Growing Up in the Shadows: The Developmental Implications of Unauthorized Status

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Unauthorized immigrants account for approximately one-fourth of all immigrants in the United States, yet they dominate public perceptions and are at the heart of a policy impasse. Caught in the middle are the children of these immigrants—youth who are coming of age and living in the shadows. An estimated 5.5 million children and adolescents are growing up with unauthorized parents and are experiencing multiple and yet unrecognized developmental consequences as a result of their family's existence in the shadow of the law. Although these youth are American in spirit and voice, they are nonetheless members of families that are "illegal" in the eyes of the law. In this article, the authors develop a conceptual framework to systematically examine the ways in which unauthorized status affects the millions of children, adolescents, and emerging adults caught in its wake. The authors elucidate the various dimensions of documentation status—going beyond the binary of the "authorized" and "unauthorized." An ecological framework brings to the foreground a variety of systemic levels shaping the daily experiences of children and youth as they move through the developmental spectrum. The article moves on to examine a host of critical developmental outcomes that have implications for child and youth well-being as well as for our nation's future.

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As the United States contends with a bevy of woes at home and abroad—the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression, wars, and terrorism on a global scale—it also needs to come to terms with the aftermath of the largest wave of immigration in recent history. A dizzying demographic change is taking place in an era of economic decline, downsized expectations, and anxiety. Complicating matters, we have entered a pervasive political ethos of divisiveness that immobilizes civil and constructive discourse across multiple policy issues. As a result, we find ourselves at a national immigration impasse with every attempt at comprehensive immigration reform having failed over the course of the last decade. In the second decade of the new century, all immigration lines are broken—the line at the border, the queues in U.S. consulates and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offices all over the homeland (Anderson, 2009, 2010; Jimenez, 2009).

The population of unauthorized migrants is larger now than at any time since the United States began trying to regulate immigration in the early twentieth century: while the United States represents 5 percent of the world's population, it has approximately 20 percent of all unauthorized migrants in the world (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2009). Although "illegal immigrants" account for about a fourth of the overall U.S. immigrant population, they dominate the immigration debate and are at the heart of the policy paralysis. Engulfed by the angry rhetoric and policy dystopia are the roughly one million unauthorized children and youth who are coming of age, some of whom are beginning to "come out illegal" (Jones, 2010, p. 36), while many others stay in the closet regarding this aspect of their lives. These youth who are American in spirit, schooling, and life experiences are nonetheless illegal in the eyes of the law. Just as forgotten are the more than four million citizen-children growing up with unauthorized parents who are experiencing unrecognized developmental threats as a result of their families' experiences.

In this article, we develop a conceptual model to examine the ways in which unauthorized status affects the millions of children, adolescents, and emerging adults caught in its wake. It is difficult to gather reliable data on unauthorized populations, and there are also ethical and legal concerns about doing research in this field, particularly involving children and youth. There are significant lacunae in what is known beyond brute numbers. This article represents a systematic and uncommon interdisciplinary effort to draw on our own research as well as that of others, including the perspectives of psychology, sociology, anthropology, education, and public policy.

As an organizing framework, we present a conceptual diagram depicting several critical dimensions that have been neglected in the specialized literatures. First, we present the various dimensions of documentation status beyond the facile binary of documented versus undocumented. Second, using an ecological approach, we consider a variety of systemic factors shaping the day-to-day experiences of children and youth as they move through the developmental spectrum from birth to adulthood. Last, we examine several different types

of developmental outcomes that are of significance to well-being and engagement. We present a conceptual model that depicts particularly challenging contexts of development for children and youth growing up in the shadows of unauthorized homes and considers developmental outcomes beyond the usual education variables. The major components of our conceptual model are developed in an interdisciplinary synthesis of the research literature offering short case vignettes of unauthorized children, youth, and families. We conclude with a discussion of the policy and research implications of our conceptual framework.

Documentation Status

The terms *alien, illegal,* and the semantically related *criminal* are often uttered interchangeably, conjuring up many unsavory associations. For children and minors, *illegal status* does not usually come about through their own volition; rather, it comes about as a result of a decision made and actions taken by their parents or other adults. Further, even for adults, there are gray zones. Many exist in a state of "liminal legality" (Menjívar, 2006) with ambiguous documentation as they patiently wait in broken queues (Anderson, 2009, 2010). In this article, we use the more neutral, descriptive term *unauthorized* as opposed to *undocumented,* as many immigrants have some form of documentation but may find themselves in limbo pending a formal legal outcome.

Unauthorized Status

Unauthorized immigrants are defined as those who live within the country without legal authorization to do so (Motomura, 2008). These individuals are not U.S. citizens, do not hold current permanent resident visas, and have not been permitted admission under the most current and specific set of rules for longer-term residence and work permits (Passel & Cohn, 2010). During the boom economic years in the last decade of the twentieth century, the unauthorized population grew dramatically from under 1 million in 1980 to a peak of nearly 12 million in 1996 (Hoefer, Rytina, & Baker, 2009). The current estimate of the unauthorized population has declined to 11.2 million (Passel & Cohn, 2010). While the majority arrived through the borders "uninspected," a substantial number are visa over-stayers (Hoefer et al., 2009).[1] All told, unauthorized adult immigrants comprise approximately 4 percent of the total U.S. population (Passel & Taylor, 2010).

The focus of the immigration debate typically concerns adults without consideration of children in families with undocumented parents (Yoshikawa, 2011). Because unauthorized immigrants are disproportionally young and in prime childbearing years, their children make up a large share of both the American newborn (8%) and school-age (7%) populations (Passel & Taylor, 2010). Among the estimated 5.5 million children growing up with unauthorized parents, approximately 1 million are themselves unauthorized. The

remainder, 4.5 million, are citizens, having been born in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2010).

In media discourse, blog discussions, and our public presentations, frustrated American citizens often pose a version of the question, "Why won't 'illegals' get in line?" While on the surface this is a reasonable question, in reality there is no line to join. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, threw sand in already rusty immigration machinery. In U.S. consulates and embassies overseas, and in U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services offices all over the country, millions of would-be migrants wait in interminable queues. There are nearly 3.5 million immediate family members of U.S. citizens and permanent lawful immigrants waiting overseas for their visas (Anderson, 2010; U.S. Department of State, 2009). The average wait for Mexico and the Philippines, for example, is four to six years for spouses and children (Anderson, 2010). The visa allocation system for work permits is no more functional (Anderson, 2009). The current wait for business-sponsored green card requests is six to twenty years, an unrealistic time frame for hiring new employees (Anderson, 2010). The annual cap for visas for highly skilled foreign nationals is filled each year in a matter of days, leaving both businesses and exceptionally qualified would-be immigrants equally frustrated. For highly skilled immigrants who manage to obtain visas, there are no guarantees. Their families may pay a steep price down the road. Hyo[2] is a young man who was raised and educated in the United States but, by a twist of fate, finds himself trapped in a place not of his making and without good choices.

> Hyo arrived with his parents in Silicon Valley, California, in the early 1990s, when he was just a toddler. His father was an engineer who found a lucrative job in the booming electronics industry, qualifying for an H-1 visa, which was renewed year after year for nearly two decades. With the economic downturn, Hyo's father lost his job, and with that the entire family lost their visas and the right to stay in the United States. Hyo speaks, but does not read or write, in his native Korean. He has been entirely educated in the United States and has adopted a laid-back Californian identity. He has been a good student in high school and is now enrolled as a foreign student at UCLA where he is studying Asian Pacific studies. He recognizes that he has little chance to remain in the United States once he graduates and is worried about how he will adapt to the country he has visited only for brief periods a half a dozen times.

Citizen Children in "Mixed-Status" Families

An estimated 14.6 million people are living in some sort of mixed-status home (Passel, 2006) where at least one member of the family is not authorized (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). Currently, *one in ten children* living in the United States is growing up in such a household (Passel, 2006). There are multiple patterns of mixed authorization: 41 percent have one documented parent with the other parent undocumented; 39 percent have two undocumented parents; and 20 percent live in households headed by a single undocumented parent

(Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). Within these mixed-status households are also a range of documentation patterns involving siblings: some born in the States with birthright citizenship, some in the process of attempting to obtain documentation, and some fully undocumented (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). Thus, becoming a mixed-status family can arise out of a variety of circumstances. As an example:

> Li's parents arrived without papers from Fujian province, China, three years before he was born in the United States. Deeply indebted to a snakehead (smuggler) to whom they owed a staggering sum of $90,000, they found themselves working eighty-hour weeks—Li's mother as a seamstress in a factory and his father delivering food for a restaurant. In this context of unbearable stress, they made the decision to send back their infant son to be taken care of by his grandparents in China. Their plan was to send for him when he turned five and was ready for kindergarten. They rationalized that the grandparents would provide much better care than any child-care center and that they would be able to use the money they saved on child care to pay down their smuggler's debt. Because Li is a citizen, they knew they would be able to bring him back, though they were also aware that they would not be able to go and visit him for his entire infancy and early childhood.

In other cases, parents make the conscious choice to leave their children behind and go through the long regularizing process, an ordeal that is much more circuitous and lengthy than anticipated (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2011). Longer and longer backlogs, a byzantine bureaucracy, and higher rates of denials are cementing growing numbers of transnationally separated families (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Facing long delays and the realization that they are missing their children's childhood, some parents make the always-difficult decision to bring their children to the United States without papers. Gabriela embodies this unhappy choice.

> Gabriela's father was shot and killed in Guatemala during the civil war when she was four years old. Her mother, with no other means of supporting her four children, made the difficult trek *al Norte*, leaving the children in their grandmother's care. Gabriela's mother worked many jobs, sent back regular remittances, and applied for asylum. Seven years later, she was finally given full refugee status. She then applied for the admittance of her children; she was told the process would take several more years. In the meantime, Gabriela's grandmother died, and she learned that the caretaker she had hired was abusive. Desperate and feeling there were no good options left, she sent for her children to make the dangerous illegal crossing with a coyote (smuggler).

In some families, older siblings accompanied their unauthorized parents, while younger siblings were born as U.S. citizens.

> Anna, a fourteen-year-old girl with a bleached streak in her otherwise dark hair, is often dressed in artsy clothes. She confides that she wants to be a creative

> writer but that her parents expect her to go to medical school. She feels the burden of being the only documented member of the family. With tears streaming down her face, she talks about how unfair it is that her older sister, Clara, born in Puebla but living in the States since she was eighteen months old, is the "good student" in the family but cannot go to college. Instead, her parents are pushing Clara to drop out of school to help the family pay the bills, since she is not eligible for financial aid, and they cannot afford to pay for her college.

Citizen Children of Unauthorized Parents

Approximately four million (79%) of the children of unauthorized immigrants are citizen-children (Passel & Taylor, 2010). Data from the Pew Hispanic Center show that over 80 percent of these children are born after the parents have been settled in the United States for at least two years, and over 50 percent are born after parents have been settled for at least five years (Preston, 2010), belying perceptions that these families come to the United States only to have children. Further, despite widespread misconceptions, having U.S.-born children does not provide an "anchor" to unauthorized parents by affording automatic pathways to citizenship, or even any protections from deportation. At best, these parents will have to wait decades until their citizen-children reach adulthood, and they will then be placed at the back of the now-decades-long line to undergo the regularizing process (Anderson, 2010). In the meantime, these parents remain at high risk of being deported during the course of their children's childhood. Indeed, well over one hundred thousand citizen-children have experienced their parents' deportation in the last decade (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2009). And those who have not had this experience nonetheless live the daily nightmare of knowing their parents may be swept away at any time:

> Heidi's immigrant dream turned into a nightmare: "At only 10 years of age I had a sad awakening . . . When I woke up, I found out that my mother had been arrested . . . My biggest preoccupation was my two little brothers and sister. What was going to happen to them? And what about my little brother that my mother was breast feeding?" She went onto [sic] explain how, as the eldest sister, she took on the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings, and how, a year and a half later, she had not seen her mother again. (U.S. Congress, 2010)

Interrupted Rites of Passage and Interminable Liminality

The family's unauthorized status entraps youth in a labyrinth of liminality that complicates the normative stages of development in multiple ways. Typically, the life course is punctuated from birth to death by religious, social, and institutional ritual practices—baptisms, bar/bat mitzvahs, quinceañeras, graduations, marriages, retirements—marking entries into new domains of life. Van Gennep (1960) termed these life-demarking rituals as "rites of passage" (p. 1), which confer new roles, rights, and obligations. Prior to undergoing these offi-

cial rites of entry into new roles, Van Gennep argued, individuals reside in a space of temporary liminality.

Liminality has been theorized as the transitional moment between spheres of belonging when social actors no longer belong to the group they are leaving behind and do not yet fully belong in their new social sphere. The liminal condition "eludes the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremony" (Turner, 2002, p. 4). The liminal moment is a period of heightened danger and ambiguity for the social orphan. The state of ambiguous belonging leaves him or her without the shared bundles of rights and obligations that structure social behavior and make it predictable.

The condition of illegality (one's own status or the status of one's parent[s]) places children, adolescents, and young adults in the untenable position of *interminable* liminality. These "betwixt and between" residents of the United States attempt to perform symbolic and ritual claims of belonging without the corresponding reciprocal condition of acknowledgment. Their claim, "I am an American by virtue of a shared fate because I speak the language, share values, ideals, and worldview," is met with a symbolic slap in the face: "You are an illegal and cannot belong." Ironically, these are individuals likely to reside in stable, two-parent, working families who put deep roots down in the United States despite their legal status (Mather, 2009). The ambiguity of belonging experienced by unauthorized youth becomes increasingly intolerable as they move into the public sphere to engage in normative coming-of-age rituals. In early childhood, the immediate family and kinship group shape a relatively protected microcosm of belonging. Typically, the family's secret taboo of unauthorized status is hidden from the child's conscious experience (Gonzales, in press), although the condition of illegality nevertheless has harmful consequences for early development (Yoshikawa, 2011). As adolescents make their way into the public domain, the intermediate worlds of neighborhood, school, and eventually work begin to mold their experiences in new ways (Gonzales, in press). As unauthorized youth pass into older adolescence and emerging adulthood, their awareness is awakened and they begin to experience increasing blocked access to expected normative rites of passage, identities, and ways of being.

Developmentally specific experiences are shaped by various ecological contexts, systems, and processes, which in turn will have implications for the developmental outcomes of children and youth growing up under the shadow of unauthorized status.

Ecological Contexts, Systems, and Processes

The social-ecological environments in which children growing up in unauthorized homes develop include varying levels of risk and protective factors—

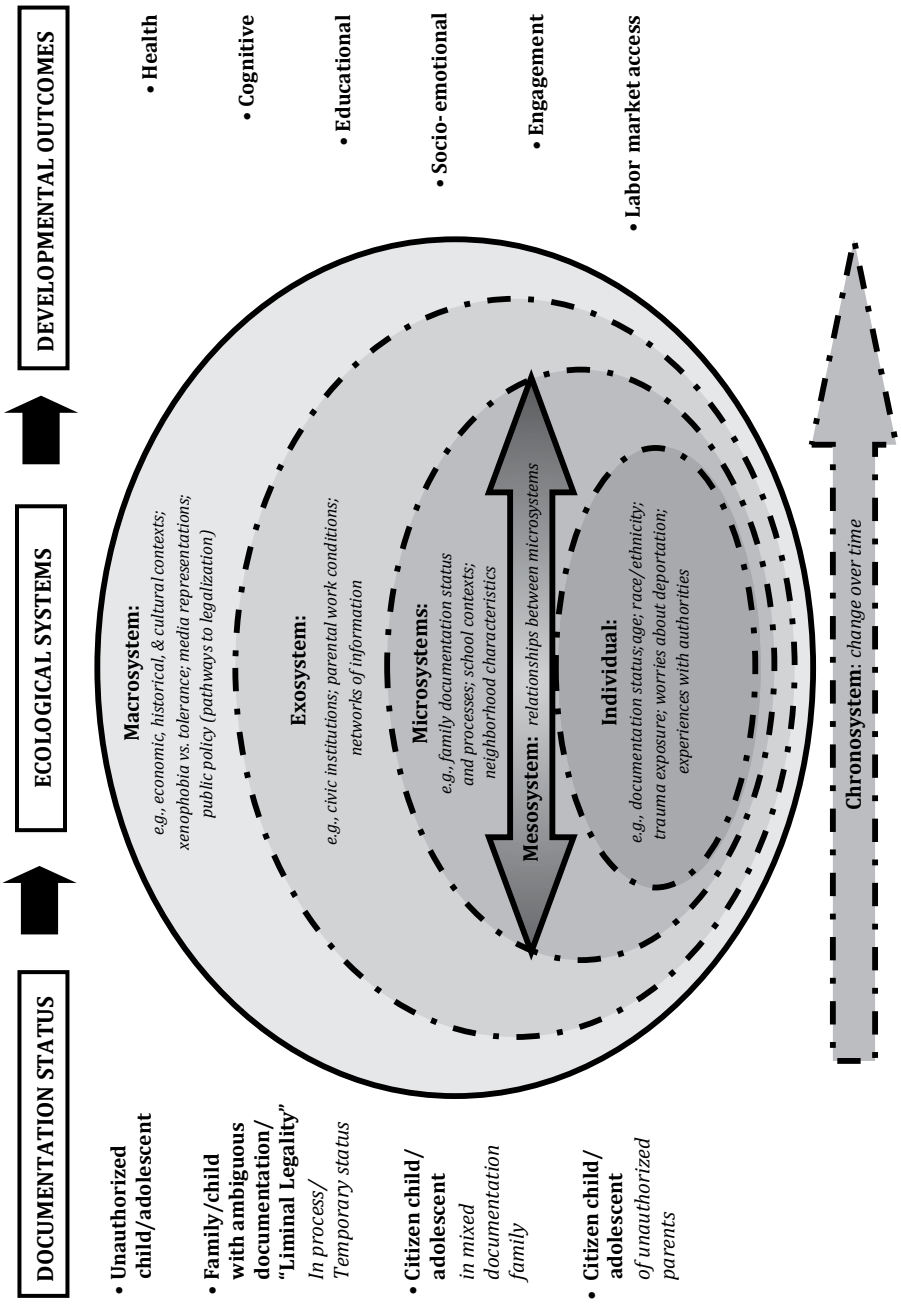
variables that detract from or enhance healthy adaptation and outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Serdarevic & Chronister, 2005). The social-ecological perspective considers human development as unfolding in reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments, varying as a function of the individual, his or her context and culture, and time. The interactions between the individual and her immediate environment (the *microsystem*, including family, school or care, and peers) take place within nested systems including the *mesosystem* (interrelations among microsystems), the *exosystem* (community, neighborhood, or parent work factors), and the *macrosystem* (societal, policy, and cultural belief systems) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Lastly, the *chronosystem* represents change over time. For immigrants, this can mean many things across systems, including developmental changes (at the individual level), obtaining documentation (at the individual or family level), acculturation (at the individual and family level) (Serdarevic & Chronister, 2005), a decision to pass an immigration reform act (at the exosystemic level), or forced migration due to wars, and changes in the economic cycle (at the macrosystemic level) (see figure 1). A social-ecological framework, then, considers the multiple factors that affect potential responses and outcomes of children and youth growing up in unauthorized homes. From our conceptual viewpoint, the mesosytemic interactions for unauthorized youth are characterized by the increasingly felt undertow of liminality shaping developmental trajectories and outcomes.

We are largely concerned with locating the vulnerabilities and risks associated with unauthorized status while recognizing that unauthorized families strive to support and enhance developmental outcomes for their children. However, because our conceptual work is animated by the hope of motivating research and informing policy in the direction of ameliorating a system that discounts and underserves so many vulnerable children, we focus on specific risks (Wagmiller, Lennon, Kuang, Alberti, & Aber, 2006) and constraints of unauthorized status. Drawing on ecological systems theories, we next explore how contextual factors constrain options and negatively influence the experiences of children and youth growing up in unauthorized families.

The Macrosystem

Macrosystemic factors in economy and society shape developmental trajectories. There are public policies, societal norms, and shared attitudes that affect unauthorized parents, children, and youth. Such factors have profound influence, beginning prior to the family's transition to unauthorized status. The global economy, conditions, and emigration policies in countries of origin, and immigration policies in the United States, influence decisions on whether to migrate or overstay visas (Ngai, 2004; Yoshikawa & Kalil, in press). Since the end of 1988, when the amnesty provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act largely ended, U.S. immigration policy has increasingly restricted access and pathways to citizenship to the unauthorized (Motomura, 2008).

FIGURE 1 *The Implications of Unauthorized Status: An Ecological Developmental Perspective*



Today, there is no avenue to provide a pathway to citizenship for the unauthorized, even for the restricted population targeted by the DREAM Act.

Attitudes toward unauthorized immigrants have become increasingly harsh in recent years, as reflected in the flurry of state and local laws aimed at unauthorized immigration. In the first three months of the year 2011, 1,538 bills related to immigration, with 141 measures in twenty-six states, passed into law. While some of those laws extended new opportunities to illegal immigrants (such as permitting them to pay lower in-state tuition rates at public colleges), most of the laws imposed restrictions on them (Preston, 2011b). In 2010, the governor of Arizona proposed—and the state legislature passed—a law (SB 1070) allowing local law enforcement officers to detain individuals based solely on suspicion that they might be without papers. Despite some public outcry about this law, and efforts by the Obama administration to stop its implementation, other states, including Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina, have passed similar laws as of this writing. Alabama's (HB 56) draconian legislation mandates parents to report the immigration status of their foreign-born children to public schools, requires children to report their undocumented parents to authorities, and makes it a crime to knowingly provide rides to undocumented persons (including to a hospital or church) (Preston, 2011a; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011). Bias crimes against Latinos have risen in recent years, even in the midst of overall decreases in violent crime. In 2008, for example, a group of high school students in Patchogue, New York, set out one morning to "kill a Mexican" (Barnard, 2008); by the end of the day, Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant living in that community, was dead. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the number of anti-Latino hate crimes has grown steadily since 2003 (Keller, 2010).

The Exosystem

Beyond the social and cultural belief systems embodied in the flurry of legislation and new patterns of discrimination, multiple variables at the neighborhood and community levels also have relevance for children and youth in unauthorized families. Above and beyond the relative disadvantage of unauthorized parents due to lower levels of education, there is evidence that a range of everyday experiences—from interactions with authorities to characteristics of their social networks and work conditions—exclude them from obtaining resources to help their children's development. The threat of deportation results in lower levels of enrollment of citizen-children in programs they are eligible for, including child-care subsidies, public preschool, and food stamps, and lowered interactions and engagement with public institutions, such as schools. Fear and vigilance shape life in the labyrinth of liminality. The fear of authorities in public institutions can extend to timidity in reporting crimes to the police, housing problems and violations to landlords, and lower use of resources like public libraries. Further, parents are often in debt to illegal enti-

ties, such as smugglers. The current "fare" for one adult to come from mainland China to the United States, for example, ranges from $60,000 to $80,000, with debts taking years to repay (Yoshikawa, 2011).

The poor work conditions of the unauthorized contribute substantially to the lower cognitive skills of children in their families, whether these children are citizens or not. As two recent studies show (Bernhardt et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011), 30 to 40 percent of unauthorized parents work at illegally low wages, a rate much higher than that among their authorized, low-wage counterparts. The combustive combination of exploitation and indebtedness forces many unauthorized parents to work twelve-hour days, six days a week, for years in jobs with the lowest levels of autonomy or the very basic protections afforded by a democracy. Unauthorized status means these workers typically cannot dare ask for a raise or report unacceptable working conditions; for them there is a permanent fear of being fired. Without recourse to unions or to public safeguards, the work conditions are not only poor but chronic, with harmful influences on children's development through increased economic hardship and psychological distress as well as less access to resources that require proof of employment, such as child-care subsidies.

— Neighborhoods and Social Ties

While immigrants reside in virtually every type of social and geographical setting, from the inner city and suburbs to rural outskirts, the majority of individuals who migrated to the United States after 1965 are concentrated in cities with large ethnic populations (Bartel, 1989). These neighborhoods are typically segregated across multiple dimensions, including class, race and ethnicity, and language (Orfield & Lee, 2006). Immigrants are disproportionately likely to live in poverty (U.S. Census, 2007), and while some are able to extract valuable social capital from their ethnic enclaves (e.g., Louie, 2004), others suffer from minimal institutional engagement in their communities (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). For very recent unauthorized immigrants, the economic and social capital benefits of ethnic enclaves are often elusive. In such families, the majority in the social network may be unauthorized themselves, sharing lower quantity and quality of information about community and public resources.

The Microsystem

— Schools

New arrivals most often find themselves in underresourced schools. These schools are typically highly segregated (Orfield & Lee, 2006) and provide limited engaging opportunities for students (Noguera, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Racially and linguistically isolated schools put students at academic risk (Orfield & Lee, 2006) and are associated with a variety of negative characteristics, including crowding, inadequate resources, low teacher expecta-

tions, poor achievement test outcomes, high dropout rates, and limited social capital to provide information about access to college (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Orfield & Lee, 2006; Weinstein, 2002). Such contexts are also associated with negative school climates (Noguera, 2003) and increased school violence (Goldstein & Conoley, 1997). Further, because unauthorized families are often in tenuous financial circumstances, their children frequently move and must change schools; school mobility, not surprisingly, has been linked to negative school performance (Rumberger & Larsen, 1998; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). The children of the unauthorized, in sum, find themselves in the most liminal spaces of America's dystopic schools.

— Family Processes

Unauthorized parents are as dedicated to their children's learning as parents with authorized or citizenship status, as one recent study showed (Yoshikawa, 2011). Parents of different statuses did not differ, for example, in rates of reading books, telling stories, or engaging in other cognitively stimulating interactions with their young children. Unauthorized fathers, despite working substantially more hours than the authorized, showed high levels of social engagement and care-giving activities. Despite these family strengths, children growing up in unauthorized homes face a number of uniquely complicated family dynamics (Yoshikawa & Kalil, in press). Many face long family separations and complicated reunifications following protracted times apart related to their unauthorized status (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Parents in liminal authorized status will often wait for years attempting to regularize themselves before bringing over their children. In many cases, children spend half or more of their childhood raised apart from their biological parents (Abrego, 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Children and youth in households with unauthorized members live in fear of being separated from parents or other family members should anyone be apprehended or deported (Capps, Castañeda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Chaudry et al., 2010). To prepare them, some parents may talk to them about a contingency plan in case of detention or deportation; a survey of Latino parents found that among the unauthorized, 58 percent had a plan for the care of their children in case they were detained, and 40 percent reported that they had discussed that plan with their children (Brabeck & Xu, 2010). This is a unique parental ethnic-racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006) to the realities of a shadowed existence. Perhaps because they believe their children are less likely to be detained, or because they wish to protect them from harsh realities as long as possible, other parents do not tell their children about their own status until their mid-to-late adolescence. This only postpones a difficult and alienating conversation.

In addition to these family dynamics, a host of factors appears to contribute to uneven family investments in children who live in unauthorized homes (Yoshikawa & Kalil, in press). While there is no evidence that there are differences in educational goals or psychological investments between groups with

high, moderate, and low proportions of unauthorized populations, there is some evidence that there are differences in economic investments, including the purchase of books, toys, and learning materials (Ng et al., 2009). This can relate both to lower rates of parental educational as well as the economic precariousness in which many subsist. When a parent owes a coyote or snakehead, has unpredictable low-wage work, is sending home remittances, and has many dependents, the purchase of books and learning toys may be an unaffordable luxury. Space for children to study is often extremely limited, as unauthorized families often pool resources, sharing space with other families or taking in boarders in already-tight quarters. While parents work long hours, older siblings often take on the responsibilities of child care, elder care, cooking, and translation (Faulstich-Orellana, 2009; Fuligni, 2010). These circumstances have been linked to high levels of stress (Yoshikawa & Kahlil, in press); though well-intentioned, unauthorized parents may have difficulty being fully physically or psychologically available to their children (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

The Individual Experience

The labyrinth of liminality thwarts individual autonomy and agency, the very foundation of a democratic society. At the individual level, children growing up in the shadow of unauthorized status take the body blows of both distal and proximal contexts. In addition to the lived experiences within neighborhoods, schools, and families, their daily lives may reflect food and housing insecurities (Chaudry et al., 2010) and, above all, the ever-present threat in the air of the deportation of a loved one, or potentially their own. A dawning awareness of their own legal status; concerns about their future, including access to education and work (Gonzales, 2009); negative experiences with the authorities; and the "social mirror" (Suárez-Orozco, 2001), the barrage of derogatory portraits of immigrants, particularly of unauthorized immigrants, in the media, school, and community settings, will shape at the individual level a number of critical developmental outcomes for these children and youth.

This array of social-ecological environments has distinct experiential and developmental implications at each specific developmental period. The bulk of the research on the unauthorized has been done on young adults or adolescents. Only very recently has consideration been given to the implications for children in early and middle childhood (e.g., Yoshikawa, 2011). Below, we systematically examine the evidence, calling attention to what is known, what is likely (based on theory and available evidence), and where further research is needed.

— Early Childhood

The overwhelming majority of children under the age of five born to unauthorized parents are *citizen-children* born in the United States (Passel & Cohn,

2010). For these young Americans, having an unauthorized parent will shape their developmental contexts in the early years—at home, child care, and preschool—as well as more distally through the work, social networks, and policy contexts their parents experience (Yoshikawa, 2011; Yoshikawa & Kalil, in press).

Early childhood is the foundational period for later cognitive and social skills (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron, & Shonkoff, 2006). The existence of disparities due to parental unauthorized status in early skill development is cause for societal concern, as recent research suggests that citizen-children of unauthorized parents are at a disadvantage as far as school readiness when compared to children of the authorized. For example, among second-generation Latino children, those from groups with higher proportions of unauthorized immigrants fare worse on emergent reading and math skills assessments at school entry than those from groups with lower proportions of unauthorized immigrants, controlling for a range of indicators of socioeconomic status (Crosnoe, 2006; Han, 2006). Moreover, such disparities are evident earlier than age five—as early as twenty-four and thirty-six months (Fuller et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011).

In one New York–based birth cohort study, two sets of mechanisms were found to be responsible for the harmful influence of parent unauthorized (relative to authorized or citizen) status on children's cognitive skills at twenty-four months of age: higher parental economic hardship and psychological distress combined with lower availability of social support for help with infant child care and lower levels of information about community and public resources that could help children's development (Yoshikawa, 2011). At thirty-six months of age, the poor work conditions of unauthorized parents—characterized by wages below the legal minimum, flat wage growth, and low levels of autonomy at work—were associated with lower enrollment of children in center-based care. Additionally, parents did not access child-care subsidies, the chief support for center-based care among families in poverty in the United States. The nexus of terrible employment conditions and lack of access to learning environments proved harmful to children's early cognitive development. Victor and Luz's experience illustrates many of these issues.

> Emiliana and Victor Sr. were parents from the Mixteca region of Mexico living in New York City and raising their twelve-month-old son Victor Jr. and four-year-old daughter Luz. Their working lives and schedules were grueling. Victor Sr. worked in a restaurant as a line cook, putting in six twelve-hour days a week. Unauthorized himself, he had been dutifully paying taxes for eleven years and waiting for a work visa; none was forthcoming. Emiliana woke up every day around 6:00, prepared her children for preschool and child care, went to work cleaning houses, came home, prepared dinner, put her children to bed, did housework, and then waited up for Victor Sr. to return home, often after 1:00 a.m. She then gave him his dinner, went to bed, and woke up only a few hours later. Emiliana seemed

> listless and sad, though when asked always said that things were "fine." Emiliana found out about Head Start only accidentally and then hesitantly enrolled her daughter, Luz, always worrying about exposure.

— Middle Childhood

To our knowledge, no studies have examined how a parent's or a child's own unauthorized status might affect development in middle childhood. Many of the same mechanisms from early childhood might apply: lower levels of take-up of programs for which children are eligible, such as afterschool enrichment programs, and greater social isolation of parent networks. Research also shows that poor work conditions experienced by unauthorized parents—low wages, meager benefits, minimal autonomy, and few opportunities for advancement—are associated with lower academic achievement in middle childhood (Yoshikawa, Weisner, & Lowe, 2006). In addition, by middle childhood, cognitive skills and perspective taking have developed to a point where some children may now have become aware of the legal status of their parents.

For youth in middle childhood, concern over the family's legal vulnerabilities begins to seep into consciousness. They become more cognizant of the culture of fear in which they live. Spanish-language television and radio frequently feature stories of deportations, and in some homes, it is a topic of family conversation that children begin to metabolize. In May 2010, when the First Ladies of the United States and Mexico visited a second-grade classroom in Maryland, a Latina girl spontaneously revealed to Michelle Obama, "My mom said . . . I think she says that Barack Obama's taking everybody away that doesn't have papers." The first lady replied, "That's something we have to work on, right? To make sure that people can be here with the right kind of papers?" Innocently, the girl blurted out, "But my mom doesn't have [papers]" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2010a; Mackey, 2010). As an example, eleven-year-old Mateo begins to (re)cognize and name the culture of fear in which too many are growing up.

> Mateo was poised and collected as he spoke in the august chamber of the U.S. Congress speaking on behalf of thousands of children of immigrant families with unauthorized family members. His steady voice was riveting: "I am here to tell you about my fears growing up in Arizona. Children want to be with their parents because we know that our parents love us. The laws in Arizona are unjust and make me fear for my family. I am always worried when my family leaves the house that something might happen to them. I think about it when my dad goes to work that he might not come back or when I go to school that there might not be someone to pick me up when I get out." (U.S. Congress, 2010)

The dawning realization—stemming from the social comparisons that children in this developmental period learn to make (Huston & Ripke, 2006)—that one's family is different can also affect self-esteem, increase anxiety, and produce internalizing symptoms.

— Adolescence and (Sub)merging Adulthood

Classically, the key developmental task of adolescence is the formation of a stable sense of identity (Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1966), along with finding one's place within the community beyond immediate family. Identity formation is, in part, achieved by mastering culturally marked rites of passage, like obtaining a driver's license, getting a first job, and, for many, going off to college. Unauthorized youth are unable to fully partake in these normative rituals; moreover, their identity formation is complicated when they come to face a negative social mirror that portrays them (Suárez-Orozco, 2001) as illegitimate and unwanted. For many adolescents who are unauthorized or are living in mixed-status homes, adolescence is a time when liminality first comes to fully destabilize their fragile world.

Ensconced in the family and provided with public education from kindergarten through twelfth grade (as per *Plyer v. Doe*), the 1.1 million unauthorized youth in the United States find themselves in a "suspended illegality" through late adolescence (Gonzales, in press), when they do not have to face full on the consequences of their condition. The social parenthesis the moratorium affords them gives way in late adolescence to a time of deep disorientation, of shock, of not knowing who they are or where they belong, and of anger at their parents for putting them into this situation (Gonzales, in press; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). These circumstances can place adolescents at risk of developing internalizing and externalizing symptoms.

> Estella has been in the States since she was four. She has two younger siblings, both U.S. citizens born in Seattle. Her family never discussed citizenship, and she has always assumed she, like her siblings, was a citizen. When she wanted to get her driver's license, her parents told her that they were concerned about safety and did not want her to drive until she was older. It was when she applied for college that she discovered her lack of documentation. Her parents shamefacedly admitted that they had brought her north to provide her a better life, thinking an amnesty eventually would come along. Twelve years later, she finds herself unable to apply for a driver's license or qualify for financial aid to go to college or apply for work. Though on some level she appreciates their sacrifices, on another she is angry with her parents and feels like she belongs "neither here nor there."

In the United States, the adolescent passage into adulthood has typically been marked by achieving independence and autonomy by, inter alia, moving out of the parental home, attending college, working full time, getting married, and having children (Arnett, 2000; Setterson, Furstenburg, & Rumbaut, 2005). These markers have been shifting since the 1950s as norms and economic realities have changed, including the increasingly greater training required for entrance into the labor force and postponement of marriage until the mid-to-late twenties. Arnett (2000) has proposed a new phase of development between adolescence and adulthood, which he terms "emerging adulthood." For young adults in the Western middle-class world, this is often an age

marked by development of individual character, self-reliance, independence, intense self-focus, and identity exploration in the areas of love and work, as well as being a time of possibilities, optimism, and transformation accompanied by instability (Arnett & Tanner, 2006).

But in many nonaffluent, non-Western contexts, where many immigrants originate, adulthood is associated with greater interdependence, reliance on extended kin and kith, and a relational obligation and responsibility to the family (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Russell, Coughlin, El Walily, & Al Amri, 2005). Further, the process of immigration may add additional complications to the Western conception of emerging adulthood (Walsh, Shulman, Feldman, & Maurer, 2005). Using data from the 2008 Current Population Survey, Rumbaut and Komaie (2010) found that the traditional markers of adulthood did not hold in quite the same way when comparisons are made across immigrant and nonimmigrant generations. The first generation—the group that initiated the migration—is most likely to have already achieved the classic adult milestones of living away from the parental home (as their parents often remained back in the homeland). This first generation is most likely to be working, be married, and have children, though they are least likely to be going to college. However, the 1.5 generation—born abroad but arriving as children—is more likely to still live with their immigrant parents, to study and work part time, and to postpone marriage and children (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). They also often juggle other responsibilities of working in a family business, contributing to family expenses and remittance pools, providing child care and elder care, and translating for and aiding parents and extended kin in navigating medical and legal bureaucracies (Fuligni & Pederson, 2002; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010).

The young people who are unauthorized—nearly half of the first generation in adolescence and a high proportion of the 1.5 generation (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010)—face a particularly difficult set of circumstances and a complicated emergence into adulthood. Liminality theory becomes a particularly useful frame for understanding how their formal entry into adulthood is complicated—while, on the one hand, they are inevitably propelled into adulthood, on the other, they are denied participation in state-sanctioned rites of passage, like getting a driver's license or passport and facile entry into college or legally sanctioned passage into the work force (Chavez, 1992; Menjívar, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). For the young adult immigrants who are exiting the relative protections of family and K–12 schooling and moving into the public sphere, the new stage is one of shock and vulnerability; they must "learn to be illegal" (Gonzales, in press). Although they might have been under the initial illusion that they would have similar access to the opportunity structure as their authorized peers, they are now confronted with limited life opportunities. They come to recognize that they, like their parents, are vulnerable to deportations, have drastically limited choices in the world of work, and will need to move ever deeper into the shadows in adulthood (Gonzalez, in press). Thus, for unauthorized young adults, this phase can be characterized as a time

of not emerging but, rather, of *(sub)merging* adulthood. They must now adapt to living below the surface of legality.

If they have managed to get good enough grades and are relatively well-connected socially—able to get the necessary information, supports, and financial resources (scholarships or financial supports) to find a way to go to college—some unauthorized young adults can temporarily put off having to function in the more vulnerable sphere of work (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, in press). For some, like Renato, a tall, well-spoken young man from Ecuador, college can become another space of liminality. "I completed engineering and now I am doing a degree in political science hoping for the DREAM Act to pass," he said, his voice trailing softly. "Until then, I can't legally look for a job." Those who must work, as most do, will squarely face what it means to not have an authorized identity. Rodolfo recounts how he had never really thought before about his illegal identity.

> I never actually felt like I wasn't born here. Because when I came I was like ten and a half. I went to school. I learned the language. I first felt like I was really out of place when I tried to get a job. I didn't have a Social Security number. Well, I didn't even know what it meant. You know Social Security, legal, illegal. I didn't even know what that was. (Gonzalez, in press, p. 16)

Unauthorized young adults often find themselves unable to find jobs different from the ones their parents hold (Gonzales, in press). Margarita, a young woman who pursued an education, found her efforts to enter the labor force frustrated.

> I graduated from high school and have taken some college credits. Neither of my parents made it past fourth grade, and they don't speak any English. But I'm right where they are. I mean, I work with my mom. I have the same job. I can't find anything else. It's kinda ridiculous, you know. Why did I even go to school? It should mean something. I mean that should count right? You would think. I thought. Well here I am cleaning houses. (Gonzales, in press, p. 26)

Unauthorized young adults may find themselves tempted to secure false Social Security cards or driver's licenses in order to find work. Step by step, many begin to cross a threshold: while in earlier years their illegal status was passive and innocent, they may now start to actively pursue the milestones of adulthood to which their authorized peers have access. Once they dip their toes in the underground waters of false driver's licenses and Social Security numbers, they are at risk of getting caught in the undertow of a vast and unforgiving ocean of complex legal currents. Obtaining a fake Social Security number can constitute identity theft, a federal offense, making unauthorized youth not just deportable but also eligible for time in the penal system (Solis, 2011). In addition, in the federal sweep to get rid of "illegal aliens," many young adults become more vulnerable to deportations for old transgressions committed during adolescence, even if they were holders of green cards.

> Jasmina, born in the Philippines, arrived at eleven years old in Forest Hills, New York, after a long separation from her mother, who had taken years to establish residency for herself and then her daughter. After receiving a green card for Jasmina, her mother sent for her, though the reunification was complicated, and her mother and stepfather had trouble establishing a bond and authority over her. When she was fifteen, Jasmina was stopped by the police in a car with four other kids, one of whom had large quantities of marijuana, enough to sell—and not just for the recreation of the five youngsters in the car. Jasmina was high but not judged to be selling, and after a lengthy and scary court process, she was placed on probation on a marijuana possession charge. She was terrified by the experience; she eventually came to terms with her mother and became a good student. She graduated from high school and got a scholarship to a Jesuit college. When she was twenty-one, she was stopped on an unrelated infraction. A few days later she was suddenly picked up at her mother's home by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials and placed in a detention facility. Because of her prior record, it is very likely she will be deported.

Dating, partnering, and marriage are also complicated for this age group (Taxin, 2011). Unauthorized young adults may be unable to legally drive and often are ashamed to reveal their unauthorized status to new friends. Even if they marry a citizen, doing so does not automatically correct their status; unauthorized youth simply get a slot in the broken queue. Further, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth, applications for residency for same-sex partnerships under current immigration regulations are consistently denied, even in the few states that allow marriage for LGBT partners (Human Rights Watch/Immigration Equality, 2006).

Thus, across multiple developmental stages—from early childhood through young adulthood—policy, neighborhood, family, and individual factors constituting the liminality and social exclusion of the unauthorized place these children and youth at risk.

Developmental Implications

Having considered the ecology of systemic factors shaping the experiences of unauthorized children and youth as they move through the developmental spectrum, we now turn to examine a range of developmental outcomes shaped by unauthorized status.

Health

Unauthorized parents are currently ineligible for all health care except perinatal and emergency-room care. Although citizen-children of the unauthorized are eligible for all government health benefits, unauthorized children are not. The outcomes of these factors for health of adults and children in unauthorized families have not been well established. On the one hand, research on the "immigrant health paradox" shows that groups with high rates of unauthorized immigrants, such as lower-income Mexicans in the United States,

have better perinatal and postnatal outcomes than their U.S.-born counterparts with roughly equal economic conditions (Hu-DeHart & Garcia Coll, 2010). On the other hand, the consequences of disparate health-care access on lifelong health outcomes are largely unknown, as the large increases in unauthorized migration (starting in the early 1990s) have been among adults and children during the relatively more protected developmental periods of childhood and young adulthood. The cumulative consequences of social disadvantage for lifelong health and mental health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, and depression, are well established (Center on the Developing Child, 2010); they suggest that the costliest consequences of unauthorized status will emerge later in the life course, as current generations of unauthorized parents, children, and youth move into midlife and older age.

Cognitive Development and Educational Trajectories

The development of early cognitive skills of children of the unauthorized is at risk relative to their peers in authorized families. This consensus emerges from the findings of a few studies that have directly examined the issue and is bolstered by patterns in national data (Crosnoe, 2006; Han, 2006; Ortega et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011). The size, growth, and heterogeneity of the population of children growing up in unauthorized households warrant particular attention in the context of education, as these youngsters enter formal schooling. There are more than five million children of immigrants in unauthorized households in the United States that need to be accommodated by the K–12 system of education. Along with seven million more students living in immigrant households with at least one foreign-born parent with legal status, it is projected that by 2015, as much as 30 percent of the public school population will be children of immigrants (Johnson & Janosik, 2008; Mather, 2009).

These millions of children and youth in unauthorized households face varying degrees of academic challenges. While some enter the U.S. educational system as young children and quite acculturated and speaking English as a primary language, more arrive sometime during the midway point of their education trajectory and with many language and academic hurdles to overcome. Moreover, poor work conditions, such as low wages, lack of access to benefits, and limited opportunities for employment, which are more prevalent among unauthorized adults, are associated with low academic achievement among their middle school and high school children. Many immigrant parents have not had schooling in their home countries and lack familiarity with the U.S. educational system, which hinders not only their access to information, knowledge, and resources that can help them navigate the system but also their ability to facilitate their child's educational mobility (Teranishi, 2010). While immigrant parents have high educational aspirations and expectations for their children, many arrive in the United States with few resources and opportunities that can help them realize these educational goals (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000).

Parental engagement with their child's school—a positive predictor of academic achievement, higher self-esteem, greater academic achievement, and higher rates of high school completion and college enrollment (Hill & Taylor, 2004)—is often a challenge for immigrant families (Hill & Torres, 2010). In some cases, language is a significant barrier that prevents contact between immigrant families and schools. Correspondence between families and schools by way of interpreters often challenges communication, and students themselves are often called on to play this role. Aside from language barriers, immigrant parents have also reported feeling intimidated by schools, particularly if parents are unauthorized and are fearful of being deported if their status is recorded in any way by the school (Advocates for Children of New York, 2009).

Barriers to parental involvement are particularly problematic for immigrant families living in racially and ethnically isolated communities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Their children attend schools that lack adequate resources (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000) and that hold low expectations for its immigrant students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). These schools are often characterized by higher dropout rates, inadequate postsecondary educational preparation, and lower rates of matriculation into college (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 2004). In fact, many immigrant youth who pursue postsecondary education may not have the academic background to adequately prepare them for college course work. Too many are relegated to remediation courses before being allowed to enroll in credit-bearing courses. Moreover, more than half (53%) of immigrant college students are over the age of twenty-four, and a sizable proportion (60%) are considered independent for financial aid purposes. They are also more likely to attend college as part-time students while working either a part-time or full-time job (Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011), which is correlated with lower persistence and degree attainment.

In addition, affordability is a significant factor in the decision to attend college. Research has found that immigrant students lack information about financing college, are less likely to apply for and access student loans, borrow less than other students, and cover more of their college cost with their own financial contribution (NCES, 2006). While naturalized citizens and legal permanent residents are typically eligible for in-state tuition, nonpermanent residents and undocumented students are treated differently from one state to the next. Additionally, undocumented students and nonpermanent residents are ineligible for federal aid and most forms of state aid (González, 2009). In combination, these factors relegate unauthorized youth to community colleges, because of their lower tuition cost, or discourage college attendance altogether (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010; Flores & Chapa, 2009; Teranishi et al., 2011). And in at least one state (Alabama), legislation was passed barring unauthorized students from attending any public college (Preston, 2011a).

Socio-Emotional Development

There is limited research on the psychosocial implications of growing up unauthorized or in unauthorized homes. There only recently has been a dawning awareness of this issue within the field of psychology, and more research is needed to better inform service providers working with these children and youth (APA Presidential Task Force Report on Immigration, forthcoming). There are several areas in which there are some emerging data or about which we can make educated guesses regarding the socio-emotional implications of this condition.

The duress of liminality takes a heavy toll on the socio-emotional development of unauthorized children and youth. Previous research has demonstrated that stressed and depressed parents have compromised parenting abilities (Ashman, Dawson, Panagiotides, Yamada, & Wilkens, 2002; Athey & Ahearn, 1991); obviously a larger than average percentage of unauthorized parents may be at risk of stress or depression. The negative consequences of having a parent detained have been well documented in an Urban Institute study of children across a range of ages and include a high incidence of reported depressive, anxiety, and post–traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms (Chaudry et al., 2010). It is likely that living in a community where family members or friends' parents have been detained or deported heightens insecurity and may undermine a sense of belonging and trust. If the child is a citizen, her sense of belonging to the nation could be undermined as its authorities actively seek to expel his or her parents, siblings, and other loved ones. And, if the child is him- or herself unauthorized, belonging is elusive, because he or she will be encircled by the hard boundaries of liminality and unable to participate in the rituals that define personhood in early adulthood. Although he or she may deeply long for belonging, it will remain a frustrated ambition. Identity formation, already a complicated task for immigrant youth (Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Fuligni, 2010), will be particularly frustrated under the siege of liminality and in the face of hostile and disparaging social, political, and media representations (Suárez-Orozco, 2004), creating a perfect storm of what we may call "perpetual outsider-hood."

Civic Engagement

To date, research on the civic engagement of immigrant-origin youth has been conspicuously sparse. Historically, civic engagement has been defined by the gold standard of voting, though more recently it has been conceptualized more broadly by including commitment to society, activities that help those who are in need, and collective action to fight for social justice (Flanagan, Gallay, Gill, Gallay, & Nti, 2005; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007). As voting is a blocked pathway for both permanent lawful residents and the unauthorized, broader definitions of civic engagement should be considered for immigrants and their children to make possible the promise of their integration

into the life of the country (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008). Some, such as Huntington (2004), have claimed that immigrants represent a threat to American civil society because of their alleged divided loyalties. Yet, the few studies that do exist on the topic of civic engagement suggest that such fears may be misplaced. In fact, when considering a broader definition of civic participation, immigrant-origin youth were found to be more active civically, especially in immigrant-specific activities like interpreting, translating, advocating, filling out official documents, and other forms of civic engagement often overlooked in traditional measures in the field (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008).

When studying immigrants, it is wise to separate civic incorporation from political incorporation (Waters, 2008). While greater civic *and* political participation come with citizenship and second-generation status, non-naturalized immigrants can be involved in an array of civic projects even though they cannot vote (Lopez & Marcelo, 2008; Stoll & Wong, 2007). Additionally, although not speaking English can block participation in some activities for the first generation, bilingual competencies can serve as tools for civic engagement among the children of immigrants (Ramakrishhnan & Baldasarre, 2004). For the 1.5 and second generations, bilingualism acts as a vector of engagement (Arnett Jenson, 2008; Stepick, Stepick, & Labissiere, 2008). Further, immigrants tend to be highly religious (Levitt, 2008; Stepick, 2005), and religious involvement and religious organizations tend to generate multiple pathways to civic involvement (Levitt, 2008; Stoll & Wong, 2007). Religious institutions socialize youth into participating in collective efforts and are traditionally places where members, especially African Americans, have been found to exchange political information and discuss public issues (Smetana & Metzger, 2005). For many immigrants, religious institutions and spiritual communities provide ready-made social ties for fostering civic participation. Finally, immigration-related controversies can serve as a catalyst for civic engagement. These controversies can mobilize some to participate in a variety of political activities, a phenomenon named "reactive ethnicity" (Rumbaut, 2008, p. 108). Young people on campus who are "coming out illegal" (Jones, 2010, p. 36), those who march, sign petitions, participate in sit-ins, organize letter-writing campaigns in support of the DREAM Act, are recent examples of reactive ethnicity mobilized in the service of civic engagement.

Labor Market Access

Nationally, almost 30 percent of young adults (those between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four) are of immigrant origin (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). Strikingly, nearly half of the foreign-born in this age group are unauthorized, having "entered without inspection" or overstayed their visas as young adults or aged into early adulthood after having been brought over as children (Hoefer et al., 2009; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010). Unauthorized status has distinct implications for their participation in the labor market as well as for the developmental opportunities in the next generation as they begin to have children

of their own. As immigrants and their children constitute a growing share of the U.S. population, it is important to examine their access to the labor market, particularly as it pertains to occupations, wages, and opportunities for mobility. Adult immigrants tend to have higher rates of labor force participation, lower rates of unemployment, and lower wages (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). However, it is important to consider the trajectory of children of immigrants into the labor force and the factors that shape their opportunities for work. Research on the intergenerational mobility of immigrant youth yields important insight on the success of children of immigrants. Among U.S.-born youth of immigrant parents and immigrant youth who arrived at a young age, there is evidence of significant gains in upward mobility: they have more education, higher wages, and work in occupations with more job security than their parents (Haskins, 2010). By the second generation, children of immigrants are experiencing labor force outcomes that are equal to or greater than the national average.

For unauthorized youth, however, there is a very different trajectory into the labor force. As unauthorized young adults are in the midst of their high school education, perhaps contemplating their future college or career aspirations, many begin to discover that they do not have a Social Security card and will not be able to apply for jobs (Gonzales, in press). In a study of unauthorized youth, Gonzales found that it is during the filling out of job applications or the college admissions process that many came to learn of their illegal status. As a consequence, a sizable proportion of unauthorized youth ultimately drop out of school and end up in low-skilled jobs with low wages, little or no job security, no benefits, and reduced promise of mobility. A generation later, they find themselves where their parents started. This is a deformation of the American Dream where children expect to do better than their parents. In some cases, unauthorized youth will pursue college and earn a degree but nevertheless face barriers to employment without a means to change their immigration status, despite their skills and credentials. Ultimately, many unauthorized youth are forced deeper and deeper into an underground work force where they will be vulnerable to depressed wages, lack of benefits, and other forms of exploitation (Bernhardt et al., 2009; Yoshikawa, 2011). By then, they are members of our nation's own caste of untouchables; American in all but the law, these youth find themselves in a labyrinth of liminality not of their own making and with virtually all exits blocked.

Discussion

The evidence reveals a consistent pattern: the effects of unauthorized status on development across the lifespan are uniformly negative, with millions of U.S. children and youth at risk of lower educational performance, economic stagnation, blocked mobility, and ambiguous belonging. In all, the data suggest an alarming psychosocial formation. Though the relationships among

documentation status, ecological settings, and developmental outcomes are articulated in our conceptual model, the significance of these relationships goes beyond the conceptual framing of a new social problem.

The sheer numbers—currently more than 4.5 million citizen-children of unauthorized immigrant parents *plus* more than 1 million unauthorized children and youth—indicate a large-scale national concern that touches every state in the nation and reaches well into the future. The 5.5 million children and youth growing up in the shadows equals more than the combined populations of Montana, Delaware, South Dakota, Alaska, North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming. Put another way: on average, one or two students per American classroom is a child who is touched directly by unauthorized status. Unauthorized status cannot be reduced to concerns about redundant workers whose labors and brainpower are sometimes needed but at times of economic contraction become superfluous and easily dismissed. Immigration is above all a family process: love (family reunification) and work (to provide for the family) have always driven migration. These families are growing deep roots in American soil. The experience of being unauthorized touches broad swatches of the American fabric. It is not restricted to a few states or a few ethnicities. It is not a California issue or a Latino issue. Relatively large proportions of certain Asian immigrant groups are also represented among the unauthorized, and these groups are particularly vulnerable to long periods of parent-child separation with the consequent social-emotional problems examined above (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). Finally, the impact of unauthorized status is not just about effects on educational outcomes or access to college and the military, the foci of the proposed DREAM Act. The implications of growing up in an unauthorized family span a variety of developmental contexts shaping multiple outcomes, including psychological well-being, mental health, physical health, education, and employment.

Our review shows that unauthorized status harms development, from the beginning of life through adolescence and young adulthood, by restricting access to some of the most important pathways to adult well-being and productivity: early learning opportunities such as quality child care, preschool, and school as well as higher education and formal entry into the world of work. For millions of children and youth growing up in unauthorized families, the American Dream and the promise of a better tomorrow have become an elusive mirage. In facing the perfect storm, unauthorized families exhibit strength and resilience and undoubtedly deploy many assets. Unauthorized parents, for example, report levels of dedication and commitment to their children's learning that are no different than those of more privileged authorized parents (Ng et al., 2009). In highlighting the fact that unauthorized status represents a measurable risk threatening the well-being of children and youth, we hope to motivate future research, novel policy interventions, and responsive practice as well as public opinion.

Research Implications

Our article focuses on a consistent, though still nascent, evidentiary base. There is still a lot we do not know about how unauthorized status affects developmental outcomes across domains, life stages, and contexts. Forthcoming large-scale and longitudinal studies with direct information on unauthorized status will help fill in the picture (e.g., the L.A. Family and Neighborhood Study and work by K. Perreira and by R. Smith). However, the vast majority of developmental and policy studies of children and youth do not collect any information on unauthorized status. With the appropriate protections for anonymity and confidentiality, such data can be collected. A variety of methods, from ethnography and in-depth interviews to survey and observational methods, can inform the study of this phenomenon (Yoshikawa et al., 2008). Studies on the domains of health and socio-emotional development are particularly needed, as are studies during the middle childhood period and studies of young and older adults in higher education, adult education, employment, and other settings.

We also need more work on the effects of high levels of protracted unauthorized immigration on democratic practices at the local, state, and federal levels. If by one measure citizens are bound by a shared fate, how does the liminality of millions among us shape our common future when the evidence suggests that neither the forced deportation of eleven million people nor massive self-deportations are likely to occur? We need further work on the ethics of systems—health, education, justice—that de facto punish children and youth for embodying a condition not of their own making. We need legal work on the millions of U.S. citizen-children who, day in and day out, lose the right to have rights simply by growing up in the shadows of their parents' unauthorized status. The societal importance of these issues is unquestionable.

Policy and Practice Implications

There are more concrete considerations as well. With a rapidly aging population, the United States cannot afford to relegate millions of its children and youth to a liminal, excluded status that harms their development and restricts their ability to become productive and civically engaged members of society. In the upcoming decades, when every working-age American will be needed to support a burgeoning elderly population, writing off millions of productive, potential citizens is economically self-destructive and civically reckless. Restricting access to high-quality child care, enriching preschool environments, and, later, higher education and employment opportunities represents an extraordinary disrespect for humanity and human potential and a tremendous waste of resources.

The most fundamental policy implication of this article is the need to create a pathway to citizenship for the long-settled unauthorized who pass a strict "belonging threshold" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2010b). Bringing

them out of the shadows would free unauthorized parents to enroll their children—our future police officers, nurses, firefighters, teachers, and doctors—in programs that benefit their development. They would also experience higher wages and be able pursue their own education as adults.

Second, labor law enforcement to correct wage violations would help address the disastrous work conditions of the unauthorized, which affect unauthorized parents, citizen-children, and unauthorized youth and young adults alike. The pernicious combination of permanent marginality, exploitation at work, and blocked mobility will shape the democratic vigor of the entire society for years to come. Quarantining millions in interminable liminality threatens to infect the larger body politic:

> The formalistic exclusion of deportable noncitizens from our rich traditions of constitutional discourse also risks the creation of a caste from a "discrete and insular minority." It facilitates irrational discrimination against the noncitizens who live, work, pay taxes, raise children and participate in communities alongside citizens every day. And practices that take root against noncitizens may provide models for actions against citizens. (Kanstroom, 2007, p. 18)

Third, as the United States becomes more diverse, and as the foreign-stock population grows numerically and proportionally, it is smart policy to increase the rate at which immigrants can access education and succeed in schooling. The need to create a more accessible and responsive education system for immigrants is important because educational attainment is now the most significant prerequisite for maintaining and gaining social status in America and is fundamental to the replenishment and development of a labor force that needs to be globally competitive. While some thrive in the educational system, the potential of unauthorized youth is often unrealized, and their dreams are thwarted. The barriers and discrimination they face stand in painful conflict with American ideals and have detrimental long-term personal, economic, and societal consequences.

Fourth, policy and procedures need to increase efficacious parental involvement for the unauthorized population. Although the Supreme Court decision in *Plyer v. Doe* provides unauthorized youth access to K–12 education, there are still many barriers for unauthorized parents of students that limit their involvement in their child's schooling. Greater attention to language needs and communication strategies can improve the relationship between schools and the families they serve. Policy implications extend into the arena of higher education. One of the most significant factors determining college participation and persistence is knowledge of, access to, and use of financial aid; this access should be extended to the unauthorized population. In addition, because unauthorized students have a disproportionately greater presence in community colleges, there is a need for state policy reform so that community colleges receive an equitable share of state funding in comparison to their four-year counterparts. For unauthorized students specifically, there

are significant barriers related to college cost and access to aid. Therefore, we need to support efforts to gain and retain access to in-state tuition for all U.S. high school graduates, regardless of documentation status, as research has shown that extending in-state tuition for undocumented students is associated with increased participation in college (Dougherty et al., 2010; Flores & Chapa, 2009).

Our last policy recommendation concerns the practices of community-based organizations serving immigrant populations. These organizations can connect unauthorized families with resources and information, which the unauthorized are either excluded from or are reluctant to access. Child development services that unauthorized parents take up must come from trusted organizations perceived as directly helpful to children, with enrollment conducted in the appropriate language (Yoshikawa, 2011). Trusted organizations, both formal and informal, can also facilitate community organizing and advocacy among this group (Smith, 2006). Even families with few connections to formal service providers or agencies report high levels of engagement with churches, local organizations with trusted reputations for working with immigrant groups, and transnational organizations with links to their countries of origin (Galvez, 2009; Smith, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). Among the unauthorized, networks of trust matter greatly and are imminently possible to build and sustain.

In conclusion, the conditions of exclusion we have described in this article are reinforced through public policies and structural, systemic inequities. Immigrants, due to their rapid growth and relative youth, are burgeoning in proportional representation. With a rapidly aging native population dependent on the youthful population's economic contributions, our nation can ill afford to foster a new underclass of socially disaffected youth and young adults.

If we cannot muster the political will to fix current immigration malaise, we should at least face with eyes wide open what the status quo means for millions of children and youth caught in a situation not of their own making. We need to answer Bernstein's (2011) unsettling question—"Are we, in effect, creating an American caste system here, one that challenges the nation's concepts of civil rights?" (p. 37). Permanently encircling millions of children and youth behind a barbed wire of liminality is counter to fundamental democratic ideals, the values we share as Americans, and the core tenets of our civilization. It is, above all, the atavistic punishing of children for the "sins" of others.

The category of "illegal immigrant" did not exist in the United States until 1888, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed; much of the growth of this nation of immigrants occurred with open doors (Ngai, 2004). The ways in which immigrant-origin youth are integrated into U.S. society, and the ways in which they are invited to participate civically, will in no small measure determine the kind of country we will become (Stepick et al., 2008). The future holds either a more equitable and democratic America or a divided society

with a new caste of untouchables, permanent outsiders at the threshold of belonging. The children of the unauthorized urgently need to be brought out of the shadows and into the sunshine of true democratic promise, fair play, and equal opportunity. Only then can we begin the work of promoting the healthy development of millions of children in our nation.

Notes

1. Over 8.5 million of the unauthorized are from the North American region (Mexico, Canada, Central America, and the Caribbean), followed by 980,000 from Asia (China, India, South Korea, and the Philippines are the top four sending countries), 740,000 from South America, and the rest from other regions (Hoefer et al., 2009).
2. Case vignettes are used for illustrative purposes and come from a range of sources, including our own field and clinical work, others' research, and news stories. Attributions are made when the cases come from sources other than the authors' own research. All names and some details may have been changed to protect the identities of the individuals.

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