

**UCLA**

**Program on International Migration**

**Title**

"Anchor Babies" and Dreams Deferred: Public Discourse about Immigrant Children and Implications for Civic and Educational Rights

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/53s32538>

**Authors**

Orellana, Marjorie Faulstich  
Johnson, Sarah Jean

**Publication Date**

2011-11-23

**“Anchor Babies” and Dreams Deferred: Public Discourse about Immigrant  
Children and Implications for Civic and Educational Rights**

**Marjorie Faulstich Orellana**

[orellana@gseis.ucla.edu](mailto:orellana@gseis.ucla.edu)

**Sarah Jean Johnson**

**UCLA**

**DRAFT**

**Being revised for inclusion in a special issue on migration and social justice  
(edited by Carlos Torres and Christine Brigid Malsbary) in the journal  
*Encyclopaideia*.**

Deferred

In May, 2011 the first author posted a series of essays on The Huffington Post, an on-line news media outlet. These columns were written in response to the passage of Arizona’s SB 1070, which authorized law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of anyone whom they “reasonably suspected” to be an undocumented immigrant – one of a spate of recent controversial anti-immigrant laws in the United States. Orellana focusing on the potential effects of this law on the children of immigrants, called for empathy for these children, “if not for immigrants themselves” ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marjorie-faulstich-orellana/recognizing-the-human-rig\\_b\\_582653.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marjorie-faulstich-orellana/recognizing-the-human-rig_b_582653.html)). The responses by bloggers were sobering.

*Idopaytaxes* wrote:

It’s time to change the law...immediately! NO ANCHOR BABIES!! The(y) are criminals and should be treated as such. I have (no) empathy for these illegals regardless of age. They are no different to me than any other criminal doing time for non violent crimes.

*Suzc* declared:

I will not have sympathy or empathy for the children of illegal immigrants until the illegal immigrants have sympathy and empathy for their own children, instead of using them shamelessly, as you are doing here.

*Redstateblues69* pronounced:

Deferred

I don't feel sorry for these kids or parents. The parents broke the law and the kids have to pay for the sins of their parents.

The vitriolic nature of these and other responses served as the impetus for this manuscript. We ask how children of immigrants are framed, viewed and treated in contemporary public discourse in the media. We do this by first considering how views of children in general have changed over time and how changing views of children and childhoods have accompanied larger historical, social and cultural transformations. We then review existing scholarship, examining public discourses about immigrants in general, and ask “where are the children?” in these analyses. This leads us to contemplate how discourses about children, childhoods, and immigrants intertwined and became evident in bloggers' responses to Orellana's essay on the Huffington Post. We examine how children are being used and positioned in ideological warfare around immigration reform, and what these views of the children of immigrants suggest about the discursive space that exists in the United States today for immigration reform, including in and around the *Dream Act*, which proposes routes to legalization for the 65,000+ immigrant youth who are coming of age without legal status.

### **Views of Children and Childhoods**

We begin with an examination of changing views of children and childhoods in recent history, in order to illustrate how particular views of children – and of particular *kinds* of children - have both shaped and been shaped by larger social and cultural transformations. This examination will provide a base for contemplating what contemporary discourse on children of immigrants may

Deferred

reveal about the current social and cultural contexts and the discursive spaces that are available for advocating for social justice for immigrant youth.

Scholars working in the tradition of what has been called the “New Social Studies of Childhood”, or the “Critical Social Science of Childhood,” have shown how views of children and their social positioning have changed across time. These theorists build on the early work of Phillipe Aries (1962), who argued, based on his analyses of how children were represented in medieval paintings, that the notion of childhood as a time distinct from adulthood, and of children as fundamentally different than adults, emerged in Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. As scholars of childhood explain, biological immaturity may be indisputable, but how that immaturity is understood and the meanings that are made of it are socially and culturally constructed, and diverge across contexts as well as over time (Prout and James, 1990).

Changing public views of childhood across history have always indexed larger social and cultural changes, and may be instrumental in creating them. Stephens (1995), building on Qvortrup (1985), argues that the hardening of the adult/child dichotomy, like gender and other dichotomies, was crucial for setting up hierarchical relations between private and public that capitalism depends on. It was tied to the formation of bourgeois notions of the family – a social group who had the luxury of “indulging” in childhood. Over time this view of childhoods was imposed on or extended to other social classes. The construction of childhood as a time distinct from adulthood was thus pivotal in the construction of modernity, as were the particular ways in which children, as a social category,

Deferred

came to be viewed.

The modern child is a Rousseauian child – one who was considered inherently good, innocent, and angelic, and who both needed and was worthy of protection, nurturing and care. The consolidation of this view of children is reflected in the evolution of concerns about child abuse and neglect, and of attention to the emotional, physical and psychological needs of children, over the last century. In this framework, young children are considered “innocents.” Under the right circumstances their capacities are presumed to naturally unfold, following normative trajectories of child development; but to ensure that children become properly socialized requires attention and care.

Jenks (1996) argues that what most distinguished ideas about children under modernity was a focus on futurity. This is evident in the concern for developmental processes as well as in how the modern child was treated as a symbol of social futures. As James (2011:1) expresses it: “Children *are*, of course, literally the next generation; what matters is the ways in which they also represent – and are used as – course material for social engineering of different kinds.” This sentimentalized notion of children always, of course, masked underlying state political interests. To invest in children’s development has been to invest in our future as a nation. To waste child talent has been to discard potential productivity. Indeed, compulsory schooling arose at the time in which this view of children was hardening, an indication of the modern state’s willingness to invest in children as promise for the future.

Viviana Zelizer (1985), in her now-classic book, *Pricing the Priceless*

Deferred

*Child*, examines changing views of children over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She looks at attitudes in the U.S. public toward child labor, child mortality, childcare, adoption and abandonment, revealing a marked shift from a public view of children as “useful” – active contributors to household economies - to “economically useless but emotionally priceless.” She shows a gradual consolidation of this treatment of children as “treasures ,” beginning with bourgeois families and gradually extending to an inclusive view of *all* children as deserving of protection and care. This was largely accomplished through the expansion of the public social welfare state as the U.S. economy expanded during the 1900s.

Zelizer, like many Childhoods scholars, focuses her attention on children as a social category, with attention to social class, but not race/ethnicity or immigrant status. Fass (2007), however, looks at this emerging sense of childhood specifically in relation to immigrants in the first great wave of immigration to the U.S. She highlights struggles to define what counted as a proper childhood, showing how immigrant parents and schools were at odds. Winning immigrants over to this emerging view of children and childhoods was instrumental in the construction of modernity, and in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a gradual consolidation of a *singular* view of children and childhoods, and of *all* children as needing and deserving of adult protection and care.

*The future of childhoods.*

Jenks (1996) argues that what may characterize the contemporary era is less a view of children as symbols of our *future* as a nation, but instead as

Deferred

*nostalgia* for a past that no longer exists. This shifting view of childhood coincides with seismic economic changes that are underfoot: as the disparity between rich and poor grows, the public sector declines, and children’s material conditions deteriorate (Qvortrup, 1985). We see widespread changes in household compositions and divisions of labor both within and across households, and the expansion of market forces into children’s lives (Thorne, 2008).

A major force shaping new perceptions of childhood are the dramatic changes in the racial, ethnic and cultural composition of the population of children in the U.S., as in most nations around the world. With a move towards neoliberalism in Western society, in which basic provisions of the welfare state have been eliminated, the fates of children of immigrants and children of color are particularly in jeopardy (Giroux, 2004). These children are increasingly portrayed as a danger to society, and the old ideology of public investment in the future of children has been replaced by a public rhetoric of fear, where the role of the state is one of surveillance, punishment and incarceration (Giroux, 2004).

Thus, discourse around children and childhoods appears to be undergoing a massive transformation, perhaps not unlike those in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But where do immigrant children fit within this schema? How are changing discourses of childhood both shaped by and shaping public views of immigrant youth? And how do views of immigrants influence discourses about children and childhood? We turn now to examine contemporary discourses about immigrants and immigration.

### **Discourses about immigrants and immigration**



## Deferred

The United States prides itself on being a “nation of immigrants” and perpetuates an ideology that anyone who works hard enough can achieve the “American dream.” But these tropes stand in contradiction with both historic and contemporary opposition to immigrants or non-natives (Perea, 1997). The media have historically presented derogatory and debasing portrayals of various immigrant groups, including the Irish, Italians, Eastern and Southern Europeans, Chinese (Ignatiev, 1995; Jacobson, 1998) in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of Mexicans since the Mexican-American war into the present (de Uriarte, 2003; Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1995). These have had far-reaching implications for politics, the construction of racial categories and hierarchies, and the public perception of immigrants.

Much contemporary *scholarship* focuses on a 1994 California bill, Proposition 187. Ratified by public vote, but ultimately ruled as unconstitutional, Proposition 187 attempted to deny public services to undocumented immigrants. It spawned a groundswell of nativist rhetoric in the media in which metaphors such as “brown tide rising” gave impetus to imagined threats to the American body politic (Santa Ana, 2002).

The alarmist discourse focused almost exclusively on Latinos, despite the fact that the post-1965 immigration wave included many immigrants from Asian countries as well as other countries around the world (Chavez, 2001). Chavez (2008) points out that nativist narratives that characterize Latinos presume that Latinos are undocumented immigrants, and ignore the fact that there are many undocumented immigrants from other countries. Thus, in the rhetoric around

Deferred

Proposition 187, references to immigrants seemed primarily to refer, implicitly or explicitly, to undocumented Latino (Mexican) migrants.

Scholars examining Proposition 187 rhetoric from various disciplinary perspectives detail how immigrants are portrayed in ways that marginalize them: as enemies, parasites, criminals, burdens, and animals (van Dijk, 1991). Mehan (1997) applied discourse analytic methods in an examination of mediated text from Proposition 187 and identifies an anti-immigrant discourse strategy, which involves the use of deictic expressions (e.g. ‘*us v. them*’) to position “us” or the in-group in opposition to the immigrant or “Other.” Mehan uses the metaphor of “immigrant-as-enemy” to represent this discursive process by which elites blamed immigrants for the poor economy and loss of jobs, a framing in which individualistic appeals to voters to look out for their self-interests successfully countered “universalistic appeals to the general good, a higher morality and universal human rights” (p. 266).

Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) offer a psychosocial analysis of the discursive process of Othering, attributing the marginalization of immigrants to the citizenry’s need of a stranger upon whom they might direct their frustration and anger. They describe two metaphors constructed by the public in Proposition 187 discourse: “immigrants-as-parasites” and “immigrants-as-criminals” (who take jobs from citizens and are a drain on public services). They argue the Othering in the discourse over immigration is “largely a projective mechanism serving primitive psychological needs in times of social upheaval and anxiety” (p. 196). This outlet would placate (though not cure) anxieties over the economic

Deferred

recession, demographic changes, earthquakes... and fill the void left by the collapse of the “Evil Empire” (former Soviet Union).

Calavita (1996) highlights the economic perspective as an explanation of restrictionist arguments in pro-Proposition 187 discourses. She apposes public anger at immigrants alongside the economic recession of the 1990s in unpacking the immigrants-as-fiscal-burden metaphor, arguing the economy is at the root of a “new nativism.” She identifies two major transformations in the twentieth-century political economy as the cause for voter hostility towards immigrants: the fiscal crisis of the 1990s and the dismantling of the welfare state (analyzed as the “crisis of Fordism”) and the ideological rise of balanced-budget conservatism (see Plotkin, Sidney, and Scheuerman, 1994). It is this environment, Calavita argues, that created the stage for voters to cast a symbolic message to register their anger with the state of economic and political affairs, while realizing it was unlikely the initiative would be enforced.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of Proposition 187 discourse, Santa Ana (1999, 2002) analyzed texts published in *The Los Angeles Times* over a period of two years focusing on metaphors used to characterize immigrants. He identified the primary metaphor—appearing in both pro- and anti-immigration discourse—as “immigrants-are-animals.” He showed evidence of how immigrants are portrayed as animals to be “lured, pitted, or baited” and even “eaten;” they are further described as “rabbits” and “pack animals.” Other examples in the *Times* used lexical distinctions to characterize immigrant actions as those of beasts of burden. For example: *This woman said she was upset about something else: why*

Deferred

*the offspring of women who ‘come across the border and drop their babies’ are granted American citizenship* (cited in Santa Ana, 1999, p. 202). Following contemporary metaphor theory (Lakoff & Turner, 1980), this metaphoric mapping, where the semantic domain of immigrants is transferred to the domain of animals (by using the word “*drop*” rather than “*give birth*”) allows for immigrants to be conceptualized as animals; the connotations being that immigrants, within ‘natural’ hierarchal orderings, are as animals, subordinate to humans. In assigning immigrants “less-than-human standing,” who are not only Other, but also animals, the metaphor separates non-citizens and citizens (p. 216).

Santa Ana points out that despite the incendiary nature of this metaphor it slipped past other researchers’ detection. This in itself suggests how naturalized racism is. He argues that the transparency of this metaphor is a key element of its power: by not drawing attention to itself, the conceptual linkages of the metaphor may be reproduced and reinforced (along with its “logical and cultural entailments”) without the reader being aware (p. 217). His analysis did not identify any affirmative metaphors, thus highlighting the racist nature of public discourse on immigration—a racism that is insidious due to the transparency of the metaphors, but nonetheless injurious.

*Where are the children?*

In the literature examining Proposition 187 and mediated discourses of immigration in general, there is very little attention to children or youth. Santa Ana (2002) notes that metaphors characterizing Latino youth, the Latino family and the Latino community in the media are negative, but he does not describe

Deferred

them in his research. Children are also missing in Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco’s (1995) analysis of Proposition 187 (which is printed as an epilogue to a three-year examination of immigrant Latino adolescents). Primary analyses of mediated discourses in which children of immigrants are included are those of reproduction (which highlight stereotypes of the Latina reproductive threat) (Chavez, 2001; Chavez, 2008; Coll, 2010) and those of a cost/benefit analysis, where children are viewed as a “drain” on social services (e.g. education and health supports) (Calavita, 1996; Inda, 2005; Santa Ana, 2002). However, within these discussions, children are largely lost from view; they simply become part of the respective “immigrant as invader” and “immigrant as burden” metaphors.

Ono and Sloop’s (2002) study is an important exception. These researchers make discourse about immigrant youth central to their analyses. Children factored into the three primary arguments they identified in national media: “economic units,” “criminality and immorality” and “disease.”

Significant in Ono and Sloop’s analyses is the fact that regardless of their support or opposition to Proposition 187, dominant media discourses followed a similar logic of representing immigrants as Other. This “us” and “them” discursive construction was used by those *opposing* Proposition 187 (advocates *for* immigrants) in conjunction with a discourse of children as vulnerable. The argument was proffered that such youth would potentially become juvenile delinquents should Proposition 187 pass, denying them a space in school (therefore posing a danger to “us”). Within such arguments, immigrant children were portrayed as scapegoats, or innocent victims, who had unwittingly become

Deferred

the target of political opportunism.

### **Tropes of childhood in bloggers’ commentaries**

The notion that children are inherently vulnerable, and in need of protection and care, was also salient in many of the bloggers’ remarks on the Huffington Post. This discourse of childhoods was used not to call for these children’s needs or rights, however, but rather to cast blame on parents. (In arguing for the need to keep youth off the street through public education, opponents of Proposition 187 also implicitly framed immigrant parents as neglectful or incapable of controlling their children (Ono & Sloop, 2002).) In several bloggers’ comments, children were framed as victims *of their parents’ crimes*. “Sisyphus93,” for example, wrote: “The children are to be pitied, not just for the fear they must live in, but for having such awful parents who would put them in this position.”

“Oaffishcad” declared:

Those here by trespass did so purposely. They didn’t accidentally come here. They are the people who didn’t think of their children. They are the people putting their children into this mess...I empathize with the children. Too bad their parents didn’t take their children’s messy lives into account when they willfully broke the law.

One blogger took up the trope of children’s vulnerability (and an overt Othering discourse) by expressing outrage at the crimes that undocumented immigrants have allegedly perpetrated against innocent children. “Tunes59”

Deferred

named three reports of purported rapes of children by undocumented immigrants. S/he further posed these children as victims of Orellana, as the author of the original essay: “[These] are just a few examples of how enablers of the status quo, like you, are harming children.”

The “us” vs. “them” mentality was evident as well in another set of bloggers’ responses – ones that expressed concern for the well-being of *some* children. “Are the illegals and their children of more value than those of our own people?” asked “AZrch.” “Joanpaul59” “Charity begins at home, and its (sic) time to take care of our own.” “AZBONEZ” asked, “How about OUR children that (sic) can’t get entry level jobs because those children’s PARENTS have snapped them all up?” Another argued that “our” children are deserving, with the implication that other children are not:

The children of working-class Americans and legal residents deserve to be brought up in an environment of dignity and love and security, not grinding poverty. Their interests will be served by protecting and growing living wage jobs in this county, so their parents can provide for their needs. In order to have living wage jobs in this country, we MUST enforce our immigration laws.

A final set of bloggers rejected entirely the trope of children’s innocence and rights to protection and care. These were the most vitriolic of the commentators, and they took up an overtly hateful, anti-immigrant stance. A number invoked the term “anchor baby,” as in the quote in the introduction – a term that refers to the presumed strategy that immigrant women give birth in the

Deferred

United States so that the child, as a citizen, can facilitate legalization for family members and that indexes a larger movement to deny birthright citizenship to the children of undocumented immigrants that would involve changes to the U.S. Constitution, which under the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees citizenship to those born or naturalized in the United States. (The assumption that immigrants bear children in order to secure their own legalization ignores the complex legal process required for children to petition for their parents’ citizenship—and the fact that this process cannot even be initiated until children are 21 years old.)

These attacks on “anchor babies” recall the public scorn accorded to poor women during debates about welfare reform in the mid 1990s. Women were derogatively referred to as “welfare queens” and were presumed to have had children only to assure themselves welfare benefits (Luttrell, 2011). But the “anchor baby” metaphor goes further than “welfare queen” in dehumanizing children—a dehumanization that was evident as well when one blogger referred to children using the third person pronoun “it:” “We don’t want to break up families. If the child was born here, then it can (come) back later in life as a citizen. If the child was not born here, then it is (in) the country illegally just like the parents. It goes too.”

We recognize that the set of bloggers who responded to Orellana essay on the *Huffington Post* are not necessarily representative of the general public. This may be a particularly outspoken or vitriolic group, who are emboldened by the anonymity of the site. Nor have we done an extensive discourse analysis of public commentary on a range of blog sites; we have simply looked for patterns in the



Deferred

311 commentaries on Orellana’s three Huffington Post essays, focusing on how children were framed and treated, especially in terms of innocence, vulnerability, and deservingness. We use this discussion to illuminate how the children of immigrants are framed in rhetoric around immigration reform, and to raise questions about implications for the changing social fabric.

**Discourses about immigrant youth in the *Dream Act***

Following Ono and Sloop’s analyses of the rhetoric used by opponents of Proposition 187, we might ask how the tropes of children’s innocence, and of their rights to protection and care, are taken up by *supporters* of such reform. Do these advocates *for* immigrant youth invoke different metaphors, or different framings of children and childhoods, than do advocates for anti-immigrant legislation? We consider here how immigrant youth are framed under the Dream Act, which calls for citizenship rights for undocumented youth who were brought to the U.S. by their parents.

The Dream Act, an acronym for the Development, Relief, and Education of Alien Minors, was recently reintroduced to the United States Senate on May 11, 2011 after several prior versions failed to be signed into law. It would offer conditional residency to “certain alien students” who entered the country as children and who have been long-term residents of the United States (S. 952, 2011). To qualify for permanent residency in the United States, the applicant must either have (a) “acquired a degree from an institution of higher education” or (b) “completed at least 2 years, in good standing, in a program for a bachelor’s degree or higher degree” or (c) have “served in the Uniformed Services for at least 2

Deferred

years” (S.952, sec. 5, 2011). Further requirements entail that the applicant demonstrates she has been a “person of good moral character” since entry to the United States (S.952, sec. 5, 2011). The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is ambiguous in defining good moral character, stating that it means character that measures up to the “standards of the average citizen” in the community in which the applicant resides and leaves the determination of good moral character to a “case-by-case basis” (8 C.F.R. §316.10).

Thus, the law is predicated on the notion that these youth are *deserving*: the American Dream should be theirs because they have earned it, by being good students and upright citizens. This discourse has been central to advocacy work around the legislation. (See for example the movie “Papers:” <http://www.papersthemovie.com/>.) It has also focused most of the research on undocumented youth. Pérez (2009), for example, presents the 16 case studies of undocumented high school and college students, showing how they have excelled academically in spite of tremendous obstacles, and how they have engaged in civic endeavors and volunteer work in their communities. He uses these stories to make a compelling case for the *Dream Act*.

There is a growing body of research on the experiences of undocumented youth, especially at college age (Chang, 2011; Dougherty et al, 2010; Enriquez, 2011; Johnson and Janosik, 2008), as well as some attention to the developmental and life challenges facing young undocumented children (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi and Suárez-Orozcom 2011) and families of mixed status (Figueroa Mangual, 2011; Fix and Zimmerman, 2001; Yoshikawa, 2011). . This

Deferred

has documented hardships that undocumented status confers, as well as some strategies of survival. Some have considered the effects of state and national policies, showing, for example, that in states that allow undocumented youth access to in-state tuition, college-going rates rise (Dougherty et al, 2008). But researchers have paid little attention experiences of youth who would not be deemed “deserving” under the *Dream Act*.

The passage of the Dream Act would generally be viewed as a milestone for immigration reform. State-level versions of the act have been passed, and these have provided immediate relief to thousands of students who could not afford a college education without qualifying for state tuition as residents. So perhaps the only politically tenable way of securing some degree of justice for undocumented immigrant youth is to operate within a discourse that views these children as “deserving.” But in the interest of securing some degree of justice for some immigrant youth, are immigrant rights advocates playing into a discourse that undermines a century or more of work to consolidate a view of *all* children as deserving of rights, care and protection under the law? Are we seeking a solution for only a small set of “worthy” youth, while dooming the rest to a life of criminality (as defined under the law, should they remain undocumented)?

An alternative discourse that emphasizes children’s *rights* is available, and does circulate actively, at least in the international arena. Perhaps best exemplified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this discourse declares that *all* children have rights without distinction. (This Convention, passed in November 1989, elaborated on a similar, but simpler set of

Deferred

rights that had been set forth thirty years prior in the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*.) The rights that are named in this convention include the right to a name and a nationality; to a free and compulsory education; to special protections in times of crisis; to social supports in order to grow and develop in health, love and understanding; and protection from neglect, cruelty, exploitation and discrimination (U.N. Res. 1386, 1959).

In this document, which has been ratified by 194 countries, children’s rights are not conditioned on their being “deserving.” The declaration is quite definitive: “Every child, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to these rights, without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, whether of himself or of his family.”

Thus, while a discussion of children’s *rights*—without condition—has been invoked in international discussions for at least forty years, it does *not* appear to be an active discourse in the U.S. public. This may not be surprising, given that the United States is one of only two United Nations member countries that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (The other one is Somalia.) Certainly, there was little trace of this discourse in the bloggers’ commentaries. Only one blogger talked about the rights of children as children, and this person was echoing Orellana: “Nowhere in this article is the author suggesting that any one child is of more value than another. She is asking that—in this highly charged debate over immigration-- the rights of children be considered in the decision-making and policy-making process.”

Deferred

The three others who used the word “rights” focused on the rights of “deserving” U.S. citizens, not the rights that all children have. Evalela, for example, mourned the declining conditions for U.S. citizens: “Why should we put the rights of these children first, when children of true citizens take a back seat. We have plenty who will never see their dreams come true, because there’s nothing left for them.” Another highlighted the right of the *state*: “Nowhere in Orellana's article does she acknowledge the validity of US immigration laws in general or the right of a state to legally enforce said laws.”

### **Conclusion**

Our aim in this paper was to consider how the children of immigrants are framed, viewed and treated in contemporary public discourse in the media, situating this within a larger discussion of how views of children in general have changed over time. We have shown how discourses about youth that were consolidated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which highlight children’s innocence, vulnerability, and need for protection, seem to emerge in contemporary public discussions about immigrant youth, even as this perspective on youth is used to wage an attack on immigrant parents. We also suggest there is evidence of a shift away from a view of *all* children as deserving of protection and care and toward one in which children must prove that they are deserving, either by birthright or by merit. This discourse is evident among both proponents and opponents of immigration reform, and is markedly visible as well in the *Dream Act*, which proposes a route to legalization for immigrant youth who meet the qualifications

Deferred

of “worthiness.”

We want to end with the words Orellana used to appeal to the hearts of readers in her first blog, and some questions that the reaction to these words evoked:

So this is an unabashed appeal to the hearts of readers: to have empathy for the children of immigrants, if not for immigrants themselves. To recognize the human rights of the 65,000 children who graduate from high school each year without the documents needed to secure college financial aid or legal jobs. Should we send all these children back to some home they have never known?

This is a call for comprehensive immigration reform that treats all children and families with dignity and respect.

What would it take to shift public discourse toward one that is centered on dignity and respect for all people, and based on compassion, understanding, and empathy, and that sees all children as worthy and deserving of rights, as well as of protection and care? Do contemporary efforts to seek justice for immigrant youth contribute, unwittingly, to undermining this stance? Can we reinvigorate such discourse while simultaneously advocating for the immediate relief that legislation like the Dream Act would provide for undocumented youth?

Deferred

### References

Aries, P. (1962).

Calavita, K. (1996) The New Politics of Immigration: “Balanced-Budget Conservatism” and the Symbolism of Proposition 187, *Social Problems* 43(1): 284–305.

Chavez, L. R. (2001). *Covering immigration: Popular images and the politics of the nation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ of California Pr.

Chavez, L. R. (2008). *The Latino threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation*: Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Coll, K. M. (2010). *Remaking Citizenship: Latina Immigrants and New American Politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2011, S. 1258, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (2011).

de Uriarte, M. L. (2003). A Problematic Press. In F. Cropp, C. Frisby & D. Mills (Eds.), *Journalism across cultures* (pp. 39). Ames: Wiley-Blackwell.

U.N. General Assembly Resolution 1386 (XIV), Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Dec. 10, 1959.

Fass, P. (2007).

Giroux, H. A. (2004). Betraying the intellectual tradition: Public intellectuals and the crisis of youth. In A. Phipps & M. Guilherme (eds.). *Critical pedagogy: Political approaches to language and intercultural communication*, Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 10-24.

Inda, J.X. (2005). *Targeting immigrants: Government, technology, and ethics*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Ignatiev (1995).

Jacobson (1998).

James (2011).

Jenks (1996).

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Deferred

Lutrell, W. (2011).

Mehan, H. (1997). The discourse of the illegal immigration debate: A case study in the politics of representation. *Discourse & Society*, 8(2), 249.

Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (2002). *Shifting borders: Rhetoric, immigration, and California's Proposition 187*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Perea, J. F. (1997). *Immigrants out!: the new nativism and the anti-immigrant impulse in the United States*: NYU Press.

Plotkin, S., Scheuerman, W. E., & Scheuerman, W. (1994). *Private interest, public spending: balanced-budget conservatism and the fiscal crisis*, Boston: South End Press.

Prout, J. and James, A. (1990).

Qvortrup, (1985).

Santa Ana, O. (1999). 'Like an animal I was treated': anti-immigrant metaphor in US public discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 10(2), 191.

Santa Ana, O. (2002). *Brown tide rising: Metaphors of Latinos in contemporary American public discourse*. Austin: Univ of Texas Press.

Stephens, (1995).

Suárez -Orozco, C., & Suárez -Orozco, M. M. (1995). *Transformations Migration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation among Latino Adolescents*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Thorne, B. (2008).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 20, 1989,  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism and the Press. Critical Studies in Racism and Migration*. London: Routledge.

Wilson, C. C., & Gutiérrez, F. F. (1995). *Race, multiculturalism, and the media: From mass to class communication*: Sage Publications, Inc.



Deferred

### References

- Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of childhood: A social history of family life*. London: Cape.
- Calavita, K. (1996) The New Politics of Immigration: “Balanced-Budget Conservatism” and the Symbolism of Proposition 187. *Social Problems* 43(1): 284–305.
- Chavez, L. R. (2001). *Covering immigration: Popular images and the politics of the nation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Chavez, L. R. (2008). *The Latino threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation*: Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2011, S. 1258, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1 (2011).
- Dougherty, K. J., Nienhuser, H.K. and Vega, B. E. (2010). Undocumented immigrants and state higher education policy: The politics of in-state tuition eligibility in Texas and Arizona. *Review of Higher Education*, 34 (1), 123-173.
- Enriquez, L.E. “Because we feel the pressure and we also feel the support:” Examining the educational success of undocumented immigrant Latina/o students. *Harvard Educational Review* 81(3): 476-499.
- Fass, P. (2007). *Children of a new world. society, culture, and globalization*. New York: New York University Press.
- Figuroa Mangual, A. (2011). Citizenship and education in the homework completion routine. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 42(3): 263-280.

Deferred

Fix, M, and Zimmerman, W. (2001). All under one roof: Mixed-status families in an era of reform. *International Migration Review*, 35 (2), 397-419.

Giroux, H. A. (2004). Betraying the intellectual tradition: Public intellectuals and the crisis of youth. In A. Phipps and M. Guilherme (eds.). *Critical pedagogy: Political approaches to language and intercultural communication*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 10-24.

Ignatiev (1995). “*How the Irish became white.*” New York: Routledge.

Jacobson (1998). “*Whiteness of a different color: European immigrants and the alchemy of race.*” Cambridge, Massachusetts. Harvard University Press.

James, A. (2011). The cultural politics of childhood in practice. Paper presented at the *Researching children, global childhoods and education conference*, City University of New York, March 24-26, 2011.

Johnson, A., and Janosik, S.M. (2008). Undocumented students and public higher education: A public policy morass. *College and University Journal*, 84(1), 32-41.

Jenks (1996). *Childhood*. New York: Routledge.

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Lutrell, W. (2011). Valuing Children. Paper presented at the *Researching children, global childhoods and education conference*, City University of New York, March 24-26, 2011.

Mehan, H. (1997). The discourse of the illegal immigration debate: A case study in the politics of representation. *Discourse & Society*, 8(2), 249.

Deferred

Ono, K. A., & Sloop, J. M. (2002). *Shifting borders: Rhetoric, immigration, and California's Proposition 187*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Perea, J. F. (1997). *Immigrants out!: the new nativism and the anti-immigrant impulse in the United States*: New York University Press.

Plotkin, S., Scheuerman, W. E., & Scheuerman, W. (1994). *Private interest, public spending: balanced-budget conservatism and the fiscal crisis*. Boston: South End Press.

Qvortrup, Jens (1985). Placing children in the division of labour. In Close, Paul and Collins, Rosemary (Eds.) *Family and Economy in Modern Society*. London: MacMillan.

Santa Ana, O. (1999). 'Like an animal I was treated': anti-immigrant metaphor in US public discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 10(2), 191.

Santa Ana, O. (2002). *Brown tide rising: Metaphors of Latinos in contemporary American public discourse*. Austin: Univ of Texas Press.

Stephens, (1995). Children and the politics of culture in 'Late Capitalism.' In Stephens, Sharon (Ed.) *Children and the politics of culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Suárez -Orozco, C., & Suárez -Orozco, M. M. (1995). *Transformations Migration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation among Latino Adolescents*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Yoshikawa, H., Teranishi, R. T. and Suárez-Orozco, M. Growing up in the shadows: The developmental implications of unauthorized status. *Harvard Educational Review* 81(3): 438-472.

Deferred

Thorne, B. (2008). The Chinese girls and the ‘Pokemon kids’: Children constructing difference in urban California. In Cole, Jennifer and Durham, Deborah (Eds.) *Figuring the future: Children, youth and globalization*. Santa Fe, N.M.: School for American Research Press.

U.N. General Assembly Resolution 1386 (XIV), Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Dec. 10, 1959.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nov. 20, 1989,  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism and the press. Critical studies in racism and migration*. London: Routledge.