

Latent Transition Analysis of Civic Resources and Opportunity among Latina/o Youth: An Intersectional Examination Civic Inequality in Adolescence

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Background

Latina/o and immigrant youth have been at the forefront of the immigrant rights movement (DeAngelo et al., 2016; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014; Nicholls, 2013).

- However, studies on youth civic engagement have not always examined how civic opportunities and resources are experienced by Latina/o adolescents (e.g., Cicognani et al., 2012; Rossi et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2008).

Guided by **sociopolitical development theory** (Watts & Flanagan, 2007), **opportunity structures (resources and opportunities available to shape civic development)** may be critical to youth civic development, particularly among marginalized youth (Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

- Youth may experience **resources and opportunities for civic development in family, school, and extracurricular contexts** (Cicognani et al., 2012; Rossi et al., 2016; Zaff et al., 2008).
- Yet, marginalized youth may face systemic barriers to civic resources and opportunities (Finlay et al., 2010; Flanagan & Levine, 2010), or access may vary by intersecting social categories such as race-ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and immigrant status (Gordon, 2008; Levinson, 2010; Terriquez & Kwon, 2015).

Latent transition analysis (LTA) was used to examine how Latina/o youths' access to civic resources and opportunities varies by gender, immigrant generational status, and SES, as well as the stability of access over time.

Method

Sample. The study includes high school age Latina/o youth in California ($n = 441$) in two waves of a larger longitudinal study of youth civic development. At the first wave, a majority identified as female (60.2%); gender was assessed using a binary measure. A majority of the sample identified as a first- or second-generation immigrant (79.7%). More than half of youth (58.7%) reported either having a hard time buying things needed or having just enough money for the things needed. Average age was 15.2 ($SD = 1.0$).

Measures. Civic resources and opportunities were measured using: extracurricular participation (5 items), quality (5 items), and adult supportive relationships (6 items), and civic modeling in three contexts, peer (3 items), teacher (3 items), and parent (6 items), and sociopolitical discussions in four contexts peer (3 items), teacher (3 items), parent (3 items), and extracurricular (3 items); each scale was assessed on a five-point Likert scale and averaged. In addition, we assessed obstacles related to external barriers to participation (caretaking siblings, work, lack of resources to participate; summed).

Results

LTAs of civic opportunity and resources were conducted in *Mplus*. First latent profile models were examined at each wave.

- The 3-class models were selected at each wave based on the fit indices (AIC, BIC), LRT and conceptual meaning (Collins & Lanza, 2010).
- These included low, medium, and high profiles, as well as consistent across indicators at each wave (Figures 1 and 2).

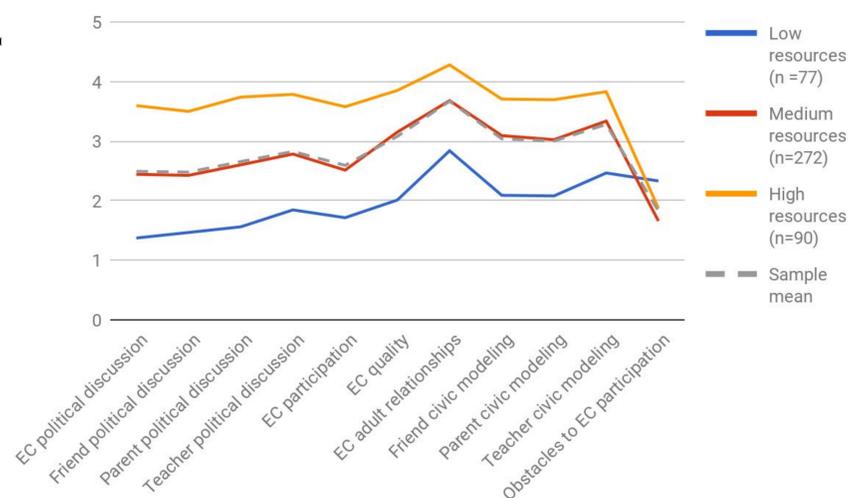


Figure 1. Mean levels of civic resources and opportunities by profile at Wave 2

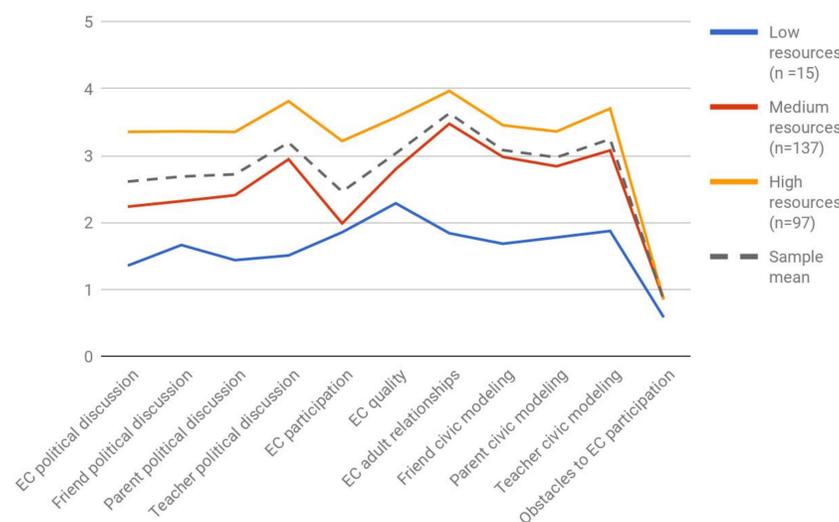


Figure 2. Mean levels of civic resources and opportunities by profile at Wave 3

In the LTA, the most prevalent transition patterns were for youth in the medium civic resource and opportunity profile, and youth in the high civic resources and opportunity profile, to each remain in their respective profiles (Tables 1 and 2).

- Youth in the low civic resource profile were less likely to remain.
- Youth had zero probability of transitioning from low to high civic resource profile, or from the high to the low civic resource profile.

Covariates were examined for the LTA.

- Relative to the high civic opportunity and resource profile, Latino boys had higher odds of membership in the low profile in the earlier wave ($OR = 2.13$, $SE = 0.39$, $p = 0.05$). Further, older youth at the earlier wave also had lower odds of membership in the low profile ($OR = 0.63$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = 0.01$).
- However, covariates did not predict transitions across waves.

Table 1. Most likely class membership by wave

Most likely class membership		n	%
Wave 2	Low	68	15.9
	Medium	246	57.6
	High	113	26.5
Wave 3	Low	44	10.3
	Medium	263	61.6
	High	120	28.1

Table 2. Latent transition probabilities

Wave 2 classes	Wave 3 profiles		
	Low	Medium	High
Low	0.53	0.47	0.00
Medium	0.05	0.77	0.18
High	0.00	0.26	0.74

Implications

Findings suggest variability in contextual civic resources and opportunities accessed by Latina/o adolescents.

- Among low-income youth of color opportunity structures in school and extracurricular contexts promotes civic engagement through skills, knowledge, and relationships built (Christens & Dolan, 2011; Conner & Cosner, 2014; Shiller, 2013; Terriquez, 2015).

However, Latino boys and low SES Latina/o youth were less likely to access civic resources and opportunities across contexts.

- Evidence from youth organizing and social justice programs with Latina/o youth indicates that gender and class may influence how boys of color become engaged (Gordon & Taft, 2011; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; Terriquez, 2015).
- Future research should prioritize how to promote civic resources and opportunities among Latino boys and low-SES Latina/o youth.

Acknowledgements

The this study was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF Grant 1551520).

