

Unions a catalyst for civic engagement, study finds

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Labor union experiences lead Latino immigrants to greater civic participation, a USC Dornsife study found.

The findings suggest that members independently and, without prompting from the union, draw upon their skills to bring about change in their lives, said Veronica Terriquez, assistant professor of sociology in USC Dornsife.

"People learn to run meetings, communicate problems effectively and use existing processes and protocols," Terriquez said. "This empowers people to help themselves and their children."

The study by Terriquez was published in the [American Sociological Review](#).

The experience of mobilizing protests and participating in campaigns helped Latino immigrants overcome their limited education and limited English skills, the study reported.

Terriquez examined the participation of Latino immigrants in a labor union and their children's schools to find out how one type of civic engagement shaped participation in another area. She surveyed and interviewed parents who were in labor unions and compared their civic participation to that of nonunion parents.

The study found that union participation, not [union membership](#) itself,

led to greater [civic engagement](#).

The skills acquired in the union did not lead to greater involvement in organized school events, parent meetings or volunteering. But [labor union](#) participation did correspond to activities aimed at school improvement, problem solving, advocacy and organizing, the study found.

"They may not become a fixture at City Council meetings or a super volunteer for the PTA, but they are more likely to resolve issues that affect their family and immediate community," Terriquez said. "The union experience helped them learn how to stand up for themselves."

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Provided by USC College

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