

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Role of Family Interaction in New Immigrant Latinos' Civic Engagement

Holley A. Wilkin¹, Vikki S. Katz², & Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach²

1 Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA 30303

2 University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90007

Civic engagement can impact politics, health outcomes, support for new policies, and the like. Research indicates that the communication infrastructure and the strength of the storytelling network, influences civic engagement outcomes. Recent community building initiatives place the impetus of community change and civic engagement on the family unit. This paper places the family unit within the storytelling network and explores how family interaction is related to civic engagement. A telephone survey of 739 new immigrant Latinos in Los Angeles was used to test the effect of family interaction on civic engagement. Regression analyses, controlling for sociodemographic factors, were used. Results indicate that family interaction leads to higher levels of civic engagement and encourages more integration into the neighborhood storytelling network.

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The spring of 2006 was witness to the most massive immigrant mobilizations on record in the United States. On April 10, 2006, participants in demonstrations in 102 cities across the country were estimated to be between 100,000 and 500,000 people each (Ferre et al., 2006). A demonstration in Los Angeles on March 25 broke the previous record for a public demonstration in the city, with an estimated 500,000 participants. These predominantly peaceful demonstrations protested the passage of HR4437, the Sensenbrenner bill, which would have raised the penalties for illegal immigration and made it a felony to harbor illegal immigrants. Demonstrators also called for public support for amnesty and paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Participants in these demonstrations were of all ages and backgrounds. The most visible faces in the initial marches in Los Angeles were Latinos, who often marched together as families. Research conducted in the months that followed these marches (González, 2007) revealed that the large turnout in Los Angeles was due in part to the call for civic participation that came from many different sources. For weeks, several prominent disk jockeys on the Spanish-language radio stations had discussed the

Corresponding author: Holley A. Wilkin; e-mail: hwilkin@gsu.edu

reform bill on their talk shows. In the days leading up to the march, they reached out to their English-language radio station counterparts to announce the rally. Hundreds of school children walked out of school to protest the day before the march, having heard about the Sensenbrenner bill through their social networks, and the Internet, specifically through announcements made on MySpace.com. Others heard about the rally at church and through other community organizations (González, 2007).

The effectiveness of this multipronged mobilization depended largely on the key neighborhood storytellers identified in communication infrastructure theory (CIT) as essential to community civic engagement. According to the theory, civic engagement is a product of a strong neighborhood storytelling network—a triangulated network of residents in their social networks, geo-ethnic media (i.e., local and/or ethnically targeted media), and community/nonprofit organizations working together to story tell the community (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a). Specifically, the strength of the storytelling network is positively related to collective efficacy, civic participation, and community belonging.

An uncommon feature of these rallies was the prevalence of young children and families marching together. This case prompts a larger question of the role of family in community mobilization and civic action. Some recent community building initiatives have placed the impetus of community change and civic engagement on the family unit (Doherty & Carroll, 2002; Erickson & Louv, 2002; Rojano, 2004). Research has shown that parents who are more active in raising their children are more likely to exhibit higher levels of civic engagement (e.g., Wilcox, 2002). In this paper, we examine the role that family interaction among Latino immigrants plays in the community communication infrastructure and how that, in turn, affects civic engagement. We begin with a discussion of CIT and the role of families within the storytelling network. We then examine sociodemographic factors that may affect Latino immigrants' connections to a neighborhood storytelling network. Finally, we present and discuss survey findings about how family interaction among new immigrant Latinos relates to civic engagement in Los Angeles.

Communication infrastructure theory

CIT was created to access urban communities' potential to build and maintain civil society in the context of globalization, new communication technologies, and population diversity (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Jung, Qiu, & Kim, 2001; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2004; Loges & Jung, 2001; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002). The *communication infrastructure* is the basic communication system a community relies upon for the information needed in residents' everyday lives. It consists of two elements: (a) the storytelling network and (b) the communication action context (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). The *storytelling network* is a triangulated network of storytellers who stimulate each other to talk about the neighborhood. For a community to thrive, it must have a strong network of such storytellers utilizing mediated and interpersonal types of communication to build a discursive community for the identification and resolution of issues of concern to the residents. The *communication action context* is all

of the elements in a community that enable or constrain neighborhood storytelling: examples include street safety, ease of transportation, the quality of goods and services, law enforcement, and availability of child and health-care services in the area.

The first component of the CIT is the *multilevel storytelling system*. Levels are differentiated by the nature of the stories told. According to Ball-Rokeach et al. (2001), *macrolevel storytellers* include all media, political, religious, and other large institutions and organizations that tell stories about the whole city, the nation, and the world for large audiences (e.g., city, county, region). *Meso-level storytellers* include smaller, more community-based media and organizations that focus their storytelling upon particular communities (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). Community or “geo-ethnic” media include a range of newspapers, magazines, newsletters, radio stations, and cable television that are targeted toward a specific ethnic group and/or geographic area (i.e., geo-ethnic). In addition, most communities have cultural, religious, neighborhood, homeowner, political, educational, sports and recreation, and other forms of locally based organizations that have the potential to act as neighborhood storytellers (Wilson, 2001). Finally, *micro level storytellers* are the residents as constituted in their interpersonal networks (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). Residents participate in storytelling within their own personal networks (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1999). Neighbor and family networks are especially important micro storytellers. Through their stories, “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) is constructed.

The second component of the CIT, the *communication action context* varies from *open*, or a context that encourages communication among people, to *closed*, or a context that discourages communication (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). All contexts have elements of both openness and closedness and are most often dictated by physical, psychological, sociocultural, economic, and technological features (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). *Physical features* include elements of how an area is designed. These features either incorporate places for people to gather and communicate or discourage these behaviors (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). *Sociocultural features* include, for example, class, ethnic, and cultural similarity or diversity in a local community, and the degree to which residents interact across these boundaries. *Psychological features* include the conditions that enable people to feel free to engage in conversations with those around them (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001), for example, feelings of fear or comfort (Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2001). *Economic features* include having the time and resources available to engage in communication with others (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). Finally, *technological features* include access to transportation systems as well as Internet and other new communication technologies (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001).

Storytelling and civic engagement

In a strong storytelling network, neighbors talk to neighbors about their community; community organizations are in touch with the needs of the residents, tell stories about community issues, and have personal or professional relationships with the producers of the local media; and local media are connected to the community

organizations and residents and tell their neighborhood stories. A strong integrated storytelling network is associated with higher levels of civic engagement in the form of belonging, collective efficacy, and civic participation (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2000; Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim, 2003; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2004; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a). Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2004) capture the full storytelling model of civic engagement including structural storytelling conditions (residential tenure, home ownership, socioeconomic status, gender, occupation, ethnicity), the integrated neighborhood storytelling network (local media, community organizations, and residents' interpersonal communication) as it is simultaneously enabled and constrained by the communication action context.

Families in the storytelling network

In its examination of civic engagement, CIT suggests consideration of families as communicative units, set in their resident networks within the community storytelling network (see Figure 1). Conceiving of families as communicative units does not privilege “traditional” family structures, instead considering a wide range of family units such as single parents, civil unions, grandparents as caretakers, and other configurations, as viable sites of family interaction that can influence civic engagement. This conceptualization views communication as a central process of family functioning (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993).

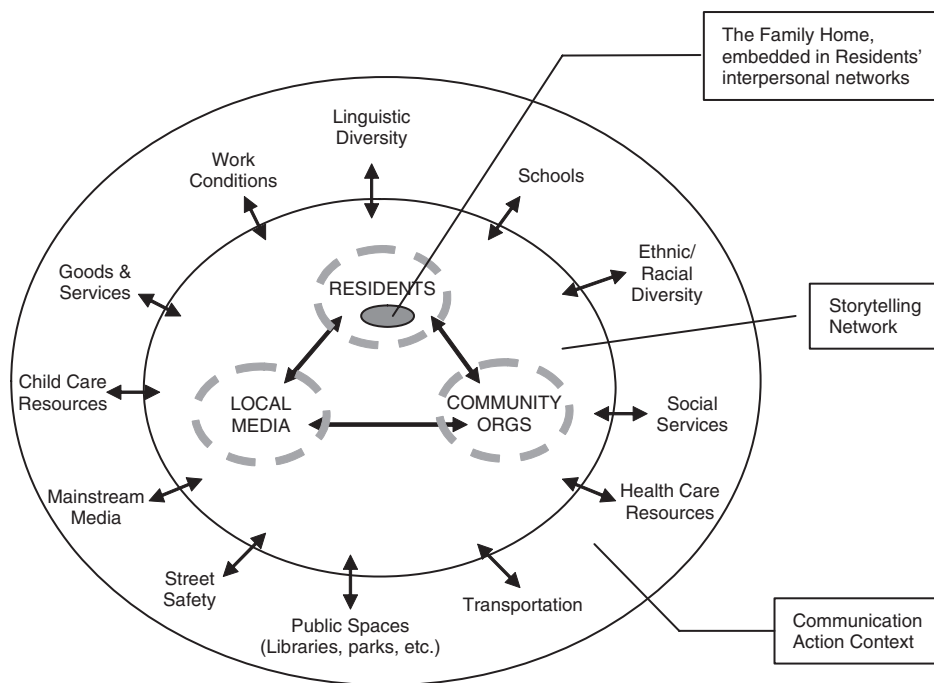


Figure 1 The family in the community communication infrastructure.

Interactions within family units are opportunities for community resources and events to be shared and mutually understood. Discussions in the home or in community spaces can constitute not only a key link between the family home and participation in the local community, but also, can be a motivation for participation in civic activities (Loges, Ball-Rokeach, & Qiu, 2003; McIntosh, Hart, & Youniss, 2007). For example, Loges et al. (2003) explain that caring for children “motivates concern for and involvement in schools, parks and playgrounds, sports leagues, and any number of other voluntary associations adults join for the sake of children.” (p. 8). Time constraints notwithstanding, families not only provide motivation for involvement, but also give opportunities for community engagement. Voydanoff (2004) found that family integration—as demonstrated through a behavioral component, activities with adolescents, and an affective component, a feeling of family cohesion/bonding—was positively related to moderate and high levels of participation in youth activities. Children’s activities provide caretakers with an opportunity to meet and talk to neighbors. Children also interact with each other and bring information back to the “dinner table” to discuss with their family. That said, our analyses do not preclude the possibility that families without children can interact in ways that motivate civic engagement.

To the extent that residents interact within their own families, a private form of storytelling, we would expect that members would be more likely to interact with their community’s storytelling network, which constitutes a more public storytelling configuration. Families’ private/public interactions and sharing of information resources should not only affect each other, but also, have a cumulative effect for immigrant families as they adapt to their new communities. Talk and resource sharing within families, as demonstrated in the illustrations above, lead to opportunities to interact with other residents. Family members may be similarly encouraged to access local community organizations or local media resources based on information or recommendations shared between family members over dinner or during a long commute home. Storytelling between family members can be both cause and consequence of civic engagement. This means that family interaction may encourage civic engagement, but also, that engagement in the neighborhood can guide family discussions about local opportunities and obstacles. Family storytelling about these resources can therefore prompt connectedness to local resources, encouraging a reciprocal relationship between family interaction and continued civic engagement.

Latino immigration and family interaction

In the course of settlement in the United States, the new immigrant Latino family undergoes fundamental changes that affect family interaction. The process of Latino immigrant settlement is characterized by changes in the structure of the family, as the necessities of the new environment result in greater gender equality between spouses (Hirsch, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2003) and increased authority of children (Katz, 2007; Menjívar, 2000; Ong, 2003; Orellana et al., 2003). Migration also results

in the formation of more nontraditional family structures (Domínguez & Watkins, 2003; Kibria, 1993; Menjívar).

Regardless of whether they were unskilled or skilled workers in the country of origin, Latino men experience a relative loss of status when they negotiate entry into the host country's employment sector (Le Espiritu, 2003; Pessar, 2003), particularly in comparison to their female counterparts. By contrast, Latinas enter the American job market with less or no formal work experience, and thus are not subject to the declines in job status that their husbands suffer, relative to their social positions in the home country (Jones-Correa, 1998). The service-oriented economy that characterizes large American cities also favors traditionally feminized employment opportunities, such as domestic housecleaning (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), child and/or elder care, and garment industry niches (Milkman, Reese, & Roth, 1998). Newfound female earning power plays a significant role in reconfiguring the decision-making authority in the household (Gonzalez, 1976; Hirsch, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Between a more independent spouse, and children who have more familial authority, male immigrants can experience a "crisis of patriarchy" (Castells, 1997) as his immigrant family reconfigures to a more egalitarian orientation (Jones-Correa, 1998, p.327).

Immigration can also result in the formation of less traditional family structures. Female-headed Latino households are common, particularly among Central American immigrants who have fled civil unrest in their home country (Coutin, 2000; Menjívar, 2000). Durand and Massey *et al.* (2002) document the feminizing of Mexican migration; while women have accounted for approximately 46% of documented Mexican migrants since 1980, there has been a substantial increase in undocumented female migration since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. The feminization of the undocumented worker flow from Latin America generally has increased the likelihood of intergenerational cohabitation, for example, a working woman, her parent(s), and her children (Domínguez & Watkins, 2003). These nontraditional family structures facilitate women's participation in domestic forms of employment, meaning that women are paradoxically raising other people's children in order to financially support their own (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2001; Segura, 1994). Alternatively, households may be composed of a combination of friends and relatives. Kibria (1993) documents the prevalence of immigrant households where friends and/or extended family members cohabit and "patchwork" their incomes and contributions as a strategy for economic survival. While these different family forms may result in wide variations in family functioning, we conceptualize the members of a household, regardless of their official relationships, as the core communicative unit of the community.

Migration also affects children's roles in their families. Since children often adapt more easily to the nuances and norms of American culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2000), immigrant childhood is often marked by responsibility for helping parents navigate a foreign world, through translating or linguistic brokering (Katz, 2007; Orellana, 2001, Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003; Tse, 1995) and helping parents at work (Park, 2001, 2002; Song, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). As a consequence of

children translating for parents, studies indicate less of a parent–child distinction in communication styles than might be observed in families that remained in the home country (Orellana *et al.*, 2003; Tse, 1995). This increased role equivalence is also related to parents' expectations of early assumption of household responsibilities and self-reliance (Buriel & DeMent, 1997; Reese, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Taken together, the assumption of greater responsibilities at earlier ages and an increased expectation of a relatively open parent–child relationship may result in more communicative interaction between family members, than in families not characterized by this degree of parent–child interdependence.

As a result of these changes in family structure, individual family members have differential access to community resources, such as schools, health-care facilities, and social services. These various resources have to be collectively shared through family interaction for the family as a whole to reap rewards of their resource gathering, leading us to our contention that the new immigrant family that engages in more storytelling within the family unit, will in turn be more engaged in their local community.

The literature suggests that these familial changes result in women having more contact with host-country organizations and institutions than men, and position children to bridge immigrant and host-country networks. Through school attendance, children of Latino immigrants have more direct daily contact than their parents with a dominant cultural institution (Rueda, Monzó, & Arzubiaga, 2003). Children also constitute a strong impetus for parents to interact with health-care organizations and social services related to child care and well-being. New immigrant Latina mothers are more likely to come into and maintain contact with community organizations than male adults in the household: “Even working mothers continue to be the primary caretakers of their children. . . and as such, come into contact with a whole set of institutions through their children” (Jones-Correa, 1998, p. 327). Women and children therefore carry much of the “burden” of connecting to community organizations and local resident networks. On the other hand, men connect with a wider range of (Spanish-language) media more often than women do (Muse-Orlinoff, Ruiz, Ambort, & Cárdenas, 2009). We therefore expect that gender will factor into the benefit that family interaction has for increased civic engagement, since women can share information resources from their connections with community organizations and resident networks, while men have more information from media resources. Given that women spend more time interacting in the community on a day-to-day basis, we expect that men will benefit most from information resources shared through family interaction.

Adults and children therefore connect to different social networks, and can, through family interaction, provide each other with broader connections to the local neighborhood storytelling network. However, work constraints (for example, long commutes, multiple jobs, and long hours) can limit family interaction and thus civic engagement (Loges *et al.*, 2003). The low-income, new immigrant nature of this sample means that many respondents are constrained by their time-consuming

struggles to access resources that they need for their families. Rather than imposing a middle-class framework on the benefits of civic engagement, we argue that family interaction and sharing of resources are the best ways for families to be able to access the resources they need. The connections to other residents, community organizations, and local media resources that result from family discussions, can ease the individual struggles of low-income immigrants by facilitating their efforts to connect with resources their families need most. This connection to a storytelling network through family interaction may increase civic engagement.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were posed:

H1: (a) Family interaction is positively related to civic engagement. (b) Family interaction is a more significant influence on civic engagement for Latino males than for females.

H2: (a) Family interaction is positively related to integration into the neighborhood storytelling network. (b) The relationship between family interaction and integration into the storytelling network will be stronger for Latino males than females.

H3: Family interaction and connections to the neighborhood storytelling network work together to increase civic engagement outcomes.

Methods

A 40- to 47-minute telephone survey of 422 females and 317 males representing a total of 739 newer immigrant Latino households—301 predominantly Central American-origin Latinos living in the Pico Union section of Los Angeles, California (in the western United States) and 438 mostly Mexican-origin Latinos living in the Southeast Los Angeles cities of Cudahy, Huntington Park, and South Gate—was conducted in 2002–2003.¹ It was introduced as a survey of residents' feelings toward their community. A well-respected commercial survey research organization trained bilingual interviewers to conduct the survey in the preferred language of the respondent (English or Spanish) using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. Researchers monitored the administration of the survey. Random-digit dialing and up to eight callbacks were used to contact residents in our predetermined study areas. The survey-response rate, conservatively calculated by dividing the number of completed interviews by the number of *theoretically* eligible phone numbers, was 48%. Given the nature of our geo-ethnic urban new immigrant samples, it is hard to find comparable response rates in the literature. Our rates, nonetheless, compare favorably with those of national surveys conducted by major research organizations (Keeter, Kohut, Groves, & Presser, 2000).

The study areas and sample

Pico Union is located very close to the Los Angeles Civic Center (1.7 miles). According to the 2000 Census, almost 79% of the population is Latino, predominantly Central

American origin; of these, 69% are first generation immigrants. This area is relatively poor; Latino residents' median household income is \$19,408. This Latino population is young and have limited formal education; only 12% of Latinos in this area have a high school degree. The Southeast L.A. study area covers 11.6 square miles east of the Los Angeles River and Los Angeles City limits. According to the 2000 Census, 96% of Huntington Park, 92% of South Gate, 94% of the total population of Cudahy is Latino—mostly from Mexico—and more than half are first generation immigrants. Residents in Southeast L.A. are relatively young and 34% completed high school. The median household income is about \$32,500.

The survey sample characteristics reflect the Census data for the areas. Survey respondents are largely new immigrants—57% first generation and 31% second generation. Nearly 84% completed the telephone interview in Spanish and 16% in English. Fifty-three percent speak both English and Spanish in the home, 43% speak Spanish-only, 3% speak only English. Respondents range in age from 18 to 91 years with a median age of 35. Fifty-three percent are married and 25% never married. Less than half the sample population (47%) has a high school diploma and a large portion of the sample (35%) has an eighth grade education or less. The annual household income is low; 44% earn less than \$20,000 a year as a family; 78% less than \$35,000 per year.

Measures

A series of items designed to capture various dimensions of family interaction asked respondents to indicate on a scale from 1 (often) to 5 (never), the extent to which they talked and/or perform behaviors together as a family. A factor analysis was used to determine which items best configured an index of family interaction. An index including the following six items emerged: *How often does your family* (a) *sit down and eat together?* (b) *sit down and talk together?* (c) *discuss work-related issues?* (d) *discuss things that are happening in the neighborhood?* (e) *participate in activities outdoors together like sports, hiking, going to parks, etc.?* and (f) *participate in neighborhood and community activities as a family?*² Items were reverse coded to make higher numbers indicate higher levels of interaction. Items were summed together into a scale. Then Tabachnick and Fidell's (2001) procedure was used to correct for a moderate negative skew, which resulted in a 5-point scale. This 5-point scale was once again reverse coded so that higher values equaled higher amounts of family interaction.³ The scale was reliable for this sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$).⁴

The measures of civic engagement and the storytelling network had been developed and tested in past research. The measures of civic engagement included: an 8-item *belonging* scale (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim, 2003; Kim & Jung, 2003; Matei & Ball-Rokeach, 2002) that measures the extent to which residents feel and behave like they belong to a community, a 6-item *collective efficacy* measure (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999) that indicates residents' confidence in the ability of their neighbors to come together to solve shared problems, and a 5-item *civic participation* scale (Kim, 2003) that indicates

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of the Independent and Dependent Variables

	Sample Mean (SD)	Males Mean (SD)	Females Mean (SD)
Family Interaction	2.96 (.71)	2.91 (.69)	2.99 (.72)
Storytelling network	6.35 (1.74)	6.53 (1.66)	6.22 (1.79)
Belonging	1.32 (.19)	1.35 (.18)	1.29 (.18)
Collective efficacy	1.41 (.28)	1.41 (.29)	1.40 (.28)
Civic participation (%)	29%	32%	27%

the number of civic actions the respondent has taken. Kim (2003) developed the *integrated connection to a storytelling network* (ICSN) indicator to measure the extent to which individuals' connections to key neighborhood storytellers (neighbors, local media, or community organizations) stimulate connections to the other storytellers. The measure includes interaction terms between the scope of connections to local media, scope of connections to community organizations, and the intensity of interpersonal neighborhood storytelling— $ICSN = \sqrt{LC \times INS} + \sqrt{INS \times OC} + \sqrt{OC \times LC}$ (LC = local media connectedness, INS = intensity of interpersonal neighborhood storytelling, and OC = scope of connection to community organizations) (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006b). Each measure was corrected as necessary for skewing; the civic participation measure was dichotomized—none (0) vs. any form of participation (1 or more on the civic participation scale)—because it was too skewed to be fixed through conventional methods. The means and standard deviations for each of the independent and dependent measures are shown in Table 1.

Sociodemographic factors—age, gender, income, education, and household size residential tenure, home ownership, and neighborhood (Pico Union vs. Southeast L.A.)—were entered into some of the analyses as covariates. Respondents were asked their *age* on their last birthday and household *income* last year (in ranges staggered from less than \$20,000 to more than \$100,000). The highest grade or year of school completed was used to indicate *educational level*, ranging from “eighth grade or less” to “a graduate degree.” Male *gender* was coded “1” and female was coded “0.” *Household size* started at “1” if the person lived alone and went to “9” for “nine or more people.” *Residential tenure* was measured by a question that asked how many years they lived in their neighborhood and *home ownership* by a question that asked if they owned or rented.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that higher levels of family interaction would lead to higher levels of civic engagement. The second part of this hypothesis predicted that family interaction would be a more significant predictor of civic engagement outcomes for males than for females. For the entire sample, age, gender, education, income, marital status, household size, residential tenure, home ownership, and neighborhood were used as covariates and entered with family interaction index measure (FII) into stepwise multivariate regressions predicting to belonging and collective efficacy.

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis—Family Interaction Predicting to Belonging and Collective Efficacy

	Belonging (β)	Males Belonging (β)	Females Belonging (β)	Collective Efficacy (β)	Males Collective Efficacy (β)	Females Collective Efficacy (β)
Age					.12*	.11*
Gender	.16***					
Education				-.08*		
Income						.11*
Household size						.14**
Residential tenure	.24***	.21***	.27***	.11**		
Southeast LA = 1				.13***		
Family interaction	.26***	.33***	.21***	.25***	.30***	.22***
Adjusted R^2	.15***	.15***	.12***	.09***	.10***	.08***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Results of the first set of regressions showed that gender, residential tenure, and family interaction predict to belonging. The regression model including only the significant covariates and FII was significant, $R^2 = .15$, $F(3, 735) = 43.84$, $p = .000$. A second regression equation was used to test the impact of FII on collective efficacy. The regression model that included only the significant covariates—education, residential tenure, and neighborhood—and FII was significant, $R^2 = .09$, $F(4, 730) = 19.89$, $p = .000$. The same covariates (except gender) as above were used in the analysis by gender. Table 2 shows the final regression models for the entire sample and by gender predicting to belonging and civic engagement. While the family interaction index beta weights for males were higher than for females in both models, these differences in beta weights were not statistically significant in predicting belonging ($t = -1.75$, $p = .08$) or collective efficacy ($t = -1.31$, $p = .19$).

The relationship between FII and civic participation was also tested using a binary logistic regression. Table 3 shows the final regression models for the entire sample and by gender predicting to civic participation. Family interaction predicts to civic participation for all respondents; there is no evidence that family interaction is more important for males or females in encouraging civic participation.

The second hypothesis—family interaction positively affects the level of integration into the neighborhood storytelling network—was also tested. Pearson's correlation showed a significant positive relationship between the FII and ICSN, $r = .24$, $p < .01$. Multivariate regression analyses were used to determine if this relationship was significant while controlling for the covariates. The final regression model with only the significant covariates—gender and residential tenure—and FII entered was significant, $R^2 = .07$, $F(3, 735) = 20.49$, $p = .000$. The second part of this hypothesis predicted the relationship between FII and ICSN was stronger for males than females. The final models were significant for both males, $F(1, 315) = 34.26$, $p = .000$, and females, $F(3, 416) = 10.25$, $p = .000$. Follow-up

Table 3 Logistic Regression Analysis—Adjusted Odds Ratios for Family Interaction Predicting to Civic Participation

	Civic Participation Entire Sample	Males	Females
nghyears(1)	.05***	.000	.093**
nghyears(2)	.25**	.233*	.262*
nghyears(3)	.30**	.326*	.267*
nghyears(4)	.32***	.324**	.293**
nghyears(5)	.41***	.294***	.514*
Family interaction	1.47**	1.561*	1.449*
–2 Log likelihood	804.08	350.01	446.62
Nagelkerke’s R^2	.13**	.17***	.12***

nghyears = years in neighborhood.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis—Family Interaction Predicting to Integrated Storytelling Network

	Entire Sample (β)	Males (β)	Females (β)
Age			
Gender	.10**		
Education			
Household size			.11*
Marital status			
Residential tenure	.09**		.13**
Family interaction	.24***	.31***	.19***
Adjusted R^2	.07***	.10***	.06***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

analysis determined that the differences in beta weights for family interaction in the two models were not statistically significant ($t = -1.43, p = .15$). Table 4 presents the final regression models for the entire sample and for each gender.

The third hypothesis predicts an additive effect of family interaction and connections to the neighborhood storytelling network, such that the regression models will be strongest when both variables are included. Past research has established that ICSN predicts civic engagement (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2000; Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Kim, 2003; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2004; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006a). We established with the first hypothesis that family interaction is significantly related to belonging, collective efficacy, and civic participation. This third hypothesis determines if there is an additive effect of family interaction and ICSN. Multivariate regressions were used to predict to belonging and collective efficacy. Table 5 shows the final regression models when both FII and ICSN are included, as well as what the models look like when only FII or only ICSN is entered. In each case, the R-square

Table 5 Regression Analyses—Family Interaction and ICSN Predicting to Belonging and Collective Efficacy (Additive and Individual Models)

	Belonging (β)		Collective Efficacy (β)		
	Only FII	Only ICSN	Only FII	Only ICSN	Only ICSN
Age					
Gender	.12***	.16***	.11**		
Education				-.12**	-.08*
Income				.08*	
HH Size					
Residential tenure	.21***	.24***	.21***	.08*	.11**
Southeast LA = 1				.12**	.13***
FII	.17***	.26***		.22***	.25***
ICSN	.35***		.39***	.16***	.21***
Adjusted R^2	.26***	.15***	.23***	.12***	.07***

ICSN = integrated connection to a storytelling network. Bold independent variables are stronger than the regression models with just one independent variable.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 6 Logistic Regression Analysis—Adjusted Odds Ratios for Family Interaction and ICSN Predicting to Civic Participation (Additive and Individual Models)

	Civic Participation		
	Entire Sample	FII Only	ICSN Only
nghyears(1)	.056***	.05***	.055***
nghyears(2)	.261**	.25**	.256**
nghyears(3)	.334**	.30**	.343**
nghyears(4)	.316***	.32***	.316***
nghyears(5)	.405***	.41***	.420***
Family interaction	1.292*	1.47**	
ICSN	1.272***		1.301***
-2 Log likelihood	783.54	804.08	787.59
Nagelkerke's R^2	.17***	.13**	.16***

ICSN = integrated connection to a storytelling network. nghyears = years in neighborhood. Bold independent variables are stronger than the regression models with just one independent variable.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

change is significant. For belonging, the difference between the model with only ICSN entered and the model with both ICSN and FII entered is R^2 change = 0.028, F change = 27.68, $p = .000$, and difference between the model with only FII and the model with both variables entered is R^2 change = 0.11, F change = 109.81, $p = .000$. For collective efficacy, the difference between the model with only ICSN entered and the model with both ICSN and FII entered is R^2 change = 0.044, F change = 36.57, $p = .000$, and the difference between the model with only FII and the model with both

variables entered is R^2 change = 0.024, F change = 19.88, p = .000. Table 6 illustrates a similar analysis using binary logistic regression to predict to civic participation. FII has a less significant impact on civic participation when ICSN is included in the model, potentially suggesting partial mediation.

For each of the civic engagement factors, including both FII and ICSN in the analysis resulted in an increase in variance explained.

Limitations

A couple of limitations are important to note. Our civic participation measure, which concentrates on behaviors such as attending city council meetings, circulating petitions, writing letters to the local newspaper editor, and participating in political demonstrations, does not capture the types of binational political participation common among Latino immigrants (see: Bada, Fox & Selee, 2006; Escobar, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2008; Jones-Correa, 1998). The variable had little variance, with more than two-thirds of the males and almost three-fourths of the females in the sample reporting no civic participation. Therefore, we report these particular significant findings with caution, as they may not truly represent the relationship between family interaction, the integrated storytelling network, and the binational civic participation of Hispanic immigrants. We hope to develop a civic participation measure in the future that will capture more of the variance in new immigrant civic participation.

In addition, some of the R^2 values are fairly low, so while we have found significant findings for our sample, it is apparent that family interaction is not the only contributing factor leading to increased civic engagement. The regression equations are, however, strongest when both family interaction and connections to the storytelling network are included. Finally, with cross-sectional survey data, it is impossible to distinguish whether family interaction increases civic engagement or if the act of civic participation results in an increase in family interaction.

Conclusions

The primary goal of this paper was to test the relationship between new immigrant Latino family interaction and civic engagement. The secondary goal was to determine if higher levels of family interaction leads to a stronger connection to the neighborhood storytelling network and whether there is an additive effect, such that the model is strongest with both variables included. Past literature suggests that Latina immigrants have more direct connections to the storytelling network, since they interact with community resources in two ways: as individuals, and as the primary caretakers of children (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2001; James-Correa, 1998; Katz, 2007). We therefore expected that men would benefit most from family member's community interactions and predicted that the effects of family interaction would be stronger for males than females. Results suggest that family interaction,

at least in part, contributes to increased civic engagement. However, there were no significant gender differences in the role that family interaction plays in civic engagement or in connecting new immigrants to the neighborhood storytelling network. Follow-up analyses found that gender differences in storytelling network connections were more likely to occur due to male's increased connections to local media ($M = 2.20$; $SD = .90$) as compared to females ($M = 2.00$; $SD = .91$). This finding is consistent with Muse-Orlinoff *et al.*'s (2009) finding that Latino males connect more frequently with a wider range of (Spanish-language) media.

As for our second goal, higher levels of family interaction are indeed related to more integration into the neighborhood storytelling network and the inclusion of both family interaction and the storytelling network resulted in the strongest regression models.

These findings contribute to CIT by unfolding one of, if not the most, important ways that newer Latino immigrants are embedded in personal networks that link them to their larger communities. Initiatives that start with the family unit as a means to produce community change are heading in the right direction, as recent mobilizations over immigration reform have indicated as well. Civic engagement can be stimulated by residents' talking to neighbors over the proverbial "backyard fence," but also by family members talking over the dinner table. Future research needs to explore the extent to which environmental factors such as employment constrain the family's ability to interact and become part of the storytelling network. This may be particularly important to consider with regard to civic participation. Participation requires time commitments that may not be possible due to work constraints, and the daily struggles that revolve around adaptation to a new environment. Our data suggest that participation in the community storytelling network through connections to other residents, geo-ethnic media, and community organizations is key to alleviating these day-to-day struggles, as these connections can facilitate connections with the services and resources that low-income families need most.

Future research is also necessary to identify which information resources are brought into the home by different family members, and the nature of each member's connections to the larger storytelling network. The nature of the stories that are being told as family members share information with each other is also a much-needed addition to this research. Not all stories and resource sharing will necessarily motivate civic engagement; "bad" or negative community stories shared over dinner, such as discussions about a recent gang fight, unkempt parks and facilities, or drug dealing in the neighborhood, indicate family interaction, but these stories could demoralize, family members, leading to civic *disengagement*. On the other hand, sharing of "bad" stories may galvanize residents to cleanup their parks, or petition the city for increased law enforcement to crack down on gangs and drug dealings. The Metamorphosis Project is currently conducting qualitative exploration of how "good" and "bad" storytelling within the family unit affect active resident participation in the neighborhood storytelling network.

We conclude on two optimistic notes. The first is that—even with the constraints on family in our times—the family, nonetheless, appears to be a site of community construction where feelings and behaviors indicating belonging, and beliefs indicating collective efficacy, are constructed through communication in the family unit and through connections to the neighborhood storytelling network. The second is that the largest populations of new immigrants in the urban context of Los Angeles—Latinos largely from Mexico and Central America—are developing critical features of civic engagement. They do this despite their relatively low socioeconomic status and, for many, linguistic isolation.

Notes

- 1 This manuscript has been developed within the broader context of the Metamorphosis Project, part of the Communication Technology and Community Program at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. The project was supported and funded by the Annenberg School for Communication, the Annenberg Center for Communication, and First 5 L.A. More information about the project is available at: www.metamorph.org.
- 2 The procedure to correct for a moderate negative skew is to take the square root of a constant (largest score plus 1) minus the current score. This corrects for the skew, but causes the resulting index to be artificially transformed so that the highest values are now the lowest and vice versa.
- 3 The authors would like to thank Pauline Cheong for her assistance in the initial development of the family interaction index and Yong-Chan Kim for his feedback on the measure.
- 4 The Metamorphosis Project's partnership with First 5 L.A. and their focus on family led to the inclusion of the family interaction index questions for the first time in the 2002–2003 Pico Union and Southeast L.A. survey. In the most recent survey of African Americans in the Greater Crenshaw area in Los Angeles, the reliability of the FII measure was higher ($\alpha = .81$). African American's family interaction will be explored in a future paper.

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