/political knowledge and past experiences of oppression have been found to be associated with critical action.

A few studies also found an association between critical action and community engagement (i.e., participating community-based activities). In a qualitative case study of a

White 17-year-old high school student named Jason in Newark, New Jersey who became an activist, he described how involvement in the community was one of the aspects that led to his activism (Fullam, 2017). Additionally, Roy et al. (2019) also found a significant association between volunteering in community organizations and critical action among youth of color. Further, in a longitudinal study of Latina/o youth (82.7% US born; 68.1% identified as Mexican/Chicana/o), youth's social justice orientation in 10th grade (which included aspects of reflection and action) was associated with more involvement in community service in 12th grade (Pérez-Gualdrón & Helms, 2017).

Another form of civic engagement, voting, is one of the most frequently operationalized measures of civic engagement, but it has not been found to equate with CCE or critical action. In a study of low-income Latino/a and African American ninth graders ($N = 761$), protesting was negatively associated with expected voting for Latino/as but was not significantly associated with expected voting for African American participants (Diemer & Rapa, 2016, p. 20). Although the authors did not examine generational status or citizenship, they posited that this may be due to Latino/a youth being more likely than African American youth to not have the ability to vote due to a larger proportion of the Latinx U.S. population being immigrants. These findings about both Latinx and African American adolescents may also be due to the structural barriers, such as voter identification laws, that disallow many marginalized groups in the U.S. from voting. Thus, more recent studies on civic engagement among Latinx youth (e.g., Bañales et al., 2019) have measured voting behavior and sociopolitical action as separate behaviors.

Although contemporary critical action also includes online activism, they are not captured in measures of critical consciousness which currently include only traditional forms of activism (e.g., in-person protesting, contacting public officials, signing petitions; Diemer et al.,

2021). When developing the Short Critical Consciousness Scale, analysis highlighted the need to include social media engagement (Diemer et al., 2020). This qualitative study can inform future measurement development that is more inclusive of these forms of online activism.

How Youth Engage in Online Activism

The use of media in civic engagement has transformed over the last few decades. Studies in the late 1990s (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998; Putnam, 1996) described a negative association between media consumption (e.g., television and internet use) and civic engagement. Nevertheless, this notion was challenged as some examples of media use were found to be associated with higher civic participation (Gil de Zúñiga & Rojas, 2009; Shah et al., 2001; Wellman et al., 2001). Internet-based media engagement related to information gathering (e.g., reading the news online) and community building (e.g., online communities around a social issue) were associated with greater civic engagement (i.e., nonpolitical community volunteering); in contrast, high levels of media consumption related to entertainment (e.g., watching television) had a negative association with civic engagement (Gil de Zúñiga & Rojas, 2009; Shah et al., 2001). Media has the potential to trigger reasoning and political discussion, which may lead to greater engagement in issues of public concern (Eveland & Hively, 2009). These findings posit that the use of media itself is not what promotes or diminishes this kind of civic engagement, but how it is used. Additionally, researchers have theorized that social media may lower costs related to engagement, provide new ways to learn about and become involved with an issue, and establish an additional avenue for political mobilization (Carlisle & Patton, 2013; Morris & Morris, 2013; Schlozman et al., 2010). The flexibility found in social media seems to be an essential element (Carlisle & Patton, 2013).

Today, young people use social media sites (e.g., Twitter, TikTok) to participate in new forms of activism and civic engagement that are also facilitated through this medium. This has been the case in liberal democracies (e.g., U.S., U.K., Australia; Xenos et al., 2014), but also in locations with limited freedom of expression (e.g., Hong Kong; Lee & Chan, 2016). These online spaces have been especially supportive for youth experiencing marginalization, who use these platforms to disrupt inequality and create counter narratives (Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2017). For example, in a study about the protestors involved in the Hong Kong-based Umbrella Movement ($N = 569$; 48% aged 25 and younger), participants described engaging in four types of activities related to activism: online expression (e.g., changing profile picture to show support, publishing videos or pictures taken onsite), online debates (i.e., exposing and responding to rumors), online explanatory activities (i.e., explaining to people in mainland China what was happening with the protest movement on the island), and mobile communication (i.e., frontline communication with others in the movement; Lee & Chan, 2016). The authors discussed how these activities varied from showing broad support online to the collective efforts to dispel rumors believed to be spread by the movement's opponents.

There are several contemporary examples of online activism among Gen Z and Millennials in the U.S. For example, as a form of protest or “prank” to a June 20th Trump campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma during the 2020 election, hundreds of teens registered multiple tickets to throw off the expected event numbers (Lorenz et al., 2020). Only 6,200 attendee tickets were scanned for the 19,000-seat capacity venue, displaying large pockets of empty seats in rally photos. The young people organized their efforts through TikTok and Twitter. Elijah Daniel, 26, described how these kinds of pranks and activism are commonplace: “K-pop Twitter and Alt TikTok have a good alliance where they spread information amongst

each other very quickly. They all know the algorithms and how they can boost videos to get where they want” (Lorenz et al., 2020, p. 1). The uproar over the Trump rally and the protest was due to the event nearly taking place on Juneteenth (June 19th), a federal holiday commemorating the official end of legal U.S. African-American enslavement. Other examples include using Instagram and TikTok to place pressure on the NCAA because of inequitable practices, rallying to create spam reports to a Texas anti-abortion site, and Black TikTok creators striking to protest cultural appropriation in media content (YPULSE, 2021). Although these examples have been captured and discussed in the media, there is a need to better understand this form of contemporary activism in young people’s sociopolitical development.

Theoretical Framework: Youth Sociopolitical Development

Heavily influenced by critical consciousness, sociopolitical development emphasizes the process of creating a more just society through mutually resisting oppression and moving towards liberation (Watts et al., 1999, 2003). Youth sociopolitical development is rooted in both developmental and liberation psychology (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Although developmental psychology primarily stemmed from a focus on individual characteristics, civic development has gained greater interest in the field through the inclusion of an ecological perspective. Additionally, unlike traditional U.S. psychology, liberation psychology, which is particularly prominent in Latin America, emphasizes human rights and social equity. In tandem, these areas of psychology, along with the study of empowerment and social justice within community psychology (Christens et al., 2016), have influenced scholars’ understanding of the sociopolitical development of youth.

As described by Watts and Flanagan (2007), youth sociopolitical development includes: (a) worldview and social analysis (i.e., similar to critical reflection; Diemer et al., 2016), (b)

sense of agency (i.e., personal, political, and collective efficacy, which are components of empowerment theory and critical motivation), (c) opportunity structure to engagement in action, which considers the resources and the adults available to shape and permit action; and (d) societal involvement behavior, which includes various forms of civic engagement (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Similar to Westheimer and Kahne's (2002) conceptualization of “good citizens,” societal involvement behavior is described within three typologies: (1) traditional community service, (2) civic engagement with conventional organizations (includes work with local, state, and national organizations that partner with dominant political parties), and (3) sociopolitical activism, which incorporates action with unconventional institutions and is the most related to liberation and social justice (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). This study centered around the third and fourth components of sociopolitical development: the opportunity structures (i.e., the role mentors) and the behavior/action in which youth engage, with an emphasis on CCE with conventional organizations and sociopolitical activism.

The U.S. Immigrant-Origin Population

The U.S. immigrant population amounts to nearly 45.3 million, predominately arriving from Latin America and Asia (Ward & Batalova, 2023). The children of immigrants (i.e., immigrant-origin) have at least one foreign-born parent and were either born abroad (i.e., first-generation) or within the host country (i.e., second-generation; Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, et al., 2015). The immigrant-origin youth population has been growing steadily. Approximately 18 million children under 18-years-old live with at least one foreign-born parent (26% of the U.S. children population)—an increase from 19% in 2000 and 13% in 1990 (Ward & Batalova, 2023). This growth is also true among young Latinxs in which 61% of the population is 35 and younger (Hugo et al., 2018).

Among the Latinx population, over two-thirds are first-generation (36%) or second-generation (34%; Gonzalez-Barrera, 2020). Some researchers use subcategories to distinguish differences within the first- and second-generation. The 1.25 generation refers to someone who arrived in the U.S. after starting adolescence (approximately over the age of 12) but before entering adulthood; 1.5 generation refers to those who arrived after school age (approximately 5 years-old and older) but prior to starting adolescence, 1.75 generation refers to someone who arrived prior to school age; 2.0 generation is someone who is U.S.-born and both of their parents are foreign-born, and 2.5 generation is someone who is U.S.-born and only one of their parents is foreign-born (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2013). Although most studies do not go into this level of detail regarding generational status, each distinction has particular challenges and advantages regarding language, acculturation, and educational attainment (Rumbaut, 2004). Further, while first-generation immigrants may differ broadly on legal status, all second-generation youth have U.S. citizenship.

Approximately 48% of U.S. immigrants identify as Hispanic or Latino (Batalova et al., 2021). The largest group, Mexicans, account for 24% of the immigrant population, followed by arrivals from India (6%), China (6%), the Philippines (5%), El Salvador (3%), Vietnam (3%), Cuba (3%), the Dominican Republic (3%), Guatemala (2%), and Korea (2%). The immigrants from these top 10 countries make up over half (57%) of the total U.S. immigrant population (Batalova et al., 2021). The terms “Hispanic,” “Latina/o,” “Latinx/e,” are examples of pan-ethnic² descriptors of the group, although many adults (56% of first-generation; 39% of second-generation immigrants) prefer to describe themselves by their country of origin (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican) over a pan-ethnic term (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2020).

² See Simon (2018) for a brief history of how these pan-ethnic terms originated and differ, and Lopez et al. (2021) for a discussion of how these terms are used in census data.

The Latinx population does not fare as well as the larger U.S. population. For instance, among all U.S. Hispanics, 19% are living in poverty (20% of U.S.-born Hispanics; 18% of foreign-born Hispanics) in comparison to only 13% of all Americans. Similarly, there are lower rates of educational attainment among Hispanics: 20% of U.S.-born Hispanics and 12% of foreign-born Hispanics hold a bachelor's degree or higher in contrast to 32% of all Americans (Noe-Bustamante & Flores, 2019). Concerning language, 86% of "Hispanic" young adults (ages 18-35) in the U.S. grew up speaking Spanish at home—19% of this age group identified as Spanish dominant, 40% as bilingual, and 41% as English dominant (Hugo et al., 2018). However, due to census categorization, this number does not include the Portuguese-speaking U.S. Brazilian population who are considered Latino but not Hispanic; approximately 450,000 Brazilian immigrants reside in the U.S. (Blizzard & Batalova, 2019).

Context of Immigrant-Origin Youth's Sociopolitical Development

Within the current globalized society, immigrant-origin youth often hold a hyphenated multi-national identity, and unlike waves of immigrants in previous centuries, it is more feasible to retain ties to their native homelands (Stepick & Stepick, 2002). As part of their unique developmental experiences, immigrant-origin youth must decipher their place within the U.S. political context while holding these mixed identities. Latinx youth are often racialized and made to feel like perpetual foreigners, even when they are second- or third-generation (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Flores-González, 2017). Across three quantitative studies of Asian-American, Latino/a, and African-American college students, feeling like a perpetual foreigner, even after controlling for racial discrimination, predicted a lower sense of belonging to American culture and more conflicts in identity development (Huynh et al., 2011).

Immigrant and non-immigrant youth at times share motives for civic engagement, but their experiences are distinct (Jensen & Laplante, 2015). Familial obligations (e.g., caring for younger siblings or elders, earning income to financially support the family) may make civic engagement more difficult for immigrant-origin youth when compared to the abundance of free time described historically among non-immigrant, middle-class, White American young adults (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013). Further, when experiences of immigrant-origin youth are compared to their non-immigrant counterparts, it can either perpetuate deficit narratives or model minority myths without the full contextual understanding of the experience (García Coll et al., 2000). Thus, the civic development of immigrant-origin youth should be studied in its own right (García Coll et al., 2000) and understood within its particular history and context.

Brief History of the Latinx Immigrant Community's Civic Engagement

The Latinx community has prolonged involvement in U.S. civic life (see Ortiz, 2018 for a more expansive historical description). Within the 20th century, many members of the U.S. Mexican community, the largest immigrant group in the United States, were largely apolitical due to the cyclical nature of their labor migration (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). However, activism was still present. For example, a recent film, *Adios Amor: The Search for Maria Moreno*, depicted one of the earliest organizers, Maria Moreno, who worked to improve the lives of farmworkers in the late 1950s and early 1960s before the emergence of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta (Contreras, 2017). Post-World War II Mexican Americans' activism in the Southwestern United States were focused on racial/cultural exclusion and influenced by the Black Power Movement (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). As immigration policies changed in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Immigration Reform and Control Act, stricter border enforcement), it substantially increased the size of the settled Mexican population in the United States because

moving back and forth became more difficult (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). This development also broadly increased activism within the newly settled population.

Simultaneously, activism increased among other Latinx immigrants as well. In 1980, for example, a referendum was introduced in Miami-Dade County, Florida that aimed to restrict business activities to English-only and remove public funding from any activities conducted in a different language (Johnson, 1980; Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). This referendum propelled Cubans to engage organizing with other Latinx immigrants, leading to the defeat of the referendum. This coalition of organizing by various Latinx ethnic groups may be partially attributed to the creation of a pan-ethnic identity, such as Hispanic or Latina/o/x, which activists use to increase support for certain political goals. Although Latinx groups (e.g., Cubans, Colombians, Mexicans) may have a diverse range of priorities—especially related to their countries of origin and how they identify politically—they can typically rally together in protection of bilingualism and in defense of anti-immigrant sentiments or restrictions (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Being treated as ethnically and racially dissimilar from White Americans by nativists in the United States is often what leads to their collective involvement in civic life (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

As deportation increased during the 21st century by the Bush and Obama administrations, new mobilization efforts took place within the Latinx immigrant community, with many of those efforts led by undocumented youth who entered the United States as children or adolescents (often referred to as “DREAMers”). DREAMer is in reference to the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a U.S. legislative proposal first introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Dick Durbin (D-Illinois). The bill has been reintroduced to congress several times, but has yet to pass (DREAM Act, 2002). The DREAM Act would provide a pathway to citizenship for certain undocumented youth who entered the United States

as minors. The grassroots organizing efforts that led to the attempted passing of this bill in the Bush and Obama administrations, along with the Obama executive orders that followed, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), were led by a diverse group of undocumented Latinx youth—varying in country of origin, gender, and sexual orientation (Wides-Muñoz, 2018). Tactics ranged from spreading awareness about the deportation of family members via social media to acts of civil disobedience, such as a sit-in and hunger strike in President Obama’s Denver campaign office leading up to the 2012 presidential election (Wides-Muñoz, 2018). More recently, much of the anti-immigrant sentiments and policies during the Trump administration propelled a newer generation of immigrant youth to become civically engaged (Wray-Lake et al., 2018).

Current Understanding of Critical Civic Engagement of Immigrant-Origin Youth

Previous researchers have examined the types of civic engagement in which immigrant-origin youth participate. In a qualitative study of immigrant-origin adolescents in the U.S. ($M_{age} = 15.25$) from El Salvador ($n = 20$) and India ($n = 20$), Jensen (2008) examined civic engagement, making a distinction between engagement at the community (e.g., volunteer work at a cultural, leisure, social or religious organization) and political levels (e.g., voting, protesting, contacting public officials, donating money to or fund-raising for political causes). All adolescents said they valued community engagement and 90% also said they valued the political activities related to civic engagement. When asked about their own engagement, the vast majority were engaged in the community (95% of Indian and 85% of Salvadoran adolescents), but only 20% were engaged in politics (Jensen, 2008). In a quantitative study of immigrant-origin first-year college students ($N = 1027$; predominantly Latino), there were high rates of political engagement across first-, 1.5-, and second-generation participants (Stepick et al., 2008).

Political activities were (1) discussed politics with family/friends (91.3% for first-generation; 88.4% for 1.5-generation; 90.5% for second-generation), (2) read a newspaper for current events (87.8% for first-generation; 87.3% for 1.5 generation; 86.1% for second-generation), (3) used the internet for current events/news (87.6% for first-generation; 90.4% for 1.5-generation; 93.3% for second-generation), (4) registered to vote (30.9% for first-generation; 30.0% for 1.5 generation; 52.8% for second-generation), and (5) attended a demonstration (64.9% for first-generation 30.9%; 67.5% for 1.5 generation; 65.7% for second-generation).

Researchers have also examined the frequency of civic engagement, particularly involvement in community or political causes, among immigrant-origin youth. In a qualitative study of 18- to 25-year-old Dominican, Mexican, and Central American immigrant-origin young adults ($N = 58$), Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, et al. (2015) found six profiles of civic participation: no civic engagement (CE; $n = 8$), low CE (i.e., infrequent and unsystematically; $n = 10$), sporadic CE (i.e., stated a commitment to civic issues; engagement was regular but sporadic; $n = 8$), work CE (i.e., said they chose a particular career in order to “give back” to their community; $n = 6$), active CE (i.e., involved on a weekly basis; $n = 16$), and civic leader (i.e., a social change agent with a leadership role in developing an organization or community organizing; $n = 10$). Overall, this sample of Latino immigrant-origin young people showed active and frequent participation in civic activities.

Other researchers have specifically examined the civic engagement of undocumented immigrant youth. In a qualitative study of 16 undocumented college students in California (12 were born in Mexico while four were born in a range of Asian countries), 13 engaged in actions such as raising political consciousness, advocating for policies on their college campus, and joining protests/rallies (DeAngelo et al., 2016). Participants described their activism as a push for

their “existence” in a context that is meant to suppress their voices (DeAngelo et al., 2016). Undocumented Latino youth activists in Chicago, Illinois who arrived in the United States as children were found to engage in civil disobedience through their participation in the Immigrant Youth Justice League (Carrasco & Seif, 2014). In a quantitative study of Latinx undocumented college students ($N = 790$; ages 18 to 30), Katsiaficas et al. (2019) found that 92% of the sample participated in at least one civic activity within the last month: 77.7% of students were involved at least once in a social cause they cared about over the past month, 63.6% of students gave advice or were engaged in advocacy for individuals in the community, 60.1% of students were involved in community organizing, and close to half (46.1%) attended a demonstration or a protest.

A quantitative study of undocumented millennials (89.5% Hispanic/Latino; 76.0% Mexican; 18 to 35 years old; $M_{age} = 23$) examined both online and offline activism (Wong et al., 2019). Their online activism included signing an online petition (66.0%) and posting about a political cause or issue via their social media platforms (59.9%) while their offline activism included participating in a political demonstration or rally (40.7%) and engaging in civil disobedience (9.5%). Wong et al. (2019) also compared their sample to a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults collected through the American National Election Study (ANES). The undocumented millennials in Wong et al.'s (2019) study were three times more likely than the ANES sample to engage in both types of online activism (signed a petition online and posted a social media message about a political or issue) and seven times more likely to participate in a political demonstration or rally.

In sum, the current literature on the CCE of immigrant-origin Latinx youth is limited, focusing on the types of civic engagement or frequency with which they engage. Further, some

studies investigated a diverse sample of Latinx immigrant-origin youth, while others examined undocumented Latinx millennials. Broadly, the past research measuring CCE in youth primarily captured traditional forms of activism (e.g., signing petitions, contacting local officials, protesting) and rarely included activities on online blogs or social media—a common tactic employed by undocumented Latinx youth in early 2000s (Wides-Muñoz, 2018). Only one study examined online activism among undocumented millennials (Wong et al., 2019). Other scholars have also found the investigation of online activism to be a large gap in the broader critical consciousness literature (Diemer et al., 2021). Thus, the types of action described in past investigations may not fully capture the ways Latinx immigrant-origin youth are involved in CCE.

Youth-Adult Relationships in Critical Civic Engagement

As youth civic development does not happen in isolation (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Watts et al., 2003; Watts & Flanagan, 2007), it is critical to study beyond individual-level factors for youth CCE. Opportunities for youth civic engagement are not evenly distributed by ethnicity, race, or social class (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Although adults alone cannot remedy the structural reasons for diminished access, they can build on the existing support within Latinx youth's social sphere (e.g., parental support; Garcia Coll et al., 2009) and intervene when other forms of social and institutional support are missing. Harro's (2000) Cycle of Liberation describes a process in which individuals reach out to others who provide feedback about their emerging worldview analysis; they either receive encouragement to act against unjust systems or are deterred from doing so. Mentors are well positioned to provide support and work alongside their proteges to guide their social analysis of inequitable systems, as well as to facilitate their movement towards action (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

Mentors have been found to be an important element of youth's support structure. Mentoring relationships may be developed *naturally* (also referred to as informal mentors) through organically formed relationships with a non-parental adult in a youth's social sphere (Zimmerman et al., 2005), which is the focus of this study. In general, natural mentors and youth form meaningful, close relationships, and mentors provide guidance and support to a less-experienced mentee (Zimmerman et al., 2005). Among immigrant-origin youth, mentors may provide developmental support through assisting youth in their exploration of their cultural identity and belonging in the U.S. (Birman & Morland, 2013). Particular to Latinx youth, mentors have been found to play a positive role in their academic achievement, language and ethnic identity development, and psychosocial outcomes (de los Reyes et al., 2021). Recent reviews and meta-analyses have found that in studies on natural mentoring relationships, outcomes examined primarily focused on school, psychological symptoms, social functioning, and physical health (Alcocer & Martinez, 2018; de los Reyes et al., 2021; Van Dam et al., 2018) with limited research on how mentors support young people's CCE (Sánchez et al., 2021).

Researchers have found that mentors can play a positive role in youth critical civic engagement. In a case study of a 17-year-old high school student in Newark, New Jersey, Fullam (2017) found that mentors in both school and community settings facilitated his development as an activist through attending protests together as well as introducing him to a network of other adult and youth activists. This support eventually led Justin to organize a school-wide student walkout to protest budget cuts. Similarly, the predominately (90%) Latino youth organizers ($N = 20$; ages 16-20) in a qualitative study described how the support they received from their adult partners was part of their process of realizing their full potential as youth community organizers (Christens & Dolan, 2011). Additionally, a mixed methods study examined the role of mentors in

the sociopolitical development of an ethnically/racially diverse sample of college students (Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021). Within the quantitative component ($N = 145$), participants' greater perceptions of perceived inequalities and higher critical action were significantly associated with more social justice conversations with natural mentors; in turn, more social justice conversations with mentors were significantly associated with more perceived inequality and critical action over time (Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021). Additionally, qualitative interviews of a subset of 30 participants revealed that natural mentors supported their sociopolitical development through 1) providing opportunities for reflection and dialogue, 2) engaging in conversations that were comfortable and nonjudgmental, 3) affording resources and information, and 4) role modeling community engagement and activism.

Due to the limited research on the role of mentors in CCE, this investigation is also informed by past studies on the role of social support in CCE. In a qualitative study of 30 racially/ethnically diverse college students, participants reported that receiving social support from others motivated them to engage in social justice efforts (Guerrero et al., 2021). One participant described how receiving social support helped her overcome her nervousness to engage in activism. Another participant described how others involved in social justice efforts provided the support she needed to also stand up for injustices. In a quantitative study, Albarracin and Valeva (2011) examined how the political participation of primarily (91%) first-generation Mexicans and Mexican Americans ($N = 156$; $M_{\text{age}} = 30.31$) in central Illinois was associated with their relationships with Anglo-Americans. Participants who perceived their lives to be impacted by Anglo-Americans (i.e., how much they think what happens generally to non-Hispanic White people in their city or town has to do with what happens in their lives) and also attended social functions with Anglo-Americans had a higher likelihood of contacting a public

official and contributing to a political campaign (Albarracin & Valeva, 2011). Further, in a qualitative study of 16 DREAMers in California, some participants described how experiencing support from peers and professors helped instill self-efficacy and served as a link to engaging in critical action (DeAngelo et al. 2016). Additionally, within a sample of undergraduate college students ($N = 368$) with varying ethnicities and statuses ($n = 89$ Hispanic DACA students; $n = 88$ Hispanic U.S. citizens; $n = 191$ non-Hispanic Whites with U.S. citizenship), more social support (e.g., role models, mentors, peers) for pursuing social justice or political engagement predicted higher activism orientation among students with citizenship, but not for Hispanic DACA students (Cadenas et al., 2018). This may have been due to some of the social and legal risks of having DACA status (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

As there are few studies that examined the role of mentors in CCE, I also reviewed the literature on how non-parental adults shape other aspects of sociopolitical political development, such as critical reflection and sociopolitical efficacy, which have been found to be significantly related to critical action (Diemer & Li, 2011; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014). In a qualitative study of 60 high school adolescents of color from predominately low socioeconomic backgrounds, Clark and Seider (2017) found that teachers supported youth's reflection of social inequities through curricula that question dominant narratives (e.g., giving new perspectives on issues). Similarly, a quantitative, cross-sectional study of 665 low-income, White, African American, Latino, and Asian American youth (15- to 25-year-olds) found a significant positive association between youth sociopolitical control (i.e., self-efficacy of feeling empowered to affect social change and policy) and teacher sociopolitical support (i.e., teachers emphasizing forms of injustices in the classroom, creating discussions of social and political issues, presenting different opinions, emphasizing that students make their own opinions about issues; Diemer & Li, 2011).

Additionally, in a nationally representative predominately White sample of U.S. ninth-grade students ($N = 2,774$; $M_{age} = 14$), Godfrey and Grayman (2014) found that an open classroom climate (i.e., classroom discussions of social and political issues) was positively associated with sociopolitical efficacy (i.e., belief that they could work with others to make positive changes in school and in politics) as well as greater participation in volunteer community activities.

Although these findings point to how supportive adults can contribute to youth critical consciousness development, more research is needed on how nonparental adults facilitate youth's CCE.

While some adults play a positive role in young people's CCE, other adults have the potential to hinder youth CCE. This has been a common experience among Black and Latinx youth activists as adults who presents themselves as allies may instead challenge and delegitimize young people's theories of political action and social change efforts (Murch, 2010; Taylor, 2016). We see examples of this during the civil rights movement where there were clashes between the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the older activists within the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who perceived the SNCC's vision of Black progress unrealistic (Taylor, 2016). Within the Latinx community, there have also been friction between the visions of older activist groups and groups led by younger Latinos with a more inclusive vision. Marisa Franco, co-founder of Mijente, a Latinx political organizing organization largely focused on young Latinx people and grassroots/digital organizing, described this divide during an interview, "Oftentimes we're asked in movement to leave certain parts of ourselves — our race, our sexuality, etc. — at the door in order to participate in Latino activism" (Betancourt, 2021, p. 3).

Although youth enter activist movements with their conceptions of political action, adults often step in to shape it into something more “appropriate.” Informed by two participatory action research studies on youth activists, Clay and Turner (2021) found that youth’s progressive and “radical” visions of change were at times undermined by their supposed adult partners. We also see recent historical examples, such as when Reverend Al Sharpton condemned youth demonstrators as “thugs” in response to their protests against the police shooting of a teenager, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. Taylor (2016) questioned what gave Al Sharpton and larger organizations like the NAACP the authority to tell young people how they *should* respond to police violence. Similar commentary was at play after the police shooting of Brianna Taylor and George Floyd in 2020.

The potential for some adults to impede and desire to manage youth’s social activism is in line with the hierarchical nature of traditional adult-youth relationships, in which adults interact with youth from a deficit perspective (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). In a qualitative study of 26 racially/ethnically diverse adolescents ($M = 17.35$), Buehler et al. (2020) found that negative adult characteristics and practices, such as adult-driven approaches, prohibited connection. Additionally, youth reported that these adult-driven approaches had a negative impact on their wellbeing, specifically decreased self-esteem, decreased motivation, and disconnect from adults (Buehler et al., 2020). Critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan, 2017) challenges traditional approaches to youth-adult relationships and describes the importance of mentors working alongside youth to examine and address the systemic structures that place youth of color on the margins. An in-depth understanding of how adults shape CCE, including how they both support and impede critical engagement, among Latinx immigrant-origin youth could better inform how adults serve as allies in youth social change efforts.

Study Rationale

As the parameter of youth CCE are typically set by adults, there is a need to better understand the types of individual and collective behaviors that can transform systems of inequality (i.e., critical civic engagement) from the perspective of youth. Past studies focusing on related concepts, such as critical consciousness, have focused predominately on youth's reflection of structural inequities and much less on how they take action to combat those inequities (Diemer et al., 2021; Heberle et al., 2020). Within studies that examined action, researchers primarily focused on traditional conceptualizations of activism (e.g., in-person protesting, contacting public officials, signing petitions; Diemer et al., 2021). In recent historical examples of CCE, Latinx immigrant-origin youth mobilized over the internet and used social media to address pressing community issues, such as the deportations of family members (Wides-Muñoz, 2018), yet only one study has examined online activism among immigrant-origin young people (Wong et al., 2019). This is a glaring gap in the literature.

CCE has the potential to encompass a broad range of behaviors, but these conceptualizations also needed to be understood within the context of Latinx immigrant-origin youth. Latinx immigrant-origin youth must uniquely decipher their place within the U.S. civic context, encompassing their hyphenated multi-national identities and potential familial obligations, which may differ drastically from the experiences of non-immigrant, White, middle-class U.S. young adults who are typically captured in the civic engagement literature. Because the context of Latinx immigrant-origin youth may make some forms of CCE more accessible than others, it is important for them, who best understand their context, to set their own definitions of the types of individual and collective behaviors that can transform systems of inequality.

Further, past researchers have studied the CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth by primarily focusing on the types of behaviors or frequency of involvement. Few researchers have focused on youth's developmental experiences, including how mentors shape engagement. Although few studies have examined the role of mentors in CCE, there is preliminary evidence on the positive role of mentors in youth critical engagement (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Fullam, 2017; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021). However, there is limited understanding on how this process takes place and, to my knowledge, no studies have directly examined how mentors shape the CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth. There is also the potential for mentors and other adults to impede CCE (Clay & Turner, 2021). To create a more equitable society, it is essential to not only understand how marginalized youth act to address inequitable systems, but also how they may be supported or impeded to work within systems that were not inherently created for them.

To address these gaps, I conducted a qualitative investigation of the CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth, guided by the theoretical framework of youth sociopolitical development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). The research questions explored were: (1) How do Latinx immigrant-origin youth conceptualize and participate in CCE? (2) How do mentors shape the CCE of immigrant-origin Latinx youth? (3) How do adults hinder CCE? Examining how immigrant-origin Latinx youth participate in CCE will more accurately capture how this group enacts social change. Additionally, through a deeper understanding of how non-parental adults shape CCE, future interventions could be developed to better equip, support, and mobilize Latinx youth within the community.

Method

In this study, Latinx immigrant-origin youth reported the individual and collective behaviors they engaged in to transform systems of inequality (i.e., critical civic engagement), how mentors shaped their engagement, and ways that adults have hindered their engagement. I employed qualitative methods, using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), to develop a theory of CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth. Unlike earlier variations of grounded theory that describe theories as emerging apart from the researcher, this approach uses a social constructivist epistemology and assumes that the researcher is part of the world being studied and the data that are collected. Thus, the researcher offers an interpretation instead of an exact picture (Andrews, 2012; Charmaz, 2014), and as such, it is important to begin with a reflection of my own positioning within this research study. Because my positionality, as well as my collaborators', influenced how the study developed, I recruited research team members and a youth advisory board of differing ages and Latinx nationalities to collaborate in the development of the interview questions. This also provided a more expansive framing of the experiences of participants in the data collection and analysis process. More details on the composition of the youth advisory board and research assistants are described in relevant sections.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity Statement

My interests in this topic and experiences from my upbringing informed the entire research process: the research questions, the interview questions and survey measures, the way I perceive participant experiences, and how I interpret the findings. I migrated to the United States from Cuba at age six and grew up in a low-income immigrant household in Miami, Florida, speaking only Spanish at home. My knowledge of the immigrant Latinx experience is colored by growing up in an immigrant-welcoming city and attending K-12 schools with predominantly

Latinx populations (80-95%). Being bilingual and Latina was well within the norm of my community. Further, during my undergraduate studies, I was highly involved in my university's service and leadership office and completed a year of national service through the AmeriCorps VISTA program. As an immigrant from Cuba, I've been consistently fascinated with politics and the exercise of critiquing and holding government accountable. Several of my family members were political prisoners for dissenting against the Cuban government. Since becoming a U.S. citizen in my early 20s, I have been a highly engaged voter and an engaged civic participant in each city I have lived in. I have most recently become involved in grassroots organizing efforts in Chicago as well as in local/national political campaigns. The participants in this study, however, hold varying nationalities, immigration histories, immigration statuses, generational statuses, and experiences with civic engagement while being several years younger.

Context of Study and Collaborating Institutions

As data collection took place between October 2022 and March 2023, it is important to note that participants described recent historical events (e.g., the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, the Covid-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd by police in 2020, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022) and how they impacted their sociopolitical development. Collaborators included partners at academic institutions and non-governmental organizations. I collaborated with two universities in large urban areas, a large public institution in Florida designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (61% Latinx; approximately one of every five undergraduates is a first-generation college student) and a private mid-sized Catholic, predominately White institution in Illinois (21% Latinx; approximately one of every three undergraduates is a first-generation college student). Both are primarily commuter schools. I also partnered with a national mentoring organization, which creates research-based resources and advocates for youth

mentoring throughout the U.S. The national organization develops and supports affiliate offices (currently in 22 states) aimed at expanding and fostering quality mentoring relationships. All affiliates are non-partisan, public-private organizations which serve as a clearinghouse for training, resources, public awareness, and advocacy, as well serving as a link between the national organization and local community-based organizations. Affiliates also advance the quality of mentoring locally through building relationships with mentoring programs—existing and new ones—to provide trainings and technical assistance grounded in evidence-based practices. I worked with staff in the affiliate offices in Florida, California, and New York to recruit participants from their partners. The Texas office is not fully established yet, but we partnered with a mentoring program in which most of the mentors are Latino men to target a more difficult group to recruit.

Participants

I used two sampling strategies, maximum variation and theoretical sampling to select and recruit participants. Through the maximum variation approach (i.e., a type of purposive sampling which aims to include diverse variations within a sample; Miles & Huberman, 1994), I selected participants who captured the most heterogeneity in their demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, country of origin, generational status, geographic location; Conlon et al., 2020; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This approach aimed to portray the commonalities in CCE and mentoring across a diverse array of immigrant-origin Latinx youth. Additionally, within the theoretical sampling approach, pertinent information was sought by selecting new research participants who may expand the emerging themes, shifting between sampling, data collection, and analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Conlon et al., 2020). In other words, some sampling priorities were established ahead of data collection through the maximum variation approach, but participant selection was also

informed by the ongoing grounded theory analysis as guided by theoretical sampling. For example, after several interviews, I sought participants who identified as men because they were less represented in the sample (i.e., maximum variation sampling). I also selected participants who had varying levels of CCE based on the screening measures and emerging themes (i.e., theoretical sampling approach). I did this by looking at how frequently the potential participants engaged in critical action and online sociopolitical action through their responses to the screening measures. I excluded two participants for not having participated in any form of critical action or online sociopolitical action. After also conducting a few interviews with participants who only took part in online sociopolitical action and finding that they had less to say about their activism or the role of adults, I prioritized interviewing participants who engaged in both. I excluded one participant for only participating in online sociopolitical action. I continued to use a mixture of maximum variation and theoretical sampling until I reached data saturation (i.e., when I no longer found new information from subsequent interviews).

Staff at the national mentoring organization and its affiliate offices conducted outreach to local mentoring programs in California, Florida, New York, and Texas, all of which had potentially eligible youth participants. Recruitment took place through email announcements in which the staff shared a flyer in English or Spanish (see Appendix A) to youth and others within the organization's networks who are either youth or work with youth. Recruitment of youth at the university partners took place through introductory courses, email announcements, flyers posted around the campus, and verbal announcements at Latinx-serving student organizations and centers. Additionally, I recruited participants through conducting outreach with people or organizations in my own social network, sharing a flyer with youth and others within their networks who are either youth or work with youth. Most participants were recruited through my

partnerships through the national mentoring organization ($n = 13$), followed my collaborating universities ($n = 6$), and my social network ($n = 2$). My university/community partners and I targeted recruitment in California, Florida, Illinois, Texas, and New York because of the large, but diverse populations of Latinx immigrant-origin youth (Noe-Bustamante & Flores, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). However, as shown below, some participants came from other states because of the wide reach of the community organization that assisted with recruitment.

Participants were eligible for the study if: (a) they identified as Hispanic, Latino/a or Latinx, (b) they or at least one of their parents were born outside of the United States, (c) were between the ages of 18 and 24, and (d) were interested in making a change in their community. This study was approved by the DePaul University institutional review board (research protocol # IRB-2022-596). Interested participants first completed an online screening questionnaire in either English or Spanish to assess eligibility based on the above inclusion criteria (see Appendix B). Participants received the option to adjust the survey language to English or Spanish after clicking the initial link, but the default setting was based on the browser in which they were using. If participants met the inclusion criteria, they were directed to a consent form in which they provided consent to participate in the study and whether they agreed to be voice recorded. If they consented to participate, they were asked to complete a demographic and civic engagement questionnaire (see Appendix C) to assist in the sampling process (e.g., age, gender, generational status, nationalities, civic engagement activities, online activism) and to provide their contact information to schedule the interview.

The sample was composed of older adolescents, 21 immigrant-origin Latinxs whose ages ranged from 18 to 24 years old ($M = 20.33$) and lived in various regions of the U.S., predominately in the Southeast and the Midwest. The largest group of participants lived in

Florida or Illinois. As seen on Table 1, most of the sample identified as women ($n = 17$), and the remaining participants identified as men ($n = 3$) and gender fluid ($n = 1$). Participants identified with multiple sexual orientations; nearly half were members of the LGBTQ+ community: Bicurious ($n = 1$), Queer ($n = 2$), Asexual ($n = 2$), Bisexual ($n = 5$), and Heterosexual ($n = 11$). All participants identified as Hispanic, Latina/o, or Latinx, and described a broad range of racial identities: Black or of African Descent ($n = 1$), Native/Indigenous to the Americas (North America, South America Caribbean; $n = 3$), White or of European descent ($n = 4$), Multiracial or a combination of races ($n = 9$), and other terms ($n = 4$) in which participants described their racial identity, such as Brown, Mexican, and Hispanic. All participants were either enrolled in college ($n = 17$) or obtained a bachelor's ($n = 3$) or a masters degree ($n = 1$) during the time of the study. Participants' and their parent's countries of origin represented North America, South America, and the Caribbean, with the largest group being Mexicans ($n = 10$). During the interviews, most participants described themselves growing up "low-income." Over half the participants ($n = 11$) did not have a parent who graduated high school, and only five participants had a parent with a college degree. As a result, parental employment was typically in low-wage positions commonly held by immigrants (e.g., construction worker, landscaping housekeeper).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Participant | Age | Gender | Racial Identity | Sexual Orientation | Educational Attainment | Grew Up | Current Location | Gen Status | Parents' Country of Origin | Parents' Educational Attainment & Employment |
|-------------|-----|--------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Alejandra | 19 | W | Other: Mexican | Heterosexual | In college (2 nd year) | TX | TX | 1 st (3) | Mexico | <i>M</i> : < HS, seamstress. <i>SF</i> : HS grad, Highway roads inspector. |
| Allison | 24 | W | Multiracial | Heterosexual | In masters program | CA | CA | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M</i> : HS grad, Dental receptionist. <i>F</i> : < HS, Construction. |
| Camila | 19 | W | Black | Bisexual | In college (1 st year) | FL | FL | 2 nd | Brazil, Honduras | <i>M</i> : < HS, cleaning. <i>F</i> : < HS, Landscaping. |
| Catalina | 23 | W | Indigenous, White | Heterosexual | Bachelor's degree | MD & TX | DC | 1 st (5) | Colombia, Ecuador | <i>M</i> : Bachelors degree, IT help. <i>F</i> : Bachelor's degree, Data center employee. |
| Dani | 18 | GF | Indigenous, White | Bisexual | In college (1 st year) | VA | FL | 2 nd | Honduras | <i>M</i> : Some HS but no degree, NA. <i>F</i> : < HS, Restaurant industry. |
| Fatima | 20 | W | Other: Brown | Queer | In college (2 nd year) | FL | FL | 2 nd * (9) | Colombia, Cuba | <i>M</i> : Bachelors degree**, Bookkeeper. <i>F</i> : < HS, Deceased. |
| Fernanda | 20 | W | Indigenous | Bisexual | In college (3 rd year) | NY | NY | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M</i> : < HS, Housewife. <i>F</i> : Some HS but no degree. Laborer. |
| Gabriela | 18 | W | Multiracial | Bisexual | In college (1 st year) | CO | MA | 2 nd | El Salvador | <i>M</i> : < HS, N/A. <i>F</i> : < HS, Landscape. |
| Laura | 19 | W | Indigenous, White | Heterosexual | In college (2 nd year) | FL | FL | 1 st (<1) | Puerto Rico | <i>M</i> : Technical degree, Preschool teacher. <i>F</i> : HS grad, A/C tech. |
| Luciana | 18 | W | White | Heterosexual | In college (1 st year) | IL | IL | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M</i> : HS grad, N/A. <i>F</i> : Technical degree. mechanic. |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|---|--|--------------|--------------------------------------|------|----|---------------------|------------------------|--|
| Mia | 20 | W | Multiracial, Asian, Indigenous, White | Bicurious | In college (3 rd year) | IL | IL | 2.5 | Peru | <i>M:</i> Bachelors degree, Family advocate for a domestic violence agency. <i>F:</i> Bachelors degree, Works two jobs in healthcare. |
| Nicolas | 21 | M | Multiracial, Latino | Queer | In college (3 rd year) | TX | VA | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M:</i> < HS. Office Secretary. <i>F:</i> HS grad. Manager. |
| Olivia | 21 | W | Indigenous, White | Asexual | In college (4 th year) | VA | VA | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M:</i> < HS. Stay-at-home mom. <i>F:</i> < HS, Contractor. |
| Samuel | 19 | M | White | Heterosexual | In college (1 st year) | TX | TX | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M:</i> Some HS but did not graduate. Cashier. <i>F:</i> < HS, Construction. |
| Santiago | 22 | M | Other: Hispanic | Heterosexual | In college (transfer) | Lima | NY | 1st (17) | Peru | <i>M:</i> HS grad, housekeeper. <i>F:</i> HS grad, N/A (In Peru). |
| Sara | 23 | W | White | Bisexual | Bachelor's degree | FL | FL | 2 nd | Colombia | <i>M:</i> HS grad. Self- employed beauty salesperson. <i>F:</i> HS grad, Stonemason. |
| Sofia | 21 | W | Multiracial, White | Heterosexual | In college (3 rd year) | FL | FL | 2.5 | Guatemala | <i>M:</i> Graduate degree, Licensed clinical social worker & psychotherapist. <i>F:</i> HS grad, Disability. |
| Valentina | 18 | W | Indigenous | Asexual | In college (1 st year) | FL | FL | 2 nd | Colombia, Nicaragua | <i>M:</i> Graduate degree, Nurse. <i>F:</i> Technical degree, Construction manager. |
| Vanessa | 19 | W | White | Heterosexual | In college (1 st year) | IL | IL | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M:</i> < HS, Nail Technician. <i>F:</i> < HS, NA. |
| Victoria | 21 | W | Other: Hispanic | Heterosexual | In college (4 th year) | IL | IL | 2 nd | Mexico | <i>M:</i> < HS, Stay-at-home mom. <i>F:</i> < HS. Chef. |
| Ximena | 24 | W | Indigenous | Heterosexual | Master's degree | FL | VA | 1 st (1) | Mexico | <i>M:</i> Bachelors degree, housekeeper. <i>F:</i> Bachelors degree, business owner. |

Note. W = Woman, M = Man, GF = Gender Fluid. Educational Attainment: Current status (Year in school if in undergrad). Gen Status = Generational Status: 1st = Born outside of the U.S. (age of arrival in years in parenthesis), 2nd = Both parents were born outside the U.S, 2.5 = one parent was born outside of the U.S. *Born in the U.S. but lived in Colombia from age 6-9 due to mother's deportation. M = Mother, F = Father, SF = Stepfather. N/A = no answer or unknown. **Foreign degree did apply in the U.S.

Procedures

Data collection took place between October 2022 and March 2023. Among those who were selected to be in the study, an interview date and time was scheduled via text message, email, or phone call (depending on their preference). Participants completed a one-on-one Zoom interview. Interviews ranged from 50 to 90 minutes ($M = 72$ minutes). To ensure confidentiality, a unique Zoom room link was generated for each participant. All participants consented to the interview being audio recorded. Participants had the option to conduct the interview in either English or Spanish, but all opted for the interview to take place primarily in English. All participants were bilingual in English and Spanish and at times used Spanish phrases. Each participant confirmed an email or phone number at the end of the interview to receive a \$20 gift card (Amazon, Target, or Starbucks) as an appreciation for their time. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company, Temi, and were available via a password protected online platform. Each transcription was checked for accuracy, de-identified, and labeled with a participant identification (ID) number before downloading it as a Microsoft Word document. All downloaded transcripts were kept in a password protected online folder and uploaded to Dedoose, a web-based qualitative analysis software. A separate document linked ID numbers to participant names and contact information and was saved in a separate password protected online folder only available to me, the project lead.

Materials

Screening Measures

See Appendix C: Interview Screening Questionnaire for the full list of measures. These measures were used to assist with sampling.

Demographics. Participants were asked to report the following demographic information: age, gender, race, zip code, whether they are currently in school, highest degree or level of school completed, parental education and employment, and any applicable Latin-American nationalities. If they were born outside of the United States, they were also asked to report how old they were upon arrival.

Critical Action. This 4-item Critical Action (Sociopolitical Participation) subscale of the Short Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS-S; Rapa et al., 2020) assessed whether participants were involved in CCE in the past year (e.g., participated in a civil rights group or organization; joined a protest march, political demonstrations, or political meeting). Participants reported how often they were involved in each activity in the last year on a 5-point behavioral frequency scale (0 = *never did this* to 4 = *at least once a week*). A sample item is “Contacted a public official by phone, mail, or email to tell him or her how you felt about a social or political issue.” This measure was selected because all forms of action are available to immigrants, regardless of status. The CCS-S measure was validated with a racially/ethnically diverse (predominately Black/African American) sample of elementary, middle, and high school youth attending public schools in the southeastern region of the U.S. and demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$; Rapa et al., 2020). The longer version of this subscale was validated with a racially/ethnically diverse (predominately Black/African American) sample of youth ranging from 13- to 19-years- old and demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$; Diemer et al., 2017), and has been used with a racially/ethnically diverse sample of university students between the ages of 18 and 24 at two timepoints ($\alpha = .85$; $\alpha = .86$; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021).

Digital Sociopolitical Action. The Youth Sociopolitical Action Scale for Social Media (SASSM; Wilf & Wray-Lake, 2023) measures youth’s efforts to challenge oppression and

injustice online. Three items were selected to assess how often participants engaged in certain activities in the past year (e.g., raise awareness about a social or political issue on social media). Participants reported how often they were involved in each activity in the last year on a 5-point behavioral frequency scale (0 = *never did this* to 4 = *at least once a week*). A sample item is “encourage your followers to take social or political action (online or in-person).” This measure was validated with a sample of immigrant-origin high school students (ages 14-17) and emerging adults (ages 18-25).

Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D: Interview Protocol for full list of questions) was developed in collaboration with the youth advisory board of immigrant-origin Latinx adolescents, composed of six members ($M_{\text{age}} = 17.2$ in fall 2021; 50% women; 50% men) from diverse Latinx nationalities—Argentine, Cuban, Honduran, Mexican, Nicaraguan, and Peruvian. After the initial brainstorming session with the advisory board via Zoom, I crafted a draft of the interview guide based on their suggestions and previous studies (Dalton, 2020; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021). The youth advisory board reviewed the updated draft of the interview guide and provided suggested changes, which I incorporated. Lastly, three pilot interviews were conducted prior to the start of data collection, and adjustments to the questions or sequence were made accordingly.

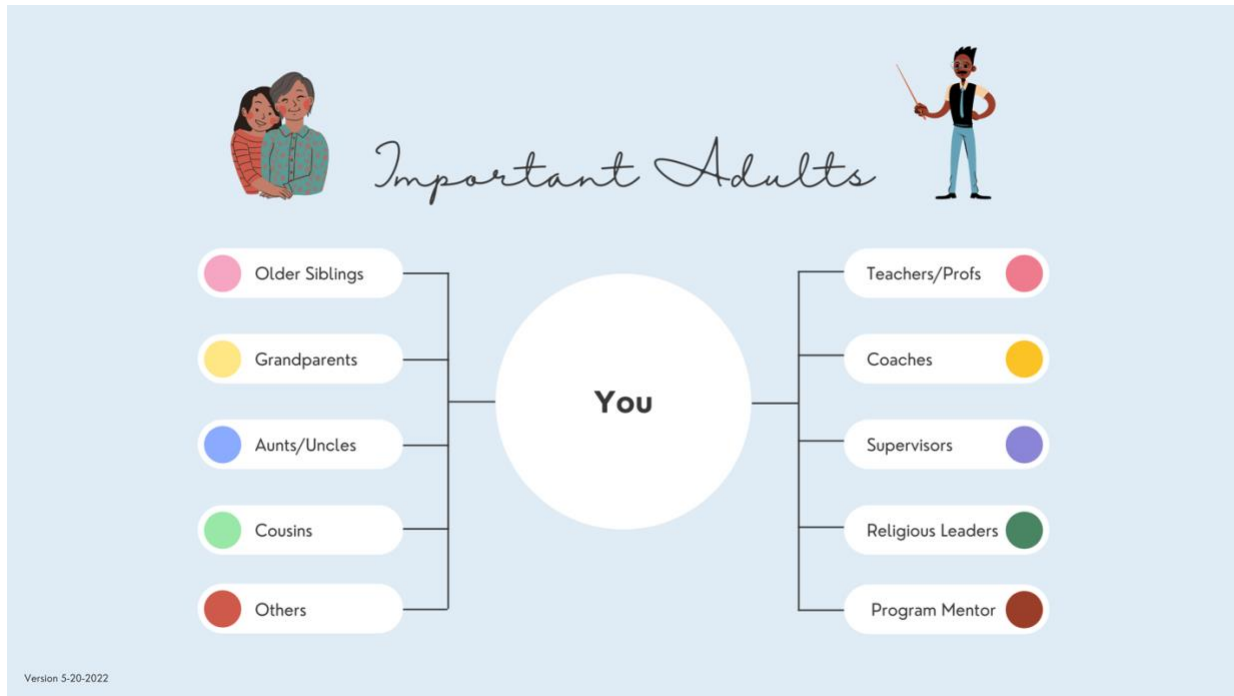
Questions captured how participants conceptualize CCE, what civic involvement looked like for them, how important adults (i.e., mentors) support their CCE, and how adults have hindered engagement. To start, I asked participants to tell me about themselves in an effort to develop rapport. Next, I asked participants about the civic activities they engage in by first asking “What social issues do you care about in your community or in society in general?” Then,

I asked more specific questions around their involvement. For example, they were asked: “Could you describe anything you’ve done in the past to get involved with these issues or other issues?” Other questions noted back to the experiences they describe in the screener survey. For example, “Tell me about _____ [e.g., protest, time you were involved with a political organization]?” Follow up questions included: “How did that experience go?” and “Have you used social media or other online spaces to do your community/activism work?”

Thirdly, I asked about the role of mentors in their CCE: “I would like to learn more about the most meaningful and important adults who have supported you in the community/activism work that you’ve done (or been doing).” They were asked to select from a list of potential meaningful adults (see Figure 1) and asked: “Who here is someone who cares about you, believes in you, and has supported your exploration of the social issues you care about?” and then they were asked to “Add a star to who has supported your community or activism work (could be in the past or present).” Follow-up questions included descriptions of the relationship and how they were supported. Before finishing this section, I also inquired about whether adults had been a hindrance to their CCE: “Can you think of a time when an adult got in the way of you doing activism work? It could be someone you already mentioned or a different person.” I followed up by asking more specifics on what happened, as well if other adults as came to mind.

Figure 1

Graphic paired with interview guide, potential important adults in the lives of participants.



Lastly, I asked participants to conceptualize CCE broadly. I started by asking them to think through a scenario: “Your city is considering a change to the law that you consider very unjust or harmful; what do you think you could do?” Some follow up questions included, “Would you try to do something yourself?” “Would you try to do something with a group?” “What type of group?” Who is in the group? What would take place online or over social media?” I also asked them about ways they thought one could broadly tackle social issues: “Beyond this scenario, in your opinion, what are ways that people can make positive changes in their community?” with follow up questions focused on different tactics.

Data Analysis

The grounded theory process is not linear, employing a reciprocal process of data collection and theory refinement. Within a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), the epistemological foundation—social constructivism—assumes that grounded theory

does not develop apart from the researcher. The researcher offers an interpretation instead of an exact picture (Charmaz, 2014). In accordance to the approach described by Charmaz (2014), the analysis was conducted in three steps—open coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding—to explore the three research questions. Analysis was conducted by me and two trained research assistants using Dedoose (version 9.0.86), a web-based qualitative analysis software. One of my research assistants, who also identified as a Latina immigrant, was 19 years old when we started data analysis, and was a member of the youth advisory board. My second research assistant did not identify as an immigrant or Latina but was 19 years old when we started data analysis. All three of us are involved in different forms of activism.

After the first eight interviews, open coding was conducted. We coded the data through an inductive approach, allowing for an initial conceptualization of ideas based on the three research questions while also being open to any new ideas that emerged from the data. Within Dedoose, codes were organized as “child” codes, which were placed within broader categories (i.e., “parent” codes). Each code had a detailed description and we met weekly to discuss our coding agreements/disagreements, the coding process, and updates to the code descriptions. Upon any disagreements, we talked through our differing points of view until we reached a consensus. We wrote detailed memos (i.e., notes) throughout the coding process to document decisions at each step. After developing the emerging codes, codes were separated, sorted, and synthesized into a coding framework. The coding framework included a definition of each code, which we organized into categories and sub-categories. The memos included every iteration of the coding framework and became the basis for the grounded theory further developed in the next two steps. The framework generated during the open coding phase was followed by focused coding and more data collection.

Focused coding involved identifying and finalizing the set of most relevant codes to categorize the data. The research assistants and I reviewed each previously coded transcript (first eight) and revised the codes based on the coding framework. Further data collection took place to expand upon the emerging codes, adjust code definitions, and/or collapse codes when needed. My research assistants and I continued to meet weekly through this stage to discuss our coding agreements and disagreements to reach consensus. During this phase, we realized that the adults who impeded CCE were typically not considered mentors, so we added an additional research question (i.e., How do adults hinder CCE) based on emerging themes and adjusted the codes and categories accordingly. We wrote memos to document our decisions throughout the focused coding phase and continued this iterative process of data collection and refinement of the coding framework until new interviews no longer gleaned novel information (i.e., reaching data saturation). Upon completion of focused coding, I conducted the third and final step, theoretical coding.

Theoretical coding is the process of creating a theory grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014). Through theoretical coding (i.e., selective coding, conceptual coding), I identified how the categories were related to each other through diagramming the central category and its major processes (Saldaña, 2021) as they relate to my three research questions. For example, when describing the findings of my first research question, I stated the central idea that Latinx immigrant-origin youth challenge structural inequities through raising social consciousness and engaging in collective action, as well as the major processes within raising social consciousness and collective action. My research team and I also met to discuss this last step and captured our discussions through additional memos. The grounded theory presented in the results section is

the finalized version of the conceptual diagram, which describes how Latinx immigrant-origin youth take part in CCE, how mentors shape their CCE, and how adults have hindered it.

Establishing Trustworthiness of Findings

Shenton (2004) describes four strategies to establish trustworthiness specific to qualitative analysis: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Establishing credibility (i.e., establishing whether the findings reflect participants' realities) can be obtained through close familiarity with the culture of participants. Two of the three coders, as well all members of the youth advisory board, are members of Latinx immigrant-origin communities. The coders also engaged in negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), in which we actively looked for examples within the data that contradicted the findings in order to think critically about the results and then make any needed revisions. This process was chronicled with the memos described earlier. For example, we discussed if it typically meant that mentors agreed with participants' stances on issues when they provided a space for reflection and dialogue. However, as we saw examples of some disagreements, which were still positive for participants' reflection, we expanded the definition to include how reflection and dialogue did not always mean holding the same stances as their mentors. There was space for discussion, regardless of agreement. I also conducted steps to enhance transferability, which refers to a detailed description of the context that allows the reader to decide whether the context of this study can apply to future contexts. I provided a detailed description of the participants, their contexts (e.g., age, generational status) and the period in which data were collected. Dependability, which refers to the ability to repeat the study was established through a detailed description of the methods and the subsequent coding steps and decisions, as outlined above. Confirmability, which is the process of demonstrating the steps taken to ensure findings truly emerged from the data, was

established by providing a description of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions and a description of methodological limitations.

Results

Overview of Findings and Youth Context for Critical Civic Engagement

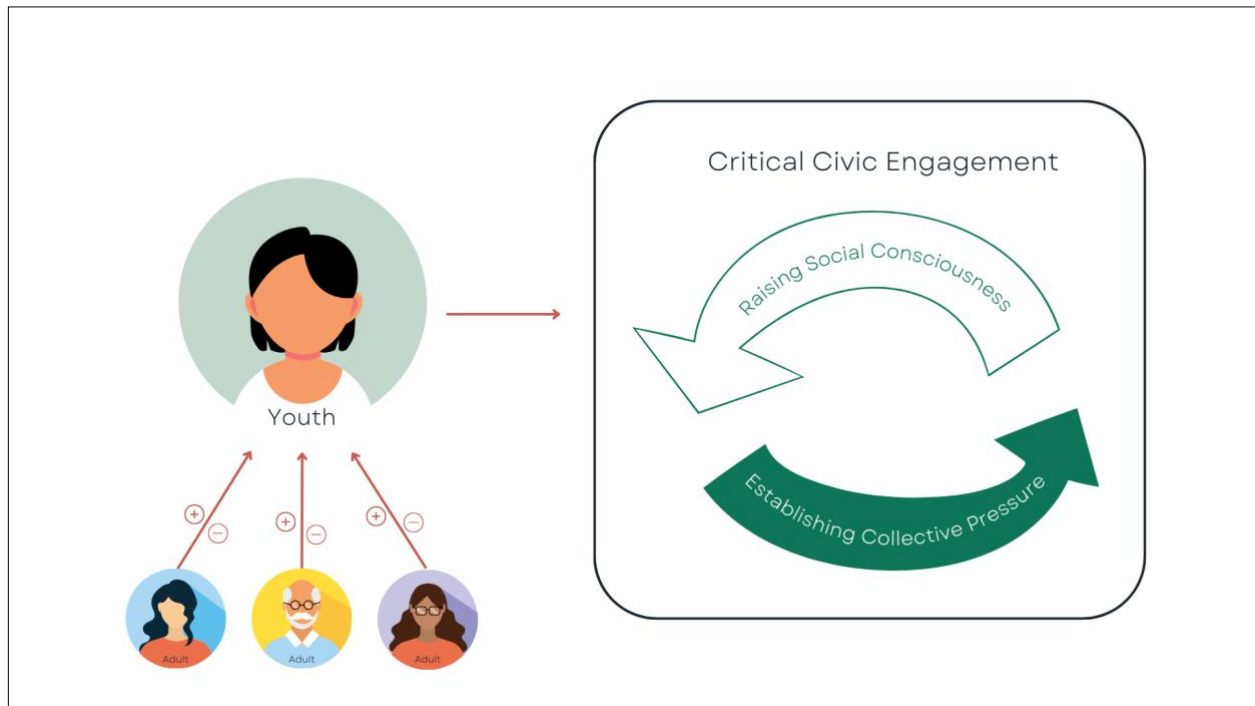
The purpose of this study was to understand (1) how immigrant-origin Latinx youth conceptualize and engage in individual and collective behaviors aimed to transform systemic inequalities (i.e., critical civic engagement), (2) how mentors have shaped their CCE, and (3) how adults may hinder their CCE. Through a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), I found that Latinx immigrant-origin youth's critical civic engagement encompassed actions that raised social consciousness and established collective pressure. Further, participants' CCE was positively shaped by natural mentors who modeled community engagement and activism, provided emotional support, equipped youth through instrumental support, provided space for reflection and dialogue, and arranged opportunities for action. Findings also revealed that adults can be an impediment to CCE by discouraging the discussion of social issues or creating a difficult environment for frank conversations, minimizing youth concerns about social issues, and becoming barriers for youth to take action. Figure 2 displays an overview of the study findings.

Participants described how aspects of their identity (e.g., racial/ethnic identity, gender, sexuality) or life experiences (e.g., a school shooting taking place in their community, economic issues within their family) led to a desire to address social issues (e.g., immigrant rights, abortion access, gun violence). Participants also described learning about social issues in high school and college. They discussed how learning of social issues informed their engagement and cross-group solidarity with oppressed groups both outside and within the Latinx community (e.g., Black folks, women, LGBTQ+ folks). For example, participants who did not identify as Afro-Latinx described how they learned about systemic racism, as well as actions they took to support

the movement for Black lives. Thus, cross-group solidarity was salient; holding within-group identity was not necessary for the support of a social issue.

Figure 2

Forms of critical civic engagement and how they can be supported or hindered by adults.



Critical Civic Engagement: Conceptualization and Participation

Participants reported multiple ways in which individual and collective action can address the social issues that they care about. This section encompasses both how participants conceptualized CCE and how they were previously and currently engaged, as the two were often intertwined. The actions that participants engaged in typically had one of two goals: (i) raising social consciousness and/or (ii) establishing collective pressure to promote social change. These social change strategies co-occurred, were not mutually exclusive, and built upon each other.

Raising Social Consciousness

Youth in this study described the importance of raising social consciousness through educating others—in person and online—about important social issues and considering how they

can mobilize to address them. Social issues described among participants included immigrant rights, racism, abortion access, gun violence, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change, and homelessness. Participants engaged in raising social consciousness through (i) activism, (ii) protests and marches, (iii) forming affinity groups, (iv) conversations, and (v) media campaigns. Luciana, an 18-year-old woman, emphasized how learning about social issues can lead to action:

When people are brought...the actual information about the injustice...brought to them face to face...they can't run away from it. They actually have to do something about it.

Or if people around them are also doing something, then they can be like...see what this is about and join it themselves.

The educational campaigns participants created were designed with a broad audience in mind. Additionally, even though the primary focus was to raise social consciousness, participants also described how these approaches, at times, raised their own social consciousness.

Artivism. Raising social consciousness was at times done through artivism, which is when activism and art intersect. At around age 14 or 15, Luciana worked with a community organization that created art in her community to promote awareness about gun violence: “We made primarily mosaics, and we posted them up in like a public high school nearby my neighborhood here.” These projects were part of larger gun reform efforts in her hometown. Art can be used to spread a social message in a moving and eye-catching way.

Protests and Marches. Protests were described as a way to raise social consciousness about social issues. Participants described how engaging in protests raised social awareness in others and/or themselves. “Putting up signs...if that's allowed...it would always bring attention or awareness to what's going on,” said Gabriela, an 18-year-old woman. This is the case for those who learned about the protest through media coverage as well as those who attended it. Samuel,

a 19-year-old man, has recently started thinking more about social issues and attending a protest was his first step towards CCE: “I went to the female rights protest recently. It was last semester ‘cause after the abortion ban, it was a big deal here.” He described learning more about people’s experiences around abortion access during the pro-choice rally, and how it has now become something important to him. Samuel shared, “It made me think a lot ‘cause they were telling opinions that I had never heard before.” The experience was impactful and motivated him to become more informed and participate in work related to this issue. This was a recent experience, so he is still figuring out what that will look like for him in the future.

Forming Affinity Groups. Some participants described how creating or joining groups around a collective identity (e.g., being Latinx, being Queer) helped them to build community and organize towards raising social consciousness in their schools or community. Mia, a 20-year-old woman, is currently the co-president and founder of a Latinx club on her college campus: “We focus on different aspects of the college experience for Latino students, so like professional, academic development, social justice.” Sara co-founded a Pride Club in her high school:

It was like the first ever club of its kind. And I knew a lot of other kids in the Queer community that kind of needed support and we found it in school, but we kind of needed it in a more tangible way. So, we focused a lot on education, like sex education, because we weren’t really receiving inclusive sex education at the time. I remember the teacher even mentioned like the “gay lifestyle” when we watched a documentary about HIV and AIDS. So, I knew something was off and I always wanted to carve like a safe space.

Because Sara and the other members of the organization felt there was such limited understanding of LGBTQ+ people and their needs in their school, they determined starting a club to raise social consciousness was essential.

Conversations. Participants also described raising others' social consciousness through engaging in one-on-one conversations with members of the community (e.g., family, friends, neighbors) via physical and/or online spaces. Many participants shared experiences discussing social issues with friends and family. They often described challenging family's rhetoric when it felt homophobic or racist. Some study participants also discussed engaging in conversations with community members through their social justice work with organizations. Sara, a 23-year-old woman described the importance of talking to members of her community during in-person canvassing:

Cause a lot of people...they might read the national news, but they don't know what's going on in their own city and how much more local elections impact them directly. So, literally canvassing, going to your neighbors, and telling people, like, directly how they can be impacted by the law.

Participants described how canvassing informs members of their community about what is happening in local politics and how they can affect change. Further, study participants described online platforms (e.g., phone/text banking, Instagram Live, Zoom meetings) as a space to engage directly in conversations about social issues as well. One of Santiago's first community-based projects was ensuring that members of his community filled out the 2020 Census: "[We used the] college account on Instagram, and we do a story, Instagram Live, and we inform people about the Census and if you have any questions, we can respond at the same time." Having options to engage others online was especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic, which made it more difficult to interface with community members in person.

Media Campaigns. Participants reported how wide-reaching campaigns leveraging various media can raise social consciousness. These types of campaigns focused on both

traditional news outlets and social media platforms. Sara described volunteering with a national youth activism organization which engages the media to amplify their message:

We also do a lot with the media. So, whether that's like the organization itself doing interviews with journalists or putting the youth activists in touch with them for the different campaigns.

Speaking to journalists is a way to work with traditional news sources to teach others about current issues and expand messaging about a topic across outlets. Participants described campaigns which focused on issues with national attention (e.g., abortion access), but also those within a more localized context. Sara emphasized using media campaigns to help community members understand what is happening locally:

Getting people on Facebook or meeting them where they're at to provide that education. 'Cause a lot of people...they might read the national news, but they don't know what's going on in their own city and how much more like local elections impact them directly.

Many people may not know what is happening in their local context or even less, how to get involved in change efforts. As Victoria, a 21-year-old woman, expressed, "there's not necessarily a very detailed thing of like, 'Hey, this is how you start in activism'" even for those who may be interested in producing social change in their communities. Participants reported different forms of media can help fill the gap between awareness and involvement.

Participants described how social media can be used as an educational tool. Dani, an 18-year-old gender fluid person, described, "If there's like a certain post that talks about a real issue or a tragedy, I do as much as I can to like, to share it, to make more people see it and bring more awareness to that issue." Sara also discussed that story sharing across platforms as a powerful way to spread a message:

One of the main things now because of how the world has kind of turned is online and digital activism. So, one of the main things we do is story sharing. So, either like creating videos or posts or any type of engagement, like Instagram Lives, anything like that to draw people in or like tweets about our stories as people, like why a certain national issue could affect us. Like either if you're living with HIV and you face discrimination or like inaccessible healthcare or you know, being outed or affected for your sexuality or your gender. And basically, I think that's the most effective way of reaching other people that like don't have your identities...reaching out to them like human to human saying like, this is what I've experienced, and this is why it matters. And kind of making them see that through a personal lens rather than through a completely political like jargon kind of way.

Story sharing a more personal way to build awareness about an issue. By sharing personal experiences across platforms, social issues may be humanized and political jargon, which may make some posts less relevant or inaccessible to others who may think differently, is avoided.

Several interviews also touched upon social media's role in informing others about how to engage in person. After the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court decision, which overturned federal abortion protections, Ximena, a 24-year-old woman, discussed how social media helped her learn about different ways she and others could voice their dissent:

The whole *Roe v. Wade* was happening, literally people were already outside the Supreme Court after like an hour <laugh>. I think that's very important...amplifying it on social media also, like going to these gatherings and learning more or going to different protests.

Thus, social media is not only a tool to raise awareness about a topic online or engage in a conversation about a social issue, but it can also encourage mobilization.

Establishing Collective Pressure

Participants described how they established collective pressure by joining others to demand change on important issues in their local community or in society broadly. Some participants, like Olivia (a 21-year-old woman), emphasized the importance of taking action beyond just raising social consciousness: “If you’re just simply on social media, reposting stuff, that’s a good way to get knowledge out there, but if you actually wanna make a change, you have to put yourself out there.” “Putting yourself out there” includes engaging in a range of activities such as (i) protesting and marching (ii) forming affinity groups, (iii) crowd funding, (iv) soliciting power brokers, and (v) electoral expansion.

Protesting and Marching. Participants often joined or organized protests to address social issues or unjust policies in their communities. Protesting not only raises social consciousness, but also establishes collective pressure. Participants described joining large protests planned by organizations with a city-wide reach. Protests were at times described as a response to an ongoing issue (e.g., March for Our Lives Protests focused on increasing U.S. gun regulations) or a recent event (e.g., the shooting of George Floyd in 2020; the overturning of federal abortion protections in 2022). As Gabriela describes: “Protests for when Roe v. Wade was overturned; going out there making sure that our voice is heard, letting them know that what they did does not represent what the country wants.”

Some participants also described school-wide walkouts or demonstrations as protests in response to school shootings in their area. There was a shooting during Fernanda’s senior or junior year of high school: “When that happened it triggered us all to go marching in [the city]

and we would do this outburst kind of things to our teachers...we did it two or three times.”

Similarly, Laura, a 19-year-old woman, described her experience attending a school walkout to protest issues around school safety after a shooting in a neighboring high school:

When the [shooting] happened, I feel like everyone felt unsafe, more like less safe in school and I think that's what made me wanna attend because I think that, as a child, we're minors, we should be able to go to school and not get murdered.

Laura described how it felt to walk out of school with her classmates in response to how they were feeling:

We were all united for one purpose and no one was really fooling around. Everyone was serious. Everyone wanted to be heard. I guess it felt empowering. I guess like even though sometimes we are not heard, we had a way to...I guess people could see us.

This experience made Laura more interested in attending protests in the future. The collective effort made her feel seen and heard.

Nicolas, a 21-year-old man, who had typically been intimidated by the idea of a protesting because of his mixed status family and the police presence in the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, described his first experience in 2022:

It wasn't like a widespread protest, and it wasn't like on any major media channels or anything, but just being able to do that, I was like, okay, we can actually do stuff. Like I think I've always been scared of protesting, but this was not scary at all.

Participants also described organizing and taking part in protest-like events that did not look like a traditional protest (e.g., people holding signs). While Vanessa was in high school, her friend was mistaken for another person and was shot by a local gang member. In response to this

horrific incident, she along with a group of friends planned a neighborhood vigil to bring solace to her family while also continuing to bring attention to gun violence in their neighborhood.

Forming Affinity Groups. Participants also shared how they used affinity groups to establish collective pressure. In addition to raising social consciousness, the Pride club Sara founded in her high school created a space where LGBTQ+ students could advocate for their needs (e.g., more inclusive sex education). Sara's work around this issue in high school was the catalyst for further activism in college, and her career. Similar to Sara, Fatima, a 20-year-old woman, founded a student organization to support Queer students on her college campus. The organization provides a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ students while also working with a larger political organization to offer canvassing opportunities to the students:

I got in contact with them [the larger political organization] after the “Don't Say Gay Bill” was in the process of being passed. Since then, we've been canvassing like every single weekend basically for that, or like phone banking. And now we're doing mostly low-income housing for LGBT folks.

Together, the students in the organization have been organizing against numerous anti-LGBTQ+ policies in Florida. Participants in this study exemplified how affinity groups can be useful in establishing and maintaining collective pressure when addressing a social issue.

Crowd Funding. Many youth shared about experiences of collectively raising money for a cause or a campaign, typically over the internet (e.g., TikTok, Instagram). Nicolas described one fundraiser he has commonly seen on social media among others his age: “I think the bingo boards are really good. So, they'll be like... ‘I need somebody to donate \$1; here's like a \$5.’ And then they'll scratch it out and they'll put your name on there.” Nicolas talked about how contributing to this felt meaningful to him because it made him feel like he was part of

something bigger than what he alone could contribute. Fatima talked about how she was terrified to leave her house at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (the Spring and Summer of 2020), so she did not feel comfortable joining any of the BLM protests, but she learned over social media how she could help raise funds to support the movement from her home:

I found on social media that to raise funds for Black Lives Matter, the organization, you would just watch a YouTube video and let the ads play so that ad revenue would give the money to them. So, I thought that was so impactful. I think that aspect of like having people see this issue and literally had a community on social media finding ways to do and impact through this platform was really cool to me. I think that really motivated me cause like, wow, a community that's really passionate. That's pretty cool.

This experience was Fatima's first venture into any kind of work to support a social issue she cared about. She was inspired to contribute to this movement after reading about BLM over social media and found much satisfaction in joining others to enact change in her community. Following this experience, Fatima joined student activist groups in her local community during her senior year of high school and has now been heavily involved in activism for over the past three years. By participating in crowdfunding, youth shared how they were able to propel social change in a meaningful way as part of larger, collective action.

Soliciting Power Brokers. Participants often reported reaching out to those in power, such as lawmakers and elected officials, to collectively place emphasis on important issues in their community. They described soliciting government officials at the local, state, and federal levels through petitions, phone calls, letters, or community meetings. Nicolas talked about how he used to be intimidated by the idea of contacting a public official:

I didn't feel like I could just call somebody up. I felt like they were gonna argue with me on the phone or like, I don't know, shut down my opinion. I don't even know what I was expecting, but I, I know that I was like scared to do it.

His first experience contacting a public official was different from what he expected:

As soon as I got into my circles at college, even during the pandemic, I would see posts online about people saying, 'contact this representative.' And I've never done things like that. But like everybody was posting about it, so I almost felt like, well, maybe I should do something. And so, I did end up calling. It's nerve-wracking, I think, to call representatives, but when like you get answered by the secretary or whatever and they say that they take down the message, it's like, okay, well I did something instead of nothing <laugh>. Um, so after that process, I feel like I've been able to do that more and more.

The first time Vanessa contacted a public official, it was through a project in a high school course where she had to write a letter to her local representative in city government. She mentioned how it was easy to write and send a letter for the assignment, but she now feels like she could do it better now that she is a little older: "Compared to how old I was when I did it and now, I feel like the topic of conversation or how I would explain certain issues, I'd just be able to explain it more thoroughly and more concise." Allison contacted a government representative for the first time while in college through her work with a Latinx student organization. She was also made aware of these tactics through social media posts:

If there was something that we could write to the local congresswoman about laws. I believe on social media, they'll tell you like, this is the email to email; here's an email template if you wanna like review that. I would do that too, like on the side.

In addition to receiving support from a teacher in more formal settings, like Vanessa did in her high school, social media posts provided information and publicly available resources (e.g., email templates, phone numbers) that explained how to contact power brokers, making it less intimidating. Joining others through student organizations at college also helped participants get started with these efforts.

Electoral Expansion. Leading up to the 2016 election, Olivia canvassed to encourage others to vote: “We are canvassing for our locals which we're going like door to door, and making sure people are either registered to vote or know who they are gonna vote for.” Sofia talked about voter suppression efforts in her home state and the importance of ensuring others can vote:

People don't want you to vote. You voting is like you standing up for against the institutions that try to stop you from voting since there [are] so many different restrictions and the new things that...stop you from voting. So, like the 2016 presidential election, I was doing like the canvassing and stuff with some friends and my sister.

Sofia encouraged people to vote in response to the voter suppression efforts she witnessed in her community.

How Mentors Shape Critical Civic Engagement

Participants described a range of ways in which natural mentors (i.e., meaningful relationships with important non-parental adults) shaped their CCE throughout childhood and adolescence. All but six participants (i.e., Alejandra, Allison, Dani, Fernanda, Santiago, and Vanessa) reported at least one natural mentor who supported their exploration of social issues and, at times, helped them take action to address them. Table 2 describes the number of mentors each participant had, their relationship, and the context in which their relationship was

developed. Among those who had mentors ($n = 15$), they reported between 1 and 6 mentors ($M = 3.00$), which included family members (e.g., older siblings, grandparents, aunts/uncles, older cousins), teachers/professors, supervisors, religious leaders, and program mentors. The most common mentors were family ($n = 18$), including immediate and extended family. This was followed by educators ($n = 12$), which included middle and high school teachers, and college/university professors. Mentors supported participants' sociopolitical development by providing (i) role modeling, (ii) emotional support, (iii) instrumental support, (iv) space for reflection and dialogue, and (v) opportunities for action.

Table 2

Mentors who had a role in participants' critical civic engagement.

| Participant | Mentor # | Relationship | Context |
|-------------|----------|--|------------------------------|
| Camila | 1 | Program mentor | College center |
| Catalina | 1 | Supervisor | Education |
| Fatima | 1 | High school teacher | Education |
| | 2 | College professor | Education |
| | 3 | Program mentor | Health organization |
| Gabriela | 1 | High school teacher | Education |
| | 2 | Program mentor | Career focused program |
| Laura | 1 | Grandfather | Family |
| | 2 | High school teacher | Education |
| Luciana | 1 | Older sister | Family |
| | 2 | Supervisor | Community-based organization |
| | 3 | Priest | Religious |
| Mia | 1 | Paternal grandmother | Family |
| | 2 | Maternal grandfather | Family |
| | 3 | College professor | College cultural center |
| | 4 | Supervisor | College cultural center |
| Nicolas | 1 | Paternal grandfather | Family |
| | 2 | Paternal grandmother | Family |
| | 3 | Middle school teacher | Education |
| | 4 | High school teacher | Education |
| | 5 | College professor | Education |
| | 6 | Church deacon | Religious |
| Olivia | 1 | Older cousin | Family |
| | 2 | Older family friend "cousin" | Family |
| | 3 | High school teacher/ LGBTQ+ club advisor | Education |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Samuel | 1 | Aunt | Family |
| | 2 | High school teacher | Education |
| Sara | 1 | Older cousin | Family |
| | 2 | Uncle | Family |
| | 3 | College professor | Education |
| | 4 | Supervisor | Community-based organization |
| Sofia | 1 | Older sister | Family |
| | 2 | Maternal grandmother | Family |
| | 3 | Paternal grandmother | Family |
| | 4 | Supervisor | Medical office |
| | 5 | Program mentor | Health organization |
| | 6 | Program mentor | Health organization |
| Valentina | 1 | Maternal grandmother | Family |
| | 2 | Aunt | Family |
| Victoria | 1 | College professor | Education |
| Ximena | 1 | Older brother | Family |
| | 2 | Aunt | Family |
| | 3 | Program mentor | Career focused program |
| | 4 | Pastor | Religious |
| | 5 | Supervisor | Government |

Some participants described having little ($n = 3$) to no access ($n = 6$) to natural mentors as Catalina, a 23-year-old woman, who only identified one mentor, explained:

So the thing is I am honestly kind of struggling. I haven't had many adults in my life who have supported me in my activism work. It really has been just a peer support; it has been all my friends. I'm an only child, my grandparents are dead, and my family mostly lives in Colombia, so I'm one of the few people who live in the United States, so I don't really see them that often. And then when it comes to bosses and stuff like that, I've had bosses who have supported me in different ways, but not necessarily I would say regarding social justice, activism. So, I don't really know if I have a good answer. I put other, 'cause I had like one kind of, I was a research assistant for this author, and he has connected me with a lot of people...But other than that I don't really think I have someone who's been like continuously pushing me forward.

Most of Catalina's family was also outside of the U.S. This gave her less access to adults who could potentially support her CCE. Other participants, such as Alejandra and Camila, described how their family in the U.S. had too much to manage in their day-to-day to be involved in activism. Further, non-familial adults invested in Alejandra and Camila's lives were primarily focused on encouraging them to pursue higher education, rather than any kind of activism.

Role Modeling

A mentor's community-based volunteering and activism often motivated a participant's desire to take action and address social issues they care about. Sara said, "My uncle has been a really big activist and philanthropist throughout my whole life...just seeing how he can impact people is really cool." Ximena met one of her mentors, who was Puerto Rican, through a program focused on first-generation business students available at her graduate school: "I personally really wanted a Latina mentor. I had other mentors, which were great, but I really needed to talk to someone who's gone through a similar background as me." In addition to the professional connections with Latinas in the business community that her mentor provided, Ximena was inspired by how, now in retirement, her mentor wanted to devote her time to social and political issues. Her mentor was very involved in the Hispanic community and was doing work with the state small business association. During their time together, she modeled how to conduct lobbying at the state level:

I had never been to a capital building or anything like that. She took me to [state capital city] with her team and they went to lobby, well, they went to talk to different congressmen and like told them to like help small businesses in [state]. Even though it was her job, having me being involved in actually going to the [state] capital building, showing me. I was like, oh wow, I didn't know this is how people did it.

Sara also described how seeing members of her family, like her uncle and his wife, involved in philanthropy and activism made it easier for her to pursue a career in community organizing, instead of other expectations her family held for her. “[My aunt and uncle] still accepted my path and [would] comment when I post something or when I say something about what I'm doing, kind of like pushing me forward.”

Some participants also described how their mentors modeled community engagement and activism in their family’s countries of origin. For instance, Mia enjoyed hearing stories about her maternal grandmother’s community engagement as a doctor (her profession being a rare accomplishment for a woman during her time) as well as her political involvement. Mia’s grandmother’s example was especially meaningful to her:

My grandma was a lot. In Peru, she would hide certain politicians in our house because of terrorism. She was very deeply involved with it, but like, it wasn't her main thing. [It] was medicine and she would go to certain impoverished areas in Peru and give out vaccines and stuff like that. And that was always very important to her.

Nicolas spent a few months with his grandparents in Mexico during the pandemic. After arriving, he realized how conservative their views were on issues like abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. Even though Nicolas disagreed with their stances on these issues, he found inspiration in how they successfully influenced politicians to complete projects in their local community (e.g., fixing a road, building a park in front of their house). Nicolas reflected on this: “It made me feel like I could still do something [in the U.S.] because they were doing something in Mexico with their small political power that they did have.” Their example gave Nicolas hope for what he could accomplish politically in the U.S.

Emotional Support

Participants described how mentors provided emotional support (i.e., empathy, genuine concern, encouragement), and how that support eventually led them to CCE. Nicolas shared how his sixth-grade teacher's encouragement and support, along with other "strict" teachers, led him down the path to attend college, which is where he became more "political."

Everybody called her mean, but she really just cared if we were passing her class and we were passing her exams and stuff. And because of that I was able to be in an advanced math class in middle school...teachers that were really strict on me, I feel, had the most impact overall. They weren't really political themselves, but at the end of the day, they pushed me to get to a point where now I am really political.

Because his teachers were "strict," they expected a lot from him.

They said that I was doing well in their classes. They expected me to go to college, like it wasn't a question of if I was gonna go to college...them pushing me to do that allowed me to apply to colleges.

For Nicolas, the emotional support and high expectations from teachers indirectly led him to become involved in politics, while others received more explicit encouragement when engaging in social action/activism. Ximena, for example, described how her brother helped foster her CCE:

I always felt supported by him, and I always told him like, "Hey, I went to this protest," and he always supported me, and he was always like, "Oh, I'm really proud of you that [you're] standing up and you're being involved in all these different things."

The emotional support she received from her brother was important because it was missing from her parents, who disagreed with her support of abortion access. Eventually, she was not even

able to converse with them about it because of the judgment she would expect to feel. Ximena's parents' beliefs about abortion were rooted in what they had learned from their Catholic faith and while growing up in Mexico.

Instrumental Support

Multiple participants shared about how mentors also provided tangible aid to assist with their civic development, such as sharing resources, helping them with applications, and providing training in community organizing. Mia works at a cultural center at her university, and she described how she applies the skills learned from her supervisor to community-based work.

She's taught me how to network with people, but also how to build community. 'Cause I've seen her do it firsthand, how she makes people feel comfortable. I think that's how I've learned to build community.

Sara described the active role her cousin has played whenever she decided to pursue new opportunities: "My cousin has always been really helpful, and anytime I apply to a new organization for work or activism, anything, she's always been there to look at my resume, practice interviewing skills with me." Additionally, Sara received training in community organizing from two mentors assigned to her when volunteering with a national organization focused on reproductive and sexual health:

They were our mentors, like [a] person to fall back on 'cause we were mostly in charge of what we wanted to work on. And then they would provide the resources, they would provide the information about the campaigns to focus on. They helped us plan our meetings or like our semesters. And they taught me what it was to be a community organizer when that was the only thing I vaguely had an idea of what I wanted to do in college. They taught me what it actually involved and entailed. They were the ones who

also helped me with my resume, taught me how much I should be fighting, and where I can work; giving me the ideas of what activism really looked like in practice.

The instrumental support she received from her mentors set the foundation for her current work as a community organizer.

Space for Reflection and Dialogue around Social Issues

Participants described how they reflected on social issues through conversations with mentors. For example, Luciana described how her sister brought attention to issues she otherwise may not have noticed, “I wouldn't like pay much attention to it, but because she brings my attention to certain issues that are impacting people who have the same identity as...maybe they're Hispanic people are being impacted by X, Y issue.” Some of their conversations took place over social media. Luciana: “She's more knowledgeable on like Latino issues than I am when we were in high school. So, I learned a lot from what she sent me through social media, too.” Luciana also described monthly small group gatherings with her priest and other Catholic school scholarship recipients to discuss social issues affecting communities of color: “[The priest] kinda like brought a lot of attention to issues we face today and how we can fix it.” Luciana described how in other aspects of the priest's work he places emphasis on expanding immigrant rights.

Participants shared that classroom interactions with their teachers was often a key time for reflection and dialogue. Sara's high school teacher encouraged her to question sources of information, rather than just taking them at face value. Laura described how topics covered in class by one of her college professors led her to reconsider certain ideas: "It's definitely challenged me to look at different things in different ways.” Olivia, who identifies as asexual, described how her high school teacher, who was also the advisor for the Pride Club at school,

taught her about topics pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community which were otherwise unfamiliar: “It was really nice for her to teach that and share that knowledge . . . one of the main things that she taught me . . . like how their rights are super important, especially right now with what's going on.” Olivia and her teacher had lots of conversations on this topic, and she described attending events at school planned by her teacher, which also expanded her understanding of people’s life experiences.

It was also helpful for participants’ development when they discussed social issues with family members, even when there were disagreements. Laura described this dynamic with her grandfather:

Well, my grandfather . . . [has] always influenced me and challenged me. [He] makes me interested in learning more and doing more and getting educated so I can maybe challenge him as well. He's very knowledgeable, so he always supports facts.

Although her grandfather does not support all of her stances—he has influenced her process of learning about issues so she can support her opinions during their discussion. These engagements have helped her develop critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of how to organize an argument. Thus, reflection and dialogue did not mean always agreeing with mentors. What was most formational was receiving the space to critically engage in a discussion, build an argument, and, at times, amicably disagree.

Opportunities for Action

Some mentors created pathways for participants to become involved in different forms of social action through volunteer opportunities. At times, that action included broader community volunteering, which did not include CCE, but did influence activism they engaged in later. For

Sara, the volunteering she participated in with her aunt and uncle from a young age gave her insight into happenings within her community at large:

He [uncle] definitely took me to a lot of different events. I remember being a kid and going to his Rotary Club meetings and then around Thanksgiving time we would spend a whole day just packing up different food kits for families in need. We did a lot of different volunteering like that. They [aunt and uncle] connected me with a museum that I volunteered at in high school, which is mostly about like our local history and like kind of saving our history to like, you know, teach future generations. They've really put me in touch with what was happening in my direct community when I didn't always know what was going on.

These instances of community volunteerism set a foundation for later, more critical work, such as Sara's organizing of LGBTQ+ students in high school, political organizing work in college around abortion access, and her current volunteer work with a national youth activist organization.

Some mentors connected participants to people or organizations. Catalina worked as a research assistant for a university professor during her junior year of college. The professor leveraged his networks to help her set up conversations with the policy director of a former presidential administration and a law professor who does work within criminal detention. While in high school, Gabriela participated in a program focused on helping young people connect to the healthcare field. Through the multiyear program (10th to 12th grade), she was assigned a mentor with whom she grew very close:

She really helped me figure out all these different orgs that I became a part of, like [organizations focused on health equity]. She really helped me find those opportunities

and let me find my voice and let me know these are the opportunities...and from there my activism [around] health equity really grew because of her.

As a first-year college student, Gabriela wants to build off her volunteering in high school and engage in more activism around health equity and abortion access.

Additionally, participants described how mentors walked alongside youth to support different forms of advocacy. Luciana described that her sister encouraged her to take action together: “She kinda pushes me to like, hey, ...let's do something. We went to the BLM protests together...stuff like that.” While Luciana’s sister engaged in action with her directly, other mentors wielded their power and influence to support youth in their CCE. Sara described that while in high school, she founded the school’s first Pride club. However, there was a lot of pushback from the school administration and establishing the club would not have been feasible without the support of her teacher (who was the club’s advisor) and some of her teacher’s colleagues.

In high school, [teacher(s)] were definitely actively involved in being kind of a middle party with our administration and getting our club founded when we ran into some issues, which was really important ‘cause we wouldn't have had an LGBTQ+ club if someone didn't like fight for us.

The teachers leveraged their power to support Sara's activism within the school setting.

Adult Power as a Hindrance to Youth Critical Civic Engagement

Although adults can positively shape Latinx immigrant-origin youth’s CCE, some adults impeded youth engagement through their power and influence. A little over half of participants ($n = 11$) identified adults who hindered their exploration of social issues or activism. None of these adults were considered to be mentors by the participants, except for one mentor.

Specifically, Valentina described one of her mentors—her maternal grandmother—as an impediment to her sociopolitical development (i.e., she played both positive and negative roles in her exploration of social issues). The rest of the participants ($n = 10$) identified other adults, which included family members, teachers, school administrators and community members, who hindered their CCE.

Some adults attempted to use their positioning to influence perceptions about social issues, which participants eventually rejected. Gabriela was raised by her single father, and she had a regular babysitter from ages 8- to 15-years-old who was a “very big Catholic conservative:”

Her trying to mold me into her values and views...I think she thought what she was doing to me was good 'cause I feel like religion can come with some good values, if that makes sense. I feel like the things or values that she was trying to inflict on me just did not align with who I was. Trying to be anti-LGBTQ, growing up, giving me false information of how fetuses actually grow and what an abortion actually is. It's like her telling me that as a young girl, but now me growing up and like actually realizing what it is, like she was definitely a big block in how much I wanted to grow and how much she wanted me to be. So, although I became the person I wanted to be—I did not follow what she said—but I think that she was definitely a block [for me] in the social issues that I think are important.

Although Gabriela felt that her babysitter, who was an immigrant from Guatemala, had good intentions, her ideas felt more like an imposition than a conversation. She especially resented the false information her babysitter tried to use to influence her perspectives.

Participants also described times when they felt unable to discuss certain topics with some family members (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandparents) due to their conservative views. Sometimes the topics were central to their identity (e.g., their sexuality or gender identity). None of Dani's family knew that they identify as bisexual and gender fluid, because she did not feel like she could discuss those aspects of her identity with them. Now that she is in college and has some physical distance from her family, she feels like she can be more herself and freely engage in work to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. The context of participants' family's countries of origin also influenced how supportive they were of certain issues. Fatima, for example, described how the Cuban side of her family is very conservative, and how her family members put forth much negativity towards her progressive stances and job as community organizer.

Because they've always questioned me on why I'm doing what I'm doing. Always, always. And every time I tell them, this is my job, what I do, like when I describe my job, they're like, oh, you're wasting your time. Because, you know, they think DeSantis is a god or like Trump is a god. So, you know, things like that they like try to stop me, but they've never stopped me, but they are like, it's stupid.

Fatima described many layers to her family's opposition of her progressive ideals, such as Republican fear-mongering tactics to scare Cubans about Communism and Cuban Facebook groups which often portray the Democratic Party and its members (e.g., Joe Biden) as pro-Communism.

For some participants, adults were supportive of certain aspects of their activism, but not all. Some participants discussed how their family members were approving of their activism around topics like immigrant rights but were intolerant of their activism across other taboo topics in the Latinx community, such as abortion or LGBTQ+ rights. As a result, some only

experienced support for CCE from younger family members (e.g., older siblings or older cousins) or non-familial mentors (e.g., teachers, supervisor, program mentor). However, what was easy to discuss with family members varied broadly by family. Valentina, an 18-year-old woman, identified her grandmother as someone who supported her exploration of social issues. She described her grandmother as “very supportive of abortion,” which is important to Valentina because much of her activism is related to abortion access. However, Valentina did not feel like she could speak to her grandmother about all topics: “When I would argue with my grandmother, I have to bite my tongue sometimes because it's a level of respect...so, you know, just agree to disagree.” In Valentina’s case, she did not feel like it was necessarily her place to argue with her grandmother about certain social issues, such as racial justice issues, because of her grandmother’s position as an authority figure in the family. While she respected this boundary, it was still frustrating.

Further, participants described how their thoughts and feelings around social justice issues were, at times, minimized by adults within community settings. Catalina applied for a fellowship with a social justice organization during her senior year of college. However, when she was granted the fellowship, she felt like she needed to turn it down because the pay was not a living wage (\$18,000 to live San Francisco for nine months). Even with some potential assistance from her parents, she felt she could not live off this salary. When she turned down the position, she told one of the directors of the fellowship that they were not paying people enough for this 40-hour per week fellowship, which was very upsetting to her. In response:

She hit me with a, ‘as a Queer Latina woman of color, I totally understand where you're coming from but maybe you should...’ what was it... ‘You catch more flies with honey’ or something like that regarding me saying that they're not paying people enough. And

I'm like, 'thank you so much for your advice.' She was obviously very upset that I had called out an organization that she cared a lot about and also probably considered herself an advocate. And she was probably very upset that I was saying, 'Hey, I don't think you're paying people enough,' especially 'cause you're mostly hiring people of color. That's kind of fucked up. And she very much turned it around on me and like tone police to my email.

Catalina felt that this adult, who in other circumstances may have supported her sociopolitical development, was instead quick to dismiss and minimize the concerns she conveyed about their organizational practices.

Lastly, participants described instances of interfacing with adults in educational contexts who used their influence, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to deter them from taking action. For example, although there were teachers who supported Sara's efforts to start a Pride club at her high school, members of the administration tried to stop them. Similarly, in Laura's high school, some teachers and administrators were not supportive of their walkout to protest the lack of gun reform after a school shooting in a nearby high school: "Some teachers were supportive, some weren't, some administration supportive...teachers threatened to...I mean...I was marked absent during that class period." While some teachers at Laura's high school were allies of the students protesting, others used their power (i.e., the ability to mark students absent) to deter them from participating in the walkout.

Discussion

Guided by the theory of Youth Sociopolitical Development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007), this inductive, qualitative study closely examines how immigrant-origin Latinx youth conceptualize and partake in critical civic engagement (CCE), both in person and online, to

address the social issues important to them within their high schools, colleges/universities, community settings, and U.S. society. Only one prior quantitative study explored the in-person and online critical civic engagement in a sample of all immigrant-origin young people (Wong et al., 2019), and this study is the first to do so qualitatively. I described how participants developed their CCE during this crucial developmental period, late adolescence. Participants described the initial steps they took (or were currently taking) to address social issues they care about.

Additionally, those who had more years of CCE experience described the range of actions they engaged in and how they were supported at different stages of their development (e.g., high school, college, and career settings). Furthermore, this study contributes to the budding research on how youth-adult relationships shape youth-led social change efforts. Only two previous studies explored how mentors (i.e., supportive, non-parental adults) shape youth sociopolitical development (Fullam, 2017; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021) and neither focused on the specific context of immigrant-origin Latinx youth.

Based on this study's findings, Latinx immigrant-origin youth desire to challenge the sexism, anti-Blackness, and homophobia within their communities. This arguably is part of a larger generational shift within the U.S. Latinx political community to create a more inclusive movement (Betancourt, 2021). Youth in this study overwhelmingly described their CCE as intersectional (i.e., encompassing multiple interrelated aspects of their identity), anti-racist (i.e., actively opposing racism), and in solidarity with oppressed groups outside of and within the Latinx community (e.g., Black folks, women, LGBTQ+ folks). Scholars have discussed how the intersection of two identities, undocumented status and Queerness, have influenced the mobilization of some Latinx immigrant youth (Terriquez, 2015; Terriquez et al., 2018), but this an emerging area of study. Further, scholars and journalists have chronicled these shifts in the

Latinx political movement and, in particular, have noted its struggle to include women, Afro-Latinxs, and the LGBTQ+ community (Beltran, 2010; Betancourt, 2021; Mallard, 2022).

Findings also show that the activism of the current sample of youth includes a range of social issues. Most previous studies on the CCE of Latinx immigrant-origin youth focused on immigrant rights activism (e.g., DeAngelo et al., 2016). Thus, while immigrant rights issues were important to participants, their CCE focused on a broad range of progressive stances as part of a larger coalition movement. Forming larger coalition movements is a tactic employed by other progressive movements (e.g., the Working Families Party), but Latinx immigrant-origin youth taking an intersectional lens to their activism seems like a shift that is specific to the period that this study is taking place.

Youth Sociopolitical Development

Findings from this study contribute to the understanding that youth sociopolitical development is a cyclical process. Although this study focused on the Latinx youth's behaviors in creating social change, participants often discussed critical reflection and action as reciprocal. For example, youth engaged in critical action to raise social consciousness in others, but in doing so also raised social consciousness in themselves. In line with these findings, one previous study found that engaging in community organizing—a type of critical action—led to increased critical reflection among a sample of Latinx youth organizers (Christens & Dolan, 2011). Taking part in action also increased some youth's belief that they could accomplish social change (i.e., sociopolitical efficacy, psychological empowerment). Two recent studies on diverse samples of older adolescents found that critical action was a precursor to sociopolitical efficacy (Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021; Toraif et al., 2021). Moreover, aspects of critical action in the current study involved expanding others' critical reflection as well as their own (i.e., the theme of raising

social consciousness). Therefore, the line between critical reflection and critical action may be more complex than what is currently captured in quantitative measurements (e.g., Diemer et al., 2017).

This study also expands what is considered critical action. For example, little emphasis has been placed on including the work of youth raising social consciousness in recent measures of critical action. In fact, the only item capturing an aspect of ‘raising social consciousness’ (i.e., “Participated in a discussion about a social or political issue”) in a commonly used critical consciousness measure (Diemer et al., 2017) was removed from both shortened versions of the scale (Diemer et al., 2020; Rapa et al., 2020). Yet, participants in this study described it as important part of their social change efforts. Additionally, findings from this study support that leveraging social media to engage in sociopolitical action should be included as a form of CCE. Past studies have primarily captured the online work of youth activists as something separate that could influence action (e.g., Bañales et al., 2020), or as only individual-level actions (e.g., posting on social media about political causes; Wong et al., 2019). However, in line with two recent studies (Mainsah, 2017; Wilf & Wray-Lake, 2021), study findings show that youth organize with others to establish collective pressure online (e.g., crowd funding).

Lastly, this study also has implications for developing multi-level measurements of critical consciousness. Even with Diemer et al.'s (2016) call to measure critical consciousness as both individual and collective constructs, there is no measurement that fully captures the contextual and relational components of critical consciousness (Heberle et al., 2020). Freire (1968, 1973) situates critical consciousness development within the context of a liberatory education located within a community. Findings from this study support how the context of education shapes critical consciousness development (i.e., the relational component of forming

affinity groups as students and being supported by non-parental adults in those spaces). Multi-level analysis may also consider how state-level educational policy may impact sociopolitical development. Additionally, these models should not only include educational and contexts, but also familial ones.

How Mentors and Other Adults Shape Latinx Immigrant-Origin Youth's Critical Civic Engagement

Findings support previous researchers' assertions that mentors are uniquely positioned to support youth CCE (Albright et al., 2017; Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Watts and Flanagan (2007) emphasize that opportunity structures for youth sociopolitical development do not only include settings or roles, but also people who recruit and mentor youth who would otherwise not be involved in social change efforts due to structural barriers. This study also builds on the work of previous research (Fullam, 2017; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021) that examined how mentors can directly expand youth's opportunity to take action (i.e., societal involvement behavior, which includes CCE) by providing instrumental support and direct opportunities. However, I also found that youth may seek out opportunities without the help of mentors, but still benefit from turning to trusted adults to further explore their developing ideas about social issues—in line with Monjaras-Gaytan et al.'s (2021) findings—and receive emotional support in this work, a unique contribution of the current study. Further, even though Watts and Flanagan (2007) emphasized how low-income youth, like the sample in this study, benefit from opportunity structures provided by mentors in community settings, these findings support how non-parental adults within the family can also substantially shape CCE. This finding is in line with past research in which Latinx youth primarily reported family members as their natural mentors (e.g., Anderson et al., 2019; Sánchez & Reyes, 1999).

Familial contexts were important places of sociopolitical development for immigrant-origin Latinx youth, which is in line with the cultural value of familism—a core cultural value among Latinx families. Familism encompasses the belief that: a) family comes before the individual, b) there should be a deep emotional and physical bond with the family (both immediate and extended family), c) people are expected to receive support of any kind from family in times of difficulty, and d) individuals have a duty to protect and upkeep familial honor (Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Not surprisingly, for those who identified a mentor who supported their CCE, immediate and extended family (e.g., older siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents) were the largest group that supported them. Unlike any other relationship type, family members provided support in all five areas within the findings: modeling community engagement and activism both in the U.S. and in their countries of origin, providing emotional support, equipping youth through instrumental support, providing space for reflection and dialogue, and arranging opportunities for action. However, familial contexts were not always supportive of participants' desire to address certain social issues. This, at times, created a rift in familial relationships or led youth to not engage with family members to maintain the expected level of respect. The pressure some participants had to balance, upholding their cultural values of familism while also staying true to their personal values around social justice, may not be as salient for non-Latinx youth and merits further exploration.

This study also provides insight that is specific to how the Latin American sociopolitical context may influence how Latinx adults may or may not want to support youth CCE. Participants described how disagreements were sometimes due to the context of their family member's upbringing in Latin America. It has been well documented across countries and ethnic groups that immigrant adolescents live at the intersection of at least two cultures (Berry et al.,

2006), and the differing cultural values between them and their family—at times referred to as an acculturation gap—may create intergeneration conflict (Birman, 2006). Participants in this study most saliently described conflicts with family members who were either very religious or skeptical of certain reforms due to the political history of their respective Latin-American countries. For youth in highly religious or socially conservative families, some social issues (e.g., abortion access, LGBTQ+ rights) were harder to discuss or they experienced resistance in conversations about certain topics. A recent report found that among LGBTQ+ Latinx youth, 72% have heard their family members say something negative about LGBTQ+ people (Human Rights Campaign, 2018). Topics surrounding race were, at times, difficult to discuss as well. Participants pointed to some of their family’s lack of understanding of structural racism in the U.S. Some family members were also resistant to the youth’s activism around progressive causes because they associated it with their experiences with Socialist dictatorships in their countries of origin. Despite these disagreements, youth described that when support was missing from certain family members—typically older members of the family—they turned to mentors in their families who were closer to their age (e.g., older siblings, older cousins) or to mentors outside of their family (e.g., teachers, mentors in community-based or activist organizations).

As all participants were either in college or recent graduates, educational contexts were important places for sociopolitical development. Teachers and professors were the largest group of mentors outside of youth’s family to support their CCE. These mentors often provided space for reflection and dialogue around social issues. This finding is supported by past studies chronicling the role of teachers in youth critical reflection, captured in a recent systematic review (Heberle et al., 2020). However, few studies (Fullam, 2017; Monjaras-Gaytan et al., 2021) have captured how teachers shape youth CCE by taking direct action. In this study, teachers used their

power to support the advocacy of students in their schools when up against less supportive school administrators (e.g., youth advocating for the needs of LGBTQ+ students, youth wanting to organize a school protest).

Additionally, high schools and colleges also provided access to join or form student organizations, which facilitated participants' CCE. Some of the organizations focused on rallying youth around a particular identity (e.g., being Latinx, being in the LGBTQ+ community), while others were issue focused (e.g., abortion access). The community building that took place in student-led organizations was central to much of participants' sociopolitical development. Although some research supports the importance of community building as a piece of youth civic development (Hyman, 2002; Wilf & Wray-Lake, 2021), it is typically not included in civic engagement measurement (e.g., Bañales et al., 2020; Garcia & Mirra, 2021) or it is often described as a byproduct. In line with Wilf and Wray-Lake's (2021) findings, community building was a central piece of youth CCE. This was often accomplished through affinity groups, which led youth to both collectively raise social consciousness and establish collective pressure. Future research and interventions may benefit from a closer examination of how community building could be a cornerstone of youth sociopolitical development.

Further, this research builds upon the work of Clay and Turner (2021) by depicting how adults can also stand in the way of youth CCE. Findings show that adults within the community (e.g., teachers, school administrators, adults in community-based organizations), as well as family members, impeded youth sociopolitical development through discouraging conversations, minimizing youth concerns, and creating barriers to taking action. Past research on this topic has placed more emphasis on adults in community organizations, with a limited focus on how this can also take place within familial contexts. Further, research on youth-adult relationships has

typically focused on how they positively shape child and adolescent development (DuBois et al., 2011) with fewer studies deciphering how adults could negatively impact youth (e.g., Buehler et al., 2020). Adverse interactions can have negative implications for youth-adult relationship development, as well as youth psychological outcomes. For example, Buehler et al. (2020) found that adolescents reported a decreased connection with adults when they felt disrespected by them. Disrespect also contributed to decreased youth self-esteem and motivation. Further, negative psychological outcomes (e.g., decreased self-esteem, decreased motivation) could also lead adolescents to be less willing to seek social support from adults during this important time of development (Buehler et al., 2020). This is an important area of exploration when considering how adults can be true partners in youth-led social change efforts.

Strengths and Limitations

There were several strengths within our sampling approach. By selecting states with large but varying Latinx populations, the study included a diverse sample of Latinx immigrant-origin youth whose heritage reflects North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Participants varied broadly by their parents' country of origin, how they identified racially, and their sexual orientation, which depicted the heterogeneity of the Latinx community. The sample also included a mixture of participants at various stages of development within the age range of 18 to 24-years old, from being just out of high school and in the nascent stages of CCE participation to holding several years of activism experience. Lastly, partnering with the national mentoring organization and its affiliates allowed for the recruitment of participants from community settings who may not have attended college, as there are many structural barriers to college access among youth of color from immigrant backgrounds.

The study sample also had limitations. All participants in the study were either attending college or had recently graduated, thus, the experiences of youth who did not have access to college were not reflected in this study despite recruiting participants from community settings. As participants typically grew in their CCE during college, the lack of non-college going immigrant-origin Latinx youth makes it difficult to know how this population may access opportunities for engagement. Additionally, the sample was primarily second-generation, with the majority of first-generation immigrants having migrated to the U.S. before they were school age (five years old and younger) except for one participant, Santiago. This limits the transferability of our findings to the experiences of first-generation Latinx immigrant-origin youth who migrated to the U.S. later in childhood or during adolescence, who may have greater levels of immigrant optimism (i.e., more positive views of the U.S. than non-immigrant peers) and lower critique of the U.S. context, which may influence their CCE (Arce et al., 2022). Moreover, the sample was predominately women, thus, the experiences of men and trans/nonbinary folks was less represented. Additionally, the sample primarily held more progressive viewpoints on social issues, which limits the understanding of the sociopolitical development of youth that identify as conservative. Lastly, interviews did not include the perspective of others in the youth's lives (e.g., mentors, parents, peers) who could further inform and triangulate the data.

I also prioritized incorporating the voices of youth and our community partners within the development of this research study. There was an extensive process in developing the interview protocol questions through the partnership with the youth advisory board, input from our community partnerships, and the pilot interviews with youth, which made the questions more understandable. Further, one of the members of the youth advisory was involved in every stage

of data analysis which provided additional contextual understanding of the experiences of young immigrant-origin Latinx youth and aided the study's credibility.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Findings from this study have implications for future research. Due to sampling limitations of this study, more research is needed to understand if CCE differs among immigrant-origin Latinx Ciswomen, as well as Transmen, Transwomen, Nonbinary, and other gender diverse people. More research could also inform how sociopolitical development differs between Latinx immigrants who arrived in the U.S. during early to middle childhood and those who arrived during adolescence or young adulthood. Future research should also examine barriers and facilitators for engagement, as well as how others in youth's social circles (e.g., peers, parents) impact CCE. Additionally, quantitative measurement could be developed to further explore the role of adults in sociopolitical development and quantitative and mixed-methods studies can be conducted to expand upon these qualitative findings. Such studies could examine broader patterns within the Latinx immigrant-origin community, if certain contexts were more conducive for CCE, and whether certain aspects of mentoring (e.g., type of mentoring relationship, mentoring quality, number of mentors) lead to greater youth CCE.

Future longitudinal studies are needed to capture the sociopolitical development of Latinx immigrant-origin youth more acutely from adolescence through young or middle adulthood, identifying critical junctures at each step of their development. This may be conducted by following several cohorts of Latinx immigrant-origin youth from high school through their late 20s to also examine various outcomes of CCE. It is also suggested that researchers examine why some Latinx immigrant-origin youth may not engage critically, providing possible places for intervention. Findings also portrayed how aspects of education (e.g., involvement in student

organizations, support from teachers and professors), community (e.g., involvement in formal or informal groups), and familial contexts (e.g., family dynamics) may influence the sociopolitical development of this population. Multi-level models could be employed to study youth sociopolitical development across these different contexts.

Findings from this study also inform future interventions. For example, organizations focused on advocacy or social justice may consider incorporating a mentoring component to support youth involvement. A recent systematic review found that nearly all critical consciousness interventions focused on critical reflection, and few on action (Heberle et al., 2020). Incorporating more action into interventions can increase youth's critical reflection of social issues, as well as their sociopolitical efficacy.

Conclusion

Through exploring the critical civic engagement (CCE) of immigrant-origin Latinx youth, guided by the theory of Youth Sociopolitical Development (Watts & Flanagan, 2007), I found that participants engaged in a co-occurring and reciprocal process of raising social consciousness and establishing collective pressure. Youth CCE encompassed a broad range of social issues, and their CCE was shaped by non-parental adults who both supported and, at times, hindered their engagement. Study findings have implications for the broader field of youth sociopolitical and critical consciousness development, expanding the definition of critical action and the importance of studying relational factors influencing CCE.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer



**DO YOU WANT
TO MAKE
CHANGE IN
YOUR
COMMUNITY?**

**ARE YOU YOU HISPANIC OR LATINX?
WERE YOU—OR AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR PARENTS—
BORN OUTSIDE OF THE 50 U.S. STATES?**

Share your experiences about making change in your community over a Zoom interview! Participants in this research study will receive a **\$20 gift card (Amazon, Target or Starbucks)** as an appreciation for their time. Must be 18 to 24 years old to participate.

Questions? Email w.delosreyes@gmail.com

Interested? Fill out a quick survey via this link tinyurl.com/slice-qual or scan here



Appendix B: Eligibility Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in this interview on your experiences in making a change in your community during a 1-hour interview. Please respond to the following questions to have a better understanding of your background.

Are you between the ages of 18 and 24 years old?

- Yes
 No

Skip To: End of Survey If "Are you between the ages of 18 and 24 years old?" = No

Do you identify as Hispanic, Latina(o), or Latinx?

- Yes
 No

Skip To: End of Survey If "Do you identify as Hispanic, Latina(o), or Latinx?" = No

Were you born in the U.S. (one of the 50 states)?

- Yes
 No

Display This Question: "If Were you born in the U.S.?" = Yes

Were both of your parents born in the U.S. (one of the 50 states)?

- Yes
 No

Skip To: End of Survey If "Were both of your parents born in the U.S.?" = Yes

Display Informed Consent If "Were both of your parents born in the U.S.?" = No

Appendix C: Interview Screening Questionnaire

Remaining Questions If consents to participate.

Display This Question If “Were you born in the U.S.?” = No

Almost done! The last few questions will tell us a little bit about you and ways you may be involved in your community.

How old were you when you moved to the U.S.?

▼ 0-11 years old ... Over 18 years old

Display Remaining Questions

What is your year of birth?

▼ 1996 ... 2005

Which term best describes your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Trans Man
- Trans Woman
- Other, please specify: _____

What is your zip code (where you live the majority of the year)? _____

Although the categories listed below may not represent your full identity or use the language you prefer, for the purpose of this survey, please indicate which group below most accurately describes your racial identification. Select all that apply.

- Asian
- Black or African descent
- White or European descent
- Native/indigenous to the Americas (North America, South America, Caribbean)

- Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian
- Multiracial
- Not listed, please specify: _____

Are you currently in school?

- Yes
- No

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? Select only one answer.

- Less than high school
- Some high school but degree not received or is in progress
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Bachelor's degree (for example BA, BS, AB)
- Graduate degree (for example master's, doctorate)

What is the highest degree or level of school **your mother** completed? Select only one answer.

- Less than high school
- Some high school but degree not received
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Technical degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example BA, BS, AB)
- Graduate degree (for example master's, doctorate)
- Not Applicable

What is the highest degree or level of school **your father** completed? Select only one answer.

- Less than high school
- Some high school but degree not received
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Technical degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example BA, BS, AB)
- Graduate degree (for example master's, doctorate)
- Not Applicable

What are your parent(s)' current job(s)?

Which Latin-American country do you and/or your parents originate from? Select all that apply.

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- The Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras

- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Puerto Rico
- Uruguay
- Venezuela
- Other, please specify: _____

Instructions: Please respond to the following statements by saying how often you were involved in each activity in the last year.

Participated in a civil rights group or organization

- Never did this
- Once or twice last year
- Once every few months
- At least once a month
- At least once a week

Participated in a political party, club, or organization

- Never did this
- Once or twice last year
- Once every few months
- At least once a month

- At least once a week

Contacted a public official by phone, mail, or email to tell them how you felt about a particular social or political issue

- Never did this
- Once or twice last year
- Once every few months
- At least once a month
- At least once a week

Joined in a protest march, political demonstrations, or political meeting

- Never did this
- Once or twice last year
- Once every few months
- At least once a month
- At least once a week

Instructions: How often do you do the following on social media?

Raise awareness about a social or political issue on social media.

- Never did this
- Once or twice last year
- Once every few months

At least once a month

At least once a week

Challenge stigmas, stereotypes, or prejudices on social media.

Never did this

Once or twice last year

Once every few months

At least once a month

At least once a week

Encourage your followers to take social or political action (online or in-person).

Never did this

Once or twice last year

Once every few months

At least once a month

At least once a week

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Note: The highlighted section will not be included in the analysis for this study.

Date: _____ **Time interview began:** _____ **Time interview ended:** _____
Video or Audio Interview? _____ **Interviewer:** _____
Participant ID# _____

Instructions: Once the interviewee joins the Zoom room, the interviewer will provide an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions before starting the audio recording (if the participant consented to being recorded). Participants will be reassured by the interviewer that even if the video is on in the Zoom meeting (if applicable), the settings in the Zoom room will only allow for an audio recording.

- *Introduce self (grew up in Miami)*

Thank you for participating in this interview. Remember that you can skip any question or stop the interview at any time if needed. I will now start the recording.

Section 1: Introduction.

1. To start off, tell me a little about yourself.
 - a. *Where did you grow up?*
 - b. *What does a typical day look like for you?*
 - c. *What are some of your typical responsibilities? (Probe about work, school, extracurricular activities)*
 - d. *How did you hear about this study?*
 - e. *What made you respond to the flyer?*

Section 2: Thanks for telling me about yourself. Now I'd like to ask you about social issues that are important to you and some ways you're trying to address them (could be in small or big ways).

1. What social issues do you care about in your community or in society in general?
 - a. *Some examples could be immigration, the environment, gun control, etc.*
 - b. *How long have you cared about these issues?*
2. What has made this/these issue(s) important to you?
3. Could you describe anything you've done in the past to get involved with these issues or other issues?
 - a. *What did you do? How did you get involved?*
 - b. *With whom (e.g., an organization, friends)? When?*
 - c. *What was that experience like?*

4. **[Note back to the civic activities in the screener questions]** Tell me about _____ [e.g., protest, time you were involved with a political organization]?
 - a. *What made you want to go to (or do) that?*
 - b. *How did that experience go?*
 - i. *Was it motivating? Discouraging?*
 - ii. *Are there other tactics you want to try in the future because of this experience?*
 - c. *What about currently?*
 - d. *Any other issues you've done work around or want to do in the future?*
5. Have you used social media or other online spaces to do your community/activism work?
 - a. *If yes, what does that look like?*
 - b. *What are some benefits of using social media for community/activism work?*
 - c. *What are some cons?*

Section 3: I would like to learn about people in your life who may have influenced your involvement.

1. How have your friends' views or experiences about social issues influenced yours?
 - a. *Do they affect the way you would take action to support the social issues you care about?*
2. How have your parents' or guardian's views or experiences influenced your views?
 - a. *Do they support your views? How or why not?*
 - b. *Do you and your parents agree on certain social issues and what should be done?*
 - c. *Do either of your parents do any kind of activism work?*
 - d. *How have your parents' experiences in your native countries influenced your beliefs?*
 1. *Do you think that some of their experiences in [native country/ies] have influenced the way they think about activism or political participation in the U.S.?*
3. I would like to learn more about the most meaningful and important adults who have supported you in this community/activism work that you've done (or been doing).
 - a. Let's [look at this list](#). I wonder if there is an adult in your life who has been the most impactful to your community/activism work. This should be someone who cares about you, believes in you, you look up to, and has supported your exploration of the social issues you care about?
 1. Do you have someone like this in your life? If so, place a yellow star by them. If not, that is okay, and we'll move on to the next part of the interview.

Instructions: Pause for them to move the sticky notes.

Instructions: Ask the following questions about starred individuals.

4. Can you describe _____ and your relationship:
 - a. *How did you initially meet them? Skip this question if a family member.*
 - b. *How long have you known them? Ask: "All your life?" If they stated, they are a family member.*
 - c. *What makes this person stand out from others in your life?*
5. In what ways has this person provided support to you around the issues you care about? Describe. Can you give me an example of a time that they supported you?
 - a. *How is their support helpful?*
 - b. *Are you both interested in this/these issues?*
 - c. *Are there certain things you talk about/do together?*
 - d. *Are there certain things you've learned from them?*
 - e. *Have you done any social action/activism with this person?*

Instructions: Finish section by asking this last question.

6. Can you think of a time when an adult got in the way of you doing activism work? It could be someone you already mentioned or a different person.
 - a. *What happened? How did they get in the way?*
 - b. *Any other adults that come to mind who got in the way of you doing activism work?*

Section 4: Thanks for telling me about the people who support you. Let's jump to slide 2 of the [jam board](#).

1. Did certain impactful experiences lead you to care about this or other issues? Place a yellow star by them.

Instructions: Pause for them to move the sticky notes.

2. Tell me more about _____.
 - a. *How was this impactful?*
 - b. *Was it motivating? Discouraging?*

Section 5: I'd like to finish our time together by asking you some questions about different forms of social action/activism. This doesn't have to be what you've done, but how you think about it.

1. We'll start with a scenario: Suppose your city is considering a change to the law you consider very unjust or harmful; what do you think you could do?
 - a. *Would you try to do something by yourself?*
 - b. *Would you try to do something with a group?*
 - i. *A formal group or is it more informal?*
 - ii. *What type of group?*

