

## **Transcending Civic Disjunctures: transnational youth organizing in a community-based educational space**

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**ABSTRACT – Transcending Civic Disjunctures: transnational youth organizing in a community-based educational space.** Recent national migration policies – separations of migrant families at the U.S.-Mexico border, increased arrests and removals by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the *Muslim travel ban* – raise questions of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion. This article examines how, during times of racial tension and conflict, Latinx immigrant and Muslim refugee members of an immigrant youth organization have challenged deficit-based narratives through collective action in a community-based educational space. I argue that a community-based educational space (CBES) in a large Midwestern city offers a unique space for transnational immigrant youth to build transformative panethnic coalitions in ways that attend to *civic disjuncture* – the conflict between youths’ daily realities and the democratic civic ideals espoused by school curricula and staff – and competing messages from students’ schools, communities, and national and global conflicts.

**Keywords: Immigrant Youth. Youth Organizing. Citizenship Education. Transnationalism. Civic Disjuncture.**

**RESUMO – Transcendendo Disjunções Cívicas: organização de jovens transnacionais em um espaço educacional comunitário.** As recentes políticas migratórias nacionais – separação de famílias migrantes na fronteira entre Estados Unidos e México, aumento no número de prisões e remoções pelo Serviço de Imigração e Controle Alfandegário dos Estados Unidos, e o *banimento de viagem de muçulmanos* – levantam questões de discriminação com base em raça, etnia e religião. Este artigo examina como, durante épocas de tensão e conflito racial, imigrantes latinx e refugiados muçulmanos que são membros de uma organização de imigrantes jovens desafiam narrativas baseadas em déficit por meio de uma ação coletiva em um espaço educacional comunitário. Defendo que um espaço educacional comunitário (EEC) em uma grande cidade do meio-oeste dos Estados Unidos proporciona um espaço único para que a juventude imigrante transnacional construa coalizões pan-étnicas transformadoras de maneiras que abordem a *disjunção cívica* – o conflito entre as realidades cotidianas dos jovens e os ideais cívicos democráticos adotados por currículos e funcionários de escola – e as mensagens concorrentes de escolas, comunidades e conflitos nacionais e globais dos estudantes.

**Palavras-chave: Juventude Imigrante. Organização de Jovens. Educação para Cidadania. Transnacionalismo. Disjunção Cívica.**

## Introduction

Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, immigration has become an even more politicized and divisive topic. Separations of migrant families at the U.S.-Mexico border, increased arrests and removals by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the *Muslim travel ban* raise questions of discrimination based on race, ethnicity and religion. These migration policies and anti-immigrant rhetoric have prompted immigrant and refugee youth to organize together to challenge deficit-based narratives. Drawing on scholarship in the field of anthropology of education that highlights the nuances of transnational practices of being, belonging, and critical consciousness formation that often occur in spaces of collective action, this 10-month ethnography explores one such effort among youth to organize (Abu El-Haj, 2015; Dyrness, 2016; Dyrness; Abu El-Haj, 2019; Maira, 2009; Ríos-Rojas, 2011). I trace how Latinx immigrant and Muslim<sup>1</sup> refugee youth members of an immigrant youth organization in a large Midwestern city in the United States engage in critical citizenship practices, which “[...] problematize and (re)construct democratic citizenship to address civic realities of exclusion and discrimination” (DeJaeghere, 2009, p. 226). I argue that community-based educational spaces (Baldrige, 2019; Baldrige et al., 2017) offer a unique space for urban immigrant and refugee youth to begin building panethnic coalitions in ways that attend to *civic disjuncture*, which, drawing on Beth Rubin’s (2007) work, I define as the conflict between youths’ daily realities and the U.S. democratic civic ideals often espoused by school curricula and staff. I explore how members of *Todos Juntos* (TJ)<sup>2</sup> – the youth branch of a grassroots organization – recognized, navigated, and intervened in civic disjunctures. In particular, I highlight how youth recognized that by solely focusing on Latinx immigrant students’ struggles, TJ perpetuated the civic disjuncture of other marginalized and minoritized students and responded by making TJ more inclusive.

## The Realities of Civic Education

Students, particularly urban youth of color, attending under-resourced schools experiencing curricular constraints have limited opportunities to develop their civic knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Meira Levison (2012) has termed this the *civic empowerment gap* as low scores on civic knowledge and efficacy tests parallel disparities in reading and math scores between White youth and youth of color. Furthermore, the daily experiences of low-income immigrant students of color and their transnational realities – including complicated relationships between their citizenship status and sense of national belonging – conflict with their lived realities. This *civic disjuncture* and the *civic empowerment gap* are concerning as studies link youths’ civic and political engagement to their political participation as adults (McIntosh; Youniss, 2010). Rand Quinn and Chi Nguyen (2017) argue that there is “[...] a need for alternative spaces for civic preparation” since schools

are limited in their abilities to develop the civic skills of youth, particularly immigrant youth color (p. 973). Additionally, out-of-school spaces for collective action allow for self-formation (*autoformación*), which Andrea Dyrness (2016) describes as a “[...] collective process of self-recovery and consciousness-raising” (p. 202) that meet youths’ needs in contrast to formal civics education, which often prioritizes the needs of the nation-state. Thus, understanding *how* transnational youths’ experiences of civic disjuncture are informing their processes of self-formation and critical citizenship in community-based educational spaces is crucial to addressing civic disjuncture and the civic empowerment gap, in light of the increasing racial and anti-immigrant tensions today. This study demonstrates that transnational youth can play a key role in their civic education by organizing in a Community-Based Educational Space (CBES), which resulted in dynamic educational experiences and advocacy.

### **Youth Organizing in Community-Based Educational Spaces**

Much attention has been given to youth organizing in community-based educational spaces as unique sites that “[...] complement and supplement student learning and growth” taking place in schools (Baldrige et al., 2017, p. 384). Youth organizing groups “[...] provide structured, strategic spaces, and experiences through which young people and their allies can make sense of the vexing and contradictory forces that shape their lives and allow them to test new avenues of struggle and resistance” (HoSang, 2006, p. 16). These spaces also afford youth opportunities to move beyond resiliency and resistance toward collective action (Ginwright; Cammarota, 2002). Furthermore, youth organizing in CBES often challenge dominant *damaged-centered* narratives of youth of color (Tuck, 2009). Shawn Ginwright (2016) contends that community organizations and other actors can employ a healing justice framework, which bridges social justice and healing, to better support the collective well-being of youth who have endured multilayered trauma, stresses, and structural oppression.

Youth organizing groups provide youth with access to social networks and caring adults, often of similar ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds as themselves (Ginwright; Cammarota, 2007; Wong, 2010). Through a range of informal and formal processes of “[...] reflection, relocation, action, and renewal”, community-based educational spaces allow immigrant youth to negotiate their liminal identities and develop positive cultural and racial identities (Dyrness; Hurtig, 2016; Ventura, 2017; Wong, 2010). The informal setting may allow youth to forge more meaningful youth-adult relationships. Often constituting “[...] a young person’s first ‘chosen’ relationship with an adult”, youths’ relationships with youth workers can be powerful (de St Croix, 2018, p. 12). Furthermore, many youth organizing groups “[...] reorganize hierarchical adult-youth relations”, allowing for intergenerational collaboration (Kirshner, 2006, p. 39). Youth organizing groups also have the potential

to be more inclusive of students with a broad range of academic performance, although this is often contingent upon an organization's funding structure.

Studies considering the civic development of Muslim and Muslim American youth post 9/11 (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Ali, 2016; Sirin; Fine, 2007) and Latinx immigrant youth (Gonzales, 2008; Stepick; Stepick; Labisiere, 2008; Unzueta Carrasco; Seif, 2014) recognize the importance of context in shaping youths' civic dispositions and forms of engagement, finding that perceptions of discrimination and an increased awareness of *otherness* engender immigrant youths' civic engagement. While scholarship on youth organizing in out-of-school-spaces has focused on typically less studied youth, such as Asian youth (Kwon, 2013; Quinn; Nguyen, 2017; Wong, 2010), and regions in which immigrant youth do not outnumber U.S.-born youth (Unzueta Carrasco; Seif, 2014; Ventura, 2017), few studies have centered cross-group collaboration, though we see these social justice campaigns occurring amongst Muslim American, Black, Latinx, and LGBTQI youth (Fine, 2018).

## Transnational Fields

The first, second and 1.5-generation immigrant youth in my study encountered internal struggles involving what Stuart Hall (1989) has describes as the negotiation of multiple “[...] points of attachment which give the individual some sense of ‘place’ and position in the world, whether these be in relation to particular communities, localities, territories, languages, religions, or cultures”. Multiple sociocultural and institutional affiliations across and beyond nation-states, or transnational social fields (Levitt; Glick Schiller, 2004), have been a central concern of scholars in the U.S.-based anthropology of education literature because they are seen to undermine youths' assimilation and adaptation as well as threaten a democratic society's social cohesion (Dyrness; Abu El-Haj, 2019). Instead, Andrea Dyrness and Thea Renda Abu El-Haj (2019) aver that youths' transnational fields foster the development of critical consciousness, knowledge of collective action, and a commitment to democratic rights, though they note that consideration of *how* youth engage in this process is largely absent from transnational discussions. This study will trace how immigrant and refugee youth draw upon both their disparate and overlapping transnational experiences in developing critical citizenship education practices.

## Methods

The study took place over the course of 10 months, between September 2017 and December 2018. The primary methods of data collection were participant observation, totaling approximately 180 hours, and semi-structured interviews. Participant observation occurred at weekly leadership meetings, the intensive summer program, several fundraisers, a youth organizing mid-year retreat, the annual meeting

with the youth organizing group's parent organization and annual gala, and four protests and marches to government buildings and government officials' homes and offices. The weekly youth leadership meetings at the community-based organization's office each lasted about two hours. The intensive 8-week summer program met at a local university for 5 hours once a week from June 2018 until August 2018 and was followed by a three-day retreat. Interviews, each lasting approximately an hour, were conducted from November 2017 until December 2018.

### *Research Site*

*Todos Juntos* (TJ), the youth branch of a grassroots organization advocating for immigrant rights, operates in two different cities. The groups come together to organize larger events, retreats throughout the academic year, and together participate in a summer program. I observed the leadership meetings of one of the youth organizing groups based in a large racially and economically segregated city in the Midwest. TJ's leadership meetings occurred weekly at the main office of its parent organization. Students, who attended six different high schools in the district, also met after school once a week in a classroom to plan, organize, and disseminate information. At the onset of this study, nearly all the student representatives from schools with TJ chapters who attended the meetings were Latinx youth. Over the course of the academic year, Muslim refugee students began attending the leadership meetings.

### *Participants*

Most student members of the youth organization are immigrant or refugee youth of color. Latinx immigrant high school students were either second-generation immigrants or undocumented immigrants of the 1.5 generation – children who came to the U.S. before the age of 12 (Rumbaut, 2004). Nearly all Latinx youth, whether immigrants or the children of immigrants, were from or had ties to Mexico. Muslim refugee youth came from different countries including Iraq, Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Myanmar (Burma). Near the end of the summer session, I announced that I hoped to interview students about their experiences with *Todos Juntos* to allow for open participation in interviews; however, since the experiences of youth who regularly attended the leadership meetings at the site I observed for a 10-month period would be more informative for the purposes of this study, I followed-up with several of these students by asking if they would be interested in being interviewed. This purposive sampling allowed for a better understanding of youths' experiences and the organization's role in their lives.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

I conducted eight semi-structured interviews, one with each participant, including the youth organizer, six youth organizing members, and a youth member who became the interim organizer for the summer program. The backgrounds of the youth I interviewed varied considerably but were representative of participants' broader backgrounds. Backgrounds varied across gender, race, language, country of origin, high school attended, schooling experiences, and legal status, though all were students between the ages of 16 and 19. Interviewees included second-generation Mexican immigrants, undocumented 1.5-generation migrants from Mexico who arrived before the age of six, and Muslim refugee youth from sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia who had been resettled in the U.S in between 2012-2015. This sampling allowed for comparisons across different students' experiences.

Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility which is useful as interviewees may make statements that necessitate follow-up questions. While youth knew that I was a graduate student conducting research, I did not reveal too many details of the study in an effort avoid swaying responses. To ensure accurate representation of the lived experiences of the interviewees in the study, I used interview tactics and techniques recommended by Andrew Shenton (2004) and Joseph Maxwell (2012). At the onset of each interview, I explained that there are no correct answers, that this research is being conducted independent of the organization, and that pseudonyms would be used to protect their confidentiality. During the interview, I engaged in the process of iterative questioning in which I returned to previous topics "[...] raised by an informant [to] extract related data through rephrased questions" (Shenton, 2004, p. 67). Iterative questioning gives the researcher an opportunity to address any contradictions that may emerge or topics that require further elaboration.

The in-depth interviews lasted approximately an hour. Interview topics centered around students' migration history, educational experiences, history with the organization, and motivations for joining the youth organization and maintaining their involvement as leaders. Interviews were audio recorded with each participants' consent and a guardian's written consent if youth were under the age of 18.

### *Participant Observation*

As I was observing youth, participant observation in this research setting was a useful tool to "[...] generate meaningful and interpretable results, more insight for the researcher, and be much less intrusive for the population being studied" (DeWalt; DeWalt, 2011). Participant observation also aided in the development of meaningful interview questions. In addition to the meetings that occurred, once a week on average, I attended other events, such as fundraisers. Youth and I often conversed informally before and after the meetings and I engaged in certain group activities, such as icebreakers. During these observations,

I paid particular attention to youths' discussion around citizenship in the traditional sense as well as the notions of critical and democratic citizenship, discussions of their aspirations, relationships with other individuals and institutions such as the school, and their thoughts about the organization. Furthermore, my participant observer notes at the weekly meetings and events were detailed and descriptive (Maxwell, 2012). Triangulating the data from these two different methods in the study – semi-structured interviews and participant observation – “[...] compensates for their individual limitations and exploits their respective benefits”, offering a fuller picture of *Todos Juntos* and its members (Shenton, 2004, p. 65).

### *Limitation*

One limitation of this study was my inability to observe the weekly school-based chapter meetings and experiences and dialogues that may happen at home regarding critical citizenship practices. This limitation can be addressed by future studies that include observations across school, home, and community-based sites.

### *Data Analysis*

In ethnographic work, data analysis is ongoing. Discussions with participants, analytic memo writing after participant observation and interviews, transcribing the audio recordings, frequently revisiting the growing data corpus, and line-by-line coding of transcriptions were part of the data analysis process. After data collection, my data analysis involved a three-stage coding process. As I coded the interviews using the qualitative software NVivo, I referenced my own reflective data – analytic memos based on field notes from participant observation – and interview transcripts. During the first cycle, *open coding* involved a combination of descriptive coding to identify basic topics in the interviews and *in vivo* coding to summarize meanings of concepts taken directly from participants (Saldaña, 2016). Fifty codes were generated in this round of open coding. Then, I identified patterns and clustered the *emic* codes, words, and ideas used by informants into categories. During the second cycle, I applied coding schema derived from the literature about civic identity and engagement, youth and community organizing and experiences of transnational and minoritized youth. Examples include codes such as social isolation, solidarity, and cross-ethnic collaboration. In the third cycle, I more cohesively blended *emic* and *etic* codes and looked for connections among codes to create interconnected code families.

## Findings

### *Navigating Civic Disjunctures*

Youth interviewed in this study referenced a range of civic disjunctures – when the ideals of civic inclusion do not correspond to students' lived realities – as central to their interest in becoming active members of TJ. TJ is not a college-access program, but for undocumented students, like Emma and Norma, it became a key site to talk to their youth organizer, Gabi, not only about how to navigate different funding streams to make college access a reality but also to blend multiple facets central to their sense of belonging – their high-achieving academic selves with their passion for advocacy driven by a sense of exclusion. For Gabi, Emma and Norma, like the undocumented Latinx immigrant youth in Andrea Flores's (2016) study, access to higher education was a marker of civic inclusion, but their access hinged on their academic excellence. Though the 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe* guaranteed undocumented youth the right to public K-12 schooling, no provisions were made for higher education. Undocumented minors with aspirations to attend college in a state where non-legal residents are excluded from in-state tuition policies at public universities were in a bind. During our interview, which took place several years after she graduated from a private Catholic university, Gabi, the youth organizer explained her thought process while she was applying to colleges within the state where she lived:

I can't even apply to a public school because there isn't in-state tuition and they are going to charge me triple [as an out-of-state student], and public schools don't even give you much money. It was frustrating, disappointing and discouraging. I had everything; I met all the qualifications for generous scholarships except for status. Why is my U.S. citizen peer more worthy than I am? (Interview, November 2, 2017).

Like Gabi, as undocumented first-generation college goers, both Emma and Norma were experiencing the same stress in trying to piece together different private scholarships to make attending college a reality. Like many other high-achieving transnational youth of color in TJ, Emma and Norma were part of numerous private youth development programs, including the Boys and Girls Club, that provide scholarships and support in applying to colleges, but both students prioritized their leadership in TJ. Emma explained:

The more I went to TJ meetings, the more I saw what they did, how they talked, and all the things they knew. I thought 'these kids are so smart. I want to be that smart. I want to be that brave'. I liked the way they talked about themselves. Education was my main priority. Since I was very young, I knew that I wanted to go to college, that I wanted to study to learn as much as I could whatever knowledge I could grasp. I knew this is why we came here, to learn everything we couldn't learn over there. When I found out about TJ, it wasn't just like a school club where you go to put it on your resume. It felt like a group that cared about each other. A group that was more than just community service or something that they

just need you, so they have numbers in a group. I knew that if I wanted to go to college if I wanted to be something in life that I knew TJ was the way to go and to grow even (Interview, August 14, 2018).

TJ became a key space for Emma's self-formation; at TJ she could learn about ways to navigate her academic excellence to confront her illegality and secure her access to higher education (Flores, 2016) while simultaneously strengthening her knowledge and ability to organize for collective action against current structures maintaining the liminal inclusion of undocumented students (Gonzales, 2011). While Emma, Norma and other Latinx students were able to transcend certain civic disjunctures, such as the myth of educational meritocracy by navigating private funding streams in an attempt to make college access a reality, this same group of youth came to recognize how this emphasis perpetuated the exclusion and civic disjunctures of other marginalized and minoritized students. Emma explained to me:

It's very segregated. There's so much anti-blackness in the Latinx community and so much anti-Latinx in the Black community. The refugee community is very in between. They're not Latinxs, but they're immigrants. Some are Black, but they're not American Black. [...] When we became the interim organizers, me and Jackson, said we need to work on this being more diverse and not just because we need to be diverse. But because if we are working with immigrant issues, it's not just the Latinx community that has these issues (Interview, August 14, 2018).

There was a desire to make TJ a space that more fully addressed its overarching goals of student, immigrant, and worker rights. Youth in TJ made it a priority to organize more collaborative campaigns and make space for different perspectives in response to mounting anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments. To document *how* Muslim refugee and Latinx immigrant youth have drawn on their transnational experiences to identify and challenge civic disjuncture I will discuss several of TJ's activities.

### *The Sanctuary School Campaign*

In 2017 students worked on the Sanctuary School Campaign, following the national movement advocating for schools to oppose Immigration and Customs Enforcement's actions on school grounds and put protections in place to ensure a safe environment for all students, particularly undocumented students and other vulnerable populations. Six TJ members spoke in front of the district's school board – five undocumented students and Hassim, a Burmese refugee. Hassim drew from his painful experiences of being a Rohingya asylum-seeker in Malaysia, where he lost both of his parents and experienced severe bullying at school, prompting him to work at a young age. At 14, he attended formal schooling for the first time in eight years. Hassim expressed his concern about his schooling environment in the U.S. – his friends who were undocumented or part of mixed-status families were afraid to come to school. Speaking in front of the school board in favor of the Sanctuary

School Act, which passed unanimously, was Hassim's first public political act in the U.S. He explained:

I felt like I was doing something right, speaking against injustice. I was facing the struggle. I was not running away from a problem like I did in Malaysia. Since then I was heavily involved. My senior year I planned that we need more Burmese. We need more representation. Muslims and other religions were not coming together and there were conflicts between one another (Interview, December 7, 2018).

Being part of TJ was important for Hassim not only because he felt it was important to speak against injustice and support his friends, but also because he wanted more Burmese refugees to participate in order to find ways to build bridges within his community, between Burmese refugees from Malaysia and Thailand, as well as with other immigrant groups.

### *The 'Clean' DREAM Act Campaign*

The second example of panethnic youth organizing is through TJ's *Clean* Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act campaign. For many months, Hassim and other students at Lincoln High School planned presentations to give in classes, recruited other students to participate in a school walk-out and march to lobby a senior government official to bring the *clean* DREAM Act to the floor for a vote in Congress. The passage of a federal *clean* DREAM Act would set undocumented minors who meet a set of criteria on a path toward citizenship without being used as a bargaining chip for other measures that would harm immigrant communities, such as more funding to build a wall and detention centers. Nearly every year since it was first introduced in 2001, activists across the country have pressured Congress to pass the bill.

In preparation for the march to the congressman's office, students at Lincoln High School created two campaign t-shirts as a way to speak back to the recent removal of protections for immigrants and anti-immigrant tensions more broadly. One shirt said *Straight Outta Shithole Country* and the other – *Muslim and Proud*. Several students, including Aisha, a Muslim refugee from Ethiopia who Hassim had recruited, spoke about their post-migratory experiences and challenged broader anti-immigrant rhetoric. This was one of the first public acts of civil disobedience where Latinx immigrant and Muslim refugee youth organized together in response to their experiences of civic disjuncture.

### *Continuing Coalition Building*

Several months later students participated in another march with the larger grassroots organization protesting the 287(g) agreement. This agreement allows state and local law enforcement agencies to perform limited immigration law enforcement functions in concert with

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, such as investigating immigration status which often leads to discrimination, racial profiling, and family separations. During a leadership meeting after the march, Gabi began by commenting about how impressive it was that they recruited so many students, given that they were just several weeks away from the end of the academic year. At previous meetings youth leaders had reported that their peers were concerned about their school attendance and were therefore wary about missing school for the march. Yet, TJ filled 15 buses totaling nearly 1,000 students. Students at the meeting shared their impressions. Kamaria, a refugee from Ethiopia, explained that “[...] it was diverse, there were refugee students there” (Fieldnote May 7, 2018). Students continued to be proud of the fact that more Muslim refugee youth had joined TJ and enrolled in the summer program, which as Jackson, one of the youth organizers, shared at a leadership meeting “[...] is one of the main ways we build our leaders” for the next academic year and develop campaign plans (Fieldnote April 19, 2018). Of the over 30 youth who participated in the summer program, nearly a third were refugee youth.

During one of the summer sessions in July, youth worked on sharing their public narratives using the worksheet *What Is Public Narrative: self, us & now* by Marshall Ganz, a community organizer and senior lecturer at Harvard University, as a way to build leadership by identifying and sharing with others how they became activists. Youth move through a three-stage process from crafting an individual *story of self*, to a *story of us* focused on their communities, and then a *story of now* to call others to action. During this session youth were in the beginning stages of brainstorming topics for the *story of us*. At first students called out: *Latinx*, *Muslim* and *multilingual*. They soon added more topics to the list on the white board such as “[...] discrimination based on language, coming to new places, trying to fit in, learning new rules, and shared experiences between refugees and immigrants”. These structured, yet informal, spaces allowed youth to move beyond focusing on representation and the number of youth in attendance from different backgrounds to brainstorm topics that include common experiences among participants that could lead to the formation of campaigns that impacted both Latinx immigrant youth and Muslim refugee youth for the upcoming school year.

The summer session created space for other meaningful interactions between participants from different backgrounds. For example, Joaquín, a second-generation Mexican immigrant, roomed with Alex, a refugee youth from Somalia. Joaquín explained during our interview that:

TJ has taught me what I've always kind of known on my own; people can be smiling but you'd never know what's going like inside of them...so today I opened up with him [Alex] like I hadn't with anybody. And I believe it helped me. I just I feel so light. I feel like there was this huge weight that came off of me. And it was good for both me and him (Interview, August 13, 2018).

TJ afforded youth with different but overlapping transnational affiliations and attachments both structured and unstructured spaces to speak across differences and address fraught emotions often stemming from experiences of civic disjuncture.

## Conclusion

This study examined transnational youths' experiences in navigating and transcending civic disjunctures in a CBES. Latinx youths' civic self-formation was initially predicated on their own experiences of civic disjuncture. At TJ, undocumented students could speak out about injustices, such as having to navigate private scholarships and their academic excellence as a way to confront their illegality. However, in recognizing how TJ alienated other minoritized youth, a desire for inclusivity and to advocate for issues that did and did not affect them directly led to a commitment in building panethnic coalitions to address the intersecting challenges of racialized immigration and education policies and practices impacting their everyday lives. Transnational youth organizing in TJ exemplifies that civic disjunctures are not only a key dimension of youths' civic self-formation but are also unexpected places for encounter for cross-group collaboration. This finding highlights the ways in which ethnographic research within the anthropology of education, through sustained engagement with participants across time and settings, allows the researcher to trace the nuances of youths' experiences as they unfold. Furthermore, by playing closer attention to how transnational youth identify, understand and critique civic disjunctures – gaps between lived experiences of injustices and the ideals of U.S. civic society – the field of anthropology of education can better understand the development of critical citizenship practices in community-based educational spaces that may allow youth to challenge and even transcend civic disjunctures.

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## Notes

- 1 Like all labels, *Latinx* and *Muslim* are homogenizing categories. In this paper these terms are being used for analytical purposes and not as a way to reify the erasure of the distinct ethnicities, nationalities and racialized histories of those that fall under these terms.
- 2 The name of the youth group as well as people's names are pseudonyms.

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