

Parental Legal Status and the Political Engagement of Second-Generation Mexican Americans



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This paper invokes a theoretical model of immigrant membership exclusion to assess the political integration of second-generation Mexican Americans. Specifically, we examine the extent to which the migration status of parents, especially mothers, is associated with the political engagement, community engagement, and voting registration of their adult offspring. In each type of engagement, respondents whose mothers have remained unauthorized show lower overall levels of political incorporation. The effect is indirect in that it is mediated by the respondents' educational level, in keeping with prior research showing that persistent unauthorized status by mothers reduces the years of schooling of children. This study thus contributes to the literature finding that the unauthorized status of parents has repercussions for the overall integration of their offspring.

Keywords: unauthorized migration, membership exclusion, political integration

A substantial body of research on U.S. immigration covering the last thirty years shows the harmful consequences of unauthorized status for immigrants and the benefits of legalization (see, for example, Bean et al. 2014; Fussell 2011; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Kossoudji and Cobb-Clark 2000; Massey 2013; Orrenius and Zavodny 2012). A more recent literature based largely on qualitative research finds negative effects of unauthorized status on children, including on their cognitive and emotional development (Gonzales 2015; Yoshikawa 2011). Even more recently, data show the depressing effects on adult offspring of long-term unauthorized status of parents (Bean, Brown, and

Bachmeier 2015). The effects of unauthorized status probably have grown since the late twentieth century because of public derision and strong sanctions from authorities (Chavez 2008; Massey and Pren 2012). Drawing on this literature, a new immigrant-integration perspective known as *membership exclusion* holds that legal status operates as a critical first stage of the integration of immigrant groups (Bean and Brown 2014; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Brown and Bean 2016). Without the early political membership afforded by legal status, immigrants may adapt socioculturally but often be hamstrung by structural barriers when attempting to advance socioeconomically.

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With legal status, however, immigrants and their children show substantial mobility.

This paper assesses whether the membership-exclusion perspective applies to the political engagement of the adult offspring of Mexican immigrants and, if so, whether the effect of influence operates directly or through other factors. To our knowledge, research has not yet addressed how parents' legal status affects children's political engagement and the potential for children's political incorporation. Insofar as legal status is a necessary precursor to political incorporation, its absence would be expected to affect the second generation's engagement in politics through voting, activism, and even awareness of issues, all of which are later stages in the political integration process (Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009). We argue that this first step of legalization is necessary to achieving many types of political engagement, not only in the first generation but also in the second.

We test the membership-exclusion perspective on the offspring of Mexican immigrants because Mexicans are a plurality of all immigrants and slightly more than half of all undocumented U.S. immigrants. In 2010, Mexico accounted for 29 percent of the foreign-born population (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012). Despite a steep decline in Mexican migration since the Great Recession, the total number of unauthorized Mexicans in the United States by 2012 was still about 5.9 million, 52 percent of all unauthorized residents. More than 27 percent of these live in one state—California (Gonzalez-Barrera and Krogstad 2015).

POLITICAL INCORPORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Broadly, political incorporation involves the extent to which immigrants have been integrated into a host country's political processes and structures. The earliest form of political incorporation is the legal right to remain in a nation; the most advanced form is the ability to influence government policies, especially by holding high political office (Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009). Because political incorporation is both a process and an outcome, it is a challenge to define, let alone operationalize

(Minnite 2009). Political incorporation manifests itself in degrees along a continuum, beginning with legalization and naturalization, advancing to participation in nonelectoral and electoral forms of politics, and ending when the immigrant group participates in the formulation and implementation of government policies (Jones-Correa 2005; Minnite 2009). As new citizens demonstrate high levels of civic engagement, they begin to influence policy and move toward such higher forms of political activity as running for elective office (Jones-Correa 2005).

Jennifer Hochschild and John Mollenkopf present both rudimentary and full models of immigrant political incorporation (2009). To achieve full political incorporation, the children of immigrants must follow a necessary progression: first entry into (or birth in) the host country, then entry into membership, then involvement in the political arena, and finally responsiveness to and from the political system. The form of entry into the host country should prove critical to later political participation because entry into membership is necessary though not sufficient for many of the later steps. Many factors may mitigate the effect of form of entry and the attainment of membership on political participation. For example, participation depends on knowledge of politics, which may be limited even among native-born citizens. For example, in 2011, a national survey of thirty thousand Americans found that only 50 percent could name all three branches of government (Lee 2012). In general, whites, males and older, financially more secure citizens are more likely to have solid knowledge about national politics, and education remains the single most powerful predictor of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Thus, any examination of how parental legal status affects the political engagement of offspring should also examine the effects of such factors, especially education.

UNAUTHORIZED MIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

In 2010, an estimated 5.5 million children in the United States had at least one unauthorized parent. Of these children, an estimated 4.5 million were born in the United States and

have birthright citizenship (Passel and Cohn 2011). A growing literature on the children of unauthorized parents suggests that parents' legal status powerfully affects children from young ages on because parents may be less likely to access the sorts of public programs, health services, and subsidies available to low-income families (Berk and Schur 2001; Castañeda and Melo 2015). Hirokazu Yoshikawa describes how the stress of precarious finances and fear of deportation exacerbate parental stress and depression to the detriment of children's development of language and cognitive skills (2011). Leisy Abrego argues that children of one or two undocumented parents commonly fear separation from their parents (2014a). Roberto Gonzales shows how youths have to learn to be illegal and how they feel they must hide their unauthorized status and isolate themselves, thereby reducing their educational opportunities (2011).

In particular, educational deficits may restrict the mobility of even legal or citizen offspring. Frank Bean, Susan Brown, and James Bachmeier assess the degree to which the legal status of parents (particularly mothers) affects the success and overall integration of Mexican American immigrant children in the 1.5 and second generations. Long-term unauthorized status among mothers limits the integration of offspring across multiple structural dimensions, such as education, income, and neighborhood attainment (2015). Children of authorized mothers average slightly more than thirteen years of schooling, and those whose mothers are unauthorized average a year and a quarter less—or the difference between not finishing high school and attaining some college (Bean et al. 2011). The long-term unauthorized status of mothers also negatively influences linguistic integration, a key factor in determining other kinds of integration (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). Although such findings highlight the effects of mothers' legal status on integration across several dimensions, analyses have not yet been extended to examining effects on the political integration of the next generation.

The literature on the political effects of unauthorized status is sparse. The low socioeconomic status and difficult lives of most unau-

thorized Mexican immigrant parents would suggest that they would be relatively unengaged politically, and, of course, their status forecloses their possibility of voting. Moreover, parents pass their political proclivities on to their children (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Vecchione and Caprara 2009). Yet for undocumented parents, the causal direction can be reversed given that children may provide a bridge to political or civic institutions (see Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Waters and Pineau 2015). Still, the increased vulnerability of unauthorized families and their lack of sense of belonging may undermine the potential for offspring to influence their parents (Abrego 2014b; Getrich 2008). Moreover, because education is related to political engagement, a lack of education among the children of unauthorized parents may mediate their potential to become more politically integrated.

MEMBERSHIP EXCLUSION

Membership exclusion is a theoretical perspective about how lack of initial societal membership, reinforced by institutional and organizational factors, limits the structural integration of immigrants and their children (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Brown and Bean 2016). Societal membership refers to both legal and social citizenship, the latter elaborated by T. H. Marshall to argue that social citizenship involves access to political, civil, and social rights (1950). Thus, societal membership refers not only to legal status but also to a much broader sense of membership. Membership exclusion underscores the signature role that the absence of societal membership may play in the integration process.

Immigration exemplifies the idea of societal membership, because newcomers are often excluded to varying degrees, with those subject to the most exclusion being most hindered in their integration (Bean et al. 2012; Koopmans 2010; Nee and Holbrow 2013). As a result, the integration of the unauthorized and their offspring may be slow and incomplete, even after three generations (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). Some scholars have noted the potential negative effects of lack of membership (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Waldinger 2013). Other research, however, emphasizes that even

though integration is multidimensional, structural integration is contingent on basic legal and societal membership (Bean et al. 2012; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Bean and Brown 2014; Brown and Bean 2016). For example, many (though not all) forms of political integration depend on societal membership, not least because voting is generally restricted to citizens. Particularly when boundaries are formalized in law, those immigrants who fall outside of them not only face persistent stigmatization and marginalization, they are also ineligible for many forms of structural participation, and the likelihood is that the effects spill over into the next generation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this paper, we examine at the individual level how the earliest form of immigrant political incorporation (legal status) relates to later forms in the next generation. In other words, does having one or two unauthorized parents influence the desire and ability of offspring to participate in organizations that have political influence and to vote? Evidence of effects of unauthorized status on the political incorporation of the next generation would lend support for the concept of membership exclusion, which highlights the crucial role initial political membership may have on the integration process. We are less interested in examining the adult individual-level correlates of political behavior, because these are limited depending on whether migrants and their families have legal status. Rather, we are interested in the consequences of earliest form of political membership, legal status, on the political variables involving the second generation. For us, the key independent variable is *parental* legal status, because membership exclusion holds that the long-term absence of legal status undercuts the ability of offspring to integrate across multiple structural dimensions regardless of a child's status. Certainly, an unauthorized adult unable to attain even the temporary protection of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals faces more challenges than legalized siblings, but the disadvantages of parental unauthorized status affect all children.

The analysis below thus examines how parents' legal status influences children's political

engagement, broadly defined. Guided by the tenets of membership exclusion and the findings of research, we limit our focus to mother's legal status, which has more effect than father's status on both sons and daughters across such dimensions of integration as education, income and neighborhood attainment (Bean et al. 2011; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). Given previous research emphasizing the impact of parents' legal status, we first hypothesize that mother's authorization status is related to the political outcomes of offspring.

If indeed we find that mother's long-term legal status affects the political integration of offspring, the next question of interest is to examine the potential mechanisms. The effect can be direct, in that if parents remain unengaged politically because their migration status makes them wary, their offspring may also hesitate to participate, even though the children are often citizens.

Immigrants with unauthorized status live in "the shadow of the law" and are denied the "set of rights an individual has by virtue of belonging to a national community" (Menjívar 2006, 1032). Even when granted residency or work permits, immigrants remain in a state of "legal limbo," experiencing "liminal legality"—suspended legality under which immigrants may secure temporary statuses but can "easily slip back into the realm of nonlegality" (Menjívar 2006, 1008). Unauthorized immigrants often take extreme measures to avoid deportation, by confining themselves as much as possible to the safety of their homes (Chavez 1998). The children of unauthorized mothers, having never seen their parents participate in politics, might withdraw from the political arena. They might view the U.S. government as unresponsive to the needs of their group and, consequently, might be pessimistic about the influence their political involvement could have. In such a case, parents' legal status would have a direct effect on children's political involvement.

Alternatively, because education and income are positively related to political engagement, the effect on offspring of parental unauthorized status may be indirect. That is, it may keep children from maximizing their socioeconomic potential and thus probably lower their

socioeconomic status and political engagement. This hypothesis maintains that other factors may mediate the effect of unauthorized mothers. Political incorporation is often affected by a variety of factors, including income and education. Unauthorized immigrants' vulnerability to deportation, low-wage employment and lack of access to public amenities may reduce their socioeconomic status relative to families with authorized backgrounds. Because children of unauthorized mothers receive less schooling than their counterparts, the effect of an unauthorized mother on political participation could be mediated by education (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

DATA AND MEASURES

This analysis uses data from a survey called Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles, or IIMMLA (Rumbaut et al. 2004). Conducted in 2004 by telephone, IIMMLA covered the five-county metropolitan area of Los Angeles, included 4,780 respondents, and was designed to parallel a previous study also supported by the Russell Sage Foundation, the Immigrant Second Generation in New York. The goal behind both studies was to see how the offspring of recent immigrants across multiple groups fare in the different contexts of Los Angeles and New York, the two cities in the United States with the largest immigrant populations. With its more than 6.5 million residents of Mexican origin, Los Angeles is the preeminent site for studying Mexican American integration (Ruggles et al. 2010). Respondents were asked about their basic demographic information, sociocultural orientation, economic mobility, geographic mobility, and civic and political engagement. The survey targeted the 1.5 and second generations among the area's six largest immigrant groups—Mexicans, Central Americans (Salvadoran and Guatemalan), Vietnamese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Chinese—along with a catch-all group of other immigrants. It also targeted the third and higher generations of Mexican Americans, non-Hispanic whites, and blacks. Respondent ages were limited to between twenty and forty because for most immigrant groups arriving in the United States after 1965, the second generation was still in young adulthood. This

study examines only the 1.5 and second generations of Mexican Americans, all of whom were accessed through random-digit dialing.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the IIMMLA study is the retrospective information obtained on the legal and citizenship status of the respondents' parents, both when they first entered the United States and at the time of the interview. This information has been used to estimate status trajectories on migration, legalization, and citizenship jointly for each parent of the respondents, as well as respondents themselves (Bean et al. 2011; Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). This analysis uses the actual combinations of parental trajectories developed through latent-class analysis (Bean et al. 2011). The measure is based on the findings that initial unauthorized status matters less to children's outcomes than whether that unauthorized status persists, and that the combinations of parents' trajectories shape children's lives. Although the data do not permit determination of exactly how long parents remained in unauthorized status, the timing of the survey suggests that many of the parents of respondents in the IIMMLA survey would have been eligible to legalize under provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.

Apart from allowing the creation of combinations for parents' legal status trajectories, the IIMMLA survey also included an abundance of data derived from respondents' answers to questions regarding political attitudes, electoral behavior, and community involvement, thus allowing us to tap into the respondents' level of civic engagement. Our analysis involves indicators of political behaviors, attitudes, and community involvement. We combine three of the behavioral indicators into an index after preliminary principal components analysis (not shown) suggested that they tapped into a latent factor. Questions on voting, political knowledge, and community involvement represent different dimensions and are therefore included separately. The questions are as follows:

In the past twelve months, have you contacted a government office about a problem or to get help or information either by telephone or email or in person; attended any

political meetings, rallies, speeches, or dinners in support of a political candidate; taken part in any form of protest, such as picketing, a march, demonstration or boycott?

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country?

Do you belong to any community organizations, work-related organizations, sports teams, or other nonreligious organizations?

Are you registered to vote in the precinct where you now live, are you registered to vote somewhere else, or are you not registered to vote?

On the understanding question, any kind of agreement was coded as a 1; any disagreement was coded as 0 to avoid variation in respondents' self-perception and their interpretation of what it means to have a "good understanding." On the registration question, any form of registration was coded as a 1, not registered as 0. The latter question was asked only of respondents who reported being naturalized or born in the United States, so the sample size for this question is smaller.

RESULTS

Because authorization status has such a powerful impact on the immigrant experience in the United States, the children of long-term unauthorized mothers have lower socioeconomic status than their counterparts. For example, the average annual household income of respondents with an unauthorized mother was about \$17,000 less than those with an authorized mother, a statistically significant difference (see table 1). In addition, respondents with an unauthorized mother tend to be much less educated, completing an average of 11.1 years of schooling, than their counterparts with an authorized mother, who attain an average of 13.3 years. Unauthorized parents themselves also tend to have less education. Authorized mothers received an average of 8.8 years, and unauthorized mothers an average of seven. Similarly, fathers coupled with authorized

mothers received a mean 8.7 years, and their counterparts coupled with unauthorized mothers had 7.7. Relatively few respondents appear to be themselves unauthorized. Using the strictest interpretation of who might be unauthorized based on a series of questions about auspices of entry and changes in visa status, we estimate that fifty-five respondents in the 1.5 generation are unauthorized, and that the correlation between authorized status of mother and offspring appears to be 0.49. In this sample, 34.5 percent of the respondents were 1.5 generation, who came to the United States before age fourteen, as opposed to the second generation, members of which were born in the United States. However, the 1.5 generation is disproportionately represented among those whose mothers remained unauthorized. More than 65 percent of the respondents whose mothers remained unauthorized were 1.5 generation, whereas only 28.8 percent were among those with legalized or citizen mothers.

On indicators of political behaviors, respondents with authorized mothers scored significantly higher than those with unauthorized mothers in every category of political behavior: participating in a protest, attending a political gathering, and contacting government. In addition, respondents with authorized mothers were more likely to report good political understanding and to belong to a community organization, suggesting more general engagement as well. In voting registration, respondents with authorized mothers were significantly more likely than those with unauthorized mothers to be registered. However, active participation in political behaviors is relatively rare, ranging from 6.6 percent of all respondents attending a political gathering to 25.1 percent contacting government. Fewer than 15 percent belong to a community organization. Political understanding and voter registration are far more common: 80.1 percent of citizen respondents reported that they had registered.

Table 2 regresses political behaviors, civic engagement, and political understanding on mothers' and respondents' legal status, respondents' nativity, parents' and respondents' education level, and respondents' household income. Respondents' age and gender are also

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations, Respondent Characteristics

	Mothers Authorized		Mothers Unauthorized		All	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Independent variables						
Age	28.1	6.0	28.3	5.9	28.1	6.0
Women (percent of sample)	51.5	50.0	46.0	50.0	50.7	50.0
1.5 generation (percent of sample)	28.8	45.3	67.7***	46.9	34.5	47.6
Father's education (in years)	8.7	4.1	7.7*	4.0	8.5	4.1
Mother's education (in years)	8.8	3.8	7.0***	3.6	8.5	3.8
Education (in years)	13.3	2.1	11.1***	3.1	13.0	2.4
Household income	\$46,664	43,072	\$29,254***	32,682	\$44,106	42,168
Dependent variables						
	%	SD	%	SD	%	SD
Political behaviors						
Attended political gathering	7.6	26.5	2.1*	14.3	6.6	24.9
Participated in protest	14.0	35.7	8.8†	28.4	13.0	33.7
Contacted government	26.7	44.2	17.6*	38.2	25.1	43.4
Good political understanding	87.0	33.7	77.0**	42.2	85.2	35.5
Belong to community organization	16.8	37.4	4.4***	20.6	14.6	35.3
Registered voter	80.9	40.2	71.1†	45.4	80.1	40.0
N	720		124		844	

Source: Authors' compilation based on IIMMLA 2004.

Note: Significance levels refer to differences between respondents with authorized mothers and unauthorized mothers. Household income is presented as a 5 percent trimmed mean.

† $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

controlled, though results are not shown. Model 1 shows the effect of mother's legal status for each of three dependent variables. In each case, having a mother who remained unauthorized is negatively related to engaging in any form of political behavior, belonging to a community organization, or a sense of having a good understanding of politics. For example, those whose mothers were unauthorized were more than 70 percent less likely than those with legal mothers to belong to a community organization. They were less than half as likely to say they had a good understanding of politics.

Being foreign born (that is, in the 1.5 generation) accounts for a small part of the disadvantage among respondents in political engagement, as model 2 shows. Respondents who are foreign born are likely to have less overall family exposure to the U.S. political system. For the political behavior and understanding variables, foreign birth has a negative effect apart from mother's legal status. Still,

the question remains whether the respondents themselves are unauthorized. Model 2 also examines whether the respondent's legal status has an independent effect on political behavior and understanding. In none of these cases is the result significant. Despite failing to achieve significance, the coefficients for attending protests (the realm of the disenfranchised) and expressing understanding of politics are positive for unauthorized respondents, suggesting perhaps a tendency for those who grew up in the United States to be less likely to remain in the shadows. Nevertheless, the lack of a significant result suggests strongly that it is mothers' legal status—which remains a significantly depressing effect on the political engagement and understanding of offspring—more than the respondents' own status that influences their political behaviors.

The story changes in model 3 for all three dependent variables. These models control for the education of the respondents and their parents as well as respondents' income. Respon-

Table 2. Regression of Political Behaviors and Understanding, Mexican Americans, Ages Twenty to Forty

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Index of attending political gathering, participating in protest, and/or contacting government			
Mother unauthorized	-0.527**	-0.409*	-0.151
1.5 generation		-0.318**	-0.218†
Respondent unauthorized		0.006	0.187
Father's education			0.005
Mother's education			0.021*
R's education			0.170***
R's household income (000s)			-0.001
Intercept	-0.702***	-0.620***	-3.157***
χ^2	10.30**	17.73**	72.79***
N	839	839	839
Belong to community organization			
Mother unauthorized	-1.261**	-0.940*	-0.599
1.5 generation		-0.125	0.126
Respondent unauthorized		-1.646	-1.363
Father's education			0.000
Mother's education			0.032
R's education			0.196***
R's household income (000s)			0.007**
Intercept	-2.379***	-2.304***	-5.131***
χ^2	22.39***	27.31***	69.77***
N	843	843	843
Good understanding of politics			
Mother unauthorized	-0.814**	-0.693*	-0.245
1.5 generation		-0.598**	-0.420†
Respondent unauthorized		0.350	0.508
Father's education			-0.014
Mother's education			0.014
R's education			0.164**
R's household income (000s)			0.012**
Intercept	1.189*	1.21*	-1.319
χ^2	22.01***	28.79***	57.69***
N	837	837	837

Source: Authors' compilation based on IIMMLA 2004.

Note: All models also control for respondent's age and gender. Index is run using negative binomial regression. Other variables use logistic regression.

† $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

dents' education far and away influences their political and civic engagement. Each additional year of education raises the likelihood of belonging to a community organization by nearly 22 percent. It raises the likelihood of ex-

pressing a good understanding of politics by nearly 18 percent. It is far more important than parents' education and even more important than household income, which has no effect on political behavior but a significant one on

Table 3. Logistic Regression of Voting Registration, Mexican Americans, Ages Twenty to Forty

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Mother unauthorized	-0.735*	-0.695*	-0.262
1.5 generation		-0.480†	-0.486†
Respondent unauthorized		N/A	N/A
Father's education			-0.040
Mother's education			0.021
R's education			0.368***
R's household income (000s)			0.003
Intercept	-0.802	-0.920	-5.510***
χ^2	30.55***	33.96***	79.56***
N	677	677	677

Source: Authors' compilation based on IIMMLA 2004.

Note: All models also control for respondent's age and gender.

† $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

belonging to a community organization and expressing a good understanding of politics. Respondents' achieved status also attenuates the effect of mothers' legal status, suggesting that education is a strong mediating variable. The children of unauthorized mothers get less schooling, and this lack is strongly related to their lack of political involvement. These findings suggest that the effect of mothers' unauthorized status on political behaviors, civic engagement, and political understanding is indirect, operating mainly by suppressing the level of the child's education.

Table 3 regresses voting registration on the same sets of predictors. The sample size for this regression is smaller because the question about voter registration was asked only of those who were eligible to vote, that is, citizens. The results are similar to those found in table 2. Having a persistently unauthorized mother dampens the likelihood that offspring who are citizens will register to vote, in this case by more than half, as the exponentiated version of the coefficient in model 1 shows. Very little of the effect of mother's legal status is related to the respondent's generation, as model 2 shows. However, naturalized citizens are marginally less likely to register to vote than the native-born second generation. Again, the education of the respondent becomes the critical factor relating to voter registration, as shown

in model 3. Each additional year of schooling raises the chances by 44 percent that a respondent will register to vote, mostly regardless of income. Registering to vote is fairly late-stage type of political incorporation, inaccessible to those who have not yet attained citizenship, regardless of their education. Yet the results show the same pattern that education mediates the effect of mother's unauthorized status on respondent's voter registration. Foreign birth still marginally drives down the chances of registering to vote, probably as a result of less family exposure to U.S. politics. Nevertheless, net of education, parents' unauthorized status does not affect the chances of their offspring registering to vote.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper provides what we believe is the first examination of how unauthorized status of parents may limit the overall political integration of offspring. Across all indicators, mothers' lack of legal status does indeed negatively influence offspring's political engagement. The results consistently show that having an unauthorized mother is significantly and negatively associated among offspring with a lack of political engagement or understanding and a lack of community involvement and voter registration. Such a consistent finding provides support for the provisions of the membership-

exclusion hypothesis. The results confirm the significant role legalization plays in the political integration of immigrant children. In this case, though, the legalization of parents matters more than that of respondents, because even the citizen children of unauthorized migrants are handicapped by their parents' status.

Second, across all the tested forms of political incorporation, the effect of mothers' legal status is indirect and mediated by respondents' education. It is not the mothers' liminal legal status that influences the children's political engagement so much as the structural limitations such as liminality imposes on children's mobility, limitations such as lack of access to education and better opportunities. Indeed, previous research has shown that parents' legal status may limit the overall integration of offspring in several dimensions: childhood development, education, income, neighborhood, and language (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Yoshikawa 2011).

The question of whether any effect of unauthorized parental status is direct or indirect is important for the policy implications. This indirect effect suggests that much of the political integration of the children of immigrants relates to socioeconomic mobility, so that more opportunities for the offspring of unauthorized immigrants may encourage greater political involvement on their part. The literature on political engagement has long stressed the critical impact of education. The children of unauthorized mothers remain disadvantaged in many respects, particularly in terms of education, compared with their counterparts whose parents have legalized or naturalized (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015).

These results also support the perspective of membership exclusion, which emphasizes how the formal lack of societal membership adversely influences integration. In this analysis, respondents with authorized mothers, on average, showed greater political engagement on every indicator. Other studies examining dimensions of mobility have found that educational attainment is directly affected by parents' legal status and that forms of mobility that are related to education, such as neighborhood attainment, are thus only indirectly re-

lated to parents' migration status (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015). This study provides further evidence of such an indirect effect, this time on political aspects of integration. Further work may examine more attitudes toward the political process, such as belief in the efficacy of government.

The results of this study show that children of unauthorized mothers, children who are overwhelmingly citizens or legal immigrants, are less likely to be politically engaged than those with authorized mothers. Basic social membership of immigrant parents is necessary for better structural integration of the next generation. These findings matter for policy. The most straightforward policy to encourage greater political participation among the children of immigrants would be to enable unauthorized migrants to find a pathway to legalization. Without immigration reform, a greater proportion of unauthorized working parents will remain in the shadows than of their predecessors who arrived in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. The persistence of their unauthorized status will affect their children, even though many of those children may be citizens themselves. Reasonable pathways that are neither difficult nor punitive will enable the children of the unauthorized to realize their political voice as well as their potential in other arenas of public and private life.

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