Political Effects of Having Undocumented Parents

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

Keywords: Undocumented immigration, citizenship, political participation, activism.
INTRODUCTION

The U.S. is home to around eleven million undocumented immigrants. Even though they are legal outsiders, most have close ties to the country. Many have U.S.-citizen relatives, including partners and children. A great deal of research has addressed the causes and consequences of anti-immigrant attitudes in this era of large-scale “illegal” migration (e.g. Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Wright, Levy and Citrin 2016). And yet we still know very little about the politics of undocumented immigrants themselves, or the political implications of this regime of mass illegality for the millions of American citizens with undocumented family members (McCann and Jones-Correa 2016).

Until scholars address these topics, we will not understand the contemporary immigrant experience. While most of the country’s immigrants are set on a path to permanent residence and citizenship, about one in four are marked as “illegals.” Since so many undocumented migrants are Latinos, without research on the politics of mass illegality we will struggle to understand Latino politics, or indeed the factors that—under some circumstances—make “Latino” a salient political identity (Lee 2008).

Research in this area also promises to provide new ways to test and build upon theories of political learning and activism. How do young U.S. citizens whose parents have few (political) rights think about and engage with the state? In this paper we provide some of the first evidence on the political effects of having undocumented parents. Since undocumented migrants are wary of attention, and they and their children only make up a small share of all U.S. residents, it is hard to gather representative data on this population. We use an original survey of young U.S.-born Latinos, some of whose parents are undocumented, to start to fill the gap in our knowledge of these issues.
To frame the political effects of mass undocumented migration on the U.S.-born second generation we draw together theories and findings from several literatures. One prediction, following from research on parental political socialization and on immigrant incorporation, is that having undocumented parents has chilling effects on civic and political engagement. However, other research on social movements and on how people respond to political threats implies that those with undocumented parents might be pushed toward activism on immigration issues. In fact, our data provide scant evidence of chilling effects, but more support for the idea that family exposure to the risk of deportation serves to mobilize the U.S.-born offspring of the undocumented to demand immigrants’ rights. These results imply that far from being inert, many undocumented migrants are politically engaged. The findings also reaffirm the insight that political behavior is shaped by social and, especially, by family ties.

**IMMIGRANTS IN THE SHADOWS**

Until 1965 Congress placed no formal limits on migration to the U.S. from the Western hemisphere (Ngai 2004). The new quotas, when they arrived, were unrealistic given the history of the southern border regions (Massey, Durand and Malone 2003). Seasonal migrant workers had long supplied much of the labor in the South-West, and at times manual workers or “braceros” were actively recruited by the U.S. government (Zolberg 2006, 310). Since the border was long, remote and hard to patrol, and checks on work permits were lax, workers continued to come and go without papers even after the 1965 reforms. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 promised to change this. Amnesties were passed for undocumented migrants who had been in the country
since before 1982, and for seasonal laborers who worked in agriculture in 1986. A total of 1.8 million people regularized their status via the former provision, and a further 1.3 million via the latter. IRCA also promised to stop unauthorized migration by sharply increasing border enforcement and by imposing new sanctions on employers who hired workers without papers.

In fact, however, border enforcement remained difficult and the sanctions regime was lax due to opposition from employers and executive branch skepticism of regulation (Zolberg 2006, 373). As a result undocumented migration continued apace. This became more politically contentious over the course of the 1990s. The federal government responded with “symbolic” shows of force at the U.S.-Mexico border (Andreas 2009). The fees charged by border smugglers rose but at first the number of migrants crossing was little affected. Gradually, though, as the danger and cost of unauthorized migration rose, as demographic changes reduced the number of young Mexicans in need of work, and especially after the U.S. economy stalled in 2008, the flow of new immigrants slowed (Massey 2013). Yet the stock of undocumented migrants has remained stable. Harsh border enforcement has made return migration too risky for most, and the median length of residence has risen to 14 years (Passel and Cohn 2016, 4). Undocumented migrants have become ever more integrated into U.S. society (Donato and Armenta 2011).

Strikingly, since 1980 around 7 million people have been born in the U.S. with at least one undocumented parent. The number peaked at about 370,000 per year in the mid 2000s, but is now trending down in a pattern that lags the fall in undocumented migration (Passel and Cohn 2015). These young people are all U.S. citizens, thanks to the 14th Amendment—which was originally intended to turn slaves into citizens but is now
arguably the most important single factor for immigrant integration in America. Even if undocumented migrants leave the country, or never become citizens, their U.S.-born children will remain and are coming of age to influence U.S. politics and society.

How does having undocumented parents affect American citizens? Most U.S.-citizen children of the undocumented were born since the 1980s, as undocumented migration increased around that time (Passel and Cohn 2015). Given the young age profile of the group, scholars in education, psychology and public health have been among the first to study the offspring of the undocumented (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011; Suro, Suárez-Orozco and Canizales 2015). For example, Dreby (2012) describes emotional problems among U.S.-born children who fear their parents may be deported. For their part, undocumented parents are more likely to have concerns about the developmental progress of their children (Ortega et al. 2009). Yoshikawa (2012) finds that the U.S.-born children of undocumented parents are less likely to enroll in the educational and welfare programs for which they are eligible, since their parents fear contact with state agencies (but see Terriquez 2012). Correspondingly, Bean et al. (2011) find that undocumented parents pass on a legacy of lower educational attainment to their children, compared to the children of legal immigrants. In a recent overview, leading demographer Douglas Massey (2013, 13) goes so far as to argue that “lack of legal status constitutes an insurmountable barrier to social and economic mobility, not only for the undocumented immigrants themselves, but also for their citizen family members.” Political scientists have been slower to study the implications of mass illegality, whether for the immigrants themselves or their U.S.-citizen offspring.
POLITICS OVERSHADOWED?

We can start to fill the gaps in our knowledge by gathering new data and by applying core theories in political science to this new situation. In particular, there is a rich literature on the process of “political socialization” whereby young people learn about politics and pick up habits of political (non-) participation. We can also draw on relevant research on contextual “cohort effects” and on collective action among marginalized groups.

Undocumented parents as role-models?

Much of the existing research on political socialization is based on social learning theory (Bandura 1969, 1971), which posits that people learn not only from their own experiences but also by modeling the behavior of others, especially their parents (e.g. Jennings and Niemi 1981). In a recent review Jennings, Stoker and Bowers (2009) reaffirm that parents serve as role-models to shape the partisanship of their children, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, also affect their offspring’s proclivity to political engagement.

It is an open question whether undocumented parents serve as political role-models and thereby help to socialize their U.S.-born children into American politics. Some of the political rights secured in the U.S. Constitution—such as freedom of expression or assembly—extend to all residents, not just citizens. Undocumented migrants can engage in many of the civic activities, such as joining clubs or going to public meetings, that tend to promote more explicitly political behavior (see Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012). But of course undocumented migrants cannot vote. And parental socialization usually means not only showing children how to exercise their political rights, but also explaining the ideas and groups that structure political life.
Research suggests that migrants may struggle at this, since they themselves often take years to learn about the politics of the new homeland (Fraga et al. 2012; Hajnal and Lee 2011; but see also Sears, Danbold and Zavala 2016).

Terriquez and Kwon (2015: 425) find that “barriers to immigrant parents’ political engagement suppress the civic and political participation” of the U.S.-born second generation. Legal status may be just such a barrier. Along these lines, Brown and Bean (2016) find that Latino immigrants, including legal residents who do not yet hold voting rights, pick up more political knowledge the longer they live in the country. But the authors find that this does not apply to the undocumented. Based on this literature, one might expect that undocumented migrants are not only unable to serve as role-models when it comes to voting, but are also less likely to engage in the kinds of civic and political behavior that are open even to non-citizens. For these reasons, undocumented parents may be less likely to socialize their children into habits of political participation.

Undocumented parents might even serve as models of political distancing. Beyond the U.S. border zone, undocumented migrants are most likely to be deported if they come into contact with the police after committing a crime, misdemeanor or traffic offense (Meissner et al. 2013, 105). In some parts of the country police officers have great discretion to ask for evidence of immigration status (Farris and Holman 2017). In this context, undocumented migrants even fear that they will be deported for reporting a crime (e.g. Menjivar and Bejarano 2004, 137). The result is that they avoid public places and state agencies, and fail to claim even the rights to which they are entitled (Gleeson 2010; Yoshikawa 2012). One might expect the children of undocumented parents to learn by example that it is best to avoid state agencies and the police. This would fit with
earlier findings that, when it comes to views of the state, parental socialization carries a less trusting message for children in racialized minority groups (Abramson 1972; Garcia 1973; Michelson 2003).

Taken together, then, past research on political socialization and immigrant political incorporation suggests chilling effects on U.S. citizens with undocumented parents. In this paper we test two ways in which these effects could work. Our first two hypotheses refer to the idea that undocumented parents are less likely to model political engagement for their children, while the third refers to the idea that the children of the undocumented may (implicitly) learn from their parents that the state should be avoided.

H1, Chilled parents: undocumented parents show lower rates of civic and political engagement than other immigrant parents.

H2, Chilled children: the offspring of undocumented migrants exhibit lower rates of civic and political engagement than other second-generation immigrants.

H3, Socialized Avoidance: the offspring of the undocumented are more likely to distrust and avoid state actors, compared to the children of other immigrants.

**A generation of immigration activists?**

In contrast, other theories imply that having undocumented parents may make second-generation Latinos more politically active, at least on the issue of immigrants’ rights. Unauthorized immigration has provoked a fierce political response, and this in turn has
politiced many immigrants. An example is Proposition 187 in California, a ballot initiative from 1994 that would have denied people without papers (even minors) services such as schooling and healthcare. The proposition passed by a large margin but was blocked by the courts, since it trespassed on federal power over immigration laws. The anti-immigrant backlash, in turn, made legal immigrants in the state more likely to naturalize and pushed Latinos to see themselves as having common political interests (Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001; Ramakrishnan and Espenshade 2001). Proposals to criminalize the undocumented and their family members also prompted large pro-immigrant marches in 2006, which brought millions of undocumented migrants and their U.S.-born relatives onto the streets (Voss and Bloemraad 2011; Zepeda-Millán 2014). Since this wave of protest, young activists have continued to push for immigration reform using innovative tactics such as occupying congressional offices and getting arrested in graduation garb, or self-deporting and then applying for asylum (Carrasco and Seif 2014).

Research on contextual socialization implies that the activism around this issue may have made young U.S.-born Latinos more likely to protest and to see protest as a viable political tool. Theories of “cohort effects” build on Mannheim’s (1952) observation that generations are marked by the politics they experience in the “formative years” of adolescence and early adulthood (Bartels and Jackman 2014; Carlsson and Karlsson 1970). Cohort effects are clearest in times of upheaval such as the Great Depression, but can also reflect narrower events like the Watergate scandal (Dinas 2013). There is also evidence that cohort effects differ for ethnic and racial minorities (Abrajano and Lundgren 2014), especially when racial politics is at stake, as in the civil rights era (Schuman and Scott 1989).
Furthermore, research on social movements and on political threats implies that this context of activism may have had even stronger effects on young Latinos with undocumented parents. Following Durkheim (1997 [1897]), social movements were once thought to result from anomie and the breakdown of social order. This view was shaken by scholars who pointed out that activists are often well-connected rather than isolated (Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1981). But recent research provides a more specific account of how movements arise from the disruption of norms and routines. Snow et al. (1998, 9) argue that “actual or threatened intrusions into culturally defined zones of privacy” such as the family can inspire people to take mass action. People are strongly motivated by threats or losses (Marcus 2000; Tversky and Kahneman 1991). Intense fear of threats to “culturally inviolable zones” like the family can help people overcome collective action problems (Snow et al. 1998, 17). Since concerns for family members are known to be shared by many Latinos, this should increase confidence that protest will arise and may succeed. In line with these ideas, messages like “Stop Separating Families” are ubiquitous at immigration protests (Pallares 2014).

The number of true activists may be small, compared to the cohort of Latinos that has grown up in this era. But an activist political climate can have wider effects thanks to media coverage (Merolla et al. 2013) or social exposure. As Cohen-Marks, Nuño and Sanchez (2009, 713) wrote in the wake of the 2006 protests, the strongest effects of immigrant activism may yet be found among “the countless children who will grow up hearing tales of the day millions emerged from the shadows to declare their determination to pursue the American dream.” Even people who did not join marches on this issue may come to think that, given their weak legal status, public protest is an effective political
tool for undocumented migrants and their allies. Again, these effects may be stronger among people more directly exposed to the issue because of their undocumented parents.

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

H4, Activism: The offspring of undocumented migrants are more likely to participate in protests on immigration issues than the offspring of other migrants.

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

To summarize, theories of parental socialization and immigrant incorporation predict chilling political effects for U.S.-born children who have undocumented parents. In contrast, theories of cohort effects and social movements imply that young Latinos with undocumented parents who have grown up in an era of immigrant activism are especially likely to mobilize and protest on immigration issues. Readers should note that the two sets of hypotheses are not incompatible. We may see evidence only of chilling effects, or only of mobilization. But it’s also possible that the offspring of the undocumented are generally less politically engaged, yet active on immigration issues.
DATA AND MEASURES

One reason there has been little research on the political implications of having so many undocumented migrants living in the U.S. for so long is that representative data on this group are scarce, as are data on their U.S.-citizen family members. Undocumented migrants themselves may be reluctant to participate in surveys (but see Bean et al. 2011; Terriquez 2012), although this is less of a concern for their U.S.-citizen offspring, who have much less to fear. Arguably the bigger problem for gathering representative data is that the offspring of undocumented migrants make up a small share of the total U.S. population, so that only a few are included in standard surveys.

In order to recruit a sample large enough for statistical analysis, we commissioned a new survey in the summer of 2013. Since the undocumented population is about 80% Latino, we focused on this group (Passel and Cohn 2014). Unequal enforcement means the risk of deportation is even more concentrated on Latinos: in recent years around 95% of those deported were from Latin America (ICE 2013). In this sense, undocumented migration is a racialized phenomenon (Chavez 2013; Zepeda-Millán 2014). In order to make comparisons we aimed to survey the U.S.-born children of both authorized and unauthorized migrants. As noted above, most of the people who have grown up in mixed-status households were born since the 1980s. In an effort to include some people whose parents were unable to regularize through IRCA, we opted to recruit Latinos born in the U.S. between 1982 and 1995. That is, they were born after the deadline for the first of the IRCA regularization programs. This does not guarantee that their parents arrived in the U.S. only after that deadline, but it helps to ensure that some did so. The survey participants also had to be adults at the time of the survey. In early 2013 we used Current
Population Survey (CPS) data to estimate the population of interest at 3.1 million Americans born in this time period to immigrant parents, with at least one parent from Latin America. That is about one percent of the U.S. population.

We commissioned the survey through the research firm GfK, formerly Knowledge Networks. This allowed us to combine two sources to reach the desired sample size. First, we drew from the GfK Latino panel, which is recruited as a probability sample based on mail addresses and random digit dialing, and is then periodically surveyed online. In return for participation GfK provides internet access where needed, which helps to ensure a representative sample. Though sizeable, the panel contained only a few hundred people who met our criteria. GfK therefore arranged to recruit extra participants online via English and Spanish-language websites. Combining the probability and the opt-in samples is much more costly than an internet-only sample, but has several advantages. Including the probability sample increases our confidence about representativeness, allows for comparisons across sample types, and also allows for more credible weighting (DiSogra et al. 2011). The survey was fielded online in July and August 2013. In the final dataset, one third of the subjects are from the GfK probability sample, and the rest are opt-in recruits, for a total of 1050 people.

Table 1 describes our sample. The unweighted sample is more educated and more female than the CPS data imply. Higher response rates from more educated people are common in survey research and suggest that we may be over-estimating levels of political engagement, which tend to be higher among the more educated. However, it is encouraging that the probability and opt-in samples are very similar, allaying some concerns about the representativeness of data from people recruited online. Given the
paucity of data for research on these issues, our survey is a big step forward. Of course, further research will be needed to corroborate our findings. In this paper we present our results with design and post-stratification weights, based on the sampling procedures and CPS demographic data. Missing data were replaced by multiple imputation (van Buuren 2014); we find stable results over 5 sets of imputations.

Table 1. Comparing demographics from Current Population Survey (CPS) data with our probability and opt-in samples of young second generation Latinos.

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

Note: The first source is the March 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS), while the second source is the Latino Second Generation Study–ICPSR number 36625.

Survey items

We asked our second-generation Latino survey participants a series of questions about the immigration history, civic and political behavior of their parents. Of course it would be preferable to ask the parents themselves, to avoid the risk of children projecting from
their own experiences onto their parents or simply misremembering their parents’ habits. But surveying both undocumented residents and their children presents great logistical difficulties. In an effort to limit the risk of respondents projecting their own values we mostly asked about specific actions rather than parental attitudes. We found that 45 percent of our respondents have at least one parent who lived for a period as an undocumented migrant in the U.S., and that one third of those parents were still undocumented at the time of the survey (we did not ask about undocumented status directly, but inferred it from the questions on migration history; see the Supporting Information, SI, for full details). As in prior research (e.g. Bean et al. 2011), we find some signs of socio-economic disadvantage among the U.S.-born offspring of the undocumented, compared to the offspring of other immigrants. Those with at least one parent who is still undocumented are more likely to have a high school education or lower, and are less likely to hold a college degree (see SI Figure S1).

We used a standard set of questions on civic behavior to test for evidence of a “chilling” effect of undocumented status on parents or their U.S.-born offspring (hypotheses H1 and H2). Specifically, we asked about the following: attending PTA or school group meetings, attending community meetings, giving blood, donating money to charity, volunteering for a charity or church, working with others in the community to solve a problem, organizing an event in the community, participating in an ethnic organization, or in an organization linked to the country of origin, participating in a sports league, or in a labor union, or a professional association, or in an organization that supports candidates in elections. In answering these questions about their parents, we told the second generation Latinos in our survey to think back to the time when they were
16 years old, so as to focus on the “formative years” of adolescence and to avoid casting too far back into the past, when memories are less reliable. We also asked survey participants to answer the same questions about themselves at the time of the survey. In addition, we used three measures of offspring political engagement. The first reports the strength of political interest, the second the frequency of political discussions in a range of settings, and the third reports consumption of political news from various media (see SI for details of question wording and coding).

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

When comparing survey participants by parental legal status we use statistical models to control for other factors that may be related both to legal status and political behavior. This is important because undocumented migrants tend to be poorer, less educated, and concentrated in certain regions, and these differences may also curtail political engagement. It would be wrong to construe all differences due to demographic factors as reflecting the effects of parental legal status. Specifically, we control for the
education of the survey participant and the parents, the survey participant’s age and gender, whether the parent(s) come from Mexico, whether the survey participant is fluent in Spanish, whether the parents held manual vs. office jobs when the survey respondent was young, and region of residence in the U.S. (see SI for more on these items).

RESULTS

We begin with the findings on parental civic behavior. Counter to our prediction (H1, chilled parents), we find similar levels of civic and political activity among documented and undocumented parents. This is illustrated in Figure 1, where the points show the share of parents said to have engaged in each activity, by legal status. Horizontal lines through each point show 95% confidence intervals, based on robust standard errors. Overall, Figure 1 reveals few differences by legal status. Furthermore, summing civic activity across all domains, we find no significant difference by parental legal status in either a bivariate model ($p=0.49$), or a model with demographic controls ($p=0.64$). We also asked survey participants about the frequency of political discussions at home when they were aged 16, and find no significant difference by parental legal status ($p=0.94$).
Admittedly, these results are indirect, since they are based on the answers given about their parents by the U.S.-born offspring. The results about chilling effects on the U.S.-citizen offspring themselves should be clearer (H2). In fact, however, we see no evidence to support the prediction of a chilling effect on the civic and political behavior of the offspring of undocumented migrants. These results are shown in Figure 2.

*Note: the data source is the Latino Second Generation Study – ICPSR number 36625.*
Figure 2. Offspring civic behavior, by parental legal status

Note: the data source is the Latino Second Generation Study – ICPSR number 36625.

If anything, Figure 2 shows that the children of the undocumented appear slightly *more* active in the civic and political domain, and statistical models of the total amount of activity across domains provide some support for this view (*p*=0.08 in bivariate comparison, and *p*=0.1 with controls). Although this runs counter to our original hypothesis (H2, chilled children), it is consistent with theories of parental socialization.
given the evidence from Figure 1 that the parents themselves did not show any chilling effects. Some of the percentages in Figures 1 and 2 are unrealistically high, a common problem with self-reported measures of socially desirable behavior. This problem may be even worse when the reports are indirect, as in our case when we asked the offspring to report on their parents. Note, however, that the key concern for our comparisons is differential rates of over-reporting among respondents with vs. without undocumented parents. We think this is unlikely.

In line with these findings, it does not appear that the U.S.-born children of undocumented migrants are less engaged with U.S. politics. Table 2 shows results from models with controls for background characteristics. The first three outcomes in Table 2 are interest in politics, following politics through the media, and frequency of political discussions. The estimated coefficient on the measure of parental legal status is consistently close to zero and non-significant. The last two outcomes, in the columns on the right side of Table 2, are indices of distrusting the federal government and police, and a desire to avoid the government and police. Again, we see no significant association with parental legal status. Overall, our results so far provide no support for H1 (chilled parents), H2 (chilled children) or H3 (socialized avoidance).
Table 2. Parental legal status as a predictor of political trust or alienation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1: political interest</th>
<th>Model 2: political media</th>
<th>Model 3: political discussions</th>
<th>Model 4: distrust authorities</th>
<th>Model 5: avoid authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.54** (0.08)</td>
<td>0.42** (0.06)</td>
<td>046** (0.05)</td>
<td>0.57** (0.05)</td>
<td>0.51** (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) undocumented</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.05)</td>
<td>0 (0.03)</td>
<td>0 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.06 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (starting at 18)</td>
<td>-0.003 (0.005)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.004)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.003)</td>
<td>-0.01* (0.003)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.15** (0.04)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.03)</td>
<td>0 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.01 (0.03)</td>
<td>0 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.05* (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent in Spanish</td>
<td>0 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) from Mexico</td>
<td>0.05 (0.05)</td>
<td>0.12** (0.03)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.06* (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s education</td>
<td>-0.09 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.05)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.04)</td>
<td>0 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s education</td>
<td>0.08 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) white collar</td>
<td>0.05 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.08** (0.03)</td>
<td>0.05* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region control</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ** means p<0.01, * means p<0.05, + means p<0.1. The source is the Latino Second Generation Study–ICPSR number 36625.

We now turn to the possibility that young U.S.-born Latinos with undocumented parents are more involved in or optimistic about political activism on immigration issues, compared to other second-generation Latinos. We find that the offspring of undocumented migrants are indeed more likely to have attended an immigration march or rally in the past year (p=0.03, with controls), and are more likely to have family members who joined the large 2006 immigrants’ rights marches (p=0.05), although they are not significantly more likely to have marched themselves (p=0.17; see SI Table S3 for detailed results). These results tend to support H4 (activism).
Finally, Figure 3 shows bivariate results for optimism about the efficacy of a range of activities in pushing for political change. We find that the children of undocumented migrants are more likely to see both legal protests, and “illegal protests or damaging property,” as politically effective (both at \( p=0.01 \) or less, with controls). There are no significant differences by parental legal status for the questions on the efficacy of lobbying, working through the courts or voting. This all supports H5 (protest efficacy).

**Figure 3. Perceived efficacy of activism, by parental legal status**

Note: the data source is the Latino Second Generation Study – ICPSR number 36625.
The estimated effects are moderate in size. In models that hold other variables at typical values, people with one or more undocumented parents are eight percentage points more likely to say they attended an immigration rally in the past year, and four percentage points more likely to have family members who marched in 2016. This is about the same as the estimated difference between people with Mexican origins and other Latinos; scholars have found that Mexican-Americans have been especially active in immigration protests (e.g. Zepeda-Millan 2014). Holding other factors constant, people with undocumented parents are about 19 percentage points more likely to say that legal protest is politically effective, and about 2 percentage points to say this about illegal protests (from a low baseline; only about 9% see such risky methods as effective).

**Checks for internal validity**

Comparing people with and without undocumented parents is not enough to show a causal effect of parental legal status. In observational studies such as this, there is always the possibility of bias due to omitted variables. We therefore use another strategy to further test for a causal connection between parental legal status and the political behavior of the U.S.-born offspring. This hinges on the fact that IRCA made it easier for migrants who arrived before the reform to regularize their status. The timing of the reform does not impose a sharp cut-off, since not everyone who arrived by 1986 was able to regularize. The fact that there were two regularization programs—with cut-offs at the end of 1981 and for agricultural workers in 1986—makes the comparison even fuzzier.

Although we only sampled people born in the U.S. from 1982-1995, some of their parents arrived in the country years earlier. So we can use the year of parental arrival,
combined with the timing of the IRCA regularization programs, as an exogenous source of variation in parental legal status. For reasons largely beyond their own control, parents who arrived after IRCA are more likely to have remained stuck in undocumented status. Figure 4 implies that this approach is viable. The figure shows the percentage of parents who were reported to be still undocumented at the time of our survey, depending on their reported year of arrival in the U.S.. This percentage jumps upwards after the mid 1980s when IRCA came into force.⁶

**Figure 4. Legal status of parents, by their year of arrival in the United States**

![Graph showing legal status of parents](image)

*Note: the data source is the Latino Second Generation Study – ICPSR number 36625.*
Although our survey participants whose parents arrived after IRCA are on average a bit younger, there is no reason to expect a sharp break that coincided with IRCA in the variables that might confound the effect of parental legal status. We thus include time trends to control for smoothly changing characteristics (e.g. a gradual process of parental assimilation), and use indicators of whether each parent arrived after 1986 as instrumental variables to estimate the effect of having undocumented parent(s). Following the logic of two-stage least squares, in our case the first-stage regression is a model of having one or more undocumented parents, as predicted by demographic controls, linear controls for parental year of arrival, and the indicators for parents arriving in the U.S. after 1986. The second-stage regression is a model of offspring politics using the predicted values for parental legal status from the first-stage model, plus the same set of controls.

Our data suggest that many people were deterred from regularizing by having missed the IRCA deadlines; we reject the null in a test for weak instruments ($p<0.01$). Table 3 presents IV results for two outcome measures. The first is an index (scaled from zero to one) that sums participation in the 2006 marches, having a close family member who joined the marches, and having rallied on immigration issues within the past year. The second is an index (scaled from zero to one) that sums the responses “legal protest” and “illegal protest or damaging property” to the question about effective measures for political advocacy. We estimate positive effects of having undocumented parents on participation in immigration rallies and on optimism about the effects of such activism, although the estimates are not quite statistically significant at conventional levels (respectively, $p=0.09$ and $p=0.1$).
Table 3. Instrumenting the effect of parental legal status by arrival after 1986.

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

Note: robust standard errors in parentheses. ** means $p<0.01$, * means $p<0.05$, + means $p<0.1$. The source is the Latino Second Generation Study–ICPSR number 36625.

One can think of the estimates in Table 3 as the Local Average Treatment Effects for people whose parents were induced to remain undocumented by the fact that they missed the IRCA deadlines. The estimates are “local” in the sense that they only apply to people whose parents were indeed constrained by this context (as Angrist and Pischke put it (2009, 158), these are the “compliers”). Overall these results, though not conclusive,
are consistent with a causal interpretation of our findings: having undocumented parents makes people more active on immigration issues.

**Checks for external validity**

One concern for this project is whether the results from our sample can be expected to generalize to the broader population of interest. Relying in part on the internet for our sampling frame may bias the survey toward including U.S.-born Latinos who have more resources and are more assimilated. Of course, this problem does not apply to the one third of respondents from the GfK panel. In addition, it is estimated that by 2013 around 95% of young Latinos had internet access, so any such bias is likely to be modest (Brown, López and Lopez 2016, 4-7).

The fact that our sample includes too many people with higher levels of education may lead us to overstate levels of political participation. This implies that one should not simply extrapolate the results to the wider population of young, U.S.-born Latinos. But this is not necessarily a problem for the comparisons of those with vs. without undocumented parents. We see no obvious reason to think that our key comparison would be biased by the fact that we have an overly educated sample, compared to the underlying population.

Another worry is that our aggregate results might mask varying effects across the country. Perhaps Latinos with undocumented parents, stigmatized by the association with illegality, are more likely to “fight” and become politically active in permissive climates (e.g. California), but more likely to “take flight” and withdraw from civic and political life in hostile contexts (e.g. Arizona). In that case, we should report the
contrasting estimates, rather than inferring an overall null effect. To test for varying effects, we interacted the indicator for having undocumented parent(s) with an index of “state-created immigration climate.” This index is based on factors such as whether state law enforcement officers are told to report undocumented migrants to federal officials (see Pham and Van 2013). States like Illinois and California receive positive scores, while states such as Alabama and Arizona get negative scores. We tested for effects on parental and offspring civic behavior, offspring political engagement and trust, activism on immigration issues, and optimism about activism—twelve outcomes in all—and found only one significant interaction between parental legal status and the index of policy climate (the models use standard errors clustered by state). As such, our data provide little reason to worry that the aggregate results might conceal varying state-level effects.

DISCUSSION

Among our more striking findings is the lack of evidence for chilling effects on the civic and political behavior of the undocumented parents of U.S. citizens. Our data suggest they engage in a range of activities that correlate with and can precede more formal engagement with the political system. In this, they are comparable to other immigrant parents. This implies that they can also model political engagement for their U.S.-citizen children. Our paper may show a relatively strong case of political engagement among the undocumented, since the parents of U.S.-born citizens are probably among the most socially integrated members of the undocumented population. Those who migrated illegally but did not have U.S.-citizen children are probably less integrated, and indeed are more likely to have left the country by now. On the other hand, our results arguably
reflect the new reality. Even compared to the 1980s or 1990s, the undocumented population is now much more integrated into U.S. society, since so many have lived in the country for so long.

Nevertheless, some queries might be raised about this finding. One possibility is that the “chilling” effects might be so deep that some young U.S.-born Latinos with undocumented parents refuse to participate in surveys such as ours. In that case we would underestimate the chilling effects. We do not think this is likely, given that, as U.S.-citizens, they have little to fear from taking a survey. It is also worth considering how a distinct but related reluctance to discuss the immigration history of one’s parents could affect our results. The wary offspring of undocumented migrants might participate in surveys, but conceal the legal status of their parents. If this kind of wariness is also more common among people who are politically disengaged, that would lead us to overestimate political engagement among those whom we identify as having undocumented parents. While this is certainly possible, we doubt it is a big problem in our data. As we explain in detail in the SI, we infer undocumented status indirectly for parents who were not reported to have U.S. citizenship, a green card or a valid visa. We avoided asking a direct question about this sensitive issue. If our survey participants were trying not to expose their parents one might also expect those recruited via the GfK panel to be more secretive, since GfK has their address, whereas the people we recruited online were not asked for theirs. And yet, as is clear from Table 1, the demographics of respondents from the two samples are similar, and comparable shares gave answers implying that they had one or more undocumented parents.
Finally, our results might be due in part to “desirability” effects, where people give the answers they think are most socially acceptable. Young Americans with undocumented parents might feel they should say they are involved in immigrant activism. Again, this is possible but we doubt that it explains our findings, for three reasons. First, we did not directly ask about parental legal status, so we doubt that the survey sent a clear “desirability” signal on this issue. Second, not all of our outcomes are desirable. If anything, we suspect there is a taboo against admitting support for “illegal protests or damaging property.” And third, our survey participants did not give other socially desirable answers, although they had the chance. A classic example of a social desirability effect is saying you voted, even when you didn’t. Yet our survey participants with one or more undocumented parents are not more likely to say they voted ($p=0.23$).

Steps for further research

Our results align with prior research on cohort effects in political socialization, and with research showing that a sense of threat is a strong motive for political mobilization (Cho, Gimpel and Wu 2006; Marcus 2000). The fact that so many Latino Americans have close ties to undocumented migrants, along with our finding that these ties make people more likely to protest on this issue, helps to explain some otherwise puzzling patterns. There has been a lot of activism for immigrants’ rights in recent years—even though undocumented migrants are in a tenuous legal position, they often lack the resources that fuel social movements, and the political context in much of the country is very hostile (Chavez 2013; Zepeda-Míllan 2016). Scholars have argued that these activists are reacting to a sense of threat, but have emphasized threats to broad social identities such as
“Latino” (e.g. Pantoja, Ramirez and Segura 2001; Pérez 2015; White 2016). In contrast, we have shown a more intimate mechanism at work: the threats apply to specific people rather than an abstract group. It would be worth testing whether similar effects are seen for siblings of the undocumented, since many U.S.-born Latinos have older brothers or sisters who arrived without papers or remained in the U.S. after their visas expired. More broadly, we think scholars should seek to understand the macro- and micro-level logics of solidarity and mobilization. Do they work separately? Or, for example, are macro-level identity appeals more effective for people who also have micro-level exposure to an issue via their family members? This is one way in which research on migration could link to broader theories about interpersonal dynamics in political behavior.

Notably, our findings are out of line with the dire predictions of some scholars on the long-run effects of having so many undocumented people living in the country, e.g. with Massey’s (2013, 13) account of “insurmountable barriers” facing not only undocumented migrants but also their U.S.-citizen children. When one looks a little closer at the existing research, however, the picture is more mixed. For example, Bean et al. (2011) find that the children of the undocumented are less educated than other second generation children, but they also find evidence of upward mobility. Even the children of the undocumented are much more educated than their parents (see also Alba, Kasinitz and Waters 2011). Rather than reaching for broad conclusions about “insurmountable” barriers, we think scholars should be more specific about the factors behind immigrant inclusion or exclusion. Our results are some of the first on the political consequences of a regime of mass illegality for the next generation. We should now ask why this legacy seems less damaging than in some of the research on education or mental health. One
possibility is that the institution of birthright citizenship is such a strong equalizing force for the second generation that it largely offsets the political legacy of having one’s parents marked as “illegal.” Citizen can push back. Scholars should learn more about which rights are relevant in this case and who is most likely to use them.

CONCLUSION

A generation of Latino Americans is growing up with close ties to undocumented immigrants, often including siblings and parents. Theories of parental socialization imply that this might chill the political participation of the second generation, since undocumented parents are less likely to act as role-models of political engagement. But our results suggest this is not the case. Instead, we have shown evidence that this is a generation shaped by a context of activism around immigration reform, and that Americans with undocumented parents are even more likely to join protests on this issue. A large body of previous research on political socialization shows that people tend to maintain the habits of political participation that they pick up in the “formative years” of early adulthood (e.g. Bartels and Jackman 2014; Jennings and Niemi 1981). For this reason, our results imply that one of the lasting legacies of this era of mass undocumented migration may actually be a new generation of political activists in America.
We thank the Russell Sage Foundation and the Cornell Institute for the Social Sciences for funding this research and for helpful reviewer feedback. We are also grateful for comments from Melissa Michelson, Robert C. Smith, Karen Schönwälder and participants in the 2015 Western Political Science Association annual meeting. A draft of this paper won the 2016 best paper award from the Latina/Latino Politics section of WPSA. The data for the study are available as ICPSR study 36625. Code for the results in this paper will be posted on the lead author’s Harvard Dataverse account within one month of publication.

Since partisan socialization is such a big part of this field of study, we are devoting a separate paper to that topic. In this paper we focus on forms of political engagement that are open even to undocumented migrants.

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

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

For these calculations our outcome is the log of the number of forms of civic activity per person (rescaled to range from zero to one) since the raw distribution is quite skewed.
Results in Figure 4 are grouped in five-year periods, due to the limited sample size. By construction, all survey participants have at least one parent who came to the U.S. before 1995, but some have another parent who arrived thereafter, or left and then returned.

It is possible that people tried to select into eligibility for regularization, which would cut against our claim that IRCA was an exogenous shock. Note, however, that people have imperfect control over the timing of migration. There also was uncertainty over the deadlines for eligibility until late in the legislative process (Gimpel and Edwards 1999).

The instrumental variables approach is equivalent to “fuzzy” regression discontinuity (Angrist and Pischke 2009, 259) with a wide bandwidth. We find the IV setup clearer in this case since we have multiple instruments, namely year of arrival for each parent.

The lone significant result ($p=0.01$) is that those with undocumented parents who live in more friendly contexts are less likely to engage in civic behavior (going to meetings etc.). Future research may be able to account for other contextual variation, e.g. studying responses to much harsher federal policies, or studying second generation politics in times and places where immigration is less politicized.

We checked whether our survey participants grew up with other people such as aunts and uncles, rather than their parents. Very few had done so. This suggests that parental return migration was rarely an issue in our sample. The possible effects of U.S. policies on U.S.-born Latinos who left with their parents are beyond the scope of this paper.
References


SI Part 1: Identifying Undocumented Migrants

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

We identified those who were reported to have entered without documents, but to have since changed legal status (by obtaining citizenship, permanent resident status or Temporary Protected Status, TPS), as having undocumented experience. We also used knowledge of the U.S. immigration system to infer undocumented status in a small number of other cases. Specifically, we identified those who entered with a visa but did not subsequently change legal status as undocumented, on the assumption that such visas eventually expired. When survey participants answered the question on status at entry, but did not answer the question on subsequent changes in status, we classed the parents as undocumented if they entered as undocumented migrants, as refugees or with visas.
When survey participants did not answer the question about status at entry, but did answer the question about subsequent changes in legal status, we classed the parents as having entered without documents if they only received TPS. We also assumed that all parents from Puerto Rico entered as U.S. citizens. After this manual coding we were left with some missing data: no data on status at entry for 16% of mothers and 21% of fathers, and no data on subsequent changes in status for 8% of mothers and 15% of fathers. We excluded from the analysis people who indicated very little knowledge of their parents, suggesting weak relationships. Specifically, we excluded those who failed to answer questions on parental legal status, and on their parents’ ages, and questions on their parents’ occupations during the respondent’s childhood. These cases made up 3% of the full sample.

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

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

Note: the data source is Second Generation Latino Survey, ICPSR study number 36625. “Undoc.” is short for undocumented.

SI Figure S1 shows educational attainment by parental legal status. Consistent with earlier research, we find that this is substantially lower ($p=0.02$) among those with undocumented parent(s) in models with controls for age and demographic characteristics.
SI Figure S1. Educational attainment by parental legal status

Note: the data source is Second Generation Latino Survey, ICPSR study number 36625. “Low” means high school or less, “mid” means some college, “high” means some certificate of higher education.

SI Part 2: Question wording and coding, and descriptive statistics

A) Civic behavior, self
“In the last 12 months, have you ...?”
1 Attended a PTA/school group meeting
2 Attended a community group meeting
3 Donated blood
4 Given money to charity
5 Worked for a charity or for your church
6 Worked with others in your community to solve a problem
7 Organized an event in your community
8 Participated in an ethnic organization
9 Participated in an organization linked to your parents’ country of origin
10 Participated in a sports league
11 Participated in a labor union
12 Participated in a professional association
13 Participated in an organization that supports candidates for election, such as a political party

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

“Now thinking back to when you were 16, did your parents or the people who raised you take part in these kinds of activities? Please say yes if any of the adults who raised you did this, and check all that apply. Would you say that they ...?”
1  Attended PTA/school group meetings
2  Attended community group meetings
3  Donated blood
4  Gave money to charity
5  Worked for a charity or for their church
6  Worked with others in their community to solve a problem
7  Organized an event in their community
8  Participated in an ethnic organization
9  Participated in an organization linked to their country of origin
10  Participated in a sports league
11  Participated in a labor union
12  Participated in a professional association
13  Participated in an organization that supports candidates for election, such as a political party
14  Took part in a political demonstration, march or rally

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

C) Frequency of political discussions at home when growing up

“At the time you were 16 years old, how frequent were political discussions at home?”
Several times a week (1) / A few times a month (0.67) / Once or twice a year (0.33) / Never (0)

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

D) Political interest

“In general, how interested are you in politics and public affairs?”
Very interested (1) / Somewhat interested (0.67) / Slightly interested (0.33) / Not at all interested (0).

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

E) Consumption of political media

“How often do you get information about politics from each of the following sources: radio, internet news sites, paper newspapers, television, magazines, internet/blogs?”
Every day (1) / Three times a week or more (0.8) / Almost every week (0.6) / One to three times a month (0.4) / Less than once a month (0.2) / never (0).
Note: For statistical models we use an index based on the sum of values assigned to each level of political media consumption, across the various sources, scaled from zero to one. Cronbach’s alpha = 0.87.

F) Discussing politics
“We’re interested in the different ways people hear or talk about politics. How often does the subject of politics come up in each of the following: at work, at your church or place of worship, in conversations with friends, in conversations with family, on an internet message board or blog, in conversation with your spouse or partner?”
A lot (1) / Some (0.67) / Hardly ever (0.33) / Never (0).

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

G) Distrusting the government and police
“How much of the time do you think you can trust the [federal government in Washington DC / the police] to do what is right? Would you say ...?”
Just about always (0) / Most of the time (0.33) / Some of the time (0.67) / Almost never (1).

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

H) Avoiding the government and police
“How do you respond to the statement: “In general, it is better to avoid contact with the [government / police].” Do you ...?”
Agree strongly (1) / Agree somewhat (0.75) / Neither agree nor disagree (0.5) / Disagree somewhat (0.25) / Disagree strongly (0).

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

I) Rallying
“In the last twelve months have you participated in meetings, rallies, marches or demonstrations related to any of the following?”
1. The tea party
2. The environment
3. Women’s rights
4. Racial equality and civil rights
5. Right to life
6. Peace/anti-war
7 LGBT rights
8 Immigrant’s rights

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

J) Effects of political actions
“What kinds of activity do you think are effective in pushing for political change?”
1 Voting
2 Abstaining from voting
3 Participating in legal protests such as rallies
4 Participating in illegal protests or damaging property
5 Taking issues to the courts
6 Lobbying politicians such as the President, Congress, the Senate, or local political bodies

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

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

L) Parental occupation
Based on an open-ended question about the work that the parents did, when the survey participant was a child. We categorized these responses. The White Collar category covers office work, from secretaries to lawyers, teachers and bankers. This is a somewhat imprecise measure of parental economic status.
### Table S2: Distributions of outcome and control variables (weighted data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One or more undocumented parents at time of survey</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of areas of parental civic activity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean number of areas of respondent civic activity</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of political discussion at home when young</td>
<td>28% never, 26% once or twice a year, 29% a few times a month, 17% a few times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in politics</td>
<td>20% not at all, 25% slightly, 37% somewhat, 19% very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of political information from various media</td>
<td>Min 0, Max 1, Mean 0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of current political discussions in a range of contexts</td>
<td>Min 0, Max 1, Mean 0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust federal government to do what is right</td>
<td>18% never, 53% sometimes, 23% mostly, 6% always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust police to do what is right</td>
<td>17% never, 40% sometimes, 33% mostly, 11% always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better to avoid the government</td>
<td>13% strongly disagree, 18% somewhat disagree, 39% neither agree nor dis., 20% somewhat agree, 11% strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better to avoid the police</td>
<td>15% strongly disagree, 14% somewhat disagree, 30% neither agree nor dis., 20% somewhat agree, 21% strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>45% high school or less, 33% some college, 22% college degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s education</td>
<td>75% high school or less, 10% some college, 15% college degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s education</td>
<td>77% high school or less, 10% some college, 13% college degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent in Spanish</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) from Mexico</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent(s) white collar</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of residence</td>
<td>8% Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14% Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25% South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53% West</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: the data source is Second Generation Latino Survey, ICPSR study number 36625.*
## S1 part 3: Model details

### Table S3. Models of activism by parental legal status

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

*Note: the data source is Second Generation Latino Survey, ICPSR study number 36625. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses. ** means p<0.01, * means p<0.05, † means p<0.1.*
SI References
