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Legal Status and the Everyday Lives of Mexican-Origin Youth in Los Angeles: family, gratitude, and the high school transition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Mindy Gayle Steinberg

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Legal Status and the Everyday Lives of Mexican-Origin Youth in Los Angeles: family, gratitude, and the high school transition

by

Mindy Gayle Steinberg

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Thomas S. Weisner, Chair

Familism refers to a set of enduring cultural values in Mexican-origin families that emphasize family assistance, obligation, cohesion, and support. Familism has been repeatedly identified as a source of resilience for even some of the most vulnerable youth, linked to positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Yet some research finds that familism is not enough to transcend hurdles that are too great and resources that are too limited. Feelings of gratitude are also salient features of daily life for many Mexican-origin youth, linked with but different from family obligation. Feelings of gratitude can go overlooked in research that focuses on the prevalence of responsibilities or time spent with family, without accounting for contextual factors, such as legal status circumstances in families or parents' long hours at work, which can interfere. A central aim in this study is to bridge the gap between research on familism, research on gratitude, and research on legal status implications for Mexican-origin youth, by looking at plural and changing legal status situations in the family context and how familism is experienced by youth

across families with plural legal status situations. The two topics – familism and legal status – can together contribute to a more holistic understanding of the actual experiences of youth and family, and how we can promote successful pathways for a significant population of Mexican-origin youth. This study tracks 42 families randomly selected from a larger sample of 428 Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles (*La Vida*, PI: Andrew Fuligni; Co-PI: Thomas Weisner; Co-PI: Nancy Gonzales) using intensive qualitative interviews, home visits, official school records, and qualitative evidence from a subsample of relatives in Mexico. The *Pew Research Center* estimates that 51% of Mexican immigrants are undocumented and the majority of their children are U.S. citizens, yet mixed-status families remain largely absent from research. This study looks at the implications of familism, family ties, and legal status across the critical developmental period of late adolescence using a comprehensive, longitudinal, and mixed methods dataset with three years of qualitative and contextual evidence. Evidence shows a significant connection between gratitude and familism for Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles, and that legal status can account for some of the variation in how familism is experienced. The added strain of unauthorized status does not weaken family cohesion or intensify family conflict; rather, unauthorized youth report feeling grateful to their parents and find meaning in high levels of family responsibility; many emphasize the importance of family connection with immediate and extended relatives in Mexico. The determination to "seguir adelante" (push ahead), in spite of it all, is one theme that emerged across interviews. To succeed academically is a desired outcome across families. This study also aims to contribute to our understanding of the pathways that lead to these desired outcomes for Mexican-origin youth growing up in different family contexts.

The dissertation of Mindy Gayle Steinberg is approved.

Jessica R. Cattelino

Carola Suárez-Orozco

Thomas S. Weisner, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

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I also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many other wonderful people who together made the La Vida project happen. Andrew Fuligni, thank you for welcoming me to be a part of the awesome La Vida research team. I feel so lucky to have had this opportunity, which shaped my experience in the doctoral program and my dissertation research project in delightful ways. To Andrew Fuligni, Thomas Weisner, Nancy Gonzales, Cari Gillen-O'Neel, Daisy Camacho-Thompson, Eva Telzer, Kim Tsai, and Lupita Espinoza, thank you all for welcoming me to be a part of your research team – I learned so much from all of you. To Claudia Castañeda, I am so grateful for all that I learned from you as well as for your friendship. Thank you also to Marylou Gilbert, for all that you taught me about project management and the intricacies of it all. To Eli Lieber, thank you for all the work that you did with our research team and for taking the time to teach us everything that we did not yet understand on Dedoose. You were tremendously helpful and I appreciate all your patience, kindness, and willingness to help. Thank you to Didi Huezo

for the endless things that you helped me with and for always making me laugh, and thank you to the many others who I had the privilege of working with on the La Vida project.

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Thank you to Lidia and Ivanna, who joined me in carrying out the wave three interviews. I so enjoyed getting to know you both as we travelled together to different homes to carryout interviews and I am so grateful for your participation and commitment to the wave three study. To Holli Tonyan, I am so grateful for the many opportunities that you have given me, to come consult with your research lab in the psychology department at CSUN, adapting the Ecocultural Family Interview to your research project, and the opportunity to work with you and others in your lab on indexing and coding of your data. Thank you for your confidence in me, your ongoing enthusiasm, and your mentorship and guidance in my own research and pathway.

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Thank you to the Department of Anthropology at UCLA, for all of the support, both financial support, which allowed me to go to various conferences to present my research, listen to others, and forge important relationships, as well as for the moral and emotional support that this wonderful department has offered me over the years. A huge thank you to Ann Walters, Jennifer Banawa, and Tracy Humbert, for guiding me through applications, helping me with endless tasks and questions, and most especially, for your kindness and calm, endless knowledge, and wonderful senses of humor. I would also like to give a special thanks to Brooke Scelza, for all of your support and guidance.

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CHAPTER 1

The Context around Mexican-Origin Youth Growing Up in Los Angeles

The primary objective of this doctoral dissertation is to advance our understanding of the significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in the United States today, including the challenges that they confront and the sources of strength that can help to defend against different barriers that many of these youth face. I do this by looking at evidence from a representative sample of 42 Mexican-origin youth and their primary parents in Los Angeles, followed over the course of youth's high school years. This dissertation is based on a total of three years of data collection (2009-10, 2010-11, and 2013-14) with Mexican-origin youth and parents in Los Angeles and fieldwork carried out in Summer 2013 and 2014 with a subsample of families' relatives in different states and towns in Mexico.

My dissertation emerges from the La Vida project (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), a longitudinal study of 428 Mexican-origin adolescents and their primary caregivers who were recruited from the ninth and tenth grades of two Los Angeles high schools during the period 2009 to 2011. The La Vida study looked at the role of familism values in the daily lives of Mexican-origin adolescents and parents in Los Angeles and associations between adolescents' experiences of family obligation and various academic and behavioral outcomes. The study design included a randomly selected nested subset of 42 adolescents and primary parents who participated in the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI), a qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured conversational interview (Weisner 2002) that lasted approximately two hours each and included about 25 photos that teens took prior to interviews of, "things that are meaningful in their daily lives." My dissertation tracked this subsample of 42 families in an additional third wave of data collection with these families, as youth completed

high school and moved on to college and other pursuits in their lives. The qualitative subsample was followed for a total of three waves between 2009 and 2014. Waves one and two took place during the period 2009 to 2011, and wave three took place during the period July 2013 to July 2014. Data collection for the wave three study included more detailed accounts of family circumstances, including the legal status situations in families and parent and youth reports on youth's high school outcomes. In addition I carried out fieldwork and qualitative interviews with a subsample of "key relatives" in Mexico, that were identified by youth and parent La Vida participants.

Academic opportunities for immigrant-origin youth are central to the goals of many Mexican-origin families in the United States. Improved possibilities for children are key motivating factors for many Mexican immigrant parents who are willing to risk their lives getting to the United States, who endure years, typically well over a decade[1], of low wage work in harsh working environments, and families who sacrifice family separation despite longstanding cultural values that emphasize family connection. Enduring cultural values that emphasize strong family ties, family obligation, assistance, and support, known collectively as familism, also appear to play a part in the successful realization of academic and other goals across Mexican-origin families.

A commitment to the family through chores and other forms of family assistance and obligation have repeatedly been identified as core characteristics across Mexican-origin families in the United States and they are likewise salient features of daily life across the Mexican-origin youth and families in this study, across three waves of data collection, as I will show throughout

[1] In 2017, 83% of Mexican unauthorized immigrant adults had lived in the U.S. for over a decade; 8% had lived in the U.S. for five years or less [Gonzales-Barrera et al. 2019].

this dissertation. Evidence from a growing body of research finds that familism serves as a key source of resilience for even some of the most vulnerable youth and is associated with positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Yet other research finds that familism is not enough to transcend major obstacles that many Mexican-origin youth and families in the U.S. face and that it can interfere with positive academic trajectories for youth. Previous research and evidence from this study also show that feelings of gratitude among youth toward their parents and other family members for the sacrifices they have made are also salient features of daily life for many Mexican-origin youth, linked with but different from family assistance and obligation. Feelings of gratitude can go overlooked in research that groups together feelings and experiences of gratitude with family assistance and obligation practices, focusing on the prevalence of responsibilities or time spent with family without accounting for contextual factors, such as legal status circumstances in families or parents' long hours at work, which can interfere with conventional notions of how a commitment to one's family or feelings of gratitude might look across these different contexts.

As the context of everyday life changes in families, for instance, with family members in different legal status situations, so too can the ways in which traditional cultural values such as familism are practiced and experienced among Mexican-origin youth growing up in the context of different legal status family circumstances. Research on Latino families in general and on Mexican-origin families in particular has increasingly incorporated a focus on the developmental consequences of unauthorized status for U.S. citizen children growing up in mixed-status families in the U.S. However, the effects of different legal status circumstances in families for the significant population of Mexican-origin youth who are growing up across a much broader context of "mixed-status" families, which includes many more subtle legal status distinctions –

such as parents with temporary or permanent lawful residence, but non-U.S. citizen, status, or U.S. citizen youth whose siblings are undocumented – are currently not well understood.

One goal of this study is to better understand the pathways that lead to the widely cited goal of academic achievement for Mexican-origin youth, most of whom are growing up across these more nuanced and consequential legal status contexts in families. In addition, through this study, I examine the degree to which and in what ways longstanding cultural values of familism can promote positive development for Mexican-origin youth. Can legal status differences help us better understand the experience and consequences of family obligation values for Mexican-origin youth today? Does unauthorized status strengthen family bonds or increase conflict between parents and their children? Are these experiences different in families with different mixed legal status situations? Evidence from the research to date on these topics has shown conflicting findings related to the meaning, experiences, and consequences of family obligation values, family cohesion or conflict, and youth's feelings and experiences of gratitude. Legal status situations can have a whole host of implications on individuals, in families, and even on family unity. Yet the effects of plural family circumstances, including more nuanced considerations of mixed legal status situations in families, on the experiences and effects of familism values and on academic achievement among youth are currently unknown.

Mexican-origin youth make up a significant share of the U.S. population and this is particularly true in Los Angeles. The Mexican-origin population saw major increases in size over the last few decades and although the rapid population growth has slowed in recent years, Los Angeles remains home to a significant population of citizen and non-citizen Mexican-origin youth, many of whom must contend with disproportionate poverty, low levels of parental formal education, and limited English language ability at home. In terms of economic circumstances

among U.S. Latinos, as a result of the Great Recession of 2007-09, “the poverty rate among Hispanics increased... more than any other group” (Taylor et al. 2012). By 2017, the median personal income of U.S. Latino workers had increased 5% since 2007, as compared to 3% for all American workers. However, economic circumstances drastically differed for U.S.-born Latinos, whose incomes dropped 6% since 2007, and foreign-born Latinos, whose incomes grew by 14% (Kochhar 2019). In 2017, 18% of foreign-born Latinos and 20% of U.S.-born Latinos were living in poverty, compared with 13% of all Americans (Noe-Bustamante et al. 2017). In terms of education, the last few decades have seen a steady decline in the high school dropout rate of U.S. Latinos and a significant rise in the number of Latinos who graduate from high school, enroll in college, and graduate with an associate or a bachelor’s degree. However, U.S. Latinos continue to fall behind other groups on important measures of educational attainment, such as earning a four-year degree. In 2014, 15% of Latinos ages 25 to 29 had a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 41% of whites, 22% of blacks, and 63% of Asians (Krogstad 2016).

Legal status is among the factors that can shape daily life and impact the long-term trajectories of Mexican-origin youth. According to data from 2017, there are an estimated 4.9 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants in the U.S. (Passel and Cohn 2019). Los Angeles, home to an estimated one-in-ten (11%) Latinos across the U.S., 40% of whom are foreign-born, and where families are largely and increasingly comprised of family members with various legal status situations (Stepler and Lopez 2016), is a prime location to examine youth's experiences growing up across these different legal status contexts. From 2009-2013, an estimated 4.1 million (79 percent) of the 5.1 million children in the U.S. under age 18 who had at least one unauthorized parent were themselves U.S. citizens (Capps et al. 2016). According to the report entitled, "Deportation of Aliens Claiming U.S.-born Children," issued by U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) to Congress for the first half of the 2017 calendar year (from January to June 2017), "ICE obtained 4,853 final orders of deportation, exclusion, or removal for aliens who claimed to have at least one U.S.-born child." During this six month reporting period, Los Angeles, where 374 final orders were obtained, was among the three ICE areas of responsibility (AOR) with the most final orders of deportation, exclusion, or removal obtained for unauthorized immigrants with at least one U.S.-born child (the other two were Atlanta with 431, and Phoenix with 387) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017).

It is important that we examine and understand how legal status differences are actually lived and experienced in the lives of those who are affected by them, allowing plenty of space and accounting for variation within this large and diverse population. In addition to the estimated 4.9 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants in the U.S. (Passel and Cohn 2019), consideration of legal status at the family-level reveals a significantly larger subset of the Mexican-origin population who, themselves, are U.S. citizens, and whose parents or siblings' legal vulnerability can and often does likewise affect their lives and pathways in life, and sometimes in unique ways that we are only beginning to understand. Continued research on the implications of legal status at the family, rather than the individual, level, with all of the nuance that family-level analysis inevitably requires, is not only valuable but is also necessary to more fully understand how legal status is experienced and the consequences that it has across the diverse population of U.S. Latinos who make up the majority of the unauthorized population in the U.S. and who are expected to represent 24% of the total U.S. population by 2065 (Flores 2017).

How legal status differences are experienced matters a great deal in terms of the different implications they might have. The threat of deportation is one such example. Significant

increases in the rates of deportation over the last decade have brought this threat much more front and center in the everyday lives of many immigrant parents and children. A growing number of immigrant-origin children report that they personally know someone, sometimes their own parent, who has been recently detained or deported. As experiences and accounts of loved ones being deported have become more prevalent across families and communities, children in immigrant families experience heightened levels of stress and fears about the possibility that their family members who they know worry about legal vulnerability could be deported, anxiety which is of course in no way alleviated by their individual legal status situation (Allen et al. 2015; Brabeck and Xu 2010; Brabeck et al. 2014; Cardoso et al. 2018; Dreby 2012; Enriquez 2011; Wessler 2012; Yoshikawa 2011; Zayas 2015).

Children in immigrant families are experiencing increasing feelings of anxiety, which have crept into the daily lives of a growing number of children. The prevalence of anxiety for children in immigrant families has increased as reports in the media, accounts from community members or from friends, experiences recounted by family members, and sometimes past personal experiences have all become more commonplace and reinforce feelings of fear and anxiety that many children in immigrant families are feeling. Children in immigrant families increasingly feel a need to remain vigilant of the threat of deportation that looms over their parent(s), sibling(s), and sometimes grandparent(s) or other close family members. Some children witness this threat realized before their very eyes, memories of which can continue to haunt children even many years later. Fears among children that their parent(s) might be deported and separated from them, as well as the experience of a parent being detained and deported have all been strongly associated with a number of negative consequences for children, including depression, anxiety, social isolation, social and academic withdrawal, and negative academic consequences (Brabeck

and Xu 2010; Dreby 2012; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco and Dedios-Sanguineti 2013; Zayas 2015). Narratives of some of the U.S. citizen youth in this study likewise revealed some youth's deep-seated fears about their family's legal vulnerability. Some youth described feeling anxious about the real possibility that their family member(s) could be deported; others detailed recent or distant memories of their experience, in one case, coming home from school and learning that their dad had been detained, and in another, being at home when immigration officials entered their home looking for their grandpa who they had intended on detaining, but after learning that he was not there, instead detaining their dad, right before their eyes. Across youth's accounts of different experiences related to the detention and deportation of loved ones, what became clear, in part owing to the benefit of longitudinal data collection, was the heavy toll that this takes in all families. In another case, in the first wave of data collection, one ninth grade teen talked at length about his cousin who he spent a lot of time with. Three years later in our wave three interview, I learned that this cousin had since been deported to Mexico.

My dissertation research draws on cross-disciplinary scholarship, engaging with issues studied by scholars of anthropology, psychology, human development, and education, aiming to advance our understanding of the diverse experiences of youth with Mexican backgrounds growing up in Los Angeles, California, who face a range of constraints and possibilities in their homes and communities. These experiences are rooted in the diversity of their backgrounds and present-day circumstances. For some families, changed circumstances, such as a severe reduction in the family's resources or fears living in new and less safe surroundings after their family had to move to a different and less safe neighborhood required changes to how longstanding family values were practiced.

Youth in the La Vida sample were recruited from two high schools, A High School (in West

Los Angeles) and B High School (in the San Fernando Valley). Mexican-origin adolescents who attended A High tended to live in neighborhoods far from school where many parents and teens described feeling unsafe, some more so than others. When scheduling the wave three interview with one male adolescent whose family had moved since our wave two interviews with them, this teen expressed enthusiasm for our follow-up conversation and was flexible in terms of his availability for our interview with the caveat that the interview had to be over before dark, as he made clear in no uncertain terms that it would not be safe for me to return to my car after it got dark outside. In another family, a female adolescent was forbidden from watching her friends play soccer in the park owing to her parents' concerns about safety. Although it was evident from her description that she likewise had a heightened awareness about safety in her everyday surroundings, she also saw her parents' restrictions as unfair and this, combined with the fact that her parents worked long hours at a factory and were never home until late at night, led her to lie to her parents and say that she was going to after-school tutoring when she would in fact go watch her friends play soccer in the park. Her dad described feeling worried about, "losing the family union." He said, "when we have the opportunity to all eat together, we eat together... we wait for each other, I will tell, for example, [teen] *let's eat*, but, but in this case I have to work two days, all day, when I go from seven in the morning, I don't get back until eleven at night, I am not home… they feel alone too." In another family, the teen's older brother had been in jail for the past few years because of gang-related activities. Only one family from among the thirteen youth who attended A High lived a short drive away from school. For the other 12 youth who attended A High, getting to and from school everyday involved a significant commute, generally by bus, as well as less sleep as a result.

For those who attended B High, some of their families lived in relatively large homes and felt

protected by the calm of their community, while others described their neighborhood's proximity to a nearby city well-known for its gangs and they worried about their children's safety. One dad described the near impossibility of escaping gang membership in their neighborhood. His own past with gangs, he explained to me, and his personal connection to one guy in particular, he said, enabled him to protect his son from the lose-lose situation that he described many others having to face related to gangs. This neighborhood/safety context is just one example of the different constraints that families face which require the reworking of family practices (i.e., one La Vida mom, "she isn't allowed to go out of the house; it's not like in Mexico where kids could just play outside").

Yet some cultural practices are amazingly resilient, as research on family assistance and obligation values has shown. Fuligni (2011) finds that for those with roots in Latin America, "family membership, at least as represented by a sense of obligation to the family, is a significant social identity... even after living for several generations in an American society that places great emphasis on independence and individuality" (105). The longstanding cultural values and practices of familism were indeed salient features of daily life across the diverse sample of Mexican-origin families who participated in this study, although these cultural values were of course experienced in different ways across the different youth in this study.

My goal is to advance our understanding of pathways that lead to academic achievement and other positive outcomes, as defined by the study population, for Mexican-origin youth growing up across different family contexts. In my dissertation, I use an eco-cultural approach to explore Mexican-origin youth's experiences and feelings of family obligation values and family cohesion or conflict, and youth's feelings about and experiences of gratitude, to account for the complexity and variability across the large and heterogeneous population of Mexican-origin families in Los

Angeles. The ecocultural framework focuses on parent and youth's daily routines, the activities they engage in, the protections and resources available to them, their fears and constraints, beliefs and values, and goals for the future (Weisner 2001). I aim to uncover "what matters" (Weisner 2002, 279) to Mexican-origin youth and their families. "Children and youth themselves need and want to 'matter,' to feel needed, wanted, and cared about not only by those close to them but by society. Mattering in this sense provides mirroring, validation, and recognition from society and is an important nutrient in successful youth pathways" (Weisner 2005, 17). Mattering, in the sense of social inclusion, may be differently available to families with unauthorized members.

In an effort to gain a richer and closer understanding of the daily lives and experiences of Mexican-origin youth growing up across families in Los Angeles and their different experiences of family obligation values and family connections, this study also includes a 10% subsample of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with immediate and extended relatives in Mexico. Strong family ties and support may be a source of resilience for Mexican-origin youth. Feelings of gratitude are also salient features of everyday life for many, but not all, Mexican-origin youth growing up in Los Angeles across families with diverse family contexts. Family assistance can provide youth with meaningful ways of contributing to their families who sacrificed for them, stimulating feelings of gratitude, shaping family interactions, and strengthening family cohesion. Results from this study show that legal status categories can account for some of the variation in youth's different experiences of gratitude, and of family obligation and cohesion in families.

Previous research has found that experiencing family obligation values as a meaningful part of daily life can lead to stronger feelings of family unity and improved academic and behavioral outcomes (Esparza and Sánchez 2008; Fuligni et al. 1999; Fuligni 2001; Germán et al. 2009;

Gonzales et al. 2008). As Fuligni (2001) underscores, "school success can be a component of family obligation – a mechanism through which teens can help their families and show gratitude" (Fuligni 2001). Yet others have maintained that structural barriers, such as severe economic hardship, and unauthorized legal status, for instance, only magnify the obstacles that these youth already face and interfere with any otherwise potentially protective effects (Castro-Salazar and Bagley 2010; Hamann and Zúñiga 2011). In contrast to a growing literature to date related to the protective effects of familism values for U.S. Latino populations, some research has also found that strong familism values puts a heavy burden on Latino youth and serves, rather, as a source of disadvantage in terms of academic outcomes (Desmond and López-Turley 2009). Desmond and López-Turley (2009) find that heavy demands from family result in youth's preference to live at home after high school to help out the family and that this necessarily interferes with the possibility of successful academic pathways. Others have similarly discussed the competing interests of school and family responsibilities among Mexican-origin youth in college and the toll that this can take for youth.

The benefits of social connections have been well documented in the literature (Castro-Salazar and Bagley 2010; Perez et al. 2010). Feelings of belonging and attachment to immediate and extended family, ethnic communities, and friends provide networks of support for many Latino youth. Just as contributing to the family proves meaningful for many Latino youth, participation in other activities related to school, church, and the larger community, can have similarly positive effects, and these various forms of participation have been linked with indicators of academic success for unauthorized youth. What we know much less about from the research to date, however, is the experience of citizenship and belonging for U.S. citizen youth growing up in mixed legal status family situations – how U.S. citizen youth in mixed-status

families compare to their undocumented peers, or siblings, in terms of rates of participation in the community, effects of community participation, of close-knit or cohesive families, and larger experiences of identity, citizenship, and belonging across contexts (family, school, community, society) in their everyday lives.

As Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) emphasize, "one in ten children… live the daily nightmare of knowing their parents may be swept away at any time" (441). Youth in mixed-status families have increasingly had to contend this "nightmare," including both undocumented and U.S. citizen youth in this study. In addition, U.S. citizen youth who grow up with undocumented relatives face a whole host of challenges related to their different legal status family situations, in ways both similar to and different from their unauthorized counterparts.

Significance of Study

The use of multiple research methods that includes both the conversational but more structured, Ecocultural Family Interview (Weisner et al. 1997; Weisner 2002), together with interviews and fieldwork with a subset of youth's family members in Mexico provides a rich portrait of family life and a deep understanding of what really matters in the lives of Mexican-origin youth and their families. Employing these methods, together with the La Vida study's longitudinal data set, demographic information, photos, and coded scores from the first two waves of data collection, sheds light on the meanings and educational and other implications of cultural values of familism and gratitude – what it is, what it means, how it looks in photos, and whether it is more present in some families than in others – in the daily lives and experiences of a heterogeneous population of Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles.

Adherence to values of familism, which emphasize family assistance, obligation, cohesion, respect for elders, and extended networks of family support, has been shown to remain prevalent

across generations of Latino families born and raised in the U.S. (Fuligni 2011), and has resulted in a growing body of interdisciplinary research that looks at the academic, social, and psychological implications for children in these families. While many findings have identified strong familial support as a key predictor of positive outcomes for Latino youth, findings are (not surprisingly) inconsistent. The subjective experiences of Latino youth are, of course, not always positive and cohesive. Legal status might be one of the reasons for this. Inconsistent findings may also be explained by the fact that most research in this area relies solely on quantitative methods, while qualitative evidence points to the complexity and variation in the lived experience of familism. As Smith-Morris, et al. (2012), explain, "the family is named as both a reason to migrate and a reason to stay home; a reason to seek more income, and a reason to be accessible for family gatherings; a reason to go, to stay, to be with, and to escape. Depending on the conversation, speakers may be defending, praising, reprimanding, or actively considering both pros and cons of family events and pressures, through the performance of their narrative" (13). Some also point to particular aspects of familism, such as dichos [proverbs, expressions, wisdom, or advice] that are passed on to children through the family (Espinoza-Herold 2007, 264).

Findings from this study, which had the additional benefit of following youth through the critical transition of their high school years and learning from youth and parents about youth's educational pathways post-high school in the final wave of data collection, reveals qualitative variation in the experience and meaning of familism across youth in this sample, that feelings of gratitude are connected to familism, and that legal status might help to explain some of these differences. The chance to learn about legal status differences at the family level also offers a unique contribution. Most research to date looks at legal status from the perspective of

individuals in families, and although the growing population of mixed-status families are increasingly included in studies of U.S. Latino families, the categories that we use to understand legal status continue to overlook important legal status distinctions that matter in youth's lives. This study sheds light on the complexity of legal status situations in families and the consequences that these legal status differences can have for the significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in Los Angeles today.

Demographics of the study population

The demographic makeup of the Mexican-origin population in the United States, including demographic shifts and changes in recent years, is part of the context that surrounds the key questions that I address in this dissertation. The U.S. Latino population has seen great fluctuations over the last few decades. According to the Pew Research Center (2019), "The U.S. Hispanic population reached a record 59.9 million in 2018, up 1.2 million over the previous year and up from 47.8 million in 2008" (Flores et al. 2019). In addition, "Between 2008 and 2018, the Latino share of the total U.S. population increased from 16% to 18%. Latinos accounted for about half (52%) of all U.S. population growth over this period (Flores et al. 2019). However, while the population growth among Latinos in the U.S. has been significant, it is also true that over the last decade, "population growth among Hispanics has slowed as the annual number of births to Hispanic women has declined and immigration has decreased, particularly from Mexico" (Flores et al. 2019).

Characterizing the demographic changes among U.S. Latinos that have taken place over the last few decades is no easy task given that some of the most significant changes include the fact that Latinos have been moving to new destinations across the country, so some states have seen big increases in the Latino population while others have seen declines. Likewise, some states

have seen significant increases in the unauthorized immigrant population, while in many more states, the unauthorized immigrant population has decreased. While California was among the twelve states where the total unauthorized immigrant population declined from 2007 to 2017, California is also among the states with the largest unauthorized immigrant populations (Passel and Cohn 2019).

Immigrants make up an estimated 13.6% of the U.S. population today, "nearly triple the share (4.7%) in 1970" (Radford 2019). Among the foreign-born population, nearly a quarter, or about 10.5 million, are unauthorized, according to 2017 estimates (Radford 2019). Mexican immigrants have long made up the majority of the unauthorized population in the U.S. but since 2007, more unauthorized Mexican immigrants began leaving the U.S. than entering and the unauthorized Mexican immigrant population has since declined by 2 million (Gonzales-Barrera et al. 2019). In 2017, the estimated 4.9 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants dropped to 47% of the total unauthorized population and no longer represented the majority (Passel and Cohn 2019). Still, Mexican immigrants and their families continue to account for a significant share of the undocumented as well as the overall U.S. population, and Los Angeles County remains home to more Latinos than any other county across the U.S., "with 4.9 million in 2018" (Flores et al. 2019).

The Pew Research Center points out that their statistics on unauthorized immigrants includes, "1.5 million or more people who have temporary permission to stay in the U.S. but could be subject to deportation by changes in government policy. In 2017, they included about 320,000 people from 10 nations with Temporary Protected Status, about 700,000 beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and a rising number of people who have applied for asylum and are awaiting a ruling" (Passel and Cohn 2019). In addition, unauthorized immigrants

include, "both immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally and those who overstayed their visas" (Litke 2017), a distinction that is too often left out of our research but one that can matter for a number of reasons. For one thing, it is the distinction between some immigrant parents who have necessarily been undocumented for all of a child's life and other immigrant parents for whom unauthorized status may not have been as salient of an issue, depending of course upon other factors also, such as when their visa expired.

The legal status categories of "unauthorized" or "authorized" that we often use to simplify how we understand the effects of legal status across immigrant families in fact obscures the lived experiences and legal status consequences that the subtleties of legal status circumstances can have for immigrant-origin youth growing up across these families. Today, most unauthorized Latino immigrants in Los Angeles and across the U.S. have lived in the U.S. for over a decade, including many of the unauthorized immigrant parents in this study. According to estimates from the Pew Research Center, "In 2017, the typical unauthorized immigrant adult had lived in the U.S. for 15 years... [and] only 20% of unauthorized immigrant adults lived in the U.S. for five years or less, down from 30% a decade earlier. About two-thirds of unauthorized immigrants have been in the U.S. for more than 10 years; a decade earlier, less than half had" (Passel and Cohn 2019).

While the unauthorized immigrant population has been declining since 2007, during this same time period, "the population of lawful U.S. immigrants – citizens and noncitizens, on permanent and temporary visas – rose by almost a quarter, to 35.2 million" (Passel and Cohn 2019). Since 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has provided work permits and protection from deportation to many eligible immigrant youth. As of April 2019, the Pew Research Center estimates that there were about 536,000 unauthorized Mexican immigrants

enrolled in DACA, with Mexico, "the origin country with the most active DACA recipients by far" (Gonzales-Barrera et al. 2019). While the future legal status possibilities for current DACA recipients remains an open question, the temporary legal status that the DACA program has provided to a huge number of undocumented and largely Mexican-origin youth has had many positive implications for youth and across families.

Another change in recent years felt across immigrant families has been a rising number of deportations and more deportations of immigrants not convicted of a crime. "Immigrants convicted of a crime made up the minority of deportations in 2017, the most recent year for which statistics by criminal status are available. Of the 295,000 immigrants deported in 2017, some 41% had criminal convictions and 59% were not convicted of a crime. From 2001 to 2017, a majority (60%) of immigrants deported have not been convicted of a crime" (Radford 2019). These changes have been felt in many Mexican immigrant families across the U.S. and, as noted above, especially in Los Angeles. Many youth growing up in Mexican immigrant families live with the fear that a relative could be deported; others, including some youth in this study, have had the experience of coming home from school and learning that their parent was detained or live with the memory of immigration officials entering their home and taking away their dad.

The majority of Mexican immigrants in the United States are lawful permanent residents (green card holders), and despite important differences between lawful permanent residency and U.S. citizenship, the two are often grouped together under broad categories like, "documented" or "authorized." As I will show in chapter two, although this group is usually absent from discussions about the effects of legal status, evidence from this study suggests that some children of lawful permanent residents experience legal status and feelings of belonging in wholly different ways than some of their peers. Although usually overlooked in discussions of legal

status, lawful permanent residency and, more specifically, the absence of permanency that this legal status actually entails in the lived experiences of some Mexican-origin families, can likewise have serious and negative consequences in families and for Mexican-origin youth growing up in Los Angeles.

The Contradictions and Experiences of Citizenship and Belonging

The experience of citizenship in daily life depends in part on immigration legislation, but also on cultural differences, geography, and feelings of belonging and identity. More people today than ever before are moving across national boundaries, while both forming and maintaining familial, cultural, social, economic, and political ties in multiple locations. A variety of circumstances compel people to migrate, including family reunification, economic conditions, and escaping persecution, natural disasters or armed conflict. Migrants leave their countries of origin with or without family; some are welcomed into new destinations and others cross borders clandestinely; some migrate temporarily and others settle permanently. For the significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in the United States today, and in Los Angeles, specifically, many were brought to the United States when they were children and among those brought as children, most are unauthorized, while a much larger share of the population of Mexican-origin youth are U.S.-born and have relatives in different legal status situations. The experience of citizenship in everyday life for Mexican-origin youth growing up in Los Angeles varies across families and does not necessarily align with how legal status categories and differences are often conceptualized.

These experiences are shaped by factors which include growing up in families with U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, and undocumented relatives, the desire or reluctance among parents to naturalize and the potential consequences of either, as well as separation, severed ties,

and connections with relatives who are still in Mexico, as well as dynamics in new settings, which can include cultural or language barriers, marginalization and discrimination. Among the U.S. foreign-born population, 2017 estimates suggest that 45% (20.7 million) were naturalized U.S. citizens, 27% (12.3 million) were lawful permanent residents, 5% (2.2 million) were temporary lawful residents, and 23% (10.5 million) were unauthorized (Radford 2019). As these figures show, immigrants enter into a range of legal statuses and this can undoubtedly affect the daily lives of immigrant-origin youth growing up in the U.S. Yet the legal context represents only one facet of the larger context of reception, which involves, "racialized and spatialized difference and the unequal politics of citizenship" (De Genova 2005, 6), all of which can be understood by their social and historical production. As De Genova describes, for Mexican migrants in the U.S., their history has been, "racialized, spatialized, legislated, and enforced" (6). Understanding the experience of citizenship in the daily lives of Mexican-origin youth requires consideration of this history, as well as the present-day contexts of these youth, including their ties to families and communities elsewhere.

The system of immigration law in the United States is one in which the rights of citizens and noncitizens, and designations of who is (or is not) welcome, are nebulous. Understanding how and to what extent the law shapes experiences of citizenship requires both an examination of historical and contemporary immigration legislation as well as empirical data on what these experiences actually are. Given the fluidity, instability, and discretion that are characteristic of U.S. immigration law, the paradoxical implications that changing legislation can have and has had on diverse populations in terms of their membership in society, and that the rights and protections to which citizens and noncitizens are entitled fluctuate[2], the legal dimension of

[2] These are issues that have also been hotly debated throughout history and remain a contentious issue

citizenship forms an important part of understanding the experience of citizenship and membership. Citizenship, in one sense, refers to a legal status that ostensibly confers membership in the political community. According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans. We are a nation bound not by race or religion, but by the shared values of freedom, liberty, and equality" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2013). And yet, changes that are enacted, sometimes suddenly and sometimes retroactively, to immigration law in this country or to how certain laws or rules are going to be interpreted and immigration cases reviewed from different points in time forward, have often reflected the distinguishing ambiguities of this system of law.

In a recent example, at a White House Press Briefing on August 12, 2019, Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of USCIS, announced the administration's revised definition of a public charge, "Since 1996, the law has required foreign nationals to rely on their own capabilities and the resources of their families, sponsors, and private organizations in their communities to succeed. However, Congress has never defined the term 'public charge' in the law, and that term hadn't been clearly defined by regulation. Well, that is what changes today with this rule. Through the public charge rule, President Trump's administration is reinforcing the ideals of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, ensuring that immigrants are able to support themselves and become successful here in America. Our rule generally prevents aliens, who are likely to become a public charge, from coming to the United States or remaining here and getting a green card. Public charge is now defined in a way that ensures the law is meaningfully enforced and that those who are subject to it are self-sufficient. Under the rule, a public charge in now defined as an

still today, for instance, with recent proposals among politicians to change the Citizenship Clause in the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

individual who receives one or more designated public benefits for more than 12 months in the aggregate within any 36-month period. For instance, receipt of two different benefits in one month counts as two months. A public charge in an admissibility determination is prospective and looks at whether an individual is likely, at any point in the future, to become a public charge as we define it in the regulation" (Press Briefing by USCIS Acting Director Ken Cuccinelli).

Reporters asked Mr. Cuccinelli about the Emma Lazarus poem etched on the statue of liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Did these words no longer apply? Steven Portnoy, a journalist for CBS News Radio, asked, "You're implementing a public charge rule for the first time... Is that sentiment — give us your tired, your poor — still operative in the United States? Or should those words come down?" (Fortin 2019). In response to these reporters' questions, immediately following his announcement, Mr. Cuccinelli responded that he was, "certainly not prepared to take anything down off the Statue of Liberty," (Fortin 2019), but the following day, in an interview with NPR, Mr. Cuccinelli clarified, "Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet and who will not become a public charge," (Ingber and Martin 2019). The rules for many hopeful immigrants had just drastically changed.

One might argue, as some, notably T. H. Marshall (1950), have, that the history of citizenship can be viewed as a progression of rights afforded to its members. According to Marshall, citizenship can be understood by the set of civil, political, and social rights acquired by citizens in England over time. In the United States, over the course of over a century and a half, legislation that once limited citizenship to, "free white persons" (in 1790), eventually eliminated racial bars to naturalization (in 1952), yet the effects of contemporary immigration legislation are still far from equal. Historically, the U.S. has repeatedly established its sovereign power to

exclude[3], from Supreme Court decisions that held that an individual of Japanese descent (Ozawa v. U.S. 1922) or an Indian Sikh (U.S. v. Thind 1923) were not considered white and were therefore excludable from naturalization, to the exclusion of "free blacks born in U.S." (Dred Scott v. Sandford 1857) and Native Americans born on American soil (Elk v. Wilkins 1884)[4], and the succession of federal laws enacted that barred Chinese residents from immigration or naturalization (Chinese Exclusion Act 1882). This history of discriminatory exclusion extended also to formal citizens, as evidenced by the repatriation of citizen and noncitizen Mexican-Americans in the 1930s, or the internment of U.S. citizens of Japanese descent in 1942[5]. The elimination of racial bars to naturalization in 1952 did not alter the law's habitual bias and the insincerity of citizenship's professed assurances. As Motomura (2012) described it to his students on the first day of his immigration law course, quoting Mark Twain[6], "History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme."

Contemporary law likewise shapes the experience of citizenship and membership in a number of important ways. As Ngai (2004) describes, "law not only reflects society but constitutes it as well" (12). Acquiring a visa to immigrate, for instance, is much easier for some than for others. The potential to do so has historically differed in substantial ways for those with and without

[3] The Plenary Power Doctrine has "dominated immigration law … [for] almost one hundred years ... [it] declares that Congress and the executive branch have broad and often exclusive authority over immigration decisions. Accordingly, courts should only rarely, if ever, and in limited fashion, entertain constitutional challenges to decisions about which aliens should be admitted or expelled" (Motomura, 1990, p. 547).

[4] This is of course complicated by Native American sovereignty and I do not mean to imply here or to assume that equal citizenship is a goal of Native people, but rather to offer some historical context on the succession of exclusionary supreme court cases and decisions made over time.

[5] U.S. citizens of Japanese descent were "officially relabeled not as citizens but as 'nonaliens'" (Motomura, 2007, p. 187)

[6] Although this quote is commonly attributed to Mark Twain, its original source is unknown.

substantial economic resources or advanced degrees. The Trump presidency has unquestionably brought about renewed anti-immigrant rhetoric and sentiment as well as newfound immigration-related concerns across immigrant communities. However, despite drastically different language and rhetoric that President Obama used to talk about immigrants in the United States, specifically, as sources of strength and part of what binds the nation together, it is also true that under President Obama there were a record number of deportations. As Kanstroom (2007) explains, deportation has served as a mechanism of control over the lives of immigrants and their families throughout American history and still today, "The danger of deportation hangs over the head of virtually every noncitizen in the United States. In the complexities and inconsistencies of immigration law, one can find a reason to deport almost any noncitizen at almost any time. In recent years, the system has been used with unprecedented vigor against millions of deportees" (Kanstroom 2007, 11). Immigrants who enter the country as lawful permanent residents may apply to naturalize after a number of years[7], yet owing to the fluctuating nature of immigration law, and that new laws may be enacted retroactively, various obstacles can arise on what was once a clear path to citizenship. As new laws are passed in Congress, legal categories change – individuals once deemed unauthorized and ineligible for formal employment and social services may become temporarily or permanently entitled to the same rights and privileges as their fellow citizens (through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or amnesty programs, for example); similarly, lawful permanent residents, once eligible to naturalize, after a 3 or 5 year wait period, and to claim official membership, may become inadmissible or deportable.

The acquisition of citizenship has diverse implications for different people, including, for

[7] The precise number of years depends on the context of immigration; wait time to naturalize after acquiring lawful permanent resident (LPR) status is generally 5 years (or 3 years if LPR status is based on marriage).

some, the potential costs of living in the United States and not being a U.S. citizen (i.e., severed ties with one's country of origin, the threat of deportation even for lawful permanent residents, lack of access to resources and services), and for others, the dilemmas that acquiring citizenship can produce, for example, for some, the fact that naturalizing in the U.S. requires renouncing citizenship in their home country, which can mean the loss of inheritance rights[8]. In discussions about immigration, noncitizens are often characterized as non-members and thus lacking the same sense of belonging and membership, while citizens are described as members in the political community, entitled to a set of rights, privileges, and the promise of equality. Nevertheless, noncitizen status does not necessarily preclude feelings of belonging, and attaining formal citizenship does not necessarily occasion the same rights, privileges, and feelings of belonging for all.

The legality of citizenship in everyday life is important in terms of the access that it affords to a range of resources and services, for instance. Lacking this legal status can pose a number of challenges for individuals and families. Increasingly, immigrant-origin, and specifically Mexican-origin families are comprised of family members with a mixture of citizen, unauthorized, and "in-between" legal status categories. Yet, even among families who do not report being affected by legal status in their family, having or acquiring formal citizenship does not change the everyday realities of marginalization, below poverty level wages, educational segregation, or the myriad other factors that can prevent U.S. citizens too from feelings of belonging, be it at home or in the larger community. The legal dimension of citizenship (i.e. who has access to legal citizenship, who wants it, and its implications; the rights afforded to those in

[8] While Mexican immigrants are entitled to dual citizenship, this was not always the case, and for this reason some people are unaware of this change, which thus, for some, serves as yet another concern related to naturalizing.

different legal status categories; the effects of deportation) cannot be ignored in any meaningful analysis of the experience of citizenship in daily life. Yet as alternative theories of citizenship suggest, viewing the experience of citizenship only in legal terms erroneously reduces citizenship to a mere status imposed by the state, rather than as a set of practices, relationships, resistances, and claims, which recognize the meaning and contingencies of membership.

The Contradictions of Citizenship

"Not all foreigners are 'strangers,' and not all citizens are true members" (Calavita 2005, 417).

There are two main ways to think through the contradictions of citizenship: 1) those who have legal status but are denied the promises of citizenship; and 2) those who do not have legal status but belong in civically-significant ways. Citizenship as defined by the law does not necessarily align with citizenship in practice. Citizens and noncitizens' experiences of belonging, their claims to rights, and sense of justice in daily life complicate legal notions of what it means to be a citizen. Many full citizens are excluded to all or parts of citizenship's guarantees. The legal category loses meaning when issues of limitation, exclusion, and discrimination are brought to the forefront, examples of which can range from the retraction of citizens' rights (as discussed above) to denied access to full citizenship despite continued membership (see Parreñas' [2001] discussion of the partiality of citizenship for domestic workers). Many remain, as Motomura (2007) describes, "perpetual foreigners based on name, skin color, language, or accent" (173). The relationship between citizenship and rights is also often unclear. Motomura (2007) shows that in the United States, "at the same time that immigration and citizenship law freed itself from express racial restrictions, immigration became less of a transition to citizenship... Affiliation emerged as the basis for whatever equality newcomers could earn. Immigrants were no longer Americans in waiting" (171). Likewise, when it comes to issues of "national security" or threats

of "terrorism," the rights of formal citizens are never fully guaranteed. Like the historical production of Mexican "illegality," Volpp (2002) shows how, "September 11 facilitated the consolidation of a new identity category that groups together persons who appear 'Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim,' whereby members of this group are identified as terrorists and disidentified as citizens" (561). Despite their formal citizenship, they are, "thrust outside of the protective ambit of citizenship as identity" (561). To make matters worse, Volpp (2002) stresses, "what of those members of this group who are not formally citizens? Those individuals who are noncitizens – currently being interviewed, deported, and detained – are made even more vulnerable by their noncitizen status and the power of immigration law to control their fate. They are even farther removed from the 'us' of America because of the ways in which we understand citizenship to correlate with membership" (584).

Marginality is certainly not exclusive to noncitizens, but rather, it is very much a part of daily life for many citizens as well, whose experiences of citizenship and belonging often vary according to backgrounds or phenotypic differences. As Ngai (2004) describes, "the association of... minority groups as unassimilable foreigners has led to the creation of 'alien citizens' – persons who are American citizens by virtue of their birth in the United States but who are presumed to be foreign by the mainstream of American culture and, at times, by the state" (2-3). Carbado (2005) illustrates the contradictions of citizenship in his description of the way in which, as a British male with ancestry in the West Indies, his experience in the United States was one of being, "naturalized black." He contends that the inequality inherent to citizenship can be understood by an examination of legislative history, "Cases such as Dred Scott, for example, reveal the racial terms upon which people became (and sometimes unbecame) white by law; they are significant as well because they naturalized whiteness as the normative identity for

citizenship... law establishes whiteness as American identity, and racism facilitates this naturalization" (637).

Formal U.S. citizen or not, rights in the United States are fragile and empirical data from three waves of interviews with Mexican-origin youth and their parents in Los Angeles in families made up of a range of legal status circumstances shows that unauthorized presence does not necessarily preclude individuals or their families from rights and protections, and that, likewise, the supposed rights and protections inherent to lawful permanent residency or even citizenship are not in fact guaranteed. Unauthorized status presents a variety of challenges and, as many have shown (notably, Boehm 2012; Bosniak 2007; Carens 2008), eligibility to claim certain rights is effectively meaningless when taking advantage of these rights would mean risking highly uncertain futures. Indeed, some families with undocumented family members from my study of Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles described their reluctance to take advantage of certain programs or resources to which some family members were fully eligible due to the exposure this could risk for those family members who are not. The barriers of "illegality" experienced during children’s formative years can have long-term implications for their development. As undocumented youth turn eighteen and their constitutionally protected right to education (established by Plyler v. Doe) no longer applies, aspirations can drastically change and the "American Dream," in some cases, can feel much more distant.

Formal U.S. citizens and noncitizens, alike, experience membership and belonging in a variety of ways. While some noncitizens remain trapped in categories of illegality, as "perpetual foreigners" (173), others participate and experience feelings of belonging, despite the lack of their formal recognition as members. As De Genova (2002) explains, "On a day-to-day basis, their illegality may be irrelevant to most of their activities, only becoming an issue in certain

contexts... Much of the time they are undifferentiated from those around them, but suddenly... legal reality is superimposed on daily life" (422).

Barriers to belonging do not discriminate by legal status and the so-called privileges associated with legal status certainly do not guarantee one's feelings of belonging. As one lawful permanent resident (green card holder) mom in the La Vida study explained to me when I asked her why it was important to her to become a U.S. citizen, she said, "Because... I thought that with time laws would change and my residency would be at risk. My husband is a citizen and so are my daughters, so I had to be one too." Other parents in this study likewise discussed the uncertainty that they associated with lawful permanent residency, despite its formal protections, and youth also talked about the effects of having non-U.S. citizen parents. Experiences of being marked as different are imposed upon individuals and can pose a variety of challenges. Still, as Coutin (1999) shows in the case of Salvadoran's denied access to rights and inclusion in El Salvador and the U.S., coping strategies that emerge from these harsh realities can serve to, "create and redefine claims to membership" (54). As individuals manage experiences of the contradictions of citizenship, some develop alternative and innovative strategies of resistance, knowing full well that they do belong.

Cultural Citizenship and Alternative Ways of Belonging

As youth and families confront feelings of exclusion, marginalization, below poverty level wages, and educational segregation, coupled with changed and changing family dynamics, sometimes separating families across nations, many citizens and noncitizens develop and utilize alternative strategies to cope with these experiences and assert their cultural citizenship, as claims to membership and belonging. Exclusion and limited rights affect the ways that individuals come to think of themselves (i.e. in terms of ethnic identity and membership in the

community), and, in turn, how they act in their daily lives, which includes developing an array of strategies and practices. For Rosaldo (1994), cultural citizenship is a process of resistance that takes place in the context of today's unequal world.

Theories of cultural citizenship contribute to our understanding the, "contested and incomplete" (Rosaldo 1989 in Flores 2003, 97) components of citizenship in daily life. Cultural citizenship goes beyond citizenships' legal limitations, adding the dimension of belonging and the right to belong; it is, "a concept from the perspective of citizens as social actors struggling not only to gain full membership in society but also to reshape it... forge community, claim space, and claim rights" (Flores 2003, 88). Rosaldo (1994) explains that, "the term cultural citizenship is a deliberate oxymoron, a pair of words that do not go together comfortably. Cultural citizenship refers to the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense" (402). Indeed, the notion of a cultural citizen is at odds with everyday ideas of citizenship as they are told via messages transmitted through the media, in schools, and on the street, in ordinary language, attitudes, and acts, and in all kinds of ways throughout a society, sometimes, like at this particular moment in history in the United States, in particularly pronounced ways. The ensuing negotiations that take place among and between individuals and families, the resistances enacted within and outside the home, and within and across borders, comprise the sets of practices that define cultural citizenship.

Noncitizens in the United States today face numerous barriers to formal inclusion in society and growing challenges related to cultural differences and discrimination as well as lack of access to different opportunities that can impede social and economic mobility. Precisely because of this lack of formal citizenship status, many noncitizens develop alternative practices and strategies, which provide them with a sense in belonging despite the law. For unauthorized

youth, sources of resilience commonly emerge, and many of these youth develop different coping strategies that serve to strengthen their sense of identity and feelings of belonging. For instance, unauthorized youth have been shown to participate in high levels of activism and civic engagement (Gonzales and Chaves 2012; Perez et al. 2010).

In Gonzales and Chavez's (2012), "Awakening to a Nightmare," for example, they find that for undocumented youth, that is, "those who are the object of disciplinary practices from society and the subjects of exclusionary discourses of citizenship and belonging" (257), while, "some wilted under such pressure, while others resisted, pursued education and training, struggled to survive economically, contributed to organizations working to change the nation's immigration laws, and maintained hope in a future where they would be allowed full participation in society" (267). Gonzales and Chavez point out that 65 of the 76 interviewees in their sample participated in at least one of the immigrant marches of 2006 (267). In the face of exclusionary practices, they explain, "a sense of inclusion emerges through everyday lived experiences such as working, forming families, making friends, paying taxes, playing sports, engaging in community affairs, and interacting with social institutions, particularly schools (Agamben 1998; Chavez 1998; Yuval-Davis 2006)" (257). Unauthorized youths' engagement in these activities and practices infuse hopelessness with possibility and dilute experiences of exclusion with forms of participation. More than just "forming families," but also being in a family, and the acquisition of familistic values, also appear to contribute to feelings and experiences of inclusion in the face of so much exclusion for many of these youth.

Perez et al. (2010) find that for unauthorized Mexican youth, "despite high feelings of rejection because of their undocumented status... 90% of respondents had been civically engaged" (245). Similarly, Estrada and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2010), find that Latino youth street

vendors, "build affirming identities" to manage "experiences of shame, stigma, and humiliation" (104), and other studies in this growing body of research similarly show how unauthorized immigrant youth's engagement in their community strengthens a sense of belonging in the face of exclusion. Practices of cultural citizenship likewise emerged through the narratives of many Mexican-origin youth and parents in the La Vida study who struggled with the barriers of unauthorized status. Some study participants, for instance, recalled the time when they went to the immigration marches with their mother, or with their daughter, and the sense of belonging that they felt as a result. The sense of inclusion and belonging in families, in particular, was a salient point across families in this study (discussed further in the following sections). Cultural citizenship moves beyond the limitations of thinking about citizenship merely as an imposed status and contributes to our understanding of the lived experiences of cultural citizens, participating in civic life in ways that produce and expand feelings and experiences of belonging.

"Close the damn borders!" Unsound Demands in an Era of Transnational Movement and Connections

"Close the damn borders" was how my good friend's *tía* (his aunt, who was born in Mexico) brought her elaborate dinner party and our intense immigration debate to a close. There was no arguing with *tía*, who was firm in her claim that the, "immigration problem" would be solved if we merely, "closed the damn borders," a perspective that is not uncommonly heard. Proponents of a "pathway to citizenship" for the estimated unauthorized population of 11 million people similarly place the nation-state at the center of their argument. Of course, a pathway to citizenship would ultimately enable unauthorized and temporarily authorized migrants to exit (and re-enter) the country (or what Coutin [2010] refers to as the "zones of confinement"), visiting family and friends across borders without the fear of losing any rights. Nevertheless, in

debates on immigration reform, this point or any others related to transnational connections are rarely, if ever, mentioned.

A transnational perspective calls into question many of the assumptions upon which claims on either side of the (falsely binary) contemporary immigration debate are often made. Advocates for a "pathway to citizenship" presume that U.S. citizenship is a desired goal, and its inward-looking focus on incorporation into the nation erases ties to people, places, politics, and communities, while the naturalization process similarly disregards ethnic identities and histories. Yet, eliminating the nation-state in analyses of the experience of citizenship in daily life (if we think of citizenship in terms of both membership in a political community as well as, "the right to have rights" [Arendt 1967, p. 269]), in the context of the contemporary immigration debate, could signify an acceptance of the status quo, with a large and growing population denied access to resources and confronted with a variety of limited opportunities.

This is not to say that transnationalism precludes the claiming of rights, as, in fact, the opposite has been shown to be true. As Smith and Bakker (2008) highlight, for example, "a decades-long struggle by migrant activists" ultimately granted their eligibility to vote in presidential elections from abroad (132). Likewise, Coutin's (1999) analysis of citizenship and clandestinity among Salvadorans who are denied, "legitimacy, rights, recognition, and inclusion" (53), by both Salvadoran and U.S. governments, reveals that fact that, "not only can the denial of citizenship result in clandestinity, but also the practices that are created in an attempt to cope with such a denial can themselves constitute claims to membership" (53). Coutin (1999) explains that by asserting their presence, Salvadorans "claimed both legitimacy and formal membership in the polity. The context in which they were staking these claims transformed the meanings of citizenship and legality. The need to assert their presence derived from the experience of

exclusion, the accusation of not belonging, the disaggregation of legal and physical selves, and the delegitimizing frameworks that make presence absence. In this context, membership became a right conferred by presence, and the just demand of an exploited group" (60). The practices that Salvadorans' enacted ultimately led to their membership as well as dual citizenship, and, in addition, Coutin argues, in this context, it also gave, "transnational meanings" (60) to citizenship.

Similarly, other research on transnational citizens, or what some term, transmigrants (Glick Schiller 2007), and others, "transnationalization" (Smith 2006), argue for the need to expand our current nationalist conceptualizations of migrants, recognizing, according to Glick Schiller (2007), that, "Transnational migrants exist, interact, are given and assert their identities, and seek or exercise legal and social rights within national structures that monopolize power and foster ideologies of identity. At the same time, it is clear that the identity, field of action, ideology, or even legal rights of citizenship of transnational migrants are not confined within the boundaries of any one single polity" (15). Theorizing migrants' experience of citizenship in transnational terms can contribute a great deal to our understanding of citizenship, given the large and growing population of migrants with multiple ties around the world. Further, as the growing body of literature on transnational citizenship has developed, we have benefitted from a more complete understanding of the complexities and intricacies of daily life. Research has grown, for instance, from a focus on identity to an understanding of the kinds of claims to rights that are possible within transnational frameworks, "set within other kinds of unequal power relations" (Smith 1997, 10), that go beyond cultural citizenship, which, "usually theorizes a Latino right to belong and make claims within the dominant white society" (10).

Through numerous and diverse sets of practices and processes, transnational migrants make claims and make changes, indeed an important contribution to our understanding of lived

realities for migrants across borders, perspectives that have been overlooked in nation-centered frameworks. Nevertheless, as Smith (2006) finds over the course of his fifteen years of research with transnational migrants in New York and Ticuani, "over more than thirty years, Ticuanenses have successfully negotiated the conflicts, limits, and meanings of membership in the local political community" (74). Thus, in contrast to Glick Schiller's perspective on transmigrants, Smith proposes that the local is equally and, in particular contexts, more important for understanding how citizenship and membership in the political community are experienced in daily life. Similarly, Boehm (2012) illustrates that transnational Mexicans, "are building lives and families outside of state control and yet they are repeatedly restricted by the nation-state. The everyday experiences of transnational families underscore contradictions within the state itself: even as transnational Mexicans challenge and circumvent state power, the experiences of Mexican migrant families uncover the strong hold of the state" (147).

Ong (1999) also employs a transnational approach in her research on transnational Chinese migrants negotiating global capitalism. She uses the term, "flexible citizenship," to describe the practices and strategies that emerge in the context of changed settings and power contexts. The notion of strategic adaptability can certainly be applied to many groups of migrants with ties and connections across nations, who likewise negotiate and employ particular but flexible strategies as they learn about and cope with new and changed contexts. Coutin (2007) also shows how flexible strategies transpire precisely because of nation-state imposed constraints, illustrating the lived reality of being, "legally absent, but physically and socially present" (102), and how despite considering oneself to be a member of a particular place, living daily life doing everything that a citizen is thought to have to do, the reality of deportation results in forced movement to a place with which individuals may feel no connection at all. Situations such as these require the

development of flexible strategies to negotiate a new existence and find alternative ways to belong. Coutin emphasizes the importance of examining how transnational migrants form relationships with their surroundings. Many are separated from their loved ones, leaving behind, "grandparents who had cared for them since birth, elderly parents, newborn children, siblings, and spouses" (108), and family members who disappear while en route to the U.S. and who are never properly identified owing to, "the clandestine nature of unauthorized immigrants' journeys" (108), the result of which is the need for new and flexible strategies to cope with changed and changing circumstances.

Transnational citizenship offers new ways of understanding the lives and experiences of individuals with cultural, familial, and political commitments and ties across borders and in multiple nations. Transnational citizenship describes the experiences, for instance, of migrant children who are, "here and not here" (Boehm 2012, 163), more accurately capturing contemporary daily life for individuals who are moving and shifting locations, and whose identity, membership, and political and social networks are tied to multiple locations and people. Unlike notions of immigration or diaspora, which imply a one-way movement and fails to capture the lived realities of many migrants around the world, some scholars have shifted to this transnational perspective, reconceptualizing the way that we think about and interpret peoples' movement and connections, and the interconnectedness of family relations, nation-states, politics, and membership. In spite of the challenges inherent to migration and legal status, everyday life continues for individuals and families around the world who are increasingly connected not by their national citizenship or ties to the nation state, but rather by their ties across borders.

This transnational perspective has proved useful for a more complete understanding of the

experience of citizenship in daily life around the world. However, the perspective remains broad, with some emphasizing the need to move beyond the national (Glick Schiller 2007), and others who claim that by circumventing the importance of the state, analyses can overlook what may turn out to be central features in the lives of transnational migrants, and in particular in the context of membership in the political community. We certainly do not want to lose sight of this perspective and lived reality; indeed, the nation-state cannot be eliminated from our analyses of the experience of citizenship, as despite the increasingly interconnected nature of migrants lives across nations, for some who live "on the margins" (147), state power continues to shape daily life, and until that is no longer the case, the "potency and permeability of state power" (147) cannot be ignored in any meaningful analysis. As Boehm concludes, "The question of who will protect the rights of transnational Mexicans – as individuals, as males and females of all ages, and as members of families and larger communities – remains unanswered... The unjust realities of lives that are between here and there can guide us to reimagine and create a world where state power and often arbitrary categories linked to immigration status do not have a dehumanizing effect. Indeed, the most intimate of relationships depend on it" (147).

How do we reconcile claims that emphasize the urgency of a pathway to citizenship for the estimated 11 million people who make up the unauthorized population, which argue for the need to incorporate the unauthorized population into the nation as full members of society (Motomura 2007; Carens 2008; Bosniak 2007), with theories that underscore the significance of the transnational and emphasize the limitations of looking inward as migrants lives are characterized across borders? I agree with Boehm that a transnational perspective has shown to be useful in understanding daily life, but perhaps current theories are still too broad in form to lead to an accurate portrayal.

Anthropological analyses of citizenship have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the lived experience of citizenship as practices, which involve participating in politics, making claims, enacting resistances, forming identities, and creating and maintaining relationships within and beyond the borders of the nation. Theories of citizenship in anthropology in particular have expanded our understanding of membership in political community and communities, and the diverse ways of making claims, which can occur by way of a range of multiple and flexible practices, and adapting to local circumstances. While legal status, or any status for that matter, does not suffice to explain experiences of citizenship as lived in everyday life, the experience of being a legal citizen and the extent to which citizenship can affect daily life varies among different individuals and is also important.

Those born in the U.S. to unauthorized parents may experience citizenship differently than do children born to U.S. citizen parents (i.e., in terms of access to social services, resources, and access to higher education, or employment). For many, being a lawful citizen may hold little meaning, if any at all, and citizenship as a legal category may only become salient when a lack of formal citizenship results in cut off opportunities. For example, one adolescent from the La Vida study describes his morning schedule – waking up before the sun comes up to take a painfully long bus ride to school, "because my dad can’t drive, he can’t get a license." Another adolescent explains that his dad was deported, and in another case, an adolescent says that his dad, "became deportable, so, yeah, he can’t work." Indeed, it is circumstances such as these that affect daily life, situations that cannot necessarily be resolved by one’s cultural or transnational citizenship. This is not to say that the situation, as I see it, is pure gloom, or that alternative theories of citizenship are not useful for understanding these experience of citizenship in daily life. On the contrary, cultural and transnational citizenship both offer useful ways of expanding our

understanding of citizenship, but I believe that the implications of the legal dimension should not be forgotten. As alterative theories of citizenship have shown, conceptualizing citizenship only in legal terms fails to capture the complexity of what it means to belong. As we have seen, formal citizens may have been naturalized into eternal "otherness," and noncitizens may enjoy an array of rights and privileges, and feelings of membership in the community. These theories move beyond the limitations of conceptualizing citizenship merely as an imposed status and they contribute to our understanding of the lived experiences of both cultural and transnational citizens, including many in this study.

Study Methods and Population

This dissertation emerges from the La Vida project (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), a mixed-method and longitudinal study with a total of 428 adolescents recruited from the ninth and tenth grades of two Los Angeles High Schools (M_{age} = 15 years; 51% females) and their primary caregivers (83% mothers), followed over two years (data collection for the larger La Vida study began in November 2009 and was completed in August 2011). For my dissertation research (funded by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley), I returned to the 10% nested random qualitative subsample of 42 families for a third wave of data collection, about two years after we completed wave two of the La Vida study. Youth participants were now 17-20 years old (most youth participants were 18-19 years old), transitioning into young adulthood, entering new and changed contexts, and at a time when unauthorized youth had to confront the harsh realities of life without papers and without the protections afforded to youth under the age of 18.

The La Vida project set out to look at the experiences and developmental implications of family obligation values in the daily lives of Mexican-origin youth growing up in Los Angeles.

Waves one and two included questionnaires with youth and parents, which assessed family background, socioeconomic resources, family relationships, mental and physical health, and substance use among youth. Parents and adolescents also completed daily checklists for 14 consecutive days, which assessed engagement in various family assistance tasks every day.

Ten percent of the 428 families (n = 42) were randomly selected to participate in Ecocultural Family Interviews (the EFI) (Weisner et al. 1997; Weisner 2002), a well-established qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured conversational interview that focuses on the daily routines and activities of family members and captures parent and youth perspectives across multiple domains. When interviewers returned to collect the daily checklists that youth and parents had filled out over a two-week period following the first family visit when participants completed questionnaires, every tenth family from the larger *La Vida* sample was recruited to take part in the qualitative EFI subsample (see Appendix A for *Recruitment Script*). While most families agreed to participate in the additional qualitative part of the study, in cases where families were not interested in participating in this additional component of the study, interviewers then recruited the next case in chronological order (e.g., cases 10, 20, 30, and so on were recruited to participate in the qualitative EFI subsample; if case 20 opted not to participate, interviewers then recruited case 21).

If families agreed to participate in the additional qualitative part of the larger study, which most families did, consents were signed and youth were given digital cameras and were asked to take about 20-25 photos of anything meaningful to them in their daily lives, including the activities, people, places, objects and anything else that they felt was most important in their everyday lives (see Appendix B for *Camera Kits*, and Appendix C for *Initial Family Visit & Camera Drop-off – Checklist*). Photos were used to focus and stimulate conversations with youth

participants. Because the wave three study followed up with the qualitative sample and did not this time include the questionnaires and daily checklists, recruitment for the wave three follow-up study with the same qualitative EFI subsample of families worked a bit differently than in prior waves. For the wave three follow-up study, interviewers contacted families based on the contact information that families had provided to the La Vida study at the end of wave two interviews, reminded participants of who we were and what the study was all about, and asked the same La Vida study families if they would be interested in participating in another conversational interview with us, much like the conversations we had in prior years.

Interviewers for the wave three follow-up study included a diverse team of researchers who were all interested in the subject matter and familiar with the La Vida study. Our team of interviewers included graduate students in anthropology and developmental psychology at UCLA and CSUN and an undergraduate research assistant at UCLA. Wave three recruitment was successful, with nearly all families from prior waves agreeing to participate again for wave three, and this was perhaps due in part to the rapport that was developed with families in prior waves of the study. Many families remembered the La Vida study and in particular many seemed to recall the conversational component of the study, that is, the qualitative EFI interviews that we had done with these same families in prior years.

Across the three waves of data collection, in-depth qualitative EFI conversational interviews with youth and parents lasted an average of two hours each and captured parent and teen perspectives across multiple domains. Topics included family obligation and responsibility, intra-family conflict, school, peer integration, parental monitoring, hidden activities, safety, economic circumstances, physical and mental health, family history, ethnic identity, religion, and future aspirations. Interviewers asked participants to "walk me through your day," which elicits

descriptions of daily routines and activities, motivations and feelings, concerns, sustainability of routines, and wishes for change (Weisner 2002). For the wave three follow-up study, I added topics and expanded subtopics that had emerged through wave one and two EFI conversations as salient topics for families. Specifically, legal status, connections with family in Mexico, and feelings and experiences related to gratitude were added as key topics for the wave three study (see Appendix D for *Wave 3 Show Cards*).

For my dissertation research (funded by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley), I returned to the La Vida qualitative subsample of 42 families for a third wave of data collection, about two years after we completed wave two of the La Vida study. Youth participants were now 17-20 years old (most youth participants were 18-19 years old), transitioning into young adulthood, entering new and changed contexts, and at a time when unauthorized youth had to confront the harsh realities of life without papers. In waves one and two, families often brought up the topic of legal status during our EFI conversations, however interviewers never asked participants directly about this topic, nor did they ask follow-up questions when participants, themselves, brought up the topic. Given how salient the topic of legal status was across families in the first two waves of data collection, I described these preliminary findings to the Institutional Review Board and requested permission to explicitly ask about this topic for the wave three follow-up study, and I received IRB approval to discuss legal status with families in the wave three study.

Carrying out interviews with youth now in a third wave of data collection, and two years since wave two had come to a close, youth were just now leaving high school and entering into new, changed, and a variety of different contexts and situations. The wave three study returned to the qualitative sample of 42 youth and parents for an additional wave of qualitative data collection.

Given the La Vida project's collection of extensive contact information for each participant, and consistent with the retention of about 90% of the EFI qualitative study families between waves one and two, recruitment of families for the wave three follow-up study was likewise successful, with nearly all families agreeing to participate again in the wave three study. Families were compensated as they were in both prior waves; youth received $30 and parents received $50 for their full participation. The wave three study again included about 20-25 unprompted photos that youth took prior to interviews, which were used during interviews to focus and stimulate conversations. Youths' descriptions of their photos and their motivation for photographing particular peoples, places, and objects led to rich descriptions across a variety of topics. Youth and parents (interviewed separately) were again asked to, "walk me through your day," which elicited descriptions of daily activities and experiences, and underlying motivations and feelings. Thematic analyses of qualitative EFI interviews, focused on family obligation, assistance, and responsibility, and intra-family conflict and consensus, were done separately for parents and youth, and led to varied responsibility/obligation/conflict/consensus profiles. Interview narratives were indexed and coded for beliefs and practices regarding salience of family rules and responsibility and intra-family conflict/consensus concerning household responsibility.

I have been intimately involved in the La Vida project as a research staff member and the coordinator of the qualitative, Ecocultural Family Interviews (EFIs), beginning in wave one. In waves one and two, I mostly carried out EFI interviews with parent participants, as one of only two interviewers for the La Vida project who spoke Spanish. For the wave three follow-up study I had the opportunity to conduct more of the EFI interviews with youth as well. In waves one and two, I also had the opportunity to carry out some of the quantitative interviews as well. Survey interviews with parents were done with interviewers reading questionnaires aloud to parent

participants and filling in their answers. This experience highlighted for me the value of returning to these families for additional qualitative data collection. For example, in one family, I sat in the kitchen with the mom, asking her questions and filling out her answers and when I asked this mom about religious identification, despite the fact that directly above her hung a framed photo of Jesus Christ, she responded that religion was not important in her life.

In addition to the wave three follow-up study with families, grants that I received from the FPR-UCLA Culture, Brain, Development, and Mental Health program in summer 2013 and summer 2014 afforded me the opportunity to add a subsample to my study of relatives of La Vida participants who live in Mexico. Over the summer of 2013 and 2014, I carried out fieldwork and qualitative EFI interviews with relatives in Puebla, Oaxaca, and Guadalajara, Mexico. This additional component added value to my dissertation research, as I was able to examine salient topics that emerged from interviews with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles across entire families, which included immediate family members who are separated across borders, as well as extended family members living in Mexico.

The experience of growing up in the United States with families with mixed and complex legal status circumstances is poorly understood, despite the fact that growing up in households with these mixed legal status situations is increasingly common across the population of Mexican-origin youth in the United States today. The tendency to reduce legal status in Mexican-origin families into the broad categories of undocumented or documented disregards important variation across families and distorts the actual legal status circumstances in Mexican-origin families today and their implications for youth.

This dissertation looks at the implications of familism, family ties, and legal status across the critical developmental period of late adolescence using a comprehensive, longitudinal, and

mixed methods dataset with three years of qualitative and contextual evidence. Evidence shows a significant connection between gratitude and familism for Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles, and that legal status can account for some of the variation in how familism is experienced. The added strain of unauthorized status does not weaken family cohesion or intensify family conflict; rather, unauthorized youth report feeling grateful to their parents and find meaning in high levels of family responsibility; many emphasize the importance of family connection with immediate and extended relatives in Mexico.

A central aim in this study is to bridge the gap between research on familism, research on gratitude, and research on legal status implications for Mexican-origin youth, by looking at plural and changing legal status situations in the family context and how familism is experienced by youth across families with plural legal status situations. The two topics – familism and legal status – can together contribute to a more holistic understanding of the actual experiences of youth and in families, and how we can promote successful pathways for a significant population of Mexican-origin youth. The determination to "seguir adelante" (push ahead), in spite of it all, is a central theme that emerged from interviews. To succeed academically is a desired outcome across families. This study aims to advance our understanding of the pathways that lead to these desired outcomes for Mexican-origin youth growing up in different family contexts across the Los Angeles area. Accounting for the heterogeneity of factors that matter to Mexican-origin youth in their everyday lives, including family members living across borders, could advance our understanding of the barriers that get in the way and the sources of resilience that strengthen positive youth development for Mexican-origin youth today.

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CHAPTER 2

Moving beyond oversimplified legal status categories to advance our understanding of Mexican-origin youth and families

Abstract

The legal status categories we currently use to classify and analyze Mexican-origin youth oversimplify legal status contexts in families, which matter for youth's lives and development. Plural family circumstances, including relatives' different legal status situations, affect youth, yet are more complex than we have the categories to depict. Categorizing Mexican-origin youth using broad categories of undocumented or documented, for example, overlooks variation in families, such as the fact that most Mexican-origin youth have undocumented relatives, or that legal status can change. Household- or family-level legal status differences, not individual labels, better represent these variations. This longitudinal study with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles considers legal status from youth and parents' perspectives and finds variation that has not been adequately addressed in research to date. From a sample of 37 families, youth in five families (14%) were undocumented in the first year of the study. Yet, youth in 23 families (62%) reported legal status effects, often due to a relative's legal status. There is more variation in experiences related to legal status within than between legal status categories. This paper considers the implications of diverse and complex legal status situations in families to advance our understanding of successful pathways for youth.

Keywords: immigrant-origin families, Mexican-origin youth, family, legal status, outcomes

The legal status categories we use and depend on as researchers to understand the implications of legal and unlawful status for Mexican-origin youth poorly capture important variation among families and prevent a genuine understanding of the lived experiences of immigrant-origin youth in the United States today. This paper aims to drive analytic classifications used in research on immigrant families, immigrant-origin youth, and legal status more generally in a more useful, and likely more positive direction. By immigrant-origin youth, I refer to both youth who are themselves foreign-born, and to U.S.-born youth with foreign-born family members; the latter situation represents most Mexican-origin youth growing up in the United States today. In many of these cases, youth have close ties to family members whose lives are affected by legal status, which, likewise, has implications for these youth. Research to date

on the significant population of Mexican-origin youth in the United States does not sufficiently account for these plural family circumstances, which can and do matter for youth and which influence their everyday lives and trajectories.

Legal status categories and circumstances in Mexican-origin families

Categories of undocumented or documented are used in research to classify and analyze legal status circumstances in immigrant families, to make sense of immigrant-origin youth's different pathways, and to contribute to our understanding of the consequences of legal status for the significant population of immigrant-origin youth growing up in the United States today. These categories refer to an individual person's legal status category – a U.S. citizen adolescent girl, for instance, is labelled or grouped into the category, documented, without any attention paid to whether she is affected by legal status for any reasons other than her own, current, legal status situation (e.g., whether her siblings, parents, or other relatives are affected by legal status; whether she was born in the United States or if perhaps she came to the U.S. at a young age with her family, grew up for some part of her life in the U.S. undocumented or with undocumented relatives, and whether she or any of her relatives have since adjusted their legal status). Other terms, such as unauthorized or illegal, authorized or legal, among others, offer alternative word choices to depict the same two categories. There is debate as to which are appropriate, but setting aside the intent and meaning of the terms, they signify the same two legal status possibilities – with or without legal documentation, itself, a complicated category. (For a more complete discussion and a critical analysis of terminology use in this context, including proponents of using the term, illegal, and discussions about the social construction and implications of illegality, see Willen et al. 2011; De Genova 2002; 2005).

A third legal status category, mixed-status families, was until recently mostly absent from

the academic research and literature on immigrant-origin youth and families. Mixed-status families refers to families, "with at least one citizen or legal immigrant child and at least one parent who is an unauthorized immigrant" (Capps et al. 2016, 1). Between 2009 and 2013, from among the estimated 5.1 million children under 18-years-old with at least one undocumented parent, 4.1 million, or 79%, were themselves U.S. citizens (1). California is "home to between 2.35 and 2.6 million undocumented immigrants" (Hayes and Hill 2017), which represents nearly 25% of the total unauthorized population across the United States. A majority of these unauthorized individuals are part of families with children and other family members who are U.S. citizens. In Los Angeles, the percent of undocumented parents with U.S. citizen children is even higher than the national average. In recent years, the mixed-status family category has offered researchers a new way to classify immigrant families, which more closely and realistically represents the actual makeup of a growing number of immigrant and in particular Mexican-origin families in the United States today.

The addition of the mixed-status family legal classification has offered researchers who study immigrant families a third way of classifying legal status in families, which also opened the door to important questions related to the consequences of legal status situations in families for immigrant-origin youth growing up with undocumented parents. Research on this topic has examined, for instance, the developmental implications for U.S. citizen children growing up with undocumented parents and how these experiences compare with those of undocumented youth growing up in the same place. The mixed-status category offered a remarkable shakeup in the world of immigration research. Previously confined by simplistic notions of legal status and a binary classification system that viewed legal status as a mere yes or no, something that you either have or you don't have, scholars have since begun to incorporate and account for the

family context, and research findings have only begun to shed light on the multiple effects of these legal status situations, including the effects on undocumented individuals, themselves, but also the consequences that extend to families and even to larger society. This research has contributed to richer analysis about Mexican immigrant families in the U.S., especially given that such a large subsection of the U.S. Mexican population is made up of families with immediate family members with different legal statuses.

The shift in our classification schema to account for mixed-status family situations has taken research with immigrant families in a promising direction. It has advanced scholarship in this area by bracketing in pertinent context, and, specifically, the family context. Some scholars have begun to consider these more complex family circumstances, which actually exist in immigrant families, and this has in turn changed some of the conversations taking place and the types of questions being asked across the field and it has enriched the body of evidence on immigrant families in the U.S.

Once static notions of legal status categories have been, at least in part, reconceptualized, and new and important questions have since emerged. Accounting for mixed-status situations in families gained widespread appeal and praise among scholars in this area and has resulted in significant contributions to the field (notably, Dreby 2012; Enriquez 2011; Figueroa 2012; Fix and Zimmerman 2006; García 2017; García 2018; Suárez-Orozco and Yoshikawa 2013; Yoshikawa 2011; Yoshikawa & Kalil 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2016, Zayas and Gulbas 2017; among many others). Consideration of mixed-status family situations has led to more representative samples in research with Mexican and other immigrant-origin families. This is especially significant in the context of the demographic changes that have taken place, in particular in places such as modern-day Los Angeles, home to the greatest shares of the Mexican

immigrant population and where it is increasingly likely that Mexican-origin families are comprised of family members in different legal status situations. This more inclusive way of classifying immigrant families has offered researchers across the fields of developmental psychology, anthropology, sociology, social work, nursing, public policy, women's studies, and others a way to, arguably, better, and certainly more accurately represent the immigrant-origin children, youth, and families in their research.

Looking at the effects of legal status for U.S. citizen children with undocumented parents has opened our eyes to the fact that unauthorized status has implications that extend beyond the undocumented individual. Unauthorized status can have serious and lasting consequences also for U.S. citizen family members and loved ones and research has shown the detrimental developmental consequences that growing up with unauthorized parents can have, specifically, for young U.S. citizen children (Suárez-Orozco and Yoshikawa 2013; Yoshikawa and Kalil 2011; Yoshikawa 2011). In one of the first of its kind, Yoshikawa's (2011) book, *Immigrants Raising Citizens: Undocumented Parents and Their Young Children*, Yoshikawa vividly portrays the unique experiences and challenges that undocumented parents face raising U.S. citizen children and he shows the long-term developmental effects that a parent's undocumented status can have for their U.S. citizen children. For instance, owing to fears of deportation, undocumented parents are less likely to take advantage of resources and services that would benefit their young children, such as center-based childcare, regardless of their children's eligibility for such programs. As the findings in Yoshikawa's book reveal, the tendency among undocumented parents to avoid these and other valuable resources and services for their U.S. citizen children, as well as other experiences common across undocumented parents, such as the ongoing stress caused by demanding work conditions and inequitable pay, can have lasting

consequences for their young children's development.

Despite the important and revealing research findings that have followed the inclusion of the mixed-status family category, consideration of mixed-status families has not been seamlessly integrated into most research on legal status and immigrant families. The mixed-status family category has remained mostly absent from research across the field; most research has remained at the individual, not family or household, level. Despite its more apt representation of the actual composition of most immigrant and particularly Mexican immigrant families, especially in places like Los Angeles, the mixed-status family category has only slowly gained traction in academic research and it has entered into academic conversations both gradually and unevenly. In addition, the mixed-status family category continues to overlook important differences and variation across families. As the makeup of immigrant populations change, so too do the kinds of questions that we must ask and examine. For instance, most Mexican-origin families in the U.S. and in Los Angeles, in particular, today are families with relatives in different legal status situations. This includes not only undocumented parents with U.S. citizen children, but also siblings and even parents in different legal status situations. For this reason, the mixed-status family category, as it has been commonly used in research with Mexican-origin families, is not as relevant or meaningful to classify Mexican-origin families and to advance our understanding of the effects of legal status circumstances in these families.

The *mixed-status family* category no longer provides us with useful tools to categorize families or any meaningful distinctions to subdivide across the increasingly diverse population of Mexican-origin families. More interesting and relevant in this case would be if research with Mexican-origin families began to examine and document the different legal status situations across families and what, if any, effects the different legal status circumstances of family

members have on children and youth in the same family. Relying on our current legal status classification system for research with Mexican-origin families in modern-day Los Angeles overlooks important family-level differences as well as variation across families. In other words, our current legal status classification system requires further refinement.

Mexicans are among the least likely group to naturalize in the United States (*Pew Hispanic Research Center* 2017), resulting in a huge number of lawful permanent residents (LPRs) (i.e., a green card holder; not or not yet naturalized), particularly among Mexican immigrant parents in the U.S. today, a great majority of whom adjusted their status (became LPRs) as a result of Reagan's amnesty program in the 80's but have not since naturalized. Despite the significant population of lawful permanent residents today, it is rarely made mention of, much less accounted for, as a separate legal status category in research with Mexican immigrant families. While research tends to overlook lawful permanent residents as a separate and distinguishable legal status classification, different from, say, the vague "documented" legal status grouping, being a lawful permanent resident in the eyes of U.S. immigration law matters for families and can have different, both positive and negative, impacts on youth's lives.

The plural legal status circumstances in Mexican-origin families today and the fact that a significant share of the Mexican-origin population is comprised of families with *very mixed* legal status situations underscores the intricacy of this topic. Our current way of classifying legal status in Mexican-origin families obscures the lived complexity in families and in turn confuses our understanding of the actual implications of legal status for children growing up today. The legal status categories that we use to understand the consequences of legal status situations for Mexican-origin youth growing up today, many of whom are, themselves, U.S. citizens, overlook key differences and important variation within these broad and impractical categories that we

continue to use.

This paper looks inside the “black box” of *unauthorized*, *authorized*, and *mixed-status* immigrant-origin families in the United States; it is about the ongoing discovery of what it means for youth to be affected by legal status. This study explores plural and changing legal status circumstances *in* the family context and it contributes to a more holistic understanding of the actual experiences of Mexican-origin youth growing up in families with complicated legal status situations, which have been overlooked in the research to date. Consideration of complex legal status circumstances across families, which represent the actual situations in most Mexican-origin families today, reveals a more accurate portrayal of how youth across these families are actually affected by diverse legal status circumstances and can in turn shed light on how we can promote successful pathways for the significant population of Mexican-origin youth in places like Los Angeles today.

In this paper, I will suggest the following three main findings: first, that the experience of uncertainty across a diverse sample of Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles today, as they transition into adulthood, underscores the opaque nature of the legal status categories into which these youth are traditionally categorized. The experience of uncertainty and its costs and consequences for undocumented immigrant youth in the United States has been well documented. Less known, however, is how U.S.-born Mexican-origin youth may be similarly affected by experiences of uncertainty in their daily lives. There are so many subtle differences among the legal status categories that we rely on, which can cause a great deal of uncertainty for youth. Uncertainty is a theme that emerges across Mexican-origin youth and in ways that we would not necessarily expect. Experiences of uncertainty are not uniform across the subset of undocumented youth or youth in *mixed-status family* situations but, rather, depend on so many

different circumstances in families.

Second, the individual legal status categories of Mexican-origin youth may not predict the effects of legal status for youth. As a growing body of evidence shows, the family unit and enduring cultural values of family obligation, task assistance, family cohesion, and extended networks of family support (known collectively as *familism*) are salient features of daily life across Mexican-origin youth today, shown to persist in Mexican families, "even after living for several generations in an American society that places great emphasis on independence and individuality" (Fuligni 2011, 105). Familism guides behavior and impacts youth and parent decision-making, daily life, and long-term outcomes. The experience and implications of familism is an important topic that has been well-examined and much debated in the research to date. The topic of familism is a salient feature of daily life that emerged across interviews with Mexican-origin youth and parents and it is the focus of the next chapter. I bring it up here also, however, to draw attention to the significance of family relationships and ties in Mexican-origin families, as this helps to explain the impact that the legal status situations of family members can have for Mexican-origin youth, regardless of their own legal status situations. *Family* extends beyond the immediate family or only those living together in the household to include also relatives living near and far, in the U.S. and in Mexico.

The third finding that I will describe in this paper is that knowing the legal status situations of every mother in the sample of Mexican-origin families, 83% who were identified as primary parents, you still could not predict the effects of legal status on youth. When I initially set out to look at legal status in the La Vida sample, this was prior to receiving IRB approval to ask participants explicitly about this topic, or, more accurately, approval to ask participants follow up questions when they brought up legal status in our interviews. More often than not, parent and

youth participants brought up issues related to legal status naturally during our conversations and without any prompting from interviewers, as would be expected given the salience of this topic for many families. After two waves of data collection, despite not asking families directly about immigration status up to that point, the interviews thus far had nevertheless produced a lot of rich data on this topic because so many parents and youth brought up the topic themselves. With this data, I took a first pass at looking at the extent to which I could determine the legal status makeup of this sample from the first two waves of interviews and to examine what, if anything, could be said about the effects of legal status for these youth.

In some cases, youth and parents' legal status was clear from what they shared related to this topic in the first two waves of interviews. Of course, this did not necessarily include information about the legal status situations of other important family members unless participants brought this up as well, but given what I did know at this point from two waves of interviews with Mexican-origin high school students and their parents, combined with demographic data, and some knowledge about immigration law, it seemed there were some conclusions that I could reasonably draw regarding the legal status situations in some portion of these families. In some cases, it was still too unclear to determine the legal status situations in families or to understand the effects that legal status may have had, either owing to ambiguous anecdotes about legal status or because there was simply insufficient evidence on this topic to draw any conclusions. This was not the case, however, or so it seemed at the time, when it came to Leticia[9] and her mother.

Leticia, a U.S. citizen adolescent, and her mother, also a U.S. citizen, are a great example of a case that, after two years of interviews, seemed straightforward in terms of questions about the

[9] All names are changed, and pseudonyms are used to maintain participants' privacy and confidentiality.

effects of legal status. In the case of Leticia and her family, as was the case in other similar examples, it at first appeared clear that Leticia was not affected by legal status. Conversations with Leticia and her mom, separately, revealed that Leticia's dad was also a naturalized U.S. citizen, like her mom. In interviews, Leticia and her mom both shared stories about things like family vacations to places such as Mexico. Despite not yet asking about legal status directly, these and other similar examples seemed to offer sufficient evidence to show that legal status did not affect Leticia in her everyday life. However, after receiving IRB approval to ask families specifically about the topic of legal status for a wave three follow up study, I learned that, in fact, legal status was affecting Leticia, specifically, and her family, more generally. I learned that Leticia’s older sister did not come to the United States until she was 13 years old and that she spent a significant period of time separated from her mom. From prior interviews with Leticia, I knew that her parents were both immigrants to the U.S. and that both had become naturalized citizens. Given the significant age gap between Leticia and her sister, it was unclear whether these circumstances had any effect on Leticia, but what did affect Leticia, as both she and her mom discussed in our wave three interviews, was the fact that her uncle, and godfather, was recently deported after living in the United States for 24 years. Leticia's mom discussed the importance of legal status issues and told me that her daughter was very affected by the fact that her godfather, and uncle, was deported after living and working in the U.S. for all of her daughter’s life. In response to the general question, "And what are other things, issues, themes, that are important?" Leticia's mom replied, "Important? Important? Well the most important thing that they should do right now is help people so that they can get their papers, because for example, [Leticia’s] godfather has been here 24 years, he has worked all the time, he does not have a license, driving, he has never gotten not one ticket, in 24 years, since he got here, he has

done his taxes every year, every year, and they don't want to give him his papers. Why not give them an opportunity to have their papers?" Leticia also talked about her "only uncle who lived in the United States," who was deported for identity fraud. This case and others like it could easily be overlooked in research looking at the effects of legal status in families, as is sometimes the case. But a simple conversation about this topic, and, in this case, a mere prompt from the interviewer asking the mom to discuss any issues that were important to her, revealed that we are mistaken to disregard the possible implications of legal status for Mexican-origin youth based only on the individual legal status categories of youth and their parents.

By ignoring important and complicated differences in the legal status circumstances across Mexican-origin families, we make false assumptions about Mexican-origin children growing up today and their different trajectories. Legal status is a crucial factor to consider in the lives of Mexican-origin youth and today more than ever before many Mexican-origin children are growing up in the context of families with increasingly complex and sometimes changing legal status situations. These diverse legal status contexts and family situations matter and can have serious effects on the lives and pathways of children in these families.

There are numerous subtle categories within the broader classifications traditionally used to define and categorize legal status and, in this paper, I will show why it is so critical that we account for these nuanced legal status distinctions. I examine legal status differences and different combinations of legal status situations in families. This includes many families with different *in-between* mixed-status categories – U.S. citizen children with unauthorized parents or siblings, unauthorized children with U.S. citizen siblings, and shifting legal status situations, such as lawful permanent residents (green card holders) who become deportable, youth with temporary relief from deportation owing to DACA, and those who become eligible to adjust their

legal status (i.e. become lawful permanent residents or naturalized U.S. citizens). I look at the multiple legal status situations that we find if we look inside the broad categories that we tend to rely on and at the patterns that emerge with respect to the effects of legal status for Mexican-origin youth during a critical period of development.

Importantly, I will address some of the methodological issues that often deter researchers from taking into account the important legal status distinctions that I discuss. The suggestions I offer are based on actual empirical evidence that come out of a longitudinal research project with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles that documented youth and parents' daily lives and experiences over the course of youth's high school years, including post-high school outcomes, in an effort to contribute to what will hopefully emerge as a new set of richer analytical categories. Legal status is a salient topic that can have lasting consequences for the significant population of, largely U.S. citizen, Mexican-origin children and youth in the United States, who will soon make up a substantial portion of the adult population across the country. An improved understanding of the actual legal status circumstances in these families today and the effects on children as they grow up can contribute to the emergence of a new set of richer analytical categories for researchers who study immigrant families to use.

Methodological Concerns: (Not) accounting for legal status contexts in research on Mexican immigrant families

The customary way of thinking about legal status, as an immigration status that an individual either *has* or *does not have*, is misleading. Given that questions about legal status most often apply to individuals in families with long traditions of family interdependence, and that U.S. immigration law produces a huge segment of the immigrant population who are neither *undocumented*, per se, nor *documented* either (depending on how this is defined or by whom),

research would benefit from a more nuanced legal status classification system that we could more systematically employ in our research across immigrant-origin families to advance our understanding of the implications of legal status for youth growing up in the United States today. The *mixed-status family* category, at least initially, held exciting potential. It contributed richness and offered a way to better conceptualize and understand the consequences of unauthorized status in immigrant families.

Yet, in light of demographic changes in the size and characteristics of the Mexican immigrant population in the United States, in addition to changes to U.S. immigration law as well as many still unresolved legislative questions, our current way of categorizing legal status is no longer sufficient to actually capture the real lived experiences of legal status in Mexican immigrant families. The legal status categories that we continue to fall back on conceal important variation across these families. The actual legal status circumstances in most Mexican-origin families today are in fact quite complicated and, indeed, messy, but are crucial to consider in order to understand how legal status affects a significant population of Mexican-origin youth coming of age in the United States today.

The legal status context in families certainly matters for Mexican-origin youth and can have significant implications on youth's lives and development. Evidence from the study discussed in this paper suggests that early negative experiences for children related to unauthorized status in their family can have lasting effects for children, in some cases, even years later when legal status no longer necessarily presents an impending threat to the family. Understanding the implications of legal status for Mexican-origin youth today requires that we account for contextual factors that matter in youth's lives and includes consideration of more than merely the legal status of youth themselves. Given the important role that the family unit plays in the lives

and development of Mexican-origin youth, undocumented parents and siblings are part of this context that we must consider. Most Mexican-origin youth today grow up in families with relatives in different and changing legal status situations. By not asking about these circumstances and thus omitting this important context, we increase false negatives in our research; that is, we assume, for instance, that U.S. citizen youth are not affected by the legal status situations of their relatives when, in fact, family members' legal status situations can likewise profoundly affect the lives of U.S. citizen youth.

Classifying youth based on whether they, themselves, are U.S. citizens ignores variation across families and conceals significant ties in immigrant families, ties that research on Mexican families has long shown play a crucial role in the lives and development of youth. One reason to classify immigrant families is to create meaningful analytical categories, which are important if the goal of our research is to better understand the trajectories of youth growing up in these different contexts. Yet the legal status categories we use are not meaningful; rather, they distort what should be transparent, that is, the actual experiences, meanings, and implications of legal status for youth coming of age in different family contexts. By classifying immigrant families using broad legal status categories, we ignore the holistic family context, diverse perspectives, legal status variation, and what is at stake for many Mexican-origin youth growing up today. More research that accounts for legal status situations at the family-level could advance our understanding of the role that close family ties and relationships play in the lives of Mexican youth. We need more empirical data on the actual circumstances in families that examines the complexities and nuances of different legal status categories and situations in families and their effects for youth so that we can create more accurate legal status categories that actually matter for youth to use in our research.

It is essential in such complex family contexts to examine whether and in what ways legal status situations in families shape youth's lives and trajectories using qualitative research. In the context of a population comprised largely of families with mixed and changing legal status situations and for whom close family ties and networks of family support have long been shown to be highly valued and longstanding key features, it is surprising that we have such limited evidence about the actual legal status circumstances across entire Mexican families (beyond only individuals or dyads in families). Evidence from the longitudinal study with Mexican-origin families examined in this paper shows that there is diversity and various combinations of legal status situations in families. Families with more messy or complex legal status circumstances tend to be the rule, not the exception. And yet families that fit nicely into any of the three legal status categories so often used in research seem to be the exception, not the rule. Despite these complex family situations, there is a dearth of research that considers this important context in Mexican-origin families and even the mixed-status category, which accounts for only slightly more context, remains mostly absent from the research and literature to date. It is essential that we move beyond these oversimplified legal categories to identify and account for how diverse and complex family contexts shape youth's lives.

Among the most common reasons cited by researchers studying Mexican immigrant families for why their research does not necessarily or directly or at all account for the legal status contexts of their participants, let alone the more complex legal status dynamics of participants' families, are methodological problems and concerns. Some researchers are reluctant to inquire about participants' legal status because setting out to do so first requires approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and they worry that including questions about participants' immigration status will prevent or delay IRB approval and, consequently, their study. It follows

that researchers are even more disinclined to ask participants about the legal status situations of their family members.

Another issue is that academic research on Mexican immigrant families tends to favor large sample sizes and quantitative measures over smaller, qualitative research-friendly sample sizes, which emphasize context and the importance of perspectives across families over time. Further, research designs that account for participants' legal status tend to be cross-sectional, which allows for a level of anonymity that longitudinal research cannot provide. Yet whether studies are cross-sectional or longitudinal, all research must take all appropriate measures to ensure the confidentiality of all participants, always, and while this is of course especially important in research with populations deemed vulnerable, such as those who are undocumented, this can serve as a reminder of the steps that we take, regardless. Putting a system in place that protects participants' confidentiality even when retaining contact with them over time for the purposes of longitudinal data collection is not only entirely possible, but, in many cases, it is essential.

Assuming rapport has been established between researchers and participants, researchers carrying out qualitative data collection with Mexican-origin families often find, as I very early on in our study did, that through conversations about everyday lives, routines, activities, experiences, and feelings, parent and youth participants are likely to bring up the topic of legal status without any prompting from interviewers. Legal status is a salient topic in Mexican-origin families and for many youth and families it would be difficult to paint a picture of daily life and what matters without discussing this topic.

In this longitudinal study with Mexican-origin families, youth and parents described the complex legal status situations in their families. Some described how legal status, whether for one family member or the whole family, did or could change over time. For instance, one family

with all undocumented family members constantly, daily, checks the mailbox in anticipation (*any day now!*), and also with some concern, for a packet from USCIS with documents that will provisionally change the entire family's unlawful status; for now, however, the possibility of deportation is a reality. Whether this family is classified as undocumented or documented could depend on any delays from the United States Postal Service. In the meantime, their lives are daily affected by legal status. In another family during our first two waves of data collection, their legal status situations were remarkably similar to those of the family just described; they, likewise, arrived in the United States over a decade ago on tourist visas that eventually expired, they underwent similar application processes soon after arrival, and they even both qualified and applied for the same waiver as part of this process. What distinguishes the two is that in this second family, after over a decade of waiting and, similarly, extensive time spent concerned about immigration status, this undocumented mother, father, and daughter all became residents of the United States shortly before the daughter graduated from high school. Legal status situations, arguably a leading issue affecting Mexican-origin youth's everyday lives, are largely oversimplified and their implications are not adequately understood.

The Present Study

This study looks at the implications of legal status circumstances at the family-level for Mexican-origin youth as they transition through high school in Los Angeles. Many, if not most, Mexican-origin youth are affected by the legal status circumstances of their larger family, irrespective of their own legal status category. There is variation in the implications of legal status for youth across the broad legal status categories we currently use (documented or U.S. citizen, undocumented, and even mixed-status families, as the term is traditionally used). Understanding the actual effects of legal status across the population of Mexican-origin youth

today requires that we ask new and different kinds of questions that account for plural circumstances in families and, importantly, that we move away from individual-level legal status classifications and begin to examine legal status at the family- or household-level.

The present study includes analysis from three waves of focused, open-ended, qualitative conversational interviews with a sample of Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles. A sample of 42 Mexican-origin youth and parents participated in extended conversational interviews beginning when youth were in the ninth or tenth grade. A total of 37 families from this sample are included in the analysis for this study. Families were followed as youth transitioned through high school, as family circumstances changed, and as families negotiated different issues, challenges, and changes that arose over this period of time.

In many families, among the most significant changes that youth and parent participants discussed were changed legal status circumstances at home. The kinds of changed legal status situations varied across families and included, for instance, an entire family adjusting their status, from undocumented to lawful permanent residents, youth or their siblings qualifying for and receiving Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), as well as families threatened by deportation orders, and family members who were deported. These different sorts of changes to the legal status circumstances in families were significant for participants and led to a variety of consequences and changes for families. After three waves of data collection, legal status circumstances changed in many families and the effects of these changes for youth emerged as a salient theme across families in this sample. And, yet, despite the growing numbers of families with these more complex family circumstances, which are harder to neatly classify (e.g., relatives with deportation orders, families with the real possibility of being able to adjust their status, youth who receive DACA, siblings who are not DACA-eligible, etc.), these family

circumstances have been mostly overlooked in the research to date in this area.

Extended conversational interviews with Mexican-origin families over four years (and three waves) of data collection, as youth transitioned through high school and into emerging adulthood, led to rich descriptions from youth and parents on the topics most important in these families. Legal status situations in families and the different effects on youth was among the most salient topics that emerged from these extended and intimate conversations with youth and parents across the study.

In this study, I assess the notion of legal status with greater depth, clarity, and specificity. I examine legal status contexts at the family level for a sample of 37 Mexican-origin youth as they transition through their high school years in Los Angeles, California. Findings from this study advance our understanding of determinants of Mexican-origin youth's trajectories, but we still have a way to go. I look at variations of mixed and changing legal status situations across Mexican-origin families. Findings underscore the need for better methods and richer analytical constructs for doing research with Mexican-origin families if our aim is to better understand the developmental trajectories of this significant population and what it means to be affected by legal status.

Methods

The *La Vida* project (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), a mixed-method, longitudinal study with 428 adolescents recruited from the ninth and tenth grades of two Los Angeles high schools (M_{age} = 15 years; 51% females) and their primary caregivers (whoever youth deemed their "primary parent" was; 83% mothers), set out to look at the experiences and developmental implications of family obligation values in the daily lives of Mexican-origin adolescents in Los Angeles. Surveys assessed family background, relationships,

resources, physical and mental health, and substance use, and daily checklists completed over 14 days assessed engagement in various family assistance tasks.

Ten percent of the 428 families (n = 42) were randomly selected for the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI), a well-established qualitative conversational interview (Weisner et al. 1997), that focuses on the daily routines and activities of family members. Five families were excluded for this study due to insufficient information (i.e., because they were not able to participate in some parts of the study), resulting in a total of 37 families who are included. In-depth EFIs in the La Vida study lasted an average of two hours each, focused on the daily routines and activities of family members, and captured parent and youth perspectives across multiple domains (e.g., family assistance and obligation, family cohesion and conflict, monitoring, disclosure, hidden activities, peers, school, economic circumstances, safety, health, family history, religion, ethnic identity, and future aspirations, among other topics). Laminated bilingual cards with key topics in large print were used as reminders of discussion topics, although most topics emerged naturally in our extended conversations and the cards were useful for the interviewer who had these available to flip through at the end of each interview to ensure that all key topics of the study were discussed with every participant.

Youth and parents (interviewed separately) were asked to, “walk me through your day,” which elicited descriptions of daily activities, experiences, underlying motivations, and feelings. Two weeks prior to interviews, youth were given a digital camera and were asked to take about 20-25 photos of places, people, activities, or anything meaningful to them in their everyday lives. These unprompted photos were used in youth interviews to focus and stimulate conversations. Youth’s descriptions of their photos and their motivation for taking different photos of specific people, places, and objects in their daily lives led to rich descriptions across a variety of topics.

For example, Miguel, an undocumented tenth grade student in wave one of the La Vida study, was born in Mexico and came to the U.S. when he was five years old, "to get a better education… and more opportunities," as he said. Miguel lives with his mom and stepdad, his 22-year-old brother, and two younger sisters (ages eight and three); his family's annual household income of 0-10K is unreliable and does not cover their basic everyday needs. Among the 25 photos that Miguel took of what was meaningful to him in his daily life was a photo of the moon. The moon, he said, was his only connection to his grandma in Mexico who he had not seen since he moved to the U.S. when he was five years old. He explained, "The movie, *Under the Same* Moon, I thought about that because my grandma's in Mexico and I'm here, and we call each other, but knowing she's far away, like the movie, you look at the moon and you know she's right there too." Miguel says that he has not seen his grandma since he left Mexico and he is hopeful that after joining the Marines he can get his papers and finally be able to go visit his family. When asked what he would change in his life, if he could, Miguel said, "I would change bein' legal here for recruiting. Go back and see my grandma, be with her." In wave three, I ask Miguel about his grandma's rancho in Mexico and if he has been there. He says, "When I was younger, yeah. From what I remember like there was a house, a cane field, and a sugar cane field, and there was like a river. And I guess, I remember that river because they showered me, and like freakin' river was cold! Really, really cold! But no, I mean like I wanna see it with my own eyes. You know? Like, they can tell you a story, like when you were little, when they read a story to you, you imagined it, but you really wanted to live it. You wanted to be in it." Miguel lives in a family with complex sibling and parent legal status circumstances, discussions about which emerged, all beginning with this one photo of the moon that he took the first time we met in wave one of the La Vida study.

Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending upon the preference of each participant. All interviews were digitally recorded, translated (if conducted in Spanish), and transcribed, and each case was linked with the survey data from the larger study and measures of behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes, including official course grades and test scores across two years. After two waves of data collection, additional topics emerged as central for families and were added as main topics in a third wave of data collection with these same families in the qualitative sample (2013-2014), which I carried out for my dissertation research. Youth were now ages 18-20, almost all having completed high school the previous year, transitioning into emerging adulthood (Arnett 2007), entering new circumstances and changed contexts.

Some of the central topics expanded (e.g., meaningful family contribution *and* frustration with responsibility; physical *and* mental health; academic *and* social monitoring) and new topics emerged as salient across participant narratives (e.g., siblings and other relatives not living in the home; family in Mexico; gratitude and resentment; appreciation and giving back; legal status and the implications of legal status situations in families). I also added a subsample of some families' relatives living in different states and towns in Mexico, and I carried out ethnographic research and extended qualitative interviews with "key relatives" in different states and towns in Mexico over the course of two summers.

During our wave three qualitative EFI interviews, I told families about this additional component of the study and, if applicable, asked if they had any close relatives in Mexico who they thought might be interested in participating in the same kind of EFI interview. If so, youth and parent participants identified these "key relatives" in Mexico. Examples include the following: 1. a *tío and tía* (the uncle and aunt) of one unauthorized female youth participant; they

raised this young girl until she was seven years old and while she was separated from her mom who was in the United States before her mom came back to Mexico to bring her young daughter back to the U.S. with her; and 2. an *hermana* (sister) of a U.S. citizen male youth who has never left the small town in Mexico where she grew up; all of her siblings (some undocumented; others U.S. citizens) live in Los Angeles, as do her recently divorced and undocumented parents; she has not seen her immediate family in almost a decade which was the last time that they came to visit.

I developed a protocol for recruiting relatives for the additional subsample in Mexico, which required that families in LA first contact the relatives whom they identified in Mexico to see if they were interested in participating. If so, families from our main sample asked for their relatives' permission for us to contact and follow up with them. To carry out fieldwork and EFI conversational interviews with family in Mexico and, to make initial contact with family members in Mexico, I also followed up with families in Los Angeles. Inevitably, as is often part of the fieldwork experience, this involved learning more about families and participating in their daily life events – celebrating and mourning with families, eating meals together, helping a new teen mom with her baby, baptism preparations, spending time with important relatives in family's lives, and going to birthday parties, the Family Clinic, the pharmacy, and the ER with youth and families. Participant observation with families with plural family circumstances and legal status situations complements the other methods used and adds value to the goals of this study.

Data collection in Mexico used the same EFI protocol in addition to extended time spent with families, which was followed up with research fieldnotes written up after time with families. Including the same photo component for interviews with relatives in Mexico, as was used with

youth participants in Los Angeles, was slightly less feasible in terms of asking participants in Mexico to take photos prior to our EFI conversations. Instead, for my fieldwork and interviews with family members in Mexico, photos were sometimes incorporated into our time spent together, when appropriate, or "imaginary photos" were discussed (e.g., "I would have taken a photo of my granddaughter because…"). In different ways, these photos, too, helped to prompt and guide conversations related to meaningful topics in participants' lives. Conversational interviews as well as extended time spent with these key relatives in Mexico adds to the array of methods used in this study and contributes to a richer, closer, and more holistic understanding of the experiences and effects of plural family and legal status circumstances in families and for a significant population of youth.

Demographics: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States

The size and composition of the U.S. Mexican immigrant population has changed considerably in recent years. "The economic downturn, stepped-up border enforcement, growing dangers associated with illegal border crossings, and demographic and economic changes in Mexico" (Krogstad et al. 2014), have all contributed to a sizable decline both in Mexican immigrants' share of the total foreign-born population and in the number of unauthorized Mexican immigrants. In the year 2000, Mexican immigrants made up 40% of the foreign-born population, and in 2012, 28.3% (11.6 million people) (Nwosu et al. 2014). In 2007, unauthorized Mexican immigrants totaled 6.9 million, and in 2012 this number dropped to 6 million (52% of the total unauthorized population) (Krogstad et al. 2014). These figures also vary by state and of the six states long home to the majority of unauthorized immigrants (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas), between 1990 and 2012, 20% moved to different states (Passel et al. 2013, 14). While in Texas the unauthorized population, "more than doubled by

2000 [and] grew by about 66% from 2000 to 2012," in California the unauthorized population dropped from 42% in 1990, to 21% in 2012 (14). On the whole, there has been a significant decline in unauthorized Mexican immigrants, in part owing to scarce economic opportunities following the recession, "today, about as many people from Mexico are leaving the U.S. as entering, after four decades of explosive growth" (Krogstad et al. 2014).

From 2007 to 2009 an estimated 150,000 Mexican immigrants came to the United States annually, "down 70% from the annual rates during the first half of the decade" ("The Mexican-American Boom: Births Overtake Immigration" 2011). I saw examples of this through casual conversations that arose during my fieldwork in Mexico. Sr. Alfonso, a cab driver in Guadalajara, talked extensively about how much he enjoyed living in the U.S. Unlike for many others who go to the U.S. consulate (often far from their home), pay large sums of money to apply for a visa (many with the hope of visiting relatives in the U.S.), and spend all day waiting (sometimes beginning as early as 2 a.m.), only to be denied and told, "better luck next time," with no guidance as to what might improve their odds, for Sr. Alfonso, obtaining a tourist visa was not difficult. At the time, he was working for a large company that paid him well, "I was making $6000 [pesos/month], it was good money, well, it still is [about $460 USD, Aug 2014], so it wasn't a problem. I went to the consulate nicely dressed up in a suit and tie and everything. They asked why I wanted to go, *to see it*, I told them, and they gave it to me." Unable to legally work on a tourist visa, Sr. Alfonso decided to return to Mexico in 2009, "the economy was bad, even the *legales* couldn't get work, so I came back."

The drop in unauthorized Mexican immigrants also coincides with a marked rise in border apprehensions and deportations. In 2010 about 390,000 people (disproportionately [73%] Mexican) were deported, "more than twice as many as in 2000" (Auclair and Batalova 2013).

Since the 1990s deportations have risen each year, with an upsurge from 2008 to 2011, while the unauthorized population, "was declining or remaining relatively steady" (18). These changing demographics – a drop in unauthorized immigrants (especially in California) and a rise in deportations (particularly of Mexican immigrants) – coincide with the demographics and time period of this study.

Notably, while the number of foreign-born Mexicans has declined, the U.S.-born Mexican-origin population has grown substantially. Between 1970 and 2012, Latinos have grown sixfold, "from 9.1 million to 53 million" (Krogstad et al. 2014, 4), and projections estimate that Latinos will reach 129 million (31% of the total population) by 2060 (4). Mexican immigrants also account for the largest group of lawful permanent residents (LPRs). Of the 5.4 million Mexicans eligible to naturalize, nearly 67% have not done so, and among the 36% who have, they represent, "only half that of legal immigrants from all other countries combined" (Gonzalez-Barrera et al. 2019). These low rates of naturalization are attributed to language barriers, fear, cost, and lack of awareness about U.S. and Mexico dual citizenship (Mexican citizens could not hold dual citizenship until 1998 [p. 12]), among other factors. When I asked about differences between LPR and U.S. citizen status, many participants did not know, some had a general idea but were unsure about specific distinctions, and many accurately speculated that citizens are likely entitled to more benefits and services. The uncertainty about this is likely, at least in part, the result of changing immigration law.

As laws change, the grounds for deportation also change, often retroactively (this likewise happened in the case of dual citizenship, with some provisions). Unknowingly, a lawful permanent resident's application to naturalize can trigger his or her deportation owing to a crime committed (even decades ago), a crime that, at the time it was committed, was not a deportable

offense. The Mexican-origin population consists of U.S.-born and naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees (although less common for Mexican immigrants), those on temporary work, study, business, or tourist visas, and undocumented immigrants, among others.

Alone, these legal status categories tell us very little about the experiences of immigrant-origin youth and their families; but the processes through which individuals and families become (or do not become) lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens and the effects of these changes for youth and families, offers a more complete and important story. Attached to each legal status category are experiences, stories, and feelings (concerns; relief), which affect youth and are precisely why legal status categories offer an important tool for analysis. As immigration law changes and is often enacted retroactively, the possibility of adjusting one's status can also change. Without a trusted immigration expert, unauthorized immigrants can easily fall victim to fraudulent *notarios* [notaries] who often drain families of their hard-earned money and may file erroneous paperwork on their behalf, which can have lifelong consequences. Given the complexity and changing nature of immigration law, some lawful permanent residents (LPRs), themselves, may not know that, for example, they are deportable or upon which grounds they can be deported, which was likewise a topic that came up in this study. LPRs, much more commonly associated with their eligibility to naturalize, can become deportable and unauthorized immigrants can likewise gain *temporary* or *permanent* legal resident status.

The 1986 amnesty program offered some 2.7 million people a pathway to citizenship, including many of the parents in this sample. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) announced in June 2012 by President Obama and implemented two months later, grants work permits, two-year temporary and renewable reprieve from deportation, and, in some states, like

California, driver's licenses to eligible unauthorized youth. Those eligible include undocumented youth who, "arrived in the U.S. before the age of 16, are under the age of 31, have lived in the U.S. for the past five years, are enrolled in school or have a high school diploma and pose no safety threat" (Jordan 2012). Of the 1.2 million DACA eligible youth (65% from Mexico; 30% in California), many of these youth applied (Mexican youth account for 77% of DACA applicants), yet 45% of eligible youth did not (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera 2014). The USCIS received 681,189 DACA applications and by July 2014, 587,366 were approved (Batalova et al. 2014, 1). Many questions related to DACA and its effect on immigrant-origin youth and families continue unanswered. Specifically, what factors dissuaded about half of eligible youth from applying? What are the implications in families with siblings, one who might be eligible for DACA and another who aged out (e.g., one sibling, age 29, and her sister, age 31)? This study sheds light on some of these questions.

For many families, DACA, "changed lives in measurable ways… 60% secured new jobs, 45% reported higher earnings, 57% obtained a driver's license, and 49% opened their first bank account" (1-2). Evidence from this study also shows many positive impacts that DACA has had for families. DACA-recipient unauthorized youth could now work legitimate jobs, earn fair wages, and drive without fear, all of which led to a huge reduction in the amount of concern felt by DACA-recipients and their families about, for example, possibilities they would have in terms of pursuing their academic goals. Questions about immigration reform loom large at the present moment in the United States. DACA brought many unauthorized youth out of the shadows and opened new opportunities for many undocumented youth and entire families. DACA increased labor force participation and wages among DACA-eligible youth (Pope 2016), and has been associated with positive emotional consequences (Patler and Pirtle 2016). Still, many looming

questions remain for the population of “DACAmented” (Wong et al. 2013) youth, once characterized by newfound feelings of promise and confidence and, in recent years, more well-known for feelings of uncertainty and concern.

Evidence from this study likewise suggests that DACA had many positive effects for youth who received DACA and for their larger families, certainly prior to 2016. However, owing to DACA’s temporary and, particularly over the past two years, erratic nature, these very same families have more recently experienced new feelings of uncertainty. Many questions remain related to the effects that DACA will ultimately have for youth who over the past few years have faced newfound feelings of uncertainty as a result of the very same legal status (DACA), which, only four years prior had provided assurance and feelings of certainty, at least temporarily, in these same families. Whether DACA, by definition, a deferred legal status, will remain in effect or if it will soon be rescinded, whether Congress will pass legislation that extends a pathway to citizenship for DACA-protected youth, and what short- and long-term legal, economic, emotional, and other consequences DACA will ultimately have for the hundreds of thousands of currently “DACAmented” young people remain open questions. But the longitudinal study I report on in this paper offers insight into some of the impacts that receiving DACA has had for Mexican-origin youth and their families.

While we have yet to know or understand the effects that DACA will ultimately have on today’s youth and their families, as this will in part depend on the fate of the actual legislation and how it changes in the coming years, what we do know from prior research and from strong evidence that came out of this study is that receiving DACA has had transformative effects in many families and for various reasons. Central among these reasons was the removal of some of the financial burden in families that DACA offered. In some cases, even the mere potential of

relieving some of the heavy economic strain that many families face was enough to change youth and their families' perspectives and outlooks on what was now possible. In families with youth who received DACA, this change in legal status from undocumented to temporarily *documented* has meant temporary reprieve from the threat of deportation, eligibility to work a legitimate job and in many cases this has also meant earning a higher wage, ability to get a driver's license (in the state of California, as well as in some other states), and, significantly for many families, eligibility to apply for some forms of financial aid, which also meant that college was now a real option for some of these youth. Youth whose legal status category officially, even if temporarily, changed with DACA, described that for the first time, new doors felt open to them. In some cases, DACA moved youth's sights from community college to a four-year institution and in other cases, youth enthusiastically talked about their upcoming plans to study for their driver's exam, or the possibility, now that they could take flights within the country, that maybe they would go visit another state.

The changing demographics (e.g., fewer unauthorized Mexican immigrants, legal status changes, increase in deportations, unauthorized youth who received DACA) have resulted in a surge of mixed-status families, specifically in Los Angeles (Nwosu 2014), as well as even more complex mixed-statuses within traditionally labeled *mixed-status* families. The number of U.S.-born children with at least one unauthorized parent has more than doubled since 2000. At least 9 million people are in mixed-status families with at least one unauthorized adult and at least one U.S.-born child… 54% of people are in families with at least one unauthorized immigrant ("The Mexican-American Boom: Births Overtake Immigration" 2011).

While statistics on unauthorized children with U.S.-born siblings do exist, research on the effects for young people does not. From 2010 to 2012 over 200,000 parents with U.S. citizen

(and perhaps non-U.S. citizen) children were deported (Wessler 2012), which raises important questions in families who face questions about what to do if a parent, or parents, are deported, owing to children's roots in their schools and community, and for some, owing to their U.S. citizen children's unlawful status in Mexico. "Tens of thousands of children without Mexican citizenship now find themselves without access to basic services in Mexico – unable to officially register in school or sign up for health care at public hospitals and clinics that give free check-ups and medicines. Mexico's health officials offer a temporary care plan for U.S.-born children, but families must certify the youngsters' documents within 90 days" (Licon 2012). The number of families who face such predicaments is on the rise; "1.4 million people have migrated from the U.S. to Mexico since 2005, including 300,000 U.S.-born children" (Passel et al. 2012). In 2011, "the number of U.S.-citizen children living in Mexico with at least one Mexican parent reached 500,000" (Licon 2012). In the U.S., the threat of deportation and family separation is very real across Mexican-origin families; it is part of the context that cannot be ignored when examining the impacts of legal status on the lives of Mexican-origin youth. Carola Suárez-Orozco refers to the "earthquake plan," which many families have in place in case a relative is deported (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011; Suárez-Orozco 2012). Demographers estimate that between 10-15% of U.S.-born children are brought to Mexico, "children who are kind of stateless in both countries" (Yoshikawa *in* Licon 2012).

One in four Latino adults in the U.S. report personally knowing someone "who has been deported or detained by the federal government for immigration reasons in the past 12 months" (Lopez and Gonzalez-Barrera 2012). I wanted to know if this was true for the families in this study, so I included this question, asking youth and parents if they knew anybody who was recently detained or deported, in the wave three follow up study and results appeared to be

consistent with this statistic. Looming fears of deportation can abruptly come to the forefront and drastically change youth's daily lives when, for example, an adolescent comes home from school and learns that his dad was just detained and is being held at a detention facility, *somewhere*, in the U.S. Youth in families with mixed legal statuses, including many in this sample, face the fear, possibility, or reality of close relatives being deported. As evidence from this study shows, this can have serious implications for youth – financially, emotionally, academically, and otherwise.

When we consider all of the above-mentioned factors, it becomes abundantly clear that we need to develop a more accurate and meaningful classification system that considers not only unauthorized youth, but also youth who have become "DACAmented" (Wong et al. 2013, 35), youth who are "undocumented and unafraid," youth who are undocumented and very much afraid, and U.S. citizen youth with close ties to relatives in different legal status situations. Research should account for the legal status of parents, siblings, and other relatives, as well as changing legal status, all of which can have profound implications for youth. The *unauthorized-authorized* binary is simply not as relevant to understanding the lives and experiences of Mexican-origin youth or the effects that these circumstances can have on youth's pathways in life.

In recent years, some studies have broached the topic of legal status by making "best guesses" at the legal status of their participants using different proxies for undocumented status. Yet, relying on proxies to determine the legal status of individuals, let alone the legal status situations in entire families, can be risky and unreliable for a number of reasons, not least of which is the complicated nature of legal status circumstances. There has also been research that asks participants directly about their legal status, and study data that comes from large population-

wide surveys, which, likewise, asks direct questions about legal status in families. Nevertheless, we as researchers have yet to agree upon or, most importantly, begin a conversation regarding, how to develop consistency across our research as we find new ways to categorize these complex legal status situations in families.

Findings from this longitudinal research with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles sheds light on some of the issues with the ways that we have relied on to categorize legal status, such as using proxies for unlawful status, and helps to dispel some of the myths that persist regarding legal status. Imagine the following situation: a Mexican-origin family of five (a mom, dad, and three daughters): Mom and dad are undocumented, and the two older sisters are U.S. citizens. Can we, with any degree of certainty, determine the legal status of the third, youngest, sister? Some might say that it is safe to assume that the youngest sister is more than likely a U.S. citizen, like her two older sisters. With undocumented parents whose two oldest daughters were born in the U.S., the third daughter likely was also – right?

This and other assumptions like it are rooted in the idea that Mexican migration is unidirectional, when in fact, as we see from the demographic makeup of the Mexican-origin population today and from the accounts of several participants in the La Vida study, some Mexican immigrant parents in the U.S. can and do migrate in both directions and have children in both countries. “From 2009 to 2014, 1 million Mexicans and their families (including U.S.-born children) left the U.S. for Mexico” (Gonzales-Barrera et al. 2019). Likewise, several La Vida participants discussed times when they either considered moving back to Mexico, as a family, or when they did move back to Mexico for some period of time in their child(ren)'s lives. Participants had various motivations for doing so or wanting to, ranging from a parent who returned to Mexico alone for some number of months for a medical procedure to the whole

family moving back together for some period of time in their child(ren)'s lives. It is in situations like these that Mexican-origin families in the U.S. would be more likely to have older children who are U.S. citizens and a younger child or children in the same family who are undocumented. In this sample of 37 families, about a quarter of families had some version of this situation. It thus seems fair to conclude that this is yet another factor that should be considered in research on legal status across wider samples of Mexican-origin families.

The legal status category, *lawful permanent resident* (more formally, *permanent resident alien*, and, informally, *green card holder*), implies that a person, or a parent, for example, is *not undocumented* and is thus afforded certain rights or protections. Yet, there is vulnerability attached to this label, which can and does have implications for families and for their U.S. citizen children. A person legally present in the United States could have a temporary (student, employment, or tourist) visa or could be a lawful permanent resident. By conflating U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, we disregard significant distinctions. Regardless of the legal status of youth themselves – whether youth are, themselves, unauthorized or U.S. citizens, whether they are eligible for or have received DACA, or if they are lawful permanent residents – their individual legal status category offers insufficient information to understand how legal status actually affects their lives and pathways in life. The legal status of relatives who youth grow up feeling close to can likewise affect youth's lives and outcomes.

We need more qualitative evidence that is grounded in a more complete understanding and representation of the actual circumstances in families to come up with more accurate legal status categories that do not conceal variation across families but, rather, considers whether and in what ways legal status circumstances matter in families and affect youth. Evidence from the La Vida study reveals tremendous diversity in youth and parents' experiences of and feelings about legal

status circumstances in their families, and unexpected patterns emerged with respect to how different legal status situations in families can affect youth. One surprising finding was that even in families with U.S. citizen children and lawful permanent resident parents (otherwise known as green card holders) – circumstances that are typically grouped together into the *documented* legal status category – some children in these families, too, are negatively impacted by legal status. In many families, the difference between having parents with lawful permanent resident status (a green card) or parents who are naturalized U.S. citizens can be significant. Some youth with lawful permanent resident parents, for instance, reported their anxiety about the upcoming deadline for their parents to renew their green cards. Research to date does not appear to include data on these distinctions, the various shades of gray among what is generally viewed as a relatively all-encompassing, appropriately broad, category of *documented*.

Immigration law is complex, yet this complexity is not reflected in our academic research on immigrant families. In much of the academic research, legal status gets reduced to oversimplified categories, perhaps, at least in part, due to the thorny nature of collecting qualitative data on families whose lives and legal statuses are far from simple. But it is precisely for this reason that we need more research that uses rigorous qualitative methods to collect evidence on the different legal status categories in families and their effects for youth. In this way, we can create more accurate legal status categories that actually matter for youth to use in our research.

Understanding the implications of legal status requires that we account for contextual factors that matter in youth's lives and includes consideration of more than merely the legal status of youth themselves. Given the important role that the family unit plays in Mexican-origin youth's lives and development, undocumented parents and siblings are part of this context that we must consider. It is for this reason that this study looks at legal status at the, more complicated, family-

level, accounting for the legal status situations of all relatives who youth deem important in their lives, and documenting any changes in the legal status circumstances of youth, parents, and their relatives. Carrying out this type of research at the family-level is challenging owing to the intricate nature of families, but I embraced the complexity and, combined with the benefit of longitudinal data, which allowed for examination of changes to legal status circumstances over time, interesting findings emerged related to legal status circumstances and their implications for youth across families.

My hope is that the evidence presented in this paper will encourage future research in this area to begin to collect data on legal status circumstances across entire families. Accounting for variation in legal status situations across the diverse population of Mexican-origin families adds value to the body of research on these topics. As more evidence continues to show how Mexican-origin families are qualitatively different, ultimately, we can create a legal status classification system that more accurately represents the actual legal status circumstances in families to advance our understanding of the effects on the significant population of Mexican-origin youth.

Previous research has enriched our understanding of the ways that unlawful status affects immigrant youth, yet the complexity and variation of the implications of legal status differences across Mexican-origin families remain largely unexamined. Given the centrality of the family and the enduring cultural values of familism in Mexican families, combined with demographic data that indicates, for instance, that Mexican immigrant parents are the least likely among immigrant groups to naturalize (which was also consistent with the population of parents in this study), it is essential that we include the legal status circumstances of all family members who matter to youth, since their legal status may also influence the lives, opportunities afforded to,

and possible futures for, even U.S. citizen youth. Until we come up with a more contextual, relevant, and meaningful classification system to document actual experiences, we cannot understand the implications of actual legal status circumstances in families and for youth development.

In this paper, I include the perspectives of youth and their parents and I consider legal status implications in terms of relationships among kin – kin in the household and others who live elsewhere, in the U.S. or in Mexico. We need to expand our definition of family and household as well as our definitions of legal status, to include not only those in the home but also to kin outside the home, some who live nearby and others further away. Some participants' relatives in Mexico raised youth during periods of separation from their parents; some cannot come to the U.S. to visit, and some once lived in Los Angeles and were deported; some kin in Mexico have a visa to travel to the U.S. and they can and do regularly visit their families in Los Angeles, and some of their relatives in Los Angeles cannot travel outside of California. If we took all of these complex circumstances into consideration, we could develop a more accurate classification system to better understand the lives and trajectories of Mexican-origin youth, and evidence from this longitudinal study with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles takes us in the right direction to do so.

Results

Evidence of the legal status situations in families: qualitative conversations with youth and parents

In the first two waves of data collection, we did not ask about legal status on surveys or in qualitative EFI interviews. Yet, during the course of our conversations, many youth and parents brought up the topic themselves. Clear indicators of legal status arose indirectly in many

interviews, such as when youth described feeling frustrated that they cannot drive or get a driver's license, "I take the bus. If my parents had a car it would be better so at least they could drop me off halfway. My dad's afraid if he gets a car it'll get taken away and he doesn't want to go through that process." One mom said, "I do not have papers, my husband does have them, and I would like them because it is important… for example in order to drive we need our licenses, and we would be able to take them to school, pick them up, and I would rely less on my husband."

Legal status also arose through other key topics in the study, such as *family history*. Participants talked about where they and other relatives were born and whether they ever visited Mexico. Some talked about frequent family trips to Mexico and others expressed their desire to visit their relatives in Mexico but said that they could not go. One teen candidly said, "My parents, don't have, um, their papers. So they don't really want to risk going back. So, no, they haven't been back." Some parents said that although they cannot travel to Mexico, they planned to send their children to visit relatives. Many participants in the first wave of data collection explicitly discussed legal status; some said they wanted to or had become naturalized U.S. citizens; for those born in the U.S., I could easily determine their U.S. citizen status.

Youth and parents also discussed the impact of legal status limitations on their lives and futures, and some contrasted their own legal status with that of other relatives. One mom said, "My life in this country without papers is very difficult, many doors are closed, but we move on. My daughter hasn't been back. I have gone because my dad was seriously sick. I crossed at night, I walked all night, and it's something, uff, horrible, very ugly, I remained very traumatized. It was tough for me, walking all night, I arrived with thorns in my hands, in the feet … very ugly … very difficult, to cross risking my life. It's been three years that I haven't gone

and I don't think that I'll go, I tell you, it's very difficult."

I believe that our extended conversations and the rapport that often develops in these fieldwork situations contributed to participants' candidness with interviewers. At the conclusion of the second wave of the La Vida study, it seemed that I could determine the legal status of 96% of the wave one ethnographic sample of 42 families. I initially grouped the families into three categories: *wholly undocumented* (teen and parent undocumented), *mixed-status* (U.S. citizen teen of unauthorized primary parent), and *wholly documented* (teen and primary parent both U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents), and hypothesized that legal status may account for some of the variation and conflicting evidence on the developmental implications of familism values for youth.

As we indexed and coded our first two waves of data for salient themes from our study such as, family responsibility, intra-family consensus or conflict, degree of academic engagement, and parental monitoring of youth, distinct patterns seemed to emerge related to legal status in all of these categories in ways that could suggest variation in youth outcomes associated with the implications of legal status situations in families. It became increasingly clear that the schema I was relying on to classify the Mexican-origin families in this study (*undocumented*, *mixed-status*, and *documented*), failed to account for important nuances within each of these categories and did not capture the full story.

Comparisons between youth and parents who have and do not have *papeles* (papers; legal status documentation) can be useful, although there are many gradations of both *documented* and *undocumented* and it became clear from this sample that these nuances can have significant implications for youth and their families. For the wave three follow-up study, I obtained IRB approval to ask parents and youth (18 years old or older), directly about the topic of legal status

(*estatus migratorio*), adding to the list of key topics in the study, and adding an additional prompt, and show card, for our interviews, although this show card was used in a slightly different way.

For most show cards, topics and subtopics were listed as reminders to the interviewer and to participants of topics to be discussed at some point during the interview. The legal status show card aimed to understand the actual legal status situations in families and listed variations of legal status categories, which participants could easily point to when appropriate or comfortable[10]. While participants tended to openly, candidly, and without hesitation discuss legal status situations in their families during the course of conversations about their daily lives and routines, and typically without any prompting from the interviewer, this show card helped to ease the determination of legal status in some cases. Once the topic of legal status was brought up and participants said, for example, that they or other relatives were, "residents," they could point to the precise category that they described (i.e., temporary resident or lawful permanent resident, etc.).

Sometimes, participants, themselves, were unsure of their legal status category, but they were comfortable with follow-up questions that helped to determine how, if at all, their experiences related to legal status affected their or their family's lives. While some participants referred to their legal status by the name of the actual visa (e.g., H-2A), others referred to the kind of visa they currently or at one time held (e.g., a work visa or a tourist visa); some used the term, "green card," and others described their "resident" status, and then elaborated on whether and how this affected their lives in the U.S.

[10] I am grateful to Carola Suárez-Orozco for this insight.

In one wave one interview, one mom recounted that she became a resident through the VAWA program. The interviewer struggled to understand her, "*¿BAWA, VAWA?*" Owing to the sensitive nature of some legal status situations (e.g., in this case, VAWA, or the Violence Against Women Act, federal legislation that makes possible a pathway to lawful permanent residency for immigrant victims of sexual or domestic violence by a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident [LPR] spouse, and, in some cases, children or parent victims of abuse by a U.S. citizen or LPR parent or child, without requiring the LPR or U.S. citizen spouse, parent, or child's involvement in this process in any way, who victims of abuse would otherwise continue to depend on for legal status sponsorship, thus making victims less likely to report the abuse), this show card helped eliminate potential discomfort when participants elaborated on their and their relatives specific legal status situations.

Wave three data collection also included the addition of kinship charts, which youth and parents helped the interviewer create during the course of our conversations. Kinship charts included immediate and extended *close* family members, each family member's key demographic information, and whether each lived in the household; no names were written. Kinship charts were useful as participants discussed their different family members, who they identified as being important in their lives; participants could easily point to the triangle or circle, for instance, which represented this relative, or they could tell the interviewer to add a family member to their family tree, when, for example, they recalled, "Oh! This cousin on my mom's side is really important too. We used to spend a lot of time together. But, well, yeah, she was deported a few years back." Interviews in Mexico also used kinship charts, which included relatives whom participants deemed significant; key demographic information was included for each person and all names were excluded.

As was the case in waves one and two, legal status again arose naturally in most wave three interviews. This time, when then topic came up, youth (age 18 or older) and parent participants were asked to, “tell me more about that,” which led to rich narratives about legal status and how legal status affects the everyday lives of the participants in this study. In so doing, it became clear that legal status has effects for youth and families that extend beyond what is merely immediately apparent. When participants did not bring up this topic themselves, prompts such as, “We’ve talked to many families over the last few years and one topic that comes up a lot is legal status. Could you tell me about this topic?” was typically enough to spark stories, memories, feelings, and experiences related to the topic.

I also added the following questions to ask across families in this sample, “Do you know anyone who has applied for DACA, the program that Obama put into place?” and, “Do you know anyone who’s been detained or deported?” Most youth either had experiences related to or at a minimum knew about DACA, but many did not know it by its name, DACA, or by the official program name, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.” Most youth either knew a lot about the program or had discussed it at some point with others in their lives (some had received DACA themselves; others had a sibling, cousin, boyfriend, or a friend who had talked about it with them; I met some youth who received DACA, and others who were eligible for it but for various reasons did not apply), and many youth only knew it as, “the Dream Act” (the “Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act”).

The “DREAM Act” refers to federal legislation, which, despite promising and bipartisan beginnings in 2001, and a number of versions that have since been reintroduced to Congress, has yet to pass at the federal level. It also refers to the “California Dream Act,” a group of state laws that passed at different points in the year 2011, which made undocumented students in California

who meet certain requirements eligible to apply for some forms of student financial aid benefits for California colleges and universities. Some participants talked about the DREAMers movement and remembered the protests that took place in 2012 by DREAMers who were, "Undocumented and Unafraid," or the rallies, sit-ins, hunger strikes, marches, and the like, that took place across the nation as a reaction to the rising numbers of deportations and anti-immigrant legislation that was being enacted across various states, and in an effort to pressure Congress to pass immigration reform.

In recent years (as compared to decades ago, when most parents in our study arrived in the U.S.), deportation has become so ordinary an occurrence that for several participants, while nothing immediately came to mind when asked if they knew anybody who had been detained or deported, later during our EFI conversations, they would nonchalantly recall that in fact a close family member had been deported. For instance, in the midst of discussing a cousin, a nephew, or another close family member, some participants stopped mid-discussion, pointed to the triangle that had just been added to their kinship chart, and said something along the lines of, "Oh yeah, that cousin was deported," after which they would elaborate about what happened and whether and, if so, in what ways, this has affected them.

Uncertainty: the opaque review process

Feelings of uncertainty are not uncommon for children growing up across immigrant-origin families in the United States. Immigrant families are more likely to face economic and other hardships, which often create feelings of insecurity and uncertainty for children. In families with relatives who are undocumented, the added pressures of unauthorized status, including the threat of deportation and, inevitably, more limited access to resources and services, can take a heavy toll for entire families who are affected by these constraints. For youth who grow up with close

family members who are undocumented (including if youth, themselves, are undocumented), questions of uncertainty are inextricably linked. The topic of uncertainty has often been explored in this context, to better understand the lived experience of unauthorized status and the consequences that the uncertainty linked to unauthorized status has for immigrant-origin children as they grow up. The association between feelings of uncertainty and the lived experience of unauthorized status, as well as the negative consequences that can result from both, have been well documented.

Past research has explored the topic of uncertainty in the context of undocumented status and unauthorized youth, specifically, for good reason. Evidence on this topic has revealed the multiple and complex ways that uncertainty intersects with unauthorized status and the unique ways that uncertainty unfolds, for instance, for 1.5 generation undocumented Latino youth as they, "transition to illegality" (Gonzales 2011). Less is known, however, about the ways in which U.S. citizen Mexican-origin youth experience uncertainty and how these experiences are sometimes surprisingly similar to those of their undocumented peers. Undocumented status necessarily entails some degree of uncertainty, which can extend to many facets of everyday life, but the uncertainty tied to legal status vulnerability is not unique to or necessarily more common among undocumented youth as compared to their U.S. citizen Mexican-origin peers. Some unauthorized youth participants made light of their parents or other family members' constant worries about legal status, while some U.S. citizen youth discussed their own anxiety about their family's legal status situation and, in some cases, youth's distress persisted even after the legal status uncertainty in their family was technically resolved.

For Patricia, an undocumented mother who brought her daughter, Rita, to the United States at a young age, concerns about legal status are intimately woven into her daily life experience.

Patricia, like many undocumented parents, grew accustomed to regularly calculating the risks involved in participating in everyday, superficially mundane activities. Driving a child to school, going to work, returning an item to a store in a shopping mall, and applying for financial aid, were just some of the stressful day-to-day activities that Patricia and other undocumented participants in this study described. On one occasion, I drove Patricia and her "DACAmented" (Gonzales and Terriquez 2013) daughter, Rita, to the Emergency Room after I received a call from Rita, asking if there was any way that I could drive them to the ER, as Rita woke up with an infection that was now spreading to other parts of her body. She saw a doctor at a clinic earlier in the day who said that Rita needed to go to the ER to get an injectable antibiotic that they did not have at the clinic and it was becoming increasingly clear to Rita and her mom that the infection was not going away on its own. At the ER, Rita was taken into a separate waiting room and was told to wait until her name was called, and her mom, Patricia, was told that she could not go in with her daughter.

Patricia and I sat side by side, silently waiting in the larger waiting room. I knew Patricia to be talkative, almost enthusiastically talkative, so her silence was notable. I wondered whether she was upset that she was not allowed to wait with her daughter. My thoughts were interrupted, however, when I felt Patricia tapping me on the shoulder. She nervously asked me, *"Mindy, ¿es security, o son policía?* [Mindy, is that security, or police?]" I scanned the waiting room, which was filled with individuals and families, most of whom looked like they had been waiting a long time. Each had unique strategies for trying to find a way to comfortably sit in uncomfortable chairs; some, I suspected, were fidgeting less due to the chairs and more perhaps because of nerves. Some had one leg held up by another chair, others leaned on the shoulder of their partner, and others appeared restless in their chair as they tried unsuccessfully to find a more comfortable

way of sitting. I spotted two men dressed in official-looking uniforms who were standing on the opposite end of the large waiting room and it seemed clear that these were the two men to whom Patricia referred. "*Son security* [They're security]," I reassured her. Patricia then leaned over to my ear and whispered, "I thought they could be immigration," she said, and nervously laughed. The sight of these two official looking men triggered a sudden rush of anxiety for Patricia. At the time, I wondered how Patricia's daughter, Rita, might have felt or reacted to the same thing, had she been sitting there with us – did she have these same fears regularly running through her mind?

Seemingly ordinary events, like a police car on the road while driving to work or being asked for identification when returning an item to a store, can provoke tremendous stress for undocumented parents, which can, but does not necessarily, extend to children and other family members. Participants in the La Vida study vividly described examples of both of these situations – some youth participants described feeling generally uneasy and at times distressed about a family member's undocumented status, while others described, for example, how, "not having papers" affects their mom or dad but that they did not feel personally affected by or anxious about the same things. For instance, on another occasion I was driving with Rita (Patricia's daughter), herself undocumented, when she turned to me and said, "See that police car? If I were driving with my mom, she'd freak out." This and other comments like it demonstrated Rita's acute awareness of her mom's constant fears and overall apprehension about immigration status and also that Rita, herself, did not feel the same way. Rita did not appear to be daily affected by the uncertainty of legal status in the same way that her mom described feeling, despite the fact that she, herself, was undocumented and then received DACA, which she currently has.

For undocumented Mexican-origin youth in situations like Rita's, growing up with some degree of uncertainty is expected. For others, who are part of the fast-growing subset of the population, growing up in families not traditionally associated with legal status vulnerability, their similar experiences of uncertainty and the implications that this can have on their lives represents a key reason why the categories we use to talk about legal status are inadequate. In some cases, the complex legal status circumstances in families, which complicate any simple determination of how to accurately categorize legal status situations, are also a significant source of the uncertainty that emerges. The increasing prevalence of uncertainty for Mexican-origin young people coming of age across the U.S. offers one compelling reason why legal status situations are best represented by more nuanced classifications.

Unauthorized status poses unique and complex disadvantages for Mexican immigrant families, as has been described in past research on this topic. From economic stress, school success, and discrimination, to fear of deportation and additional challenges related to identity and liminal membership (Gonzales 2011; Menjívar 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011), unauthorized status can cause a great deal of uncertainty in families in a variety of ways. For parents, unauthorized status means they cannot legally work in the U.S. and, as a result, many have few other options than to work long and often odd hours, and to more readily accept poor paying and lower quality jobs with less if any say about their work schedules. For those without papers, the possibility of taking any sick days, regardless of pay and no matter how dire the circumstances, is simply differently available, much less, any time off to spend with one's family, whose work schedules and routines are likely to differ. Many undocumented parents in the La Vida study talked about their jobs in the context of being stuck working the worst shifts, with very different schedules than their loved ones, who they wish they could spend more time

with. Many contrasted their own experiences, having no other choice than to work for less pay and during whatever times they are told, with the experiences of their colleagues who have *papeles* (legal documents to work), who do not have to deal with these same constraints at the same job.

One mom, for instance, talked about her struggles every day at a job where she is treated differently, precisely, and only, because of her unauthorized status. She talked about the difficulties of working in the United States without papers. While her kids have received certain benefits as a result of DACA, for her, she says, it is very difficult. No matter how much and how hard she works, and for how many years she has worked at the same place, she says, "They never give me weekends. They say they can't, but I can see it's not that they can't, it's that they don't want to. So, I never have any time to *convivir con mi familia* [to be with my family]. The others, yes, they give them a Saturday or Sunday, but for me, no."

These additional obstacles can have impacts on the amount of time families have to spend together and may also affect the level of children's responsibility. The hardship associated with legal status, including the threat of deportation, is very real for some families in the La Vida study. Unauthorized youth talked about wanting to help their families; some said they wanted to get a job so they could contribute financially and help ease their family's economic burden. One such undocumented teen, Miguel, has parents and siblings with different legal statuses. His mom and dad are undocumented, and his two younger sisters and cousins are U.S. citizens. In our wave three interview, Miguel discusses the severe economic hardship that his family faces and he describes feeling a great deal of responsibility to do whatever he can to help his family financially, which interferes with his academic aspirations. Despite receiving DACA, which gave Miguel greater access to jobs and improved pay and working conditions, it did not help with his

academic goals. Miguel feels responsible to financially support his family, leaving him with little time for anything else. His mom needs his help, he explains, and Miguel feels that it is important, crucial even, that he does whatever it takes to help his mom and sisters, even when it comes at a cost to him, "Trying to defend my family is something that's very important to me. Like I said, family before anything. I mean, my grandpa, grandfather, did the same thing, take care of family, but I think it's, more importantly, what we have to do. 'Cause if we don't take care of them, who else will?"

Miguel has been working to support his family for the last few years. During his senior year in high school, Miguel worked three jobs, but only told his mom about two of them. For Miguel, taking care of his family, in particular, his mom and his, as of recent, three U.S. citizen siblings, is most important. When I asked Miguel how he feels about being responsible for so many things, he said, "It makes me feel good because in a sense, I'm teaching my little sisters that, no matter what happens, no matter what um, you go through, one way or another, you will get ahead. I mean, I've uh dropped out of school, I've went from job to job, I've tried to get ahead for my little sisters. I mean, and I'm responsible because my mom taught me."

Having endured living extended periods of time with no water, no food, and pretending that he already ate to ensure that his family eats, Miguel is very concerned about his family's wellbeing and highly values helping his family at whatever the cost to himself. Miguel's grandmother disagrees. As of wave three, Miguel's grandmother, who lives in Mexico, has a visa and comes and goes to the United States to visit her children and grandchildren. In fact, in her unique situation, she actually *has* to travel back and forth every 90 days in order to collect her husband's pension. In my interview with Miguel's grandmother, she contrasts life in the United States with life in Mexico and says that she prefers her life in Mexico, noting the many

constraints that her undocumented daughter (the mother in our study) faces, having to deal with things like limited hot water at home, which she does not appear to like, as well as many other everyday worries as a result of severe economic hardship. She does not find it to be fair nor appropriate that the family's financial burden is placed on her grandson, Miguel. She knows that her grandson complies, regardless of the fact that it gets in the way of his academic goals, and she does not agree with this.

Several families at different points throughout this longitudinal study faced severe economic hardship and discussed the different ways that it affected their family. In another family in wave one of the La Vida study, the mother, father, and six children were living in a small garage that they temporarily converted into their home. The other interviewer and I arrived at the address that was given to us by the interviewer who had carried out the quantitative interview with this same family a few weeks before. He informed us that the family had recently moved, and they were living in a different house and had a different telephone number, and that he did not know why. We rang the doorbell to the house and asked for Ana (the Mom).

The woman who answered the door was not sure to whom we were referring when we asked for Ana. But after a few moments of apparent confusion, she seemed to realize who this was and went to call for her. Moments later, Ana, a smiling woman who seemed happy to see us, came from behind the house to the front porch to greet us, and welcomed us to the back. We followed her through the backyard where there were five or six young boys playing board games on plastic tables, where trees just barely shaded the area from the scorching, 90- maybe 100-degree, heat, and we followed her into a small backhouse just at the end of the backyard. Ana grabbed two dusty, green plastic chairs, brought them inside, and motioned for us both to take a seat. Her son, Pedro, followed her inside, and she introduced us.

The backhouse was a small rectangular room, taken up almost entirely by the two beds, a crib, and a dresser. There was sufficient floor space left for the two chairs that Ana brought inside, but just barely. There were some toys in the crib, a cloth shelf neatly packed with differently sized shoes, and a few toys on the ground. Considering the fact that six children, aged 2-19, and the mom and dad, all slept in this same small space, it was reasonably clean and orderly. There was no kitchen or bathroom and a refrigerator sat right outside the door. The other interviewer suggested that she and Pedro go outside to conduct their interview and so they went out into the very hot backyard and sat at a table where the other boys weren't playing board games. Ana placed her two-year-old son in his crib. When he started to cry, not more than a moment later, she gave him a toy and told him to go to sleep, and, almost remarkably, he did. We began our interview, sitting close, facing one another, in the two green plastic chairs. I learned that Ana's husband was recently detained, was later deported to Mexico, and was now back home. Ana and her family had to move because they could no longer afford their home or to go anywhere else. The main house belonged to a cousin of Ana's husband, who lived there with her husband and three children.

Ana seemed comfortable talking with me and she was forthcoming as she discussed different aspects of her life and the recent changes for her family. She described their new living arrangements, where we sat. She said, "Look over here, my daughter and son sleep here, and my other two sons, here. I pull out a mattress for them, he [the baby] sleeps in the crib, and my husband and I over there. They are sharing beds. We had to leave the apartment we rented. My husband was in jail because of a DUI, he was deported to Mexico and I had to find the money to bring him back. He is back illegally; we need him because we depend on him. He is the only one that works" [Ana, wave one EFI].

Ana went on to describe her family's current financial situation. She showed me the inside of the mostly empty refrigerator and described how she finds ways to make the food, leftover from last week, feed her family for another two weeks, "When I get my food stamps, the first thing I get is beans, rice, sugar, tortillas, eggs, and *chile*. Then, the rest of the month I buy meat and things like that. At the end of the month when I do not have food stamps then I start using the beans and rice. I manage the money the best I can. At the end of the month I cook eggs with *chile*, beans, and tortillas. We always have tortilla, beans, and *chile*."

Ana talked about her concerns that her son won't continue in school due to not having a social security number. She explained, "He has seen the burden that we have gone through to help [older daughter] to pay for school… My concern is that he could not finish school… We try to celebrate when he is student of the month by taking them out to eat. I keep telling him that he needs to study. He tells me that the problem is that you need a social security number to do things. My kids feel marginalized and limited. [Pedro] sometimes asks me why he was not born here."

Meanwhile, outside, and just beyond earshot distance from me and Ana, Pedro described to the other interviewer his desire but inability to contribute to his family, "Yeah when I'm able to… to help out my family with money… I tried to get a job, but I can't because I don't have a social security number" [Pedro, 9th grade]. Ana talked about how her daily routine used to be reliable and stable, that is, until recently when her husband, and the only source of financial support in the family, was detained. Her older daughter helped track down the detention facility where her dad was taken, which, as Ana and her family's experience only confirmed, is notoriously difficult to do. Ana explained that she, herself, could not be the one to try to locate the detention facility where her husband was being held, as doing so could result in her also

being detained and possibly deported, leaving their four children with no parents instead of one.

For children, unauthorized status can represent highly uncertain future possibilities, which can, “impede[s] [the] educational attainment of even the most eager students” (Abrego 2006, 217). Behnke et al. (2010) similarly find that many students drop out of high school owing to, “a continuous pull to join the labor force to help their families” (401). Dropping out of school to work and make money can become a practical option for students who, “see no future economic benefit of staying in school” (401), or, likewise, for some who feel a sense of urgency and obligation to help alleviate some of their family’s economic stress. Circumstances such as this loom large for many undocumented youth, such as for Miguel, in the previous example, who, despite wanting to pursue his academic goals, felt a more immediate responsibility to help his family financially. For Ana, however, this is precisely the path that she fears her son could go down and she does not want this to happen. While the uncertainty tied to unauthorized status can indeed cause some undocumented youth to disengage from school and to instead, for example, focus on getting a job to earn money and help their families, unauthorized status, alone, does not necessarily impede academic engagement and advancement. Rather, it appears that while some of the negative consequences tied to undocumented status can lead some youth to disengage and abandon previously held aspirations, other factors can similarly contribute to opposite outcomes for undocumented youth.

In line with past evidence that has repeatedly found that close relationships with key figures in youth’s lives, including mentors, teachers, and other role models, can play a significant role in shaping youth’s trajectories (Enriquez 2011; Gonzales 2011; Stanton-Salazar and Spina 2003; Weisner et al. 2001), parents across the La Vida sample similarly described the different ways that their children's high school teachers impacted their children's lives. Several parent

participants talked about the importance of teachers in their children's lives and, specifically, the difference that it can make when teachers put forth an effort to be engaged in their students' (and these parents' children's) lives, or, at a minimum, at least engaged in their schoolwork (the latter was indicated by parents who felt displeased by some teachers' lack of involvement whatsoever). I heard both positive and negative anecdotes related to this topic; some parents described the negative impacts that teachers' behavior, words, or mere lack of care and attention, had on their children, while others described teachers who cared about their children and explained how this impacted their children's lives. Consistent with the literature on this topic, a consensus seemed to emerge among parent participants in the La Vida sample that teachers who demonstrated care and concern about their students and who took an active role in discussing things like higher education with their students played a significant role in shaping youth's different pathways.

For instance, this came up in the case of Ana, who was concerned that her husband's deportation was going to have long-term negative impacts for her son's academic prospects. By wave three of the La Vida study, however, the circumstances in Ana's family had taken a turn for the better. I arrived for our wave three interview at a different address than where the family had been previously living and I was greeted by a smiling Ana who welcomed me into a clean, relatively spacious apartment. Ana seemed lighter, like a burden had been lifted from her shoulders. She said that she felt much better since her husband has been back home. Pedro's dad was back at home with his family now for a few years after having been deported, an experience that Ana said really affected her family and, in particular, affected her son, "His self-esteem dropped a lot," she told me, "he missed school, his grades dropped, he didn't want to go to school for three months… he hid from me, by himself, he would go off…" Ana asked his school counselor for help and she said that the counselor did help but that it was just overall difficult.

While her husband was in Mexico trying to successfully make it back to his family in the United States, Ana cared of their one and a half-year-old son with autism by herself and barely scraped by as she struggled to feed her family. After four unsuccessful attempts to return and then a near-month-long journey crossing back into the U.S., Ana's husband eventually made it back to his family. After he returned, he and Ana spent five months saving money to move, and they eventually did, into the apartment where we carried out our wave three EFI. As of wave three, Ana's son, Pedro, and his sister had both received DACA, which, according to Ana, empowered her son. "He wouldn't have had the strength," she told me. Ana described a complete turnaround in her family's circumstances, including her son's engagement in school and other daily life activities, as well as his discussions about her son's plans for the future.

Ana told me about a teacher who she said was, "very interested in her son, one of the best teachers in all of the state of California." This teacher had apparently encouraged Pedro to transfer to a magnet school that had recently opened not far from his previous school for his senior year of high school. Ana described an interaction she had with this teacher, where he told Ana that he was going to bring her a paper to sign for her son to transfer schools but that even if she did not sign it, he would take Pedro with him to the new academy, where he felt confident Pedro would thrive. And he did. Pedro completed his senior year of high school at the new magnet school, where he graduated with all As and Bs. As of wave three, Pedro was in his first year at community college, with plans to transfer to a Cal State University after two years, and he planned to study sociology.

Like for many undocumented parents in this study, Ana's son's education was not the only source of Ana's uncertainty. She also talked about the effects that unauthorized status has in terms of work. She described an experience she had when she went to Jack in the Box to apply

for a job. As she approached the fast food restaurant, she saw an "E-Verify" sign posted on their wall, and she said she immediately turned back around. Her husband has worked at the same job for three years and gets no holidays, no vacations, "Yes, they give vacation, you can take your vacation week, but fully unpaid; so they can't do that, it would totally throw off the balance of the family," she explained. Her husband works for an agency that assigns him jobs in different places. "He makes $350 weekly, sometimes maybe $380… he works day and night… but he doesn't have any of the same rights," Ana told me, "because of the lack of papers."

Despite Pedro's experience during his freshman year of high school, when he came home from school one day and found out that his dad had been detained, not even knowing where, and the severely negative consequences of this experience on his entire family at the time and for Pedro, specifically, who as a result disengaged completely from school, just a few years later, fear of detention or deportation did not appear to be among the family's primary concerns. They, of course, remained keenly aware of the potential consequences of their unauthorized status and they continued to take practical steps to prevent negative consequences from occurring, however, in terms of the fears and concerns that guided their daily lives, this did not appear to be central among them. In other family examples, unauthorized status deters some parents and families from taking advantage of resources or accessing services that they are otherwise eligible for, owing to concerns related to their unauthorized status. In fact, evidence that has been reported on the effects of legal status in mixed-status families points to this exactly, highlighting the need to take into account that in mixed-status families, U.S. citizen youth, like their undocumented peers, may be less likely to benefit from resources and services available to them owing to their parents' reluctance to take advantage of these resources, owing to their unauthorized status.

Indeed, for some families in this study, this very issue came up. For example, in one very

mixed-status family – a U.S. citizen adolescent with undocumented parents and a mix of undocumented and U.S. citizen siblings – this came up related to applying for DACA. In this case, however, it was the daughter herself, not her parents, who did not want her to apply for DACA, despite her eligibility, owing to the potentially negative effects of supplying all her information to the government. In our wave three interview, the mom described her children's different legal status situations and the fact that she and her husband, and two of their children have a deportation order weighing on their shoulders. Her oldest daughter, who she brought to the United States when she was one year old, applied for and received DACA. The mom explained that despite the uncertainty of it, “she got the courage to apply, because she drives, and she wanted to be able to drive with a legitimate driver’s license.” Meanwhile, another daughter, who the mom said she brought to the U.S. when she was four, was also eligible for DACA, but did not want to apply. The mom explained, “There’s no point, as she doesn’t drive and she has a job… and she doesn’t want to, she says, *no, that because afterwards they’re going to take it away and they’re going to deport them*… they are scared… she wants to wait until she knows what’s going to happen with DACA.” Her son, who is also undocumented, aged out of DACA-eligibility, and works as a lawyer, helping others in the community with these very issues, and her daughter, who was the youth in this study, is a U.S. citizen. The uniqueness of this family is important to note. In some ways, the very mixed legal statuses of the parents and children in this family, with two DACA-eligible children, one who decided to apply for and received DACA, and the other who chose not to apply, is unique, certainly as compared to *mixed-status families*, as they tend to be conceptualized, with undocumented parents and U.S. citizen children. In other ways, the legal status circumstances in this family are uniquely similar, for example, to Ana and her family, in terms of both families' experiences related to the threat of deportation and its

effects on family members.

In another mixed-status family, a male U.S. citizen youth lives with his undocumented father, his grandmother (his father's mother), and an aunt. In my wave three interview with his dad, his dad describes the ways that legal status concerns become internalized in families and children, regardless of citizenship status, and affect families and children. In his family, the overwhelming fears that, he says, become part of daily life, prevent his U.S. citizen son from visiting his mom and aunts, who live in different states. He explains,

Dad: We thought that by coming here everything was going to be better but as it turns out it did not happen that way.

Interviewer: Why?

Dad: Communication… we thought it was different.

Interviewer: How different?

Dad: Well, look at the T.V., I have always thought that the T.V., radio, and Internet have a lot of influence. We feel that everything that you see on T.V. somehow affects you. There are a lot of problems with immigration; those problems have affected everybody like my nephews and my son. At school, when the kids hear about immigration, they worry about it. They feel the pressure against our people. Those problems add a lot of strain on family relationships. For example, my sister has tried to get her legal residency… that is a real problem for us. Before, things were not like that. Before, we could go out, we could visit other states. My sister lives in Seattle and she used to visit, but not anymore because they are scared. They are afraid the police could stop them or something. Today, it does not really matter if you have papers or not. That affects my nephews because they talk about it with my sister. My son's mother... lives in Arizona and she cannot visit. My son wants to go but he cannot because it affects a lot. That is what I am trying to

tell you.

In this family, despite the fact that his son is, himself, a U.S. citizen, the vulnerabilities associated with legal status, and the fears that his dad feels, as a result, prevent his son from visiting his mom, due to the fact that she lives in another state.

Meanwhile, for Ana, an undocumented mom, and her son Pedro, who was undocumented when we first met and has since received DACA, despite the very difficult experiences that this family endured when Pedro's dad was deported, as of wave three, the negative implications of legal status no longer loom over this family as they once did. With their dad safely back at home and the benefits that DACA has had for Pedro and his older sister who are now able to pursue their academic goals, legal status no longer poses the same constraints as it once had in this family. In addition, Ana says that two of her children qualify and are eligible for Medical and the food stamps that they receive also help their family.

Across the sample of Mexican-origin families in this study, while fears and concerns related to legal status and deportation certainly appeared as a theme, this theme did not emerge consistently across families with undocumented family members or in ways that might be expected. For instance, for Ana and her family, who went through a whole host of negative experiences after her husband was unexpectedly detained and deported, including her son completely disengaging from school and Ana, barely able to make ends meet for her family, after a few years of time with her husband back at home and the benefits that DACA brought for her two older children, circumstances drastically changed in this family and, from our wave three interviews, deportation-related concerns were not as salient in this family as they were in the family discussed above with the dad whose fears related to legal status prevent his U.S. citizen son from visiting his mom in Arizona, even though, as a U.S. citizen, he could do so. By

contrast, Ana, despite her own undocumented status and that of her husband, is not deterred, for example, from taking advantage of resources for which her family is eligible.

Uncertainty was not experienced in uniform ways across parents and youth in the La Vida study and families' diverse experiences related to the consequences of different legal status circumstances in their families seemed to underscore the importance of taking into account more nuances across legal status categories and circumstances to more accurately represent the experiences and consequences for immigrant-origin youth. I began the initial phases of analysis by grouping families into *unauthorized*, *authorized*, and *mixed-status* families. In addition to the complexity in family circumstances that was necessary to overlook, in order to make these demarcations, the variation that emerged within each category was also notable. As research continues to document these legal status variations across families, including sometimes complicated legal status circumstances as well as the different effects they can have on children, we will better understand how legal status shapes the pathways of a diverse and significant population of Mexican-origin youth.

Two pathways despite similar legal status beginnings

Rafa, an unauthorized 18-year-old young adult at the time of our wave three interview, came to the U.S. when he was eight years old with his mom and his then ten- and fourteen-year-old sisters. His dad came first to work and gather enough money, and after about a year, he returned to Mexico to bring the rest of his family. Rafa's mom describes their year apart as, "very difficult." They communicated by phone every two or three days, but it was, "very hard," she says. From one day to the next, *"se cambió mucho la vida* [life changed a lot]." After a year of separation, Rafa and his family came to the U.S. together, walking through the mountains. "But it wasn't too hard," Rafa's mom said, "not like the other stories that one hears about people who

suffer getting through the mountains." At the time of our wave one interview, Rafa was in the tenth grade and talked a lot about school, "I don't really have a class that I don't like. Last semester, the class that I liked least was of computers. Because, um, we almost never did anything and I didn't really learn anything except for what I had already learned… Math, I like math a lot, I'm good at it. I have good grades… usually I get grades like As or Bs." Rafa tried hard in school, despite his awareness of the barriers that he and his family faced as a result of their unauthorized status. Academic success was something that his parents emphasized strongly. Unlike some of his unauthorized peers who came to the U.S. as infants, Rafa came when he was a bit older and he remembered and missed his family in Mexico. His awareness of the legal status limitations that he and his family faced have always been high, as the implications of legal status was an open topic of conversation in Rafa's family ever since they arrived in the U.S. Everyone in Rafa's household is undocumented and they regularly discuss the financial and emotional hardship that this entails.

Although EFI interviews were only carried out with Rafa and his mom, Rafa's entire family was very welcoming and talked with me and other interviewers during all our visits to their home. As a result, I learned a great deal about how unauthorized status affects Rafa and his family. In 2013, Rafa and his sisters received DACA. Each application cost Rafa's family $485, plus $250 for the *abogada* (lawyer). "DACA changed their lives," Rafa's mom tells me, "now they can apply to work where they *want to work* [emphasis], *y están bien agusto* [they are comfortable; at ease; content]. Now it's up to them to do well because they have all the opportunities to do so. If they study, they will be able to find a good job. It's not like in Mexico, where a woman I know went through a lot of school and ended up working cleaning houses." Rafa says that unauthorized status affects his parents in that it prevents them from being able to

visit their relatives in Mexico. More specifically, he says that it prevents his mom from visiting any of her relatives, who she has not seen in many years, and it has also made it difficult for his dad to find a job. For Rafa and his sister, receiving DACA, as of wave three, opened many doors that they describe. Now eligible for financial aid and authorized to legally work, as well as to drive, rather than having to take the bus to work, his sister finally began school, currently works as a certified nursing assistant, and plans to become a nurse. Rafa graduated from high school with good grades; in fact, he had the highest grades from among the youth in the La Vida sample. Rafa was accepted to a Cal State University, and the only university where he applied, but owing to a problem with the financial aid, which he said did not cover his tuition, he decided that he would wait and apply again the following year, as he expects he is eligible for financial aid and this will be much less of a financial burden for his family. Rafa plans to follow in his sister's footsteps and become a nurse. He currently works as a manager at the same fast food restaurant chain where his mom also works, and he contributes to his family's bills every month.

Rafa and his family are a very close-knit, loving family. Rafa talks extensively about his gratitude for his family, their support, and all that they have taught him related to being responsible and otherwise. The family decides together who is going to pay for what at the end of each month, when they all pool their money together to pay for the household bills and look at how much their income was for that month. Nothing is designated beforehand or made explicit, in terms of who will be paying for which thing, but everyone in the family knows and plans for contributing to the household bills at the end of each month in some way. As of wave three, all members of the family except for the dad were working, which changed largely as a result of Rafa and his sister having received DACA, and their additional contribution for the bills each month reduced the financial stress that the family had been feeling.

As they reminisced about what their life was like in Mexico, about their other family members who are still there, and about how everyone in the town there knows them, Rafa and his family all seemed to light up in the same way. Left with few alternatives but to move to the U.S. after everything was stolen from their ranch in Mexico, Rafa's family decided to move to the U.S. over a decade ago. They were robbed of their sole source of income and, without a large bribe, as they explained to me, the police were of no help. On his dad's side, Rafa's paternal grandparents had been contracted to work as braceros in the U.S. years ago, and for many years after, they did not risk coming illegally; but years later, they fixed their papers, and, as Rafa's mom explained, "They have their pension, medical, and everything, they're citizens. But they don't like it here, so they come and go as they please." Rafa's uncle lives in another state and got his residency some twenty-five years ago through the amnesty program. He petitioned for Rafa's family through a Family-Based Immigration Visa, and Rafa and his family has been in this process ever since (for the last 14 years), waiting in the so-called "line," as it is often referred to in everyday conversations about undocumented immigrants. Rafa's mom says that DACA also helped in this respect, as they used to worry, "if one day we finally get the date to become residents, we used to think, *how in the world are we going to get together $25,000 for all 5 family members?* But now that all three kids have DACA, which was much cheaper, we will only have to pay for me and my husband, so $10,000 total." Fixing their papers would have cost $5,000 for each family member, but owing to DACA, which they paid for one child at a time, so they could afford it, they will only have to pay this $5000 for Rafa's mom and dad to adjust their status. Rafa's mom says that they will likely have to wait another 3 to 4 years before their papers go through. "*¿Como ves?* [What do you think about that? / See what I mean?]"

Unlike the story that follows, Rafa and his family have yet to hear back about their application

for lawful permanent residency in the U.S., submitted about 14 years ago to the USCIS. Literally any day now they could receive a notice in the mail which, after over a decade of waiting, could change their status from unauthorized to lawful permanent residents [LPRs] and on a pathway to citizenship. Despite the hardships linked also to LPR status, Rafa's mom says that everything would change for the better – they could at last buy a house and no longer, "waste money," as the mom describes it. As they remain in this now 14-year waiting period, Rafa and his family endure many limitations of living daily life without papers.

While her kids have received certain benefits as a result of DACA, Rafa's mom talks about how she works tirelessly and, yet, owing to her undocumented status, she has no say in her own work schedule, and that she must work whichever days and hours she is scheduled. She is never given weekends for her days off and so she rarely gets to spend time with her loving family. "In Mexico," she tells me, "we weren't rich, but *we were agusto* [comfortable; at ease]. I didn't have to work." Rafa's mom says that her family dreams of having their own house, but without a social security number, and unable to prove their earnings, they have to rent their house; they pay $1,700 per month plus bills. "The difference having a social security number is that, without one, you pay taxes and get nothing back; we pay $500 every year in taxes but we get nothing back." The mom works night shifts at a fast food restaurant and returns home daily at 3am. For over a decade, she has begged for better hours or a weekend day off, at least occasionally, so that she can spend time with her family. But she is undocumented, she tells me, and she is thus left with few to no other options. Rafa's family is very close and important to him; he says he loves them very much, cherishes the time they spend together, and appreciates being able to talk to them about anything.

In another family, Lupe, a tenth-grade female in wave one of the La Vida study, came to the

U.S. when she was nine months old and lives with her 12-year-old sister and parents who are separated and sleep in different rooms. In our wave one interview, Lupe talked extensively about school and her plans for the future. She said she usually does not like History class, but this year, History was her favorite class, "the teacher is really good, the way he teaches it, I like it, it's really interesting… he's really hard, he challenges me so I guess that's why I like it, I like to get challenged… I have an A." Lupe talked about her future goals and the steps she needed to take to achieve them, "I just had a grad-check and I'm doing really well. If I were to graduate this year, I would graduate with honors. I want to be an Obstetrician. I have to go to a four-year university, then medical school, one year of residency, and then another year... I want to stay close for college, live with my parents. I don't want to be that far apart." When asked what her parents think, Lupe said, "My parents, they think it's good [chuckles], they are proud."

Although Lupe does not mention this at the time of our wave one interview, at that time, legal status could have interfered with these plans. Nevertheless, Lupe's mom also strongly emphasized school and the importance of Lupe doing well in school. In every year of the La Vida study, Lupe talked about a number of extracurricular activities in which she participated – volleyball, leadership, ice skating, among other activities, and she served as the student body treasurer. She discussed clear goals for her future and greatly valued doing well in school; likewise, her mom emphasized the importance of her daughter doing well in school and going to college.

In our wave three interviews, we learned that when Lupe's family immigrated to the U.S., life was very difficult – her dad only worked three days per week and they often did not have enough money for food. Lupe described a time when her mom only had a quarter to buy food, so she bought a small bread to share. Her dad would wake up at 4am to look for cans from the

neighbors to recycle and he has never learned English. This went on for about three years until her dad was able to get a better job. Despite being undocumented, Lupe's dad drove for years and never got a ticket. According to Lupe, one of the largest impacts of legal status for her family was the fact that, without papers, her dad could not travel to Mexico to see his brother (who he had not seen in over 18 years). Lupe's mom said she felt anxious about getting their papers fixed before her daughter graduated from high school. Lupe's family applied for their residency fifteen years prior through her dad's work. Though they did everything *"by the books,"* while waiting 15 years in the infamous "line," many questions and doubts remained. They were eligible for the 245i waiver, which enables those who are eligible to pay a fine to adjust their status without having to leave the U.S. despite having accrued unlawful presence. Eligibility requires that the applicant was physically present in the U.S. when the law was enacted (in December 2000) and that a visa petition was filed on the person's behalf before April 30, 2001. Rafa's family, too, was eligible for the 245i waiver.

Unlike for Rafa and his family, however, for Lupe, just before graduating from high school, her family received the paperwork in the mail and after over a decade and a half waiting, Lupe and her parents were granted lawful permanent residency, circumstances which changed so much for her family. Lupe's dad was finally able to visit his brother in Mexico, and when he finally did, Lupe says, "they both broke into tears." Lupe's mom plans to visit her relatives in Mexico soon for the 10-year anniversary of her mother's (Lupe's grandmother's) passing. Lupe can continue her academic pursuit without worry, and in three years (totaling five), Lupe and her parents will be eligible for U.S. citizenship. Though Rafa and his siblings' DACA-eligibility brought Rafa and his family much cause for celebration and relieved a great deal of stress for their family, the larger weight of legal status and its potential consequences remains intact on this

family's shoulders, while for Lupe and her family, having received this packet in the mail, especially before Lupe graduated from high school, meant that Lupe could continue to pursue her academic aspirations without the same uncertainty, and it signified a much longer-term sense of relief across her entire family.

The individual legal status categories of Mexican-origin youth may not predict the effects of legal status for youth

After three waves of qualitative interviews with families in the La Vida study, it was clear that the consequences of unauthorized legal status are not reserved only for undocumented youth. Through conversations with youth and parents across families in the La Vida sample, it became increasingly apparent that relying on the individual legal status categories of Mexican-origin youth to examine the implications of legal status on their lives would paint a very incomplete picture. Further, from the sample of 37 Mexican-origin adolescents and their primary parents, the five ninth and tenth graders who were undocumented in wave one of the study, by wave three, all had new legal status classifications. Four of the five youth had received DACA, and the fifth adjusted her status together with her parents and she became a lawful permanent resident shortly before completing high school.

In addition, twelve of the U.S. citizen youth across this sample had undocumented parents, the effects of which varied for youth across these families. In another eight families, examples emerged from youth and parent interviews showing various ways that legal status can also affect U.S. citizen youth with U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident parents, in ways big and small. Finally, in another twelve families, also with U.S. citizen youth and with either U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident parents, legal status did not appear to have any effects on the lives of these youth or their families.

Analysis of legal status and its impacts on the lives and trajectories of the five undocumented youth in wave one of the La Vida study revealed tremendous variation among this subsample, despite the very small sample size. Four of the five youth graduated high school on schedule, with plans to continue higher education. In Miguel's case, however, his high school trajectory was a bit different. Miguel lives with his undocumented mother and step-father; his older brother is undocumented, and his three younger sisters are all U.S. citizens. Miguel has long felt solely responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of his mom and three little sisters, no matter the cost to himself. The responsibility he feels is primarily a financial one, but it manifests also in other realms of his life. In our wave three interview, I ask Miguel about any effects that legal status has in his life. He responds, "Well, um, my mom and stepdad are scared that if they ever get pulled over, they don't have an ID. They can't get a, they don't have a driver's license... Yes, they do [drive]. And I mean, they're scared that they're gonna take the cars away. Like, you know, I mean, they're scared that they'll take the cars away, and take them off to jail. 'Cause they're driving without a license. I mean, they have insurance, car insurance, but they don't have a license. [Interviewer: Right.] And they don't have no legal documents. And from before they've seen in the news, that whoever goes to I guess jail, immigration comes and checks if they have papers. If not, you're outta here. So yeah, it's—"

I ask Miguel if they have ever been pulled over and he describes three separate examples in which each of his undocumented family members – his older undocumented brother, his stepdad, and his mom – have each been pulled over. Miguel was with his mom when she was pulled over and I asked him how he felt when this happened. He tells me, "Um, I felt scared because I felt like if they ask my mom for her license, and she can't talk back, what are they gonna do? Are they gonna take her away? I don't care about the car, I care about my mom, because how my, or

what if they take me and her away, who's gonna take care, at the time it was just my 2 sisters. What's gonna happen to them?" Miguel then goes on to talk about the conversations that he has had with his mom on various occasions about the hypothetical scenario of what would happen if his mom were deported. He explains, "Well my mom has told me if anything happens to her, or my stepdad, or just her in general, that I'm the one responsible for them three. Like no matter what, like anything, it doesn't matter, my tía wants to take them, anyone else from the family, she said, *No, you're the one that's responsible for them.*" Miguel says that he and his mom have had this same conversation on various occasions, both before and since having received DACA, and that it has always been the same, "Same conversation. Like, *if anything happens to me, anything happens to both of us* [mom and stepdad]*, you're taking care of the girls*." I asked what Miguel thought, or thinks, about this, and his response, "[*pause*, *stammers*] I'm scared because I don't know [*pause*], I guess I don't know how to be a father figure to them. I don't know if I'm ever gonna be a good father... That's what scares me the most."

Miguel then goes on to talk about the threat of deportation, generally, and he also points out, specifically, that, "Yes, um well, me I don't mind if they deport me, I mean..." The possibility that his mom and stepdad could be deported, however, appears to cause him some unease. Although, he also explains that this is not something that he thinks about often, at least, not as much as he used to. He explains, "because I know that my mom, my mom and stepdad are not taking the risks they used to. I mean, we would drive all the way to freakin' Castaic Lake and Palmdale and all that without license, and come back, all the way to LA, and come back, but they're not doing that anymore. I mean, now we just work and come back." Miguel's sense of his responsibility to take care of and to ensure the wellbeing of his family underlie all these conversations, and this is most apparent when it comes to the financial obligation that he feels.

Miguel started working during his junior year of high school to help support his family. For a year, Miguel worked, "Uh, full-time. From... second shift, from 4pm 'til like 12:30 in the morning." He went on to describe how this played out in his daily life, "Yeah, right after school, go to work, um, come back from work, try to do some homework, sleep if I could; if not, take a shower and go to school. Same routine every day." I asked how that was, and Miguel concedes, "Uh, it took its toll. I mean, uh there were... 'cause of that, now my sleep pattern's really [*pause*] it's not normal anymore. There's days I don't sleep at all. There's days I sleep at three in the morning, four, and wake up, five, take a shower, go to work." He goes on to describe how this affected him at school, "But um yeah, and there were days where I'd be at school and I'd sleep in the class and the teacher would wake me up, be like, *Oh, did you even learn anything?* And I'd be like, *No, can you review it?* And some, some teachers were nice enough to actually understand my situation; others, they were like, *No, you know, you weren't paying attention. I have other kids that attend*. Alright it was like, *I understand*." When he first started working, Miguel's grades went down and his mom gave him the following options, "Work, or stay in school and try to do better." Miguel explains that this was how he thought about it at the time, "So I was like, *why not both?* But also my mom needed help with rent, and [*ice cream cart passes by*], I guess, I guess my brother was not, was not helping out, so I, it was... I felt it was my turn to step up and take responsibility for my family even though my stepdad was working." The following year, in Miguel's senior year of high school, he dropped out.

Miguel worked long hours at two different jobs as he helped to support his family, which he feels an obligation to do. This caused him to miss some days of school, he explains, and his school counselor decided that he had missed too many days. He thus had to leave his high school and start at a continuation school, which, Miguel says, he did not like and from where he soon

left. He explains, "I didn't wanna be there because I recognized some guys and we were friends back in middle school, but they became troublemakers, gang members. I don't, I'm not gonna get dragged into this. I just stayed there for two days, and I took off. I'm all like, *You know what? I'm gonna check out. I'm gonna go to* [name of alternative education program]." Miguel later completed his high school degree and got his diploma from an alternative education program. His acquaintance from middle school, who he believed, "would try to influence me to go into their gang, and you know, people that are with them go with them," he says, "is not yet graduated. He dropped out and moved to Palmdale."

As the first one in his family to graduate from high school, Miguel says that his mom felt proud to see him graduate. He pointed out his high school diploma that hung proudly on the wall. Also, as part of his photos prior to our wave three interview of the things most important to him in his daily life, he took a photo of his high school diploma. Like other undocumented youth in the La Vida sample, Miguel, too, received DACA. Unlike in other cases, however, where youth and parents described the benefits of DACA associated with higher education and, specifically, their eligibility for financial aid, which thus made higher education possible for them, Miguel talked about DACA and the benefits that it had for him mainly in terms of his job, a job where, in wave three, he had been working for a few years to help support his family. Miguel previously worked at the same company under someone else's name and now that he had his work permit, he could work under his own name and he also received an increase in his pay. Miguel said that he was now also thinking about where he would go to college and he talked a bit about two possibilities that he was considering. Nevertheless, working and supporting his family seemed to be Miguel's main priorities. He submitted applications to both schools that he was considering as options and each had since followed up with him but he said that he was putting off giving more

thought to this, at least at this point. He said that one of the schools had been calling him, "Uh yeah, they've been calling me. I'm like, *No!* They're like, *We want your appointment!* No, like, *I'm busy, I'm working*." The other school also sent Miguel a confirmation and informed him that he could pick his classes. But he said, "I never went... I was nervous, I guess you could say." Continuing with his education is something that Miguel says he knows is important to his mom, "Yes, it is because she wants me to um, make something out of my life." When I asked if it is also important to Miguel, he takes a minute to think and then responds, "[*pause*] It's more important to me that my family has food on the table than me, continuing my education."

Miguel says that he has been intimately familiar with the fact that he does not have papers since he was a young boy, "I mean, I learned that si-, since I was little, because my mom told me. She's all like, *We're in a different country, it's very different from where we're from.* And she's like, *You're gonna, you're gonna have very limited resources because, one, you don't have papers, you're not a citizen, you gotta learn English*. Um, she's all, *Not many people like us 'cause we're immigrants, I guess, we take away the jobs that no one else wants*." Miguel then talked about the discrimination that he has experienced in his own life and with his family. He recalls things that have been said to him and ways that he and his family have been treated – by his colleagues at work, by other families at his school events, and by perfect strangers in the community, all related to his family's economic and legal status circumstances. He recounts one anecdote, an experience that he had at work, when his mom's previous warning to him became quite real for him, "I've actually been called an immigrant before at work. Like a, *wet back*, and all these racial slurs because, I, I have, I didn't have papers, but working there, the thing is that I had to prove that I knew how to work, that I deserved to be there, unlike the other guy that was working, that was doing a half, a half-ass job. And they thought that just because he had papers,

he deserved better. I mean, yeah, you may have been born here, but if you have, haven't, if you have never gone to bed without eating, or spending half a year without light in your house, or water, or going to your aunt's house to go take a shower, and then going back home to where there's no light, there's nothing, so like [*pause*]. You, you have never been through [that]. I don't know [if] you know how much I want this [referring to his job]. I mean, that's what I, that's what I think. I don't know" (Miguel, male youth, age 20, wave three EFI).

Miguel spoke candidly and vividly. Much of what he described, including the effects of legal status circumstances for him and his family and the impacts of the economic hardship that his family faced, were circumstances that I had learned about from my interview with Miguel's grandmother the week prior, who spoke about many of these same things. However, Miguel's accounts of many of the same set of circumstances that his grandmother had also described offered distinct, authentic, and at times bone chilling accounts of Miguel's unique experience and coping strategies to deal with the various challenges that he and his family have faced.

Among the changes that I made to the protocol for data collection for the wave three follow-up study with families was the addition of, "transcriber's comments," at the end of each transcript. This added a space at the end of transcripts where transcribers were asked to jot down a brief description of features of the interview that could otherwise later go overlooked by readers, including the overall atmosphere surrounding the interview, the tone of the speakers, either throughout the interview or at any particular moments, and anything else that could contribute to a more accurate representation of each interview. Specifically, at the end of each transcript, transcribers were asked to include the following, "A couple of sentences to convey tone of the interview, which can include something that might go unperceived by just reading the transcript text as opposed to hearing the audio – maybe if the interviewee seemed agitated or

particularly excited, if the interviewee seemed particularly emotional or sobbed throughout the interview. Things like this we would never know unless noted in the transcript." In what I believe is the only example of its kind, in the transcriber's comments at the end of the transcript of Miguel's wave three EFI interview, the transcriber writes, "I was nearly moved to tears at some points in the conversation that were so heartbreaking or moving." Indeed, Miguel offers heartfelt and poignant descriptions of his daily life experiences, when he was growing up and in the present day, as illustrated above, which offer clear and vivid narratives about the daily life of one undocumented Mexican-origin adolescent growing up in Los Angeles.

In the context of much of the research to date on the experiences of undocumented youth growing up in the U.S., Miguel's story does not necessarily sound unique. Rather it embodies many examples of the precise kinds of hardship about which prior research evidence has warned can place undocumented youth in particularly precarious situations. Findings from past research on undocumented youth has shown associations between undocumented status and stymied academic prospects, pressure to stay close to the family, early entry into the labor force due to the family's financial constraints, and feeling hindered by the bleak and uncertain future prospects available due to unauthorized status. While Miguel's experience offers an example of an undocumented young person who is confronted with a striking number of these barriers, Miguel's experiences, though consistent with some of the research on this topic, were unique in the context of the La Vida study sample. For the other undocumented youth in this sample, some who faced similarly unpredictable circumstances in their daily lives and similarly worried about their and their family's uncertain futures, although this presented them with various obstacles, to be sure, these circumstances, challenging as they were, did not necessarily determine these youth's inevitable trajectories or outcomes.

In addition to the five adolescents who were undocumented in wave one of the study, legal status was also a salient topic for many other adolescents across the La Vida sample, whose narratives and experiences underscored the significance of what goes overlooked when we rely on individual legal status categories to inform our understanding of the implications that legal status can have in the lives of Mexican-origin youth today. Indeed, many U.S. citizen Mexican-origin adolescents grow up in the context of a great deal of legal status vulnerability and concern.

In fact, one important finding that emerged from families in the La Vida study was that the topic of legal status was no more salient in the lives of undocumented youth than it necessarily was for some U.S. citizen youth with undocumented relatives. The extent to which legal status affected youth in this sample in so-called, "mixed-status," families varied quite a bit, and, likewise, the compositions of these "mixed-status" families were not uniform. They ranged from, some "mixed-status" families, in the sense of the category as it is typically used, that is, to describe families made up of U.S. citizen children with undocumented parents, to, many more families with relatives in very mixed-legal-status situations.

Some families were dealing with quite a lot at home and in their families, including issues related to parents or children's physical or mental health, some parents were in the process of getting a divorce, and some families were trying to find ways to cope with severe economic hardship. In families faced with these different circumstances, some youth were having a hard time as a result. Families who struggled with these and other challenges in their lives, of course, included both, those with and without legal status concerns. In one such family, the mother and her three children make up a mixed-status family, in the traditional sense of the term. Sara, age 19, graduated from high school, and has an almost one-year-old baby of her own. She says that crossing the stage at graduation while pregnant was not easy, and she would like to go back to

school, but for now she is focused on having a job where she can earn some money. Her two younger siblings were also born in the United States and so are also U.S. citizens. Her mom immigrated to the U.S. 26 years ago and is undocumented. In my interview with Sara's mom, she talks a lot about her mom in Mexico (Sara's grandmother), who she has not been able to see in over 20 years and who she deeply misses. In Sara's interview, she likewise talks about how hard it is for her mom, who has not been able to visit her relatives, and mostly her mom, in Mexico, in so many years. Sara's parents got divorced when Sara was four years old and her dad is also undocumented.

Sara says that her dad struggles finding a job due to his legal status. He finds temporary jobs, but he has not had a steady job in many years and Sara says that she does not know how he is even able to survive from his extremely low income. Sara's mom, Viviana, has worked for many years at the same local restaurant chain, less than a block away, where she is a manager, makes nine dollars an hour, and works the night shift. In this way, she is able to walk to and from work, and she can run home if any problems arise or if her kids need her. Viviana works late into the night and Sara has long been responsible for caring for her two younger brothers when her mom goes to work. Sara says that her mom hates her job but that her options are limited because of legal status. Sara and her siblings are very much aware of legal status, as their mom has long discussed it with them. Viviana tells me about the, "earthquake plan" (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011; Suárez-Orozco 2012) that she and her family have in place in the event that she were to be detained or deported, and it was clear that she had given this thought. Viviana explains that she has discussed the plan with her children and, although she is not so certain that her children would be happy about it, she is firm in her plan that if she were deported, her children would go with her to Mexico.

Sara and her mom are both lighthearted in our interviews each year, even as they each, separately, describe their daily lives in Los Angeles and, at times, recount examples of difficult circumstances. The family lived in the same one-bedroom apartment over the course of all three waves of the study, in a part of Los Angeles infamous for its high crime rate. Sara's younger brother has what her mom describes as, behavioral issues, which affect their family a great deal, and significantly more than legal status concerns, which are also a source of worry.

While Sara's mom takes precautions in her daily life to avoid detection by immigration services, she is not hindered from seeking out and taking advantage of resources available, such as classes offered in the community and anything else that she can find that could potentially help with her son. Since wave one, Sara's mom discussed issues that she was having with her son and talked about meetings with the psychologist at her son's school and classes that she attended to learn more and try to help. By wave three, these issues had gotten particularly bad, with Sara's brother becoming increasingly violent. As a result, a social worker now comes over weekly to work with Sara's brother, and the family tries to keep him in school. While he is sometimes calm and polite, other times he begins screaming about things, throwing and breaking things, and he has physically injured both his mom and his sister. Both describe feeling helpless about this situation. They were told that when they feel like they are in danger they should run out and call the police. And, as Sara's mom tells me, they have called the police in emergency situations, but because of the neighborhood where they live, the police take an exceedingly long time to arrive, if they ever do, despite their having reported an emergency. In addition, when the police have come to their home, Sara and her mom both explain that, because Sara's brother is a minor, the police are concerned with ensuring that *he* is safe, while Sara and her mom are left both still feeling very much in danger. In this case, the mom's undocumented status does not deter her

from taking advantage of resources, such as the social worker who comes over regularly, or even to call the police when her son becomes violent and the family becomes fearful. In their case, dealing with Sara's younger brother, who at times acts out violently, has been enormously difficult, but Sara and her mom each tell me that they push through these tough times.

In another *mixed-status* family, legal status greatly impacts the entire family in different ways and their situation hardly looks like other, so-called, *mixed-status* families. Juan is a 19-year-old U.S. citizen, who lives in a rough neighborhood in Los Angeles with his 26-year-old undocumented brother, his 20-year-old U.S. citizen sister, his 13-year-old undocumented sister, and his undocumented mom. His dad, also undocumented, no longer lives with the family as of the wave three study. His dad was very abusive with Juan's family, including injuring his mom so badly that she requires surgery. Juan's 25-year-old sister, Carmen, does not live in the household and has never been to Los Angeles. Carmen was born in Mexico and, unlike her U.S. citizen siblings or her 26-year-old and 13-year-old undocumented brothers, Carmen stayed in Mexico, where she has a husband and a daughter of her own. Juan's cousin, who he was close to and spent a lot of time with growing up, was recently deported and is currently living with his sister and her family in the small town in Mexico where they live. Juan recalls what life was like in Mexico when he lived there with his family at various points during his childhood. He was last there when he was in the sixth grade and he says that he misses his sister who lives there, who he has not seen since that time, about seven years ago.

As of wave three, Juan reports that a lot has changed, mostly in terms of his role in the family, with more, "real responsibilities," financially. With his girlfriend's motivation, Juan says that he eventually finished high school. After his abusive dad officially separated from the family, they moved to South Los Angeles, where Juan feels unsafe. The neighborhood felt uneasy, and when

I scheduled my interview with Juan, he warned that I should not come after dark. Trash was littered all over the gutters and sidewalks and graffiti lined a number of walls and fences. Juan said that he often hears gunshots from his home. When they first moved there, Juan said that people in the neighborhood used to mess with him, for instance, someone once tried stealing his bike. But now that people in the neighborhood are familiar with him, they don't mess with him so much anymore. Primary among his concerns, Juan worries about his mom, who is afraid to get the surgery that she needs to repair her burst ear drum because taking off any days from work to do so could easily result in the loss of her job. Given her undocumented status, Juan explains that if his mom takes off a day from work to have her surgery, they could easily just replace her with someone else and she would have nothing that she can do or say about it.

In his room where we carried out the wave three interview, above his bed, Juan had a corkboard with numerous post-it notes on it, listing various things that he had to do, such as, "appointment with social worker to apply for food stamps." Juan tells me that he recently went to apply for food stamps and government benefits to help his family and, as a U.S. citizen, he qualifies, but he does not know if he can get benefits for his mom and his sister who are undocumented. His family's difficult economic circumstances cause Juan a great deal of stress. He feels a lot of responsibility, as the only and oldest sibling who does not have his own family (his older brother, who recently received DACA, has a wife and two children). Juan talks about the potential effects of undocumented status for his little sister, and about the effects that unauthorized status has for his mom and his older brother, specifically related to health. Juan is most concerned about the economic hardship that his family faces. He says that his mom is forced to do extremely hard work for very little money. He says that he has been to his mom's job where she sews clothes for hardly any money at all, but that, at the same time, she cannot

afford to lose the job. Among Juan's future aspirations, he says that he would like to join the military, or possibly become a border patrol agent. He explains that he would like to help people – bring them to nearby hospitals, offer water, help, etc., for the many people who are left to die as they try crossing, and his mom's stories about her experiences seem to have inspired this goal for Juan.

Rosita, age 19, offers another example of a U.S. citizen youth in a more traditional mixed-status family. Rosita's dad immigrated to the United States when he was 18 years old, and her mom when she was 15. She has a younger, 17-year-old brother and an older brother who is 21, both of whom are U.S. citizens, like Rosita. Rosita says that she does not ask her parents too much about the topic of legal status, but she knows that they live with the same constant fear that she lives with daily. In our interview, Rosita details the implications of her parents' undocumented status related to their jobs and the fact that her dad is not able to visit his sick mother in Mexico. With notable discomfort in her voice, Rosita describes conversations that she and different family members have had regarding a, "deportation plan," in case her parents are deported. This is something that her family has talked about with Rosita since she was in high school. She tells me, "When I was in high school, yeah. Like, *if something were ever to happen to me, like if I were to die or if somebody, if they like deported us, you have to take care of your brothers*. 'Cause I can't leave the burden on my aunt or something, like, because they have a lot of kids and, yeah, they'll [two brothers] be like, my responsibility, not that I can't. I take care of my brothers, but it's gonna be hard, you know?" She goes on to say, "once I have things in order, I plan to look into how to fix my parents' papers so they can travel to Mexico... my Mom gets depressed sometimes because she hasn't seen her relatives in so long."

In a final example of a mixed status family, Guadalupe similarly grows up in the context of a

family with very mixed legal statuses. While she is a U.S. citizen, there is a pending deportation order against her parents and two of her siblings that was put into effect some five years ago. Guadalupe's oldest sister, age 34, was undocumented for most of her life and about six years ago she adjusted her status and became a lawful permanent resident through her U.S. citizen husband. To do so, she had to return to Mexico with her infant son, where she successfully completed this process and adjusted her legal status. She is currently in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen and she wants to go back to college to become a nurse. Guadalupe's older brother, age 33, was also brought to the U.S. as a child and is undocumented. With the help of private scholarships that he received, he graduated from law school and works for a nonprofit organization where he helps immigrants navigate the legal process, including applying for DACA, even though he, himself, aged out of being eligible to apply. He was the first in the family to graduate from college, as well as law school, and Guadalupe, currently attending university, herself, will be the second. Guadalupe's 30-year-old sister feared that she would be deported if she applied for DACA and another sister, age 25, received DACA and now has various benefits as a result. Guadalupe feels close to her family and says that her mom is, "a great mom!" While she moved away for university, Guadalupe stays in close contact with her relatives. She talks about the deportation order that her family is fighting and tells me that if they went back to Mexico to try to apply for U.S. residency, they would face a ten-year bar. She describes feeling closest to her *tío*, who lives in Mexico but who lived with her and her family when she was young. She is also close with two of her siblings, who she says, feel that giving back is important, as she does also. Guadalupe is enjoying college. She works on campus three days per week for 6-7 hour shifts and she is majoring in psychology.

These stories that emerged across interviews with youth in the La Vida sample showed that

legal status is even more salient for some U.S. citizen youth than it is for some youth who are undocumented, and their various stories helped to explain why this is. The stories of U.S. citizen youth with undocumented relatives show a diversity of contexts and experiences, many specifically related to legal status implications in families, and the effects of these diverse contexts likewise vary quite a bit for these U.S. citizen youth.

Knowing the legal status of every mother in the sample (83% identified as primary parents), you still could not predict the effects of legal status for youth

Families across the La Vida sample shed light on the diversity of legal status circumstances across so-called mixed-status families. Many more families have relatives with various "mixed" legal status circumstances than those who do not. Having asked youth and parent participants about the legal status circumstances in their families and able to look across the sample at how legal status situations changed in some families over time and sometimes in significant ways, it became evident that grouping families into the widely-used categories of *undocumented*, *mixed-status*, and *documented* would not capture how legal status was experienced by many, perhaps most, of these youth. Moreover, after learning about the complex legal status circumstances across the households in this study, it was clear that the data did not fit into these categories. In some cases, youth with lawful permanent resident parents saw their parents worry at times due to uncertainty related to their legal status situation and this in turn caused youth to likewise worry. Similarly, in other families, both parents' legal status was not always the same; in some cases, while youth's primary parent was a lawful permanent resident, their secondary parent was undocumented, which in some cases had significant implications for youth. In a few cases, one parent was a U.S. citizen and the other undocumented. While this is a more rare occurrence because of the fact that there is no numerical limit on the number of immigrant visas for

immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and this includes spouses, other factors can and do get in the way of both parents necessarily becoming U.S. citizens.

For example, in one family, a U.S. citizen female youth, Flor, is very familiar with both of her parents' immigration stories, how they met, as well as their different current legal status situations. Her parents met and fell in love after they were both in the United States. Her dad became a lawful permanent resident in the 80s through the amnesty program, and although her mom was in the process of becoming a lawful permanent resident also (waiting in the infamous "line," which, for spouses of lawful permanent residents from Mexico, like for those in other "Family Preference," as opposed to "Immediate Relative," categories, can be a very long wait[11]), circumstances changed after her mom was caught crossing back into the U.S. after she went to Mexico to see her mom who was sick. Flor's mom describes how she was caught on her way back, "in a part of Tijuana, they got me, they took my finger prints, and that caused me to lose the papers that I was in the process of getting." Flor describes her mom's legal status circumstances as, "very difficult." Very difficult, indeed, as, after being caught at the border, her mom is no longer eligible to adjust her status. Meanwhile, her dad became a U.S. citizen, which, for her mom, might never be possible. Her mom has a difficult time finding steady employment and she works variable days at a sewing company. As her mom says in my interview with her, her best bet at this point is to simply, "wait to see if there is an amnesty and to see if the laws

[11] For those in the "Immediate Relative" category, which includes spouses of U.S. citizens, unmarried children under 21 years old of a U.S. citizen, or parents of a U.S. citizen who is at least 21 years old, there is no numerical limit on the number of immigrant visas and although this can still sometimes take months to process, it does not take decades; by contrast, for those in one of the four "Family Preference" categories, which includes spouses, minor children, and unmarried adult children of lawful permanent residents, there are a limited number of visas issued each year for each of the four family preference categories and for those from countries with high levels of immigration, such as Mexico, there can be very long wait times.

change," as this is her only real option. This same situation was also the case in another family in this sample. His mom, who is undocumented, has been in the U.S. for 26 years and is barred from ever being able to adjust her status. His dad, on the other hand, though he also entered the U.S. illegally, was able to apply for residency through his work, he became a lawful permanent resident when he and youth's mom first got together, and he became a U.S. citizen five years later. For lawful permanent resident primary parents, there was a great deal of variation in terms of the legal status of the other spouse – some were undocumented, others U.S. citizens, and others also lawful permanent residents; in some cases this meant that one or the other, or both spouses were in the process of adjusting their status, and in other cases, for a whole host of personal or legal reasons, parents did not expect to adjust their status and become U.S. citizens.

Some youth growing up in family contexts made up of all U.S. citizen children and lawful permanent resident (LPR) parents described negative experiences and sometimes lasting consequences, such as heightened anxiety, *because* of the vulnerabilities associated with their parents being non-U.S. citizens and the less well-known but real consequences that even lawful permanent residency can have in some families.

In the case of one U.S. citizen male youth, his mom and dad are both lawful permanent residents. When he and his three siblings were young, his family moved to Mexico and they moved back to the U.S. when he was in elementary school. Although his parents are lawful permanent residents, he describes the anxiety that he saw his parents feel when they had to renew their green cards. He explains, "reapplying [for their green card] isn't a taxing process, but they feel scared that they may be denied for some reason."

The legal status categories that we often use to categorize the increasingly diverse population of Mexican-origin families in the U.S. does not only overlook interesting variables, but, as I

suggest in this paper, these categories can also mislead our understanding of the actual implications of legal status situations for Mexican-origin youth today. To produce veridical results related to the implications of legal status situations in families and for youth, research should continue to examine household- or family-level legal status differences, not individual legal status labels. Given the current demographics of the U.S. Mexican-origin population, with fewer individuals and families migrating from Mexico to the U.S. compared to years prior, and an increasingly diverse Mexican-origin population, largely comprised of U.S. citizen youth growing up in families with complicated and very mixed legal statuses, we have a lot to learn about the effects that legal status can have on the population of largely U.S. citizen but also noncitizen Mexican-origin youth, a population that will represent a significant part of the next generation of adults in the United States.

Laura, a U.S. citizen adolescent in the tenth grade was living in a cramped space with barely enough room for herself, her older brother, and her mom in wave one of the La Vida study. She reported high levels of family conflict and described frequent fights arising between her and her mom, as well as many risk-taking behaviors – shoplifting, drinking, doing drugs – which resulted in her being on probation. Her mom worried that her friends had a bad influence on Laura, but as Laura explained in our wave three interview, "she thought it was my friend who influenced me, but it wasn’t like that… it was just me... Sometimes I would do it because I would get mad at my mom so I would just leave and I was so mad, and I would steal and after I would feel good, like, *oh I got this, so whatever, I don’t care*. Sometimes, 'cause I had problems with my family, and I would go and steal and it would make me feel better." Laura said that school was important to her, but when probed to elaborate on what she liked about school, she said that she gets to hang out with her friends, which is better than being at home, and in terms of her classes, she felt

satisfied with getting C’s, just passing her courses. Laura's mom and dad separated when she was five years old and Laura feels close to her dad, although they also get into arguments sometimes.

Laura, by virtue of being born in the U.S., is a U.S. citizen, as is her brother. Laura’s mom came to the U.S. from Mexico in the late 1970s and became a lawful permanent resident through the 1986 amnesty program. Her dad, likewise, could have adjusted his status, but did not because at the time he planned to return to Mexico, "He didn’t want to get his papers fixed," Laura's mom told me, "He could have but didn’t want to with the reasoning that we would be leaving soon anyway. I submitted my paperwork. This was in ’87. All they asked for was documentation from 1980 onward proving we had been here that long. They wanted any and all proof. I archived everything leading up to 1987… I had proof of all the rent, utilities, bank invoices you could think of. I kept everything, my pay stubs, schedules, you name it. I was a very curious person."

If we were to look at the legal status situation from the household perspective, it would not appear to be an issue or to have any connection to Laura’s disinterest in school. When I returned to this family in wave three and asked about legal status, I learned much more regarding just how much legal status has shaped Laura’s life. When Laura was 13 years old, she came home one day, *terrified*, her mom tells me, as Laura told her mom that her dad was going to be deported. Her mom explained,

"He [Laura’s dad] didn’t submit his paperwork until after we separated. We were apparently supposed to go back to Mexico but that never happened and he never fixed his papers. He used to do very specialized work that not many others could do, soldering, making pulleys, etc. His boss noticed how good of a worker he was and decided to submit his paperwork [to adjust his status] through work. The problem is that they submitted his documentation packet attached with the other woman he was with. He got married and submitted that… she was undocumented as

well. So the lawyer told them he might get deported and so my daughter came home one day crying, begging for me to help and it broke my heart so I did it… The lawyer started asking me questions with her in the room listening. Asking what he was like so I said he'd been a good father etc. and afterward it was her turn. The lawyer started asking her the same questions and she said he was a great father and was praising him very highly… the entire process went on for about three years. This is why my daughter's grades started falling in ninth grade. We would have to go to meetings, they even gave her a memory test to see if she was capable of retaining information. The school would send someone home with her, maybe a social worker, to make sure things were okay here. I couldn't talk to her at this time either because she'd ask me why anything mattered to me anyway. She was very confrontational towards me. I couldn't even look at her and she was mad because I hadn't wanted to help her father get his documentation. Towards the end of the proceedings we even had to go see an immigration judge and when he asked me why I was there and wanted this man to stay in the country I told him that it was because my children deserved to have their father with them in the same country. *My daughter needs him*, I said, *whether it's economic or not*. I showed him my daughter's grades and asked if he thought it was okay for her to have such low grades on account of her dad facing deportation. She was there, crying, as well as myself and her father. They had given him a timeframe about when he might be deported. He knew things were serious when he saw my daughter's grades as well. She went from having A's and B's to straight F's. This was in ninth grade, her first year, she didn't finish it. They finally started pushing back his possible deportation date until they just let him stay. My daughter started wanting to get her grades up, but she was low on credits and had already missed too much."

Had we not asked about legal status, we would have never known that Laura feared her father

was going to be deported, or that as a middle school student, Laura had to go to court and testify for her dad. As researchers, we might have looked at associations between the high levels of household conflict and Laura's low engagement in school. But by merely asking about legal status, literally just saying the words aloud, this led both Laura and her mom, separately, to describe in detail how legal status profoundly shaped Laura's life and her engagement in school. Prior to her learning about her father's possible deportation, Laura was a student with mostly As and Bs, and when she entered the ninth grade, Laura had, "*puras Fs* [all Fs]" in her classes. It was not until after her dad was granted residency, years later, that Laura again became engaged and motivated in school and her grades began to rise.

Interviewed separately, in separate locations and on different days, Laura and her mom both described the same story. Laura told me, "He [her dad] barely became a resident, like, four years ago, I think, no more, like five to six years ago, so barely, you know?" I asked her, "And do you remember when you were young? Did you know that he didn't have papers?" "No," Laura replies, "I did not know, I, like I always, I didn't even know about that, like, *what is that?* Like, I thought people could just live here without, like anybody saying, *hey, you gotta go back, you don't have papers, or you don't have,* you know?"

Laura recounts learning about her dad's legal status situation when she was in middle school, "I remember um my dad he wouldn't really speak about it. He would just be like, *hey you know soon I'm gonna go to court and then the judge is gonna ask you questions about me and stuff and just answer them as much as you can and stuff...* 'cause he didn't have papers. So, he was trying to um fix for his papers and it took a while I remember it was like two years and it was so stressful for me like thinking, *oh my God can he get deported at any minute*. And I'm like, it's hard. I was, I think 13, I was in middle school. I was probably in 8th grade and it's funny because

in 8th grade I dropped my grades. Literally they were like straight F's. So, it was really hard on me, you know. I would just do whatever, I wouldn't go to school, but I would ditch to other classes. And um it just I felt like I didn't care about school. Every time like I had a problem like I didn't care about anything and stuff. Like I just didn't wanna think about it. So I would do like things that were like, like, like get my adrenaline pumping like, *oh yeah I'm gonna ditch, I'm gonna go have fun over there in my friend's class and blah blah blah*, but yeah he would tell me, *yeah we're gonna go to court*, then that day came and I wasn't nervous 'cause I didn't know what to expect. And once I got there I was like, like, *the judge is like right in front of me asking me questions*. *So, how old is your dad? Does your dad pick you up? Is he a good dad? What would happen if he would if I would deport him? Would you be sad?* I was like, *oh my God, so they're gonna deport him*, like literally my jaw was shaking I was so sad and scared that they were gonna deport him and then I was just bursting out in tears. I couldn't even talk. Literally I was just like every time I would try, I would cry so much. You know it was just, it was sad. And then he told me, *oh it's okay, you know you don't have to talk*. Just by my reaction, he's seen that he was a good dad, that I really cared, 'cause if I didn't care I wouldn't have been crying like that."

When asked if she knows anyone who has been deported, Laura talks about her aunt, uncle, and cousins who had to move back to Mexico last year, "Oh yeah, my uncle. My uncle, well my uncle wasn't deported. His wife, he was trying to uh, put in papers for his wife, he has papers already. And he has kids, two kids, and because he lost his job, and he has kids and his wife couldn't get papers, 'cause they denied him, and they all had to go back, and they had to start all over, and filing papers again. They have to, they can't live—now they can't, if you're trying to fix papers, I think, or I don't know how the judge told him that, if they want papers they have to

move back. And they have to like file ‘em from there, and then after they can come here, or something like that… So they’re in Mexico now. I was really close to my cousin, he’s a boy." Laura’s cousin came to the U.S. with his parents when he was 8 years old, and at age 17, he had to return to Mexico with his family. When asked what she thought it was like for him to have to go back to Mexico, Laura said, "Oh, I know it’s horrible… He didn’t wanna go back, but he didn’t have a choice." In contrast, Laura says that her aunts, "all have papers. They all put in their papers all at the same time and they, luckily, like thank god that they all got their papers to stay here and work, you know?"

Asking families in wave three of the La Vida study about the legal status situations in their families revealed a great deal of variation in legal status circumstances across families and that knowing the legal status of every mother (83% identified as primary parents) and youth across the sample, you still could not predict the effects of legal status for youth. Laura's case offers one illustration of this finding and this example was not unique or a one off. Some youth and parents brought up the instability, and actual lack of “permanency” associated with the lawful permanent resident legal status category. The effects that this had for youth and in families varied, but the larger variation in legal status circumstances that emerged across families and the multiple and sometimes unexpected effects that different legal status family contexts had for youth underscored the importance of accounting for more nuanced legal status distinctions across Mexican-origin families, as evidence from this study showed that these more nuanced legal status differences across families matter in the lives of many youth. As Laura’s story and what she experienced with her father reveal, important developmental events can easily be overlooked if we disregard important legal status distinctions or group families into umbrella categories such as, "documented," assuming that the legal status situations of youth and their primary parent

necessarily tell the whole story of how legal status can affect youth; clearly, it does not.

In another example from the La Vida study, David, a U.S. citizen male youth, has two U.S. citizen siblings, a lawful permanent resident father, and a U.S. citizen mother. When David was about seven years old, his mom passed the citizenship test and went from lawful permanent resident to U.S. citizen. David's mom immigrated to the U.S. in 1979, when she was sixteen years old, and she became a lawful permanent resident (LPR) in 1987 through the amnesty program, like many other parents in this study and like a great majority of Mexican immigrant parents today. Unlike the vast majority of LPR Mexican parents, who for a host of reasons (discussed in the demographics section above), do not adjust their status, David's mom, like Laura's mom, did. David's father is a lawful permanent resident, like Laura's father now is as well, however, despite these similar circumstances, David and Laura's experiences as they relate to legal status circumstances in their families, could not be more different. Unlike Laura, David has never experienced any consequences related to his parents' legal status situations.

In another case, much more similar to Laura's, a U.S. citizen mother talks about her son's close relationship with his father. This mom explains that she is the only U.S.-born family member from among her siblings and parents, "a lucky accident," she calls it. She was born in the U.S. and at months old, her family moved to Mexico. Thus, her other five siblings are not U.S. citizens as she is. She is recently separated from her son's father and she moved into a smaller, one-bedroom apartment. Her son chose to live with his dad, which makes her sad, but she understands, as he has more space living with his dad than he would living in her one-bedroom apartment. His dad, a lawful permanent resident, was born in a big city in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. when he was 18 years old. Like many other parents, he became a lawful permanent resident through the amnesty program at age 19. His parents lived in Mexico and they

used to come to visit, but they have both since passed away. When their son was seven years old, he went to Mexico to visit these grandparents and other relatives there, including aunts and uncles on his dad's side who cannot come to the U.S. He liked it very much and has been back since to visit again. In our interview with their son, he assumes that his dad is a U.S. citizen and talks about how he remembers helping his dad study for the citizenship test. Yet, we learn from his mom's interview that, while everything was in order for his dad's citizenship completion, one month prior he got a DUI and as a result had to wait an additional five years to take the exam and is actually in the process of doing so now. In this case, we do not know the actual effects, if any, that knowing about this might have had on their son, but based on similar circumstances and their effects on youth in other families, it is certainly possible that had his parents told their son that the citizenship test he had been helping his dad to prepare for was delayed by five years after he received a DUI, it may have resulted in increased anxiety about his dad's legal status security.

In another family, Jasmine talks in great detail about the effects that legal status has had for her and her family. She is intimately familiar with her parents' immigration stories, which she details in her wave three interview. She explains that her mom first came to the U.S. in 1985 with a tourist visa for 15 days and then returned to Mexico. Her mom and her dad met in Mexico when her mom was practicing dentistry there. They dated for a while, Jasmine says, before her dad came to the U.S., by creating a different name and identity. Jasmine says that her dad came to the U.S. when he was in his twenties and her mom took a bit longer. She says that her maternal aunt and grandmother came to the U.S. first and they knew her mom's, now, husband, and at the time they urged her to marry him. But her mom did not come to the U.S. until many years later, when she was in her mid-30s. She did so, Jasmine explains, by simply telling the border patrol agent that she needed to go to the store to grab something and come back. She

memorized how to say this sentence in English and because she did not have any bags with her, the border patrol agent allowed her to pass. She and Jasmine's father first went to Texas and they eventually moved to California, where they currently reside. Jasmine's mom eventually became a lawful permanent resident, which, she says, took about two years, and then six months for the paperwork to go through. When Jasmine was in middle school, her mom took citizenship classes, where she walked each night, from 6pm to 9pm, for two years. Today, she is a naturalized U.S. citizen.

In Jasmine's wave three interview, she describes her clear memories of not being able to go to the doctor when she was a little girl because her family did not have medical insurance. She contrasts this with her current circumstances, with Kaiser insurance and able to make an appointment and get looked at relatively quickly, as opposed to, "waiting around for 14 hours," as she says that she remembers having to do. Jasmine says that her father was never able to get a better job in the U.S. because he did not have his papers yet. When he eventually got his papers, she says, "he even went back to school for a while to try to advance, but he eventually went back to doing factory work." Growing up, Jasmine says that legal status affected her and her family mostly in terms of their economic circumstances and in significant ways. At her dad's first factory job in the United States, Jasmine recounts how he was using a false identity, which was fine, until he got a promotion at work. This caused some of his co-workers to feel jealous and angry, Jasmine describes, and they threatened him, and then notified the factory owners. Rather than fire him, however, the factory owners instead eventually helped Jasmine's dad adjust his status.

Jasmine is very knowledgeable about her parents' legal status situations. Although she was young when her parents each adjusted their legal statuses to lawful permanent residents, and then

became U.S. citizens, she remembers parts of the process, and she says that she has asked her parents questions about it in the past. She remembers well, for example, the two years when her mom used to take classes and study every night for the citizenship test. While these legal status circumstances in her family have since changed with both of her parents having since successfully adjusted their status, Jasmine's clear recollection and descriptions of the negative effects that a lack of legal status has had for her and her family in their day-to-day lives speaks to the possibility that she continues to be affected by it in some ways.

Also, despite the fact that the legal status circumstances in her immediate family have changed for the better, explicit examples also emerged through her narrative of some concrete ways that legal status in fact also still continues to affect her life. Her close relationships with family members are important to Jasmine, as they were for many youth in this study. Jasmine's grandmother on her mom's side, was someone particularly important to her and she had moved into the household with Jasmine and her parents about six months prior to her recently passing away. Jasmine cries as she talks about this and says that her grandmother's passing away has also caused her mom to be depressed. Jasmine is also close to her cousins. One cousin, who she considers to be more of a sister and she even calls her, her sister, lives in Guadalajara, Mexico, and she and Jasmine often communicate over *Facetime*. Another of Jasmine's cousins was deported about five years ago and came back unlawfully. Jasmine recounts that he was deported because, "he submitted papers to immigration to be in the U.S. legally, and missed the appointment."

In another family, I talked with a lawful permanent resident (LPR) mom about the differences between being a U.S. citizen and a lawful permanent resident. She was quick to respond with her perspective, that when one is not a U.S. citizen, it is possible that the government could one day

decide to rescind lawful permanent residency, generally, causing lawful permanent residents to lose any rights they provisionally had and become subject to deportation. In a different interview, another mom shared this same view. This mom contrasted her own situation, as a lawful permanent resident, with that of a U.S. citizen throughout our wave three interview. The fact that she is not a U.S. citizen causes her to live with an underlying sense of unease. She has not taken the citizenship exam, she tells me, "because of the English part of it," which she fears she would not fully understand and, as a result, she would not pass the exam.

As the experiences of these youth and families reveal, we need to detach categories such as lawful permanent resident from notions of "documented," and begin to explore what if any patterns emerge on a larger scale with respect to the implications that this more nuanced legal status category might in fact have across Mexican-origin youth and families. That youth and parents in this study brought up lawful permanent residency as a source of uncertainty in their lives was surprising and speaks to the need for further examination. Lawful permanent residents (more commonly known as green card holders) are not entitled to the same rights or assurances of permanency as are naturalized U.S. citizens. In some cases, families, themselves, only learn about these legal status realities when faced with a set of unforeseen circumstances tied to their legal status situation, while in other cases, families are very much aware of the regulations tied to their legal status and in some of these cases the provisional nature of their lawful permanent residency causes unease.

While in many cases, lawful permanent residency represents the pathway to citizenship that it is and, in general, it is not associated with legal status constraints but rather with all that it offers to so many immigrants in the United States, it is also true that as a legal status category, there are less well-known restrictions connected to it and, as evidence from this study shows, these legal

status realities arise in some families and can have real consequences for youth, which should be further explored. This finding underscores some of the reasons why lawful permanent resident status should no longer be conflated with that of U.S. citizen or lumped into the umbrella category of, "documented," (itself a category that demands a more clear definition), and why further examination of its implications for children is warranted. Despite its actual definition and under the guise of "permanent," these experiences and the implications that arise for some Mexican-origin youth today due to their parent's lawful permanent resident status, go unnoticed. It should come as less of a surprise that Mexican-origin youth, who have long been shown to place great emphasis on longstanding family traditions of family obligation values, family connections, and networks of family support, are affected by the legal status situations of their family members, who matter to youth across every domain of their lives.

Discussion

Experiences of uncertainty in families really capture the opaque nature of the legal status circumstances in many families. The same legal status category can have different effects for children growing up in two different families, depending on the different circumstances in each. Similarly, families can experience uncertainty in ways that change over time. Together, all of these experiences that youth and parent participants across the La Vida sample powerfully described offer a lens through which we can more clearly see the complexity of legal status situations and the sobering consequences that they can have in families.

Given the many categories and gradations that undocumented status actually entails, comparisons between individuals who are *undocumented* or *documented*, for instance, are in fact not useful. The added pressures of unauthorized status and the, inevitably, more limited resources and access to services, takes a heavy toll for entire families affected by these

constraints. Yet research to date by in large has overlooked the significance of family relationships when it comes to advancing our understanding of how legal status affects this significant population of young people across the United States today.

As a first approximation to developing a set of descriptive indicators of likely influences on youth due to varied family and legal immigration circumstances, here is a listing of the topics that should be considered when examining family and immigration status.

"Documented"

LPR

U.S. Citizen (naturalized or U.S.-born)

Visa status

Changed legal status circumstances

Application for residency or other status "in the line" (for how long?)

Family circumstances around the youth

Employer-based status

Close family relationships

Effects of divorce, violence, etc.

Effects legal status has had on other family members

"Undocumented"

Family circumstances around the youth

Close family relationships

Applications in process or denied in the past?

What youth knows about family legal status

Changed legal status circumstances

Effects of divorce, violence, etc.

Effects that legal status has had on other family members

As underscored by the many stories from youth and different family members in this paper, these topics are not only relevant but are intimately tied to the daily life experiences and the implications that legal status circumstances have for many Mexican-origin youth today. These suggestions are based on empirical evidence that come out of the La Vida study with Mexican-origin youth and their families in Los Angeles and I believe they take us in the right direction for advancing our understanding of actual legal status circumstances and their implications for Mexican-origin youth across this diverse population.

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CHAPTER 3

Familism, Gratitude, and Academic Pathways for Mexican-Origin Youth as they Transition through High School in Los Angeles

Abstract

The emerging science of gratitude points to a host of positive implications associated with an orientation toward gratitude, and research has underscored the positive effects of fostering these feelings. For Mexican-origin youth, feelings of gratitude appear to be salient features of daily life, linked with but different from family obligation and responsibility. Previous research findings are inconsistent as to whether a commitment to familism, values that emphasize family assistance, obligation, cohesion, respect, and extended networks of family support, generalizes to positive outcomes and wellbeing, or inhibits youth from extending their horizons, or can lead to rebellion from families seen as too restrictive. Evidence from our three-year study provides ample evidence of a significant connection between gratitude and familism for Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles. It is currently unknown how this connection plays out in later adolescence, how thoughts and experiences of gratitude develop, and what associations exist with long-term academic and behavioral outcomes. I examine the development of gratitude in the family context by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, I explore feelings and experiences of gratitude in youth's everyday lives, factors that promote or inhibit the continuation of gratitude across the critical developmental period of late adolescence, and associations with youth outcomes.

Keywords*:* Gratitude, Familism, Mexican-origin youth, academic outcomes

"Para poder seguir adelante" [to keep going; push forward; achieve one's goals] and "*para darles una vida mejor*" [to give them a better life] accompanies nearly every parent's immigration story and narratives of relatives in Mexico, "I wanted a better life for my son, my husband was coming back and forth from the U.S., he was sending us money, but our family was never together, so one day, I just picked up and came with my son, I didn't even tell him I was coming."

In this paper I report on the La Vida study sample (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), a longitudinal study of 428 Mexican-origin adolescents and their primary caregivers who were recruited from the 9th and 10th grades of two Los Angeles high schools during the period 2009 to 2011. The La Vida project looked at the role of familism

values in the daily lives of Mexican-origin adolescents and parents in Los Angeles and associations between adolescents' experiences of family obligation and various academic and behavioral outcomes. The study design included a randomly selected nested subset of 42 adolescents and primary parents who participated in the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI), a qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured conversational interview (Weisner, 2002) that lasted approximately two hours each and included about 25 photos that teens took prior to interviews of, "things that are meaningful in their daily lives."

The qualitative subsample was followed for a total of three waves between 2009 and 2014. Waves one and two took place during the period 2009 to 2011, and wave three took place during the period July 2013 to July 2014. Given the rapport that had been built with families by wave three, in this final year of qualitative interviews with families, data collection included more detailed accounts of the family circumstances of this subset, including the legal status situations in families as well as parent and youth reports on youth's high school outcomes. This subset is the focus of this paper.

The La Vida study sample examined in this paper is representative of the larger U.S. Mexican-origin population, with a diverse set of Mexican-origin families and most with different versions of mixed legal status situations, that is, family members with various temporary or permanent legal statuses. While U.S.-born, and thus U.S. citizen, children may seem to benefit from their U.S. citizen status, or at least fare better than their unauthorized peers, ample evidence shows that the legal status concerns of family members can likewise have consequences for the daily lives and trajectories of U.S. citizen youth also.

How does one *seguir adelante* when various legal, financial, and other barriers interfere with the academic and career objectives of youth and families? "I don’t complain," says one young

woman in Mexico, who has not seen any of her siblings or her parents in many years, all of whom live in Los Angeles, "*siempre intentamos salir adelante, siempre échale ganas para que mis hijos vivan mejor* [we always try to push forward, always try harder, so that my children can live better]." "If I could change something," she says, "*ahorita nada. Estamos contentos* [Right now, nothing. We're happy]."

The larger context within which youth and parents work to get ahead, to keep going, trying, pushing to reach their goals, of course, differs across diverse family contexts. One mom works three jobs, takes six buses, and hikes from the bus stop to her employer's house in the Malibu Canyons, silently discouraged by the fact that her employer does not ever think to offer her a lift. As a single parent of five, she works hard to help her family get ahead and in ways that differ from other Mexican immigrant parents who similarly struggle to make ends meet. A mom in another family describes how she finds ways to make the food leftover from last week feed her family for another two weeks. Her unauthorized status makes it difficult to find employment and the E-Verify sign hanging in the window of otherwise would-be employers cause her to immediately turn around and walk the other way. She is happily married, but during her son's sophomore year in high school, her husband drove through a yellow light and was eventually deported to Mexico. The daily routine that she had previously described as stable and reliable becomes unstable and far from reliable, as she must find ways to contend with significant economic insecurity, unlikely job prospects, and a husband whom she hopes will find a way to return from Mexico. Another mom refers to her story as, "a lucky accident;" having grown up in Tijuana, Mexico, in a family with many brothers and sisters, she is the only one from among her siblings who happened to be born during a quick visit that her family took across the border to California. She, likewise, works tirelessly to help her and her children get ahead, but in ways that

differ from the first two examples. Consistent across adolescent and parent narratives about the importance of *siguiendo adelante* (getting ahead), despite the number of barriers that might get in the way, is the drive for education, most importantly, for youth. What differ across subsets of Mexican-origin families are the circumstances in families, which can in some cases facilitate and in other cases hinder the ease with which children growing up across these different family contexts – some who are U.S. citizens, others who are unauthorized, and many who are in mixed legal status family arrangements – have access to pathways that will contribute to them achieving these goals.

The emerging science of gratitude points to a host of positive implications associated with an orientation toward gratitude and research has underscored the positive effects of fostering these feelings. For many Mexican-origin youth, feelings of gratitude are salient features of daily life, linked with but different from family obligation and responsibility. Previous research findings are inconsistent as to whether a commitment to familism values, which emphasize family assistance, obligation, cohesion, respect, and networks of family support, generalize to positive outcomes and wellbeing, or inhibit youth from extending their horizons, or can lead to rebellion from families seen as too restrictive. Evidence from our three-year study with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles offers ample evidence of a significant connection between gratitude and familism for Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles. It is currently unknown how this connection plays out in later adolescence, how thoughts and experiences of gratitude develop, and what associations exist with long-term academic and behavioral outcomes.

In this paper, I examine the development of gratitude in the family context by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, I explore feelings and experiences of gratitude in youth's everyday lives, factors that promote or inhibit the continuation of gratitude across the critical

developmental period of mid-adolescence, and associations with youth outcomes. Some youth in the first two waves of the La Vida study described family obligation as meaningful in their daily lives, while others described feeling frustrated or resentful about their high levels of obligation, which sometimes led to family conflict. For some, feelings about family obligation changed over time and, in some cases, this appeared to be at least in part related to legal status situations in families. Using evidence from the *La Vida* study, I look at experiences and feelings about the topics of familism and gratitude for Mexican-origin high school students in Los Angeles, connections between these two topics of familism and gratitude, and associations with different academic outcomes for this sample of youth.

I look at the implications of different structural barriers in Mexican immigrant and Mexican-origin families, such as the effects of unauthorized and mixed legal status family situations, financial hardship, divorce, and gender differences, among others, for the development of familism and gratitude among Mexican-origin youth across the critical developmental period of late adolescence. Does growing up in a family with greater economic pressure, or with immigrant parents who are more likely to have low levels of education and more difficulty navigating things like the school system for their children, or with the threat of deportation hovering in the background, put strain on family relationships and lead to less gratitude among Mexican-origin adolescents? Or do first generation youth, or youth who grow up in families with greater economic hardship experience more gratitude as a result of the difficulty their families face or perhaps related to their familiarity with and greater understanding of their parents' immigration stories and experiences?

Literature

The *family* is central to the daily lives of many if not most Mexican-origin families today.

Family extends beyond those in the household to relatives living near and far, in the U.S. and in Mexico. Enduring cultural values of family obligation, task assistance, family cohesion, and extended networks of family support (*familism*) are salient features of daily life for many Mexican-origin youth, shown to persist in Mexican families, "even after living for several generations in an American society that places great emphasis on independence and individuality" (Fuligni 2011, 105). Determination to "seguir adelante" (push ahead; keep going; move forward) for a better future is central to the goals of Mexican-origin families, and endorsement of these family values may be one way this goal is achieved. Familism guides behavior and impacts youth and parent decision-making, daily life, and long-term outcomes, yet there is disagreement in the literature about how familism is experienced by youth, including its meaning, behavioral scripts, and consequences.

Growing research focuses on the role and protective effects of familism values in Mexican-origin families, commonly identified as sources of *resilience* and linked to a host of favorable long-term outcomes for youth. Familism involves the benefits of extensive family networks of support and can generalize to school and peer relationships and foster positive socioemotional identity. Familism may be protective for Mexican-origin youth, many of whom grow up in a context of disproportionate poverty and unsafe neighborhoods and contend with discrimination and healthcare and academic barriers (Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez 2003, 222; Taylor et al. 2012).

Previous research finds associations between the cultural values of familism and indicators of academic achievement (Esparza and Sánchez 2008; Germán et al. 2009; Gonzales et al. 2008; Fuligni 2001). School success can be a component of family obligation – a mechanism through which teens can help their families and show gratitude (Fuligni 2001). Esparza and Sánchez

(2008) describe a link between familism and specific favorable academic outcomes, namely, school attendance and relatively strong academic effort. They suggest, "feeling a stronger bond with family may create expectations that students will miss fewer classes and spend more time doing their homework" (2008, 198). Likewise, Fuligni et al. (1999) explain, "youths likely feel that achieving in school is an important part of their family obligations and that their academic success will in some way assist the family's fortunes" (1041). Similarly, Gonzales, et al. (2008) argue that familistic values, including but not limited to family obligation, serve as, "a protective resource" (151), which promotes heightened academic engagement among immigrant youth. Evidence also shows links between feelings of gratitude towards parents and other family members and positive psychological, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Froh et al. 2011; Grant and Gino 2010; Emmons 2003), and associations between reduction of stress and increased prosocial behavior through the transmission of familism (Knight and Carlo 2012; Calderón-Tena et al. 2011; McGinley et al. 2009).

Countering the oft-cited pattern of academic underachievement and other negative outcomes for Latino youth, a growing body of research explores the factors that influence and facilitate success among Latino youth (Ceballo 2004). Findings point either to particular components of familism, such as sayings, or *dichos* ("scholars cannot agree on whether *dicho* and *proverb* are synonymous" [Espinoza-Herold 2007, 264]; a *dicho* could be defined as a saying or an expression, wisdom or advice), which are passed on to children, or to other ways of coping, such as through, "acts of resistance" (Gonzales and Chavez 2012, 267), coupled with the importance of family. In Gonzales and Chavez's (2012), "Awakening to a Nightmare," for example, among, "those who are the object of disciplinary practices from society and the subjects of exclusionary discourses of citizenship and belonging" (2012, 257), namely, undocumented youth, "some

wilted under such pressure, while others resisted, pursued education and training, struggled to survive economically, contributed to organizations working to change the nation's immigration laws, and maintained hope in a future where they would be allowed full participation in society" (267). Gonzales and Chavez point out that 65 of the 76 interviewees in their sample participated in at least one of the immigrant marches of 2006 (267). In the face of exclusionary practices, they explain, "a sense of inclusion emerges through everyday lived experiences such as working, forming families, making friends, paying taxes, playing sports, engaging in community affairs, and interacting with social institutions, particularly schools (Agamben 1998; Chavez 1998; Yuval-Davis 2006)" (2012, 257). Unauthorized youths' engagement in these activities and practices infuse hopelessness with possibility and dilute overwhelming exclusion with forms of participation. More than just, "forming families," but also being in a family, and the acquisition of familistic values, appear to contribute to feelings of inclusion in the face of so much exclusion.

Understanding who participates in civic society, and why they do or do not, is important for a fully contextualized understanding of familism and school and other positive engagement in U.S. society, since these may well be connected. On the one hand, there is evidence of Latino marginalization which echoes throughout the literature on civic engagement (de la Garza 2004 *in* Martinez 2010). At the same time, it is known that civic involvement is good for otherwise marginalized youth (McBride et al. 2003). Martinez's (2010) study, "Politicizing the family: How grassroots organizations mobilize Latinos for political action in Colorado," further illuminates the importance of familistic values among Latinos, with respect to these same 2006 marches in Colorado. Martinez (2010) shows how, "local grassroots organizations played a pivotal role in mobilizing Latinos and immigrants for political action by utilizing a host of

strategies including emphasizing cultural values, especially familism, to convey the significance of the marches and the need for immigration reform" (464). Grassroots organizers in Colorado deliberately invoked family-oriented frames to mobilize Latino protestors in the community, "Cultural appeals, especially those that couple political participation and familism, were preferred frames for mobilizing protestors because they best captured the significance of immigration reform, had proven effective in prior campaigns and reinforced organizations' ethos about community organizing... family is important because relationships are important in Latino and immigrant communities" (Martinez, 2010, 478).

Similarly, Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) find in their sample that, "in order to survive and achieve educationally, the interviewees drew on strong family support systems" (35). While academic success for Mexican-origin students can be attributed in part to individual motivation and external support and resources, Castro-Salazar and Bagley (2010) point out that it must, "be situated within the context of the strong familial support" (33). In their sample, Castro-Salazar and Bagley find that, "all the participants alluded repeatedly to the positive influences and support they received from their families, specifically to the influence of their mothers" (33). Likewise, Espinoza-Herold (2007) emphasizes the need to recognize, "the power and influence of the extended family and that Latinos often operate within these family influences when making life decisions, such as attending college and planning for the future" (274). Espinoza-Herold (2007) focuses on students who, despite it all, manage to, "beat the odds" (261), and do so by drawing on their "cultural resources" (261). Resilience and positive development, achieved by drawing upon cultural resources for instance, are an important yet understudied area of focus (Society for Research in Child Development. 2012 Themed Meeting: Positive Development of Minority Children. Feb 9-11, 2012. Tampa, FL). Understanding the pathways that lead to

favorable outcomes such as academic achievement is key, and strong familial support among Mexican-origin families may very well contribute.

While a significant and growing body of research suggests that supporting familism values may equip Mexican-origin youth with resources that help buffer against risks associated with academic, economic, sociocultural, and health disparities and stressors that have long been shown to disproportionately affect Mexican and other immigrant-origin youth, it is not an unalloyed benefit. Familism has also been associated with disadvantages in youth's outcomes. The same cultural values that can equip Mexican youth with sources of resilience can also compel these same students to want to live at home after high school, which, some find, translates into lower rates of college application and underachievement among Latino students (Desmond and López-Turley 2009). Indeed, Desmond and López-Turley (2009) find that the preference to live at home as well as the obligation that many U.S. Latino youth feel to stay close to home and help the family with whatever might arise, both of which are strongly related to familism, they argue, "may help to explain why Hispanic youth lag so far behind other racial and ethnic groups in virtually every measure of educational success" (316).

Some research also points to circumstances such as, conflict over family practices, economic stress, gender differences, consequences of divorce, or adolescent non-disclosure to parents at times, all of which can interfere with the already difficult teen years. While youth's adherence to the longstanding values of family obligation and respect may be associated with greater academic motivation and participation for some youth, academic participation and motivation do not necessarily translate into long-term academic success (Esparza and Sánchez 2008; Fuligni 2011; Gonzales et al. 2008). In addition, structural barriers can also interfere with otherwise protective effects of familism values (Castro-Salazar and Bagley 2010; Hamann and Zúñiga

2011), and factors such as unauthorized status can certainly magnify the hurdles that many Latino youth face (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). Many point to the emphasis that immigrant parents place on their children's education. Immigrant parents are repeatedly shown to have high expectations and aspirations for their children (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011, 457), and children are often motivated to do well in school because of their parents' high expectations (Fuligni 2011). Yet, sometimes the challenges associated with unauthorized status are too big and can interfere, even for youth with a strong desire to meet their parents' academic goals for them (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011, 457). There is disagreement in the literature regarding the implications that strong endorsement of familism values has for Mexican-origin youth. This is significant as, on the one hand, the first set of promising findings have led some scholars to advocate for community leaders (doctors, teachers, and others) to incorporate these cultural values into their work with Latino students, patients, and otherwise, in an effort to promote these positive results. Yet, there remains disagreement about these findings, which is perhaps unsurprising, given the considerable heterogeneity across the population of Mexican-origin youth, alone. Indeed, as Fuligni (2011) points out, "family identities are not magic bullets" (109), and familism alone may be helpful but insufficient.

The subjective experiences of Latino youth are, of course, not always positive and cohesive. Inconsistent findings might be explained by the fact that most research in this area relies solely on quantitative methods, while qualitative evidence points to the complexity and variation in the lived experience of familism. For example, as Smith-Morris, et al. (2012), explain, "the family is named as both a reason to migrate and a reason to stay home; a reason to seek more income, and a reason to be accessible for family gatherings; a reason to go, to stay, to be with, and to escape. Depending on the conversation, speakers may be defending, praising, reprimanding, or actively

considering both pros and cons of family events and pressures, through the performance of their narrative" (13). Some point to particular aspects of familism, such as *dichos* [proverbs, expressions, wisdom, or advice] that are passed on to children through the family (Espinoza-Herold 2007, 264). I found that there was qualitative variation in the experience and meaning of familism, that feelings of gratitude are connected to familism, and that legal status might help to explain some of these differences. Feelings of gratitude seem to be salient features of everyday life for many, but not all, Mexican-origin youth. Family assistance can provide youth with meaningful ways of contributing to their families who sacrificed for them, stimulating feelings of gratitude, shaping family interactions, and strengthening family cohesion.

A growing body of literature in psychology emphasizes the benefits of gratitude, which have been associated with psychological and physical health, social cohesion, heightened prosocial behavior, an increased likelihood of goal attainment including academic achievement and job satisfaction (Bono and Froh 2008; Calderón-Tena et al. 2011; Emmons and McCullough 2003; Froh et al. 2011; Grant and Gino 2010). In light of these research findings, intervention research has followed and has included interventions such as having participants keep gratitude journals and participating in a "gratitude visit," expressing their gratitude to someone who they had not previously properly thanked. Adults who have kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis report improved health, increased exercise, improved sleep, fewer physical symptoms, and higher overall life satisfaction (Emmons and McCullough 2003). Children who have participated in these interventions practicing grateful thinking show more positive attitudes about school and their families (Froh et al. 2008).

Another intervention, the gratitude visit, done with adults and with youth, has asked participants to write a letter to someone to whom they never properly expressed their gratitude

and to then read their letter to this person. Participants who have carried out these "gratitude visits," to express their gratitude to someone who they never previously properly thanked, report improved romantic relationships, and their friends, family, and partners report them being "markedly more pleasant" (Froh et al. 2009). Themes of familism and gratitude emerged across interviews with Mexican-origin youth in the La Vida sample. Many described feeling motivated to contribute to their families in different ways because of severe financial and other constraints their families faced. Youth in the La Vida sample regularly engaged in daily chores and babysitting of younger siblings; some youth contributed financially by getting a job at a local grocery store, or helping parents at work. Many adolescents described how doing things for and with their family formed an obvious, and gratifying, part of daily life. The prevalence and salience of familism values (values that emphasize family assistance, obligation, cohesion, respect for elders, and extended networks of family support) across Mexican-origin families in the United States has stimulated a growing body of interdisciplinary research that looks at the academic, social, and psychological implications of strong adherence to these cultural values for children.

Familism values also appear to be closely associated with feelings and experiences of gratitude, which are also prevalent across high school aged Mexican-origin youth. Family obligation can stimulate feelings of gratitude, or can provoke conflict between family members. This study explores feelings and experiences of gratitude in the daily lives of Mexican-origin youth, and differences in its salience across a representative sample of Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles. In the first two waves of the study, without any explicit prompts regarding gratitude, descriptions of feeling grateful and appreciative emerged across adolescent interviews through different topics (e.g., family history, daily life, responsibilities, and religion) and in a

surprisingly large number of youth's photos (photos form part of the youth qualitative EFI interviews, discussed in more detail in the methods section of this paper). To contribute to our understanding of the development of gratitude in the family context and its socialization in Mexican-origin families, the wave three study explored ways that parents encourage feelings of gratitude and appreciation, respect and family cohesion (e.g., through stories about the past, hardship, resilience, religion, sayings and proverbs, etc.) and what motivates or discourages it. Parents described their attempts to instill feelings of gratitude in their children (e.g., through narratives about their past in Mexico or crossing the border), and how these strategies proved to be, in their opinion, successful or not. Research on topics of familism and gratitude largely emerge from disciplines such as psychology that employ mainly quantitative measures. Complementary qualitative investigations are essential to enrich these discussions.

As the population of Mexican-origin families in the U.S. has proliferated, scholars have become more committed than ever before to understanding Mexican-origin families and elements that can contribute to positive youth development. Yet research with Mexican-origin families tends to use single method approaches and large sample sizes, and often neglects legal status circumstances at the family level. Past research has instead focused on individual youth or on accounts only from parents, despite the centrality of the family, particularly in Mexican-origin families. Longitudinal research is also key to understanding youth's actual experiences, trajectories, and outcomes. To more fully understand what is at stake for Mexican-origin youth in their quest to *seguir adelante*, I look at these experiences for youth growing up across Mexican-origin families, taking into consideration the broader family context, multiple perspectives, plural family situations, and changes over time.

From the literature that I have reviewed and the ethnographic evidence from the La Vida

study described in this paper, I examine gratitude in the family context and as a concept that involves various levels and which is present in different domains of life. This includes gratitude in the following contexts: as an experience or a feeling: appreciation, respect (for people, family; *for getting me where I am*, *for doing x for me*; for a higher power; *for making miracles, helping me to get through this*); family closeness; belonging, feeling supported, feeling valued; how it operates in terms of relationships: stronger bonds are formed, feelings of closeness, support, being valued, belonging; in terms of actions: a desire to give back (now and in the future), obligation to assist; a religious element: connection to religious iconography and religion (the Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, for example, is an important, powerful, and one of most cherished religious figures among Latinos, and in particular, Mexicans; a temporal element: appreciation for the past; ancestors, far away extended-relatives; hardship family has endured; and in terms of statements made: emotional/psychological; how participants talk about gratitude and what it means for their relationships, for instance, acknowledging a benefit received: "after all they did for me;" "to pay them back for everything they did;" "she teaches me responsibilities, and I'm really grateful for that;" "my responsibilities are fair 'cause… my mom's teachin' me how to be clean, not to be dirty. I run errands for her ... I feel special. You know, like, important or somethin'… cook… take out the meat… put the beans on… I feel like she needs me more;" "She was a very special person… always there for me and my mom."

One of my aims is to bridge the gap between research on familism (enduring values that emphasize interconnection in Mexican families), research on gratitude, and research on legal status implications for Mexican-origin youth, by looking at plural and changing legal status situations in the family context, and how familism is experienced by youth across families with plural legal status situations. The topics of familism, gratitude, and legal status are very much

intertwined, and together can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the actual experiences of youth and family members, and how we can promote successful pathways for a significant population of Mexican-origin youth.

Methods

The La Vida project (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), is a mixed-method and longitudinal study with a total of 428 adolescents from two Los Angeles High Schools (M_{age} = 15 years; 51% females) and their primary caregivers (83% mothers) followed over two years (data collection was completed in August 2011). The purpose of the La Vida study was to look at the role of familism in the daily lives of Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles. Questionnaires assessed family background, socioeconomic resources, family relationships, mental and physical health, and substance use among youth. Parents and adolescents also completed daily checklists over 14 consecutive days, which assessed engagement in various family assistance tasks every day.

The study design included a randomly selected nested subset of 42 adolescents and primary parents (ten percent of the total La Vida sample) who participated in the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI), a qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured conversational interview (Weisner 2002) that lasted an average of two hours each. A total of 37 of these families are included in the analysis for this paper. The remaining five families are excluded from the analysis due to insufficient data on these families. Adolescents who participated in EFI interviews each year were given a digital camera two weeks prior to our interviews and were asked to take about 25 photos of, "anything meaningful in their daily lives," including places, people, activities, and anything else that was important to them. Photos were used to focus and stimulate conversations with the adolescents.

The qualitative subsample was followed for a total of three waves between 2009 and 2014. Waves one and two took place during the period 2009 to 2011, and wave three took place during the period July 2013 to July 2014. Given the rapport that had been built with families by wave three, in this final year of qualitative interviews with families, data collection included more detailed accounts of family circumstances for the families in this subset, including the legal status situations in families as well as parent and youth reports on youth's high school outcomes. This subset is the focus of this paper.

The La Vida study sample examined in this paper is representative of the larger U.S. Mexican-origin population, with a diverse set of Mexican-origin families and most with different combinations of mixed legal status situations, that is, family members with various temporary or permanent legal statuses (family members who are U.S. citizens, undocumented, DACA-recipients, lawful permanent residents, in different kinds of limbo legal statuses, etc.).

Qualitative interviews with this subset of families captures parent and youth perspectives across multiple domains. This included 15 topics and various subtopics, which were explored across families: *family obligation and responsibility*, *peer integration*, *hidden activities (hidden from parents)*, *safety*, *parental monitoring*, *family history*, *economic circumstances*, *work and resources*, *ethnic identity*, *religion*, *physical and mental health*, *school*, and *future aspirations*. Other topics and variations of course emerged (*siblings*, *sports*, *girlfriends*, etc.) and these are also included.

After the completion of data collection for waves one and two, followed by indexing and coding of transcripts and interview materials, the following three additional topics emerged as salient across this sample of youth and they were thus added as main topics to be discussed and explored in this same sample of families in the wave three follow-up study: legal status

circumstances in families, feelings of gratitude and frustration, and connections to family in Mexico. All interviews were transcribed, and each case was linked with survey data and measures of behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes, including official course grades, test scores across two years, and reported high school outcomes in the final year of the study. Thematic analyses of qualitative EFI interviews, focused on family obligation, assistance, and responsibility and intra-family conflict or consensus were done separately with parents and teens, and led to varied responsibility/obligation/conflict profiles. Interview narratives were indexed and coded for beliefs and practices regarding family rules and responsibility and intra-family conflict or consensus concerning household responsibility. Associations with youth and parent narratives about feelings of gratitude are explored.

This paper looks at data from three waves of qualitative interviews with Mexican-origin youth and parents in Los Angeles and associations with post high school outcomes. The analytic sample for this study includes 37 Mexican-origin youth and their primary parents in Los Angeles who participated in three waves of qualitative EFI interviews. Five cases are excluded from the original qualitative sample of 42 families, given insufficient data in these cases for their use in comparisons across the full sample. Data collection for the wave three follow-up study took place when most youth had completed high school and had either started university or entered the workforce, and often both, or had dropped out of high school and were attending an alternative education program to get their high school diploma, and in some cases youth had started college and were taking some time off with plans to return. Of the group of youth who graduated high school and who were not attending university at the time of the wave three follow-up study, in some cases it was clear that these youth would likely continue in their pursuit of higher education at some point in the near future and in other cases this seemed less likely.

Table 1 lists demographic information for the study sample with study participants grouped by youth's level of academic attainment in the wave three study, when youth were ages 18-20.

Table I. Youth Participant Characteristics[12]

	Gender	Youth's Legal Status	Family Legal Status	Wave 1 Income	Wave 1 Salience Rules/Resp, Adolescent[13]	Wave 1 HH Conflict, Adolescent[14]
4-year institution	Female	Undocumented --> LPR	Undocumented --> LPR	51K or more	5	4
	Male	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	0-10K	7	7
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	21-30K	n/a	n/a
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	11-20K	6	7
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	31-40K	7	8
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	21-30K	6	6
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	31-40K	7	6
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	4	5
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	7	8
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	21-30K	6	6
					mean = 6.11	mean = 6.33
Community College	Male	Undocumented --> DACA	Undocumented	21-30K	7	7
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	21-30K	3	3
	Male	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	41-50K	2	2
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	11-20K	3	2
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	7	6
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	n/a	6	8
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	4	4
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	41-50K	8	8
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	31-40K	6	8
					mean = 5.11	mean = 5.33

[12] Note. HH = household.
[13] Wave 1 Salience of Rules/Resp, Adolescent = Salience of rules and responsibility based on our qualitative coding of adolescent reports on this topic in the wave one EFI study. Codes are described below.
[14] Wave 1 HH Conflict, Adolescent = Household consensus or conflict based on our qualitative coding of adolescent reports on this topic in the wave one EFI study. Codes are described below.

High School Diploma	Female	Undocumented --> DACA	Undocumented	11-20K	6	6
	Male	Undocumented --> DACA	Undocumented	21-30K	4	7
	Male	Undocumented --> DACA	Undocumented	0-10K	6	6
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	0-10K	7	7
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	41-50K	7	5
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	11-20K	4	3
	Male	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	21-30K	4	1
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	31-40K	2	6
	Female	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	11-20K	7	7
	*Female[15]	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	31-40K	6	7
	*Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	21-30K	6	7
	*Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	31-40K	n/a	n/a
	*Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	11-20K	7	5
					mean = 5.5	mean = 5.58
Dropped out of high school	Male	U.S. citizen	Mixed-status	0-10K	3	3
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	11-20K	n/a	n/a
	Male	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	5	4
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	11-20K	4	3
	Female	U.S. citizen	Documented	51K or more	7	6
					mean = 4.75	mean = 4

Coding and reliability

Coding was carried out on a scale from 0–8 for both codes. For *salience of family rules and responsibility,* a 0 represents no mention of family rules. A score of 1–2 indicates a slight importance and salience of family rules; some rules may exist but may or may not be followed and are typically not enforced. An example of this score would be the following, “my son is supposed to clean his room, but he hardly ever does. Sometimes he helps out, but we never make him.” The 3–5 range denotes a moderate importance and salience of family rules; some rules

[15] *These youth dropped out of high school and received their high school diploma through an alternative education program. Four of the five youth in the "dropped out of high school" category were working on completing their high school education through an alternative education program in the wave three study; one youth dropped out and it was unclear whether he was working to complete his degree.

exist and influence behavior in household, as they are sometimes enforced and followed. An example in this middle range is the following quote from a mom who explains, “Sometimes she helps take care of her brother, but sometimes she won’t help at all. I say, *your brother needs* help, and her response is, *uh huh*. She doesn’t always want to help.” The 6–7 range represents substantial importance of family rules, which highly influence behavior in household; many rules exist and they are usually enforced and followed. The following adolescent quote provides an example of a score of 6 – 7, “My parents always make me set the table and wash the dishes after dinner. I also watch my younger brother when my parents are at work. They expect me to, and I do it.” Finally, an 8 indicates that family rules govern all to almost all behavior in the household; rules are always followed.

For our second code, *intra-family conflict/consensus over household responsibility*, the same 0–8 scale was used, with a 0 indicating no family consensus over household responsibilities; extensive family conflict. The 1–2 range denotes very little consensus regarding household responsibilities; family conflict over household responsibilities frequently occurs. An example comes from a dad who says, “He wants to buy things but doesn’t want to earn money … he doesn’t follow the rules … I have to yell and scream.” The 3–5 range signifies some family consensus regarding household responsibilities; family conflict sometimes occurs, and a score of 6–7 shows a good amount of family consensus regarding household responsibilities; family conflict rarely occurs. Finally, a score of 8 indicates total family consensus regarding household responsibilities; no family conflict arises. Reliability of these two codes was established using a 15% sample of participants (mean .88), and codes were used in mixed methods analyses using quantitative measures for the 37 families, contrasted with the full sample data.

Evaluation of Research Findings

Gratitude has been shown to be related to psychological and physical health, heightened prosocial behavior, and an increased likelihood of goal attainment including academic achievement (Bono and Froh 2008; Calderón-Tena et al. 2011; Emmons and McCullough 2003; Froh et al. 2011; Grant and Gino 2010). Evidence from this study is consistent with emerging research that finds associations between stress factors and prosocial behavior through the transmission of familism among Mexican-American teens (Calderón-Tena et al. 2011; Knight and Carlo 2012; McGinley et al. 2009). Themes of familism and gratitude emerged across interviews with Mexican-origin youth in this study. Many described feeling motivated to contribute in different ways because of severe financial and other constraints their families faced. Youth across this study sample regularly engaged in daily chores and babysitting of younger siblings; some youth contributed financially by getting a job at a local grocery store or helping their parents at work. Many youth described how doing things for and with their family formed an obvious, and gratifying, part of daily life.

Legal status, first generation students, economic hardship, family consensus, and gratitude

In waves one and two of the La Vida study, without any explicit prompts regarding gratitude, descriptions of feeling grateful, thankful, and appreciative emerged across teen and parent interviews, and in a surprisingly large number of teens' photos. Many adolescents talked about feelings of gratitude and the importance of giving back to their parents now and in the future. Among the range of photos that teens took prior to our EFI interviews were many framed photographs in their home of family members in Los Angeles and in Mexico. One ninth grade female complained that her mom, "bugs" her too often about cleaning. While she emphasized that her "independence" set her apart from other family members, her photos revealed the importance of family, "That’s my grandma who died, she was a very special person because she

was always there for me and my mom. When my mom needed a place to stay, she always lent the house to her, when she got sick, my mom bought a house just for her and my aunt."

Among this sample of Mexican-origin adolescents, many described their experience of obligation to their family as a meaningful part of their everyday lives, while some teens did not describe finding positive meaning in high levels of obligation, which instead elicited intra-family conflict and feelings of resentment. The findings that I report on in this paper suggest that legal status differences can account for some of the variation in the ways that familism is experienced and conceptualized by high school aged Mexican-origin adolescents.

While many teens described family rules and responsibilities in a positive light and often drew associations between their responsibilities and feelings of appreciation for their family, some described how their family's financial hardship has led to them having to pursue jobs of their own to buy personal items (like clothes and videogames), or to be able to go out with friends or to buy a present for a boyfriend or girlfriend. This pattern of more individualistic motivations to do things like get a job differed across youth in the La Vida sample based on legal status differences. Unauthorized youth across the sample consistently talked about the importance of family rules and responsibility, doing things for their family, and their feelings of appreciation for all their family has done for them.

Unauthorized status poses unique and complex disadvantages for Mexican immigrant families, from economic stress, school success, and discrimination, to fear of deportation and additional challenges related to identity and liminal membership (Gonzales 2011; Menjívar 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). For parents, unauthorized status means they cannot legally work in the U.S., and as a result, many have few other options than to work long and often odd hours, and to more readily accept poor paying and low-quality jobs. These additional obstacles

can have impacts on the amount of time families have to spend together and may also affect the level of children's responsibility. The hardship associated with legal status and deportation is very real for some families in the La Vida sample. Unauthorized youth talked about wanting to help their families; some said they wanted to get a job so they could contribute financially and help ease their family's economic burden. In one such family, the mother, father, and six children live in a garage that has been converted into their home and they face severe economic hardship. The mother says, "Look over here, my daughter and son sleep here, and my other two sons here. I pull out a mattress for them, he [the baby] sleeps in the crib, and my husband and I over there. They are sharing beds. We had to leave the apartment we rented. My husband was in jail because of a DUI, he was deported to Mexico and I had to find the money to bring him back. He is back illegally; we need him because we depend on him. He is the only one that works."

The same mother went on to describe her family's financial situation, and showed the interviewer (myself) the inside of the refrigerator, which sits just outside the door to the garage, "When I get my food stamps, the first thing I get is beans, rice, sugar, tortillas, eggs, and *chile*. Then, the rest of the month I buy meat and things like that. At the end of the month when I do not have food stamps then I start using the beans and rice. I manage the money the best I can. At the end of the month I cook eggs with *chile*, beans, and tortillas. We always have tortilla, beans, and *chile*." Meanwhile, outside of their makeshift house and just beyond earshot distance from the mother being interviewed, the teen (being interviewed by a different interviewer) described his desire but inability to contribute to his family, "Yeah when I'm able to… to help out my family with money… I tried to get a job, but I can't because I don't have a social security number."

For children, unauthorized status can represent highly uncertain future possibilities, which,

Abrego (2006) says, "impede[s] educational attainment of even the most eager students" (217). Likewise, Behnke et al. (2010) find that many students drop out of high school owing to, "a continuous pull to join the labor force to help their families" (401). Dropping out of school to work and make money can become a practical option for students who, "see no future economic benefit of staying in school" (401), circumstances that loom large for many unauthorized youth. Some studies have illuminated how unauthorized youth draw on their strengths and develop coping strategies that help to manage additional barriers. For instance, Enriquez (2011) finds that unauthorized status prompts families and children to find alternative sources of strength and support, in addition to the more traditional forms of, "emotional and financial support from … family members, peers, and teachers" (488), commonly cited in the literature. Other research findings suggest that ingrained cultural values can equip even the most marginalized youth with resilience to overcome different barriers (Castro-Salazar and Bagley 2010). Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) find that high levels of familism are evident for unauthorized parents and youth, which, they contend, can serve as a resource in families, bringing them closer together. Similarly, in the La Vida study, I found that the added strain of unauthorized status did not appear to weaken family cohesion, nor intensify household conflict; on the contrary, unauthorized youth in this study reported feeling grateful to their parents and finding meaning in their high levels of obligation and responsibility. Among the five families with youth who were undocumented in the ninth and tenth grades, all five reported high levels of family obligation; in one case, high levels of family obligation and responsibilities interfered with the youth's academic goals, while in the other four cases, strong values of family obligation and closeness appeared to serve as a source of resilience and support for these youth and contributed to their wellbeing as each pursued their individual goals. All five undocumented youth also emphasized

the importance of maintaining their connections to their immediate and extended families in Mexico.

Of the total of five youth who were undocumented in wave one of the La Vida study, all five showed high levels of family obligation and high degrees of gratitude toward their family and related to their sense of family obligation, which persisted over time. In one case, family obligation did appear to interfere with this adolescent's academic trajectory. Miguel, an undocumented male adolescent, lived with his mom and step-dad, who are both undocumented, his U.S. citizen aunt, who lost her home and lived with Miguel and his immediate family, his undocumented older brother, who came to the U.S. at age 16 and started working right away, and his three younger U.S. citizen sisters. Family responsibility is very salient in Miguel's life and, specifically, taking care of his little sisters is extremely important to him, "Trying to defend my family is something that’s very important to me. Like I said, family before anything... my grandfather did the same thing... it's what we have to do. ‘Cause if we don’t take care of them, who else will?" Miguel came to the U.S. when he was five years old. He dropped out of high school his senior year, when he was working two jobs, helping to pay the bills and support his family, and his high school counselor said that he had missed too many days of school. He later received his high school diploma through an alternative education program. In the wave three study, Miguel said that he was deciding where he wanted to go to college and was considering a pathway that would take him to nursing school, however he also continued to feel considerable financial responsibility at home and pressure to take care of his family, who face severe economic hardship. He explained, "It makes me feel good because in a sense, I’m teaching my little sisters that [*pause*] no matter what happens, no matter what um, you go through, one way or another, you will get ahead. I mean, I’ve uh dropped out of school, I’ve went from job to job,

I've tried to get ahead for my little sisters. I mean, and I'm responsible because my mom taught me" (Miguel, male, age 20). Miguel received DACA, which allowed him a slight pay increase at work, but did not help Miguel in terms of the hardship that his family faced. He said that after receiving DACA, he tried to put his family members who do not have health insurance on his health insurance plan through his work, but he learned that he would not be able to do so unless they were his wife or children. His family has tried to pay for health insurance but Miguel says that it was too expensive for them.

Among the other four undocumented adolescents in the La Vida study, all four reported high levels of family responsibility, gratitude toward family, and high levels of academic engagement in wave one of the study, all of which continued throughout their high school years. As of the wave three study, one of these youth had gone on to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR) together with her parents, just shortly before graduating from high school and she was now in her first year of university at a four-year institution.

In another case, academic success is likewise very important to this male youth, who experienced significant challenges related to legal status in his family throughout high school. During his sophomore year, one day he came home from school to learn that his dad had been detained after running a yellow light. This devastated his family and caused him to disengage from school for a period of time. His sense of family responsibility and cohesion remained high, however, and he ended up graduating from high school with all As and Bs. As of wave three, he had received DACA and was attending community college, with plans to transfer to a four-year institution after two years to study sociology.

In the fourth case, Rafa also reported very high levels of family responsibility and closeness, and very high academic engagement and motivation, beginning in wave one when Rafa was a

freshman in high school and continuing throughout his high school years. His GPA was among the highest from the entire La Vida sample throughout our study. Rafa remembered well his home in Mexico and his many relatives who still live there. His entire family is undocumented and he and his sister received DACA as of wave three. Rafa and his family are close and everybody in his family contributes financially. Rafa applied for college and was accepted to the only four-year institution where he applied. Owing to something having gone wrong with his financial aid forms, he said that he would not have received financial aid if he started that year, and so he decided to wait a year and he plans to reapply and begin university the following year, when he will qualify for financial aid. In the meantime, Rafa works as a manager at the same fast food chain where his mom has worked for over a decade, and with his DACA status, he already makes more money than his mom does at this same place.

In the final case from this subset of youth participants in the La Vida study, another undocumented adolescent, Rita, in wave one likewise reported high levels of family responsibility and high levels of academic engagement. Like the other undocumented youth in this study, as a freshman in high school, Rita was already well-aware of her legal status situation, and like all but one of the other undocumented students in this sample, barriers associated with her unauthorized status did not appear to interfere with her pursuing her goals. Rita came to the U.S. when she was eight years old and she remembers life as a little girl in Mexico and her relatives who live there, who she has not seen in many years. Despite the uncertainty of her undocumented status, Rita remained academically engaged in high school with plans to continue her education. She lived with her mom and stepdad, and family responsibility was something that Rita discussed as an implicit part of her everyday life and routine. She talked about the importance of doing whatever she could to help her mom. At the time of our wave one interview,

her room was packed into boxes, as her family prepared to move into a one-bedroom apartment in a less safe part of town, owing to financial difficulty, "Money, my mom tells me it's a problem, but I, how can I say this? We're used to, when we don't have money, we have to, cut our stuff. That means no more going out. If I have to work with my mom to do three jobs a day, then I'll work with her, if I don't, then I don't. Usually she doesn't tell me, doesn't show it, but you can tell we're losing money." Surrounded by boxes that she was preparing to move, Rita explained why her family is moving, "Because before there was five of us, now it's three, and because my stepdad doesn't have a job right now, and my mom is paid not as much as before, so we're gonna go down a little bit, like five blocks more… not small, it's just not, it's not gonna be a two-bedroom. It's gonna be a one-bedroom." In this same wave one interview, Rita says that she has tried to get a job to contribute financially to her family, "I tried. It didn't work. Because I was trying, hopefully they were gonna hire me at Foot Locker. I had a chance, but because, the work, school, and then homework, it came all together. So work was not the answer right now. So work didn't work, and then taking care of the dog, it worked, but then that job, the lady that I take care of her dog decided to give it to him… And like, he [stepdad] always tells me, *Your job is school. You need school to have a job. If you drop out of school, unemployment, you gotta find a new job, a new school or something*. But he's always telling me, *School is your job. It's your job. It's your job.* So that's what I'm doing right now." Rita also discussed how she modifies her daily life and things that she should expect to be able to do and buy when she sees that her family is struggling economically. Owing to her pregnancy during her senior year, while Rita graduated from high school and started some classes at community college, she decided to take some time off to give birth to her daughter and she plans to return to school in the future. Learning that she was pregnant was scary for Rita and she describes feeling grateful for the support that she got

from her family and close family friends, who helped educate her about the options that she had and who supported her in her decision to have her baby.

In all five cases of undocumented youth in this study sample, giving back to their family after all their family had done for them was an important theme that ran across these cases. All five youth who were undocumented in the ninth and tenth grades faced additional challenges related to their lack of access to resources and services and added barriers and stress because of their undocumented status; they were all aware of their undocumented status and the implications that it could have on their and their families' lives. All five youth showed high levels of family obligation, family contribution, and gratitude for family, and in four of the five cases, academic motivation persisted throughout their high school years and after.

In every wave of the La Vida study, these youth described their motivation to contribute to their families, to get good grades, and to stay out of trouble, as one adolescent explains in the following way, "Because they did a lot for me, like they're, they've given me this. Well that, and just like, I guess just, get grades for them. Like, make them proud – get good grades, no drugs, no gangs, just being, mellow. Well not mellow, but like, just staying out of trouble." Among these five cases with undocumented youth, in four of the five, family obligation and responsibility were salient features of adolescents' daily lives and appeared to contribute to their academic engagement and positive academic pathways. In one case, however, it seemed that high levels of family responsibility coupled with the family's severe economic hardship, beginning early-on in high school, interfered with this adolescent's ability to pursue his academic and other goals. Although it was clear that he felt some disappointment about this, he also consistently reported finding a great deal of meaning in his high levels of family responsibility.

All five of these youth reported high levels of gratitude throughout all three waves of the La

Vida study. Gratitude was likewise a theme that emerged from youth's narratives across the sample, across legal status categories. Adolescents in the La Vida study explicitly discussed the relationship between their family's financial hardship, their motivation to contribute to their family, and their feelings of gratitude and appreciation for their family. Adolescents in wave one of the La Vida study frequently said things like, "Me and my sister plan to save up money so we can move out and get a nicer home for my mom because she works all her life just to maintain us in this house and we want to be grateful and get a better house than this one, show her that we really love her." Teens commonly described doing things now and in the future for their families as a way to pay them back, "I think I can help them, if I have the money to help them, then I probably will since they raised me. And then, they bought me a lot of stuff. I guess that's like me paying them back for everything they did. That's probably what I'll do." Gratitude appeared to play an important part in the lives of many of these adolescents – linked with but different from family obligations, chores, and so forth.

Like Miguel who feels that it is his personal responsibility to do whatever he has to do to help his mom and sisters to, "seguir adelante," no matter the cost to himself, adolescents across the La Vida sample frequently brought up and discussed the importance of the cultural values of family obligation, contribution, and respect, which appeared to serve as a protective factor for many of these youth, in particular in the context of youth and families who encountered barriers and faced economic and other hardship. Close family relationships appeared to encourage resilience for most of these youth, despite the great hurdles that got in the way.

Levels of intra-family conflict related to how family rules and responsibility are instilled and enforced

Though gratitude came up across numerous qualitative interviews in the *La Vida* sample,

some teens also described conflicting perspectives related to generational or cultural differences with their parents, a lack of respect for their parents, or not viewing family contribution as meaningful now or later in life. While many youth find meaning in family obligation, for example, "because they did a lot for me," and many reported striving to, "get good grades for them, make them proud… no drugs, no gangs, staying out of trouble," some youth point to cultural differences, and view their parents' expectations of them as unfair. One ninth grade female adolescent explained, "Because they were raised like that, they expect us to do the same. Latinos have to work more than other kids because our parents expect us to take care of ourselves at 11 or so." Another tenth-grade male adolescent says that he does not like his mom, who is always "nagging" at him, and he criticizes the fact that his dad sends money to his grandfather in Mexico. He explains, "I asked him, *why you always send him money?* Cause he sends like 300-something dollars a month, to Mexico! And I'm like, *why are you sending him so much money?* And, he's, *oh, 'cause he's my dad.* I'm kind of mad that he still sends my grandfather money when we could use that for something else."

A strong sense of familism is a cultural value that is socialized into many Mexican-origin children from a young age and has been shown to endure in families many years and generations later (Fuligni 2011). Yet family obligation values are not always conceptualized or conveyed in the same way. Patterns emerged from the ethnographic evidence from this study showing that intra-family conflict was related to how household rules and responsibility and expectations for teen contribution are instilled and enforced in families. Findings revealed that a higher sense of family rules and obligation among Mexican-origin youth was associated with less household conflict, when adolescents knew what they were supposed to be doing – sometimes by clearly outlined rules in places like chore lists, or via implicit obligations that parents instilled in their

children. Adolescents described disliking ambiguous and wavering rules. Conversely, when rules and responsibilities were clear and predictable, even when there were many rules in place, this led to high family consensus (Steinberg et al. 2012).

One teen talked about her family's financial situation and how everybody contributes to help. She described feelings of appreciation and having a better understanding of economic hardship, now that she is older. She explained, "Just like a lot of bills. Like, I just got surgery because of, um, my wisdom teeth. So, that was, that was one thousand, one thousand, um, I don't know, but it was a lot. And like, so we were stressing out about that, and the day after that I had to pay like 200 for like a payment of like my uniform and I'm still not done paying my uniform. And, um, my sister's like everything. She needs help with her apartment, school, and, it's just, it's just really hard. But it's always been like that, but like lately, I guess since I'm older now, I see more of…well, before I didn't really used to see it." She goes on, "My mom makes money too… my dad pays for the house, insurance, food, like all that stuff and my mom pays for um, just like um, anything me and my sister want. Like, anything me and my sister need. And, my sister too, she helps me out. So, it's kind of like, they're, everybody helping me out in a way."

This adolescent explains that now that she understands her family's financial situation and has a better understanding of the importance and meaning of her family's economic circumstances, she finds more meaning in contributing to her family and also describes strong feelings of appreciation for her family and the moral support that they provide for her. She says, "just like, support. Moral support. Um, when like I come home from school really late, I come home at like eight, like she [my mom], she has a plate of food for me. So that's like a really nice thing to have. And she asks me about my day, and like, like, what… like yesterday it was really hot, like I came all dehydrated because my school's kind of far, so she like took care of me, she put ice on

my face."

One area where this adolescent does not find meaning in the rules that are in place are when it comes to making and bringing food to her dad. She explains that she disagrees with the motivation behind this but that in light of her overall feelings of appreciation for her family, more largely, she overlooks this one area where she disagrees and where there would otherwise be conflict. When the interviewer asked her if there were things that she disagreed with, she responded, "Feeding my dad. He can do it himself. Just give him what he wants. And like you know, he could get up. But I mean I guess he’s used to that... Like, I mean I can’t say, *no, get it yourself,* cause I’m like, it’s like rude. Like I don’t want to say anything." And apart from this one area, this teen otherwise understands and agrees with the meaning behind her responsibilities at home and, as a result, she complies, and she also feels grateful for her family.

Conflict occurred in families over family responsibility and obligation expectations where familism was lower and the reasons and meaning behind family assistance was unstated, unclear, or demanded, according to adolescents and parents in this study. Family responsibility with clear rules and the meaning and necessity made clear, had low conflict. In cases with high family stress, compliance with and consensus over family rules and responsibility occurred when adolescents understood the motivation and meaning behind these rules or expectations.

For example, Juan, a U.S. citizen male adolescent, lives with his mother, father, and younger sister who were all born in Mexico and are undocumented. This case and many others like it appeared to support the finding that acculturation stress is related to more sympathy and pro-social behavior (McGinley et al. 2010). Despite Juan's resentment about his alcoholic and abusive father and the high household conflict that resulted from this, Juan describes being close to his mother, valuing their connection, and feeling grateful for her teaching him responsibility.

Juan says that his responsibilities are "fair," and that contributing to household chores, running errands, and picking up his younger sister makes him, "feel like she needs me more... I feel special."

In cases where parents explained the rules to their children, regardless of whether adolescents were necessarily too fond of the rules, these cases showed low conflict and more compliant adolescents. One parent described how she explains to her daughter why she has rules regarding her daughter going out, "I give her this example, 'you know the parents who let their children go out all night?, it is because their families don't care about them. 'I care about you and I don't want any harm to come to you'." Likewise, one adolescent explains, "They always give me a reason why they don't want me to be outside. Like, they tell me why not. If there is a reason, I accept it. But, if they don't then we start talking it out."

Many parents and adolescents in the La Vida study described high parental monitoring in waves one and two of the study, when youth were in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. By in large, this parental monitoring was viewed in a positive light, by parents and youth alike. For parents, many described the importance of knowing where their children were at all times – who they were with, and what they were doing. For youth, despite a bit of frustration here and there, having to always report back to their parents, even those who reported said frustration, tended to also discuss the overall value they saw in their parents wanting to know what was going on in their lives. Some adolescents described the strict rules their parents enforced, but many alluded to this, too, as ultimately, something positive. High parental monitoring in wave three, however, proved much less fruitful for youth in this study. In the few wave three cases with parents who showed high levels of parental monitoring of youth (youth who were now 18-20 years old in the wave three study), youth expressed strong feelings of disagreement with this approach; parents in

these few cases also brought up their own awareness that their strict parental monitoring of their now, technically, "adult" children, might seem excessive to some, and, in some ways, even appears excessive to these parents, themselves, who did not necessarily disagree with this premise, yet in these few cases, these parents explained that despite the conflict that ensues with their children, it is important to them that they know where their children are and who they are with, regardless of their age. Youth whose parents showed high levels of parental monitoring in the wave three study, when youth were now 18-20 years old, described more conflict arising in their family and less feelings of fulfillment from spending time with family.

The socialization of gratitude: knowledge of family history, cultural/ethnic socialization, and religion

Parents in the La Vida study indicated ways in which they aimed to transmit feelings of responsibility and gratitude to their children. Some parents talked about telling stories to their teenage children about their own experiences growing up in Mexico, living with firm rules, or the hardship they endured crossing the border to get to the U.S. It appeared that this strategy, which a number of parent participants employed, was indeed a successful one, as one key pattern that emerged from youth transcripts (interviews with youth and parent participants were done separately in all three waves of the study) was descriptions across youth participants about all that their had parents endured (growing up in Mexico; lack of economic resources; leaving Mexico, and loved ones in Mexico, to go to the U.S.; the dangerous journey across the border without papers, etc.), to offer their children a better life in the U.S. and more opportunities than they had. Youth described feeling grateful for all of this sacrifice that their parents made and many expressed wanting to give back.

The concept of *educación*, a more complex idea than its literal English translation (education)

might suggest, is among the key concepts that emerged in interviews with parents. Many talked about the importance of their teenage children having quality friendships and advising their children to stay away from friends who are *mal educado* (poorly educated). They described encouraging their children to be well educated, or bien *educado*, which involves strong morals and manners, and *respeto* (respect) for elders and those in positions of authority (like teachers). *Respeto*, or respect, is fundamental for Mexican families in this study and for Latinos at large. Parents described giving their children *consejos*, or advice, sometimes in the form of short stories or lessons, and hoped to foster *confianza*, or trust, with their children. *Confianza*, or trust also came up a lot. Parents reported wanting their teenage children to have *confianza* with them.

For example, one father, similar to the explanations of many other parents across the La Vida sample, explained how he teaches his son the importance of having and showing respect for the family. He says, "he knows that we, and I tell him, my son... I am here for my mom, since she is older. She doesn't have anyone to support her. I have to be with her, because of problem at home. The family doesn't help or whatever. I have a moral obligation to help her a bit. And besides, in some form, since he's my only son, he has his cousins here, he knows that we are… She has two adopted daughters, so from there, she gets a bit of money. She pays part of the rent. My sister pays another part of the rent. And I pay most of the rent. He knows that economically, we aren't well. I've taken him to work with me, but he doesn't like the work I do. But I've always told him, *you don't like what I do, then study. School is important. If you don't like what I do, you're going to end up doing what I do*."

Another theme that emerged through teens' photos was the importance of different religious imagery. Mentions of gratitude or giving back now and in the future, were often associated with teens taking photos of the Virgen de Guadalupe, home shrines, Jesus, and relatives in Mexico

whom teens miss, including photos of other framed photographs of older relatives or places in Mexico (people who teens may have never met and places where teens may have never been). Like many teens in our sample, one tenth grade male underscored his respect and appreciation for the Virgen de Guadalupe. His family faces severe economic hardship, which has become increasingly stressful owing to his father's drinking and domestic violence. He shows the interviewer the photo he took of a wooden carving of the Virgen de Guadalupe, which he keeps in his room, "Being Catholic, well, it's important, 'cause the Virgen de Guadalupe is the only person I talk to, and I believe she can make things happen. The last thing I talked to her about was my mom and dad, how can I help my mom, with the rent and all that stuff... I feel good having someone to talk to, 'cause I get to get stuff out, like, you know, relief."

Likewise, a tenth-grade female who lives with her mother, father, and younger brother describes being very close to her family, especially to her father and his extended relatives. She explains, "I have lots of devotion for the Virgen de Guadalupe. I know her story and I always keep it in mind. I have a necklace of her too." Another ninth-grade male adolescent says, "The Virgin Mary, she's my role model. She's done lots of good things for lots of people. And I really appreciate her. We go to church every Sunday, to all the events that worship her, that relate to her… we thank her for everything she's given us… everything, everybody for being well in health, and money, and all that." Another adolescent tells the interviewer, "Well, my mom has this statue in the bathroom. It has candles around it. And, it's her saint. She loves him. And, she just always like, whenever we have a problem, like we'll go to him, and then that's how it is. And, then yeah." La Virgen de Guadalupe is an important figure for many families in our sample. Seen as a protective and nurturing mother, the Virgen de Guadalupe provides many Mexican teens and families with hope and faith that their prayers will be answered.

The prevalence of adolescents' photographs of framed photos of relatives who live near and far, who they are close to literally and theoretically, illustrated the sense of appreciation that many teens feel, for their different relatives in the U.S. and in Mexico. As one ninth-grade female adolescent describes, she took a photo of a photograph of her grandmother and says, "that's my grandma who died … three grades ago, I guess. She was a very special person because she was always there for me and my mom."

A sense of fulfillment from helping the family

Many youth described feelings of fulfillment that they got from contributing to their family. As Rafa, a tenth-grade undocumented male adolescent explains, he wants to go to college and looks up to his older sister who successfully graduated from high school and went to college. He says, "Yeah, I look up to her cause I guess, well she went to college, she graduated from high school and so that's something I want to do to too. And, well, she helps me out with schoolwork sometimes." That his older sister serves as a role model and is available to help him with his homework is important for Rafa. Rafa explains that though his parents check up on his grades and one of the household rules is that he must do his homework, his parents are not very involved in his school. He reasons, "I guess cause my dad gets off work late, sort of late, so they don't really have time." Like the other unauthorized students in our sample who show high levels of family consensus, when the interviewer asks teen Rafa, "What is the most important part your life, of your routine?" Rafa responds, "The most important thing that I do? Being with my family." These remarks, or versions of them, appear in discussion with families made up of plural legal status circumstances, and are consistent with research findings related to unauthorized status that point to the challenges parents face negotiating working long hours and checking in on their children's academic progress. Youth in the wave three study also discuss

how important it is to them that they help to guide their younger siblings, regardless of whether they themselves ended up going to college or graduating from high school, helping their siblings to achieve this goal is likewise important.

Discussion

Findings from the *La Vida* study suggest that legal status can account for some of the variation in the ways that familism is experienced and conceptualized by high school aged Mexican-origin adolescents. The added strain of unauthorized status does not appear to weaken family cohesion, nor intensify household conflict; on the contrary, unauthorized youth in our sample reported feeling grateful to their parents and find meaning in their high levels of obligation and responsibility, and they emphasized the importance of family connection with immediate and extended family. Adolescents in the La Vida study across legal status categories explicitly discussed the relationship between their family's financial hardship, their motivation to contribute to their family, and their feelings of gratitude and appreciation for their family. Adolescents frequently brought up the importance of the cultural values of family obligation, contribution, and respect, which might serve as a protective factor in the midst of barriers such as severe economic hardship, which many of these adolescents and their families face.

Although gratitude was a salient feature of daily life for most youth participants in the La Vida sample, some teens also described conflicting perspectives related to generational or cultural differences with their parents, a lack of respect for their parents, or not viewing family contribution as meaningful now or later in life. Patterns emerged from the ethnographic evidence that showed that intra-family conflict is related to how household rules and expectations for teen contribution are instilled and enforced in families. Findings showed that a higher sense of family rules and obligation among Mexican-origin youth were associated with less household conflict

when adolescents knew what they were supposed to be doing (e.g., clearly outline rules, chore lists, etc.). Adolescents described disliking ambiguous and wavering rules, but when rules and responsibilities were clear and predictable, even when there were many rules in place, this led to more compliant adolescents and high overall family consensus. Conflict occurred in families over family responsibility expectations where familism was lower and the reasons and meaning behind family assistance was unstated, unclear, or demanded. In cases with high family stress, compliance with and consensus over family responsibility occurred when adolescents understood the motivation and meaning behind their parents' rules or expectations.

Youth in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades, in waves one and two of the La Vida study, viewed parents' high parental monitoring in a positive light. Parents described the importance of knowing where their children were, who they were with, and what they were doing. And although youth expressed some frustration here and there, having to frequently report back to their parents, even those who reported said frustration, tended to also discuss the overall value they saw in their parents wanting to know what was going on in their lives. High parental monitoring in wave three, however, proved less fruitful for youth in our study who did not understand their parents' high levels of monitoring given their age (18-20 years old in wave three). In wave three, youth whose parents showed high levels of monitoring had more intra-family conflict and less feelings of fulfillment from spending time with their family.

Parents in the La Vida study used particular strategies to transmit feelings of responsibility and gratitude to their children, such as through stories they tell their children about their own experiences growing up and their experiences immigrating to the U.S. The importance of different religious imagery was a theme that emerged from youth's photos. Accounts of feeling grateful and wanting to give back to their families now and in the future, were commonly

associated with teens taking photos of the Virgen de Guadalupe, home shrines, Jesus, and relatives in Mexico whom teens miss, including photos of other framed photographs of older relatives or places in Mexico. Many youth described feelings of fulfillment that they got from contributing to their family. Without explicit prompts and before making this a central theme in the wave three study, youth across waves one and two talked about both, the important influence that older siblings have had on them as well as the importance of being a good role model for their younger siblings.

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CHAPTER 4

A Comparative Study of the Everyday Lives of Mexican-Origin Families Living across Borders

Abstract

This article compares the everyday lives of Mexican-origin youth and their families living in the sending communities of Mexico and the receiving communities in Los Angeles. Past research on familism values has shown the importance of family unity and interconnectedness for Mexican families in the United States. However, this research often overlooks connections in families to kin living in Mexico. In many cases, kin maintain emotionally close relationships, even after years of family separation across borders. Also, many Mexican-origin youth today grow up with parents or siblings in precarious legal status situations, which sometimes leads to more family separation. Despite being physically far away, many Mexican-origin youth in the U.S. feel a strong sense of family obligation and connection to their relatives in Mexico, feelings of gratitude or resentment come up, and in many cases older relatives in Mexico provide youth with sources of support and motivation. Research on the implications of familism would benefit from more mixed-methods and longitudinal research designs, consideration of structural barriers, such as legal status constraints, which can interfere with otherwise protective effects, and recognition of the fact that the definition of "family" extends more broadly in many Mexican families than it is often examined in this context. Networks of extended family ties includes kin in Mexico and are part of the family that matters a great deal in the lives of many Mexican-origin youth in the United States today.

This article compares the everyday lives of Mexican-origin youth and their families living in the sending communities of Mexico with those of their relatives living in the receiving communities in Los Angeles. Past research has shown the importance of family unity and interconnectedness in Mexican families, however, this research often overlooks connections in families to kin in Mexico. In the United States, legal status is also a salient issue in many Mexican families. Regardless of whether youth are themselves U.S. citizens, they often have family members who are not. Estimates suggest that one in four individuals of Mexican-origin knows someone who has been detained or deported in the last year, and evidence from the La Vida study shows that this is indeed the case for a representative sample of Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles.

A significant and growing body of research across disciplines and methodological traditions focuses on Latino youth development and explores different avenues for promoting positive

youth development for this population. Evidence from this research has repeatedly emphasized the importance and centrality of traditions of family ties and unity and of strong ties between kin, regardless of where they live and whether or not these relationships allow those in them to spend time together. Close family relationships and strong family ties have been shown to persist in Mexican-origin families in the United States, even after many generations (Fuligni 2011). The significance of family and the salience of values that emphasize strong and supportive family relationships in Mexican-origin families was likewise commonly expressed by the Mexican-origin youth and parents in Los Angeles who participated in the La Vida research project over the course of four years of time or what was for most youth participants, the course of their high school careers.

The centrality and meaning of these relationships for Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles and across the United States is all the more striking in light of the reality that in many cases, kin maintain emotionally close relationships, even when they are separated by borders and even when barriers prevent them from physically spending time together. Among the population of today's Mexican-origin youth in the United States, many grow up with parents or siblings in precarious legal status situations and with relatives who they feel emotionally close to even when these relatives live far away in Mexico.

Many closely bonded Mexican families are physically separated across borders and this leads to a number of important questions that we have yet to fully understand or know the answers to. How do kin who are “left behind,” in Mexico, perceive the costs and benefits of their relatives having gone to Los Angeles? Are kin left behind better or worse off, emotionally, educationally, economically, in areas related to work, romantic relationships, and general wellbeing in their everyday lives? How do youth in Los Angeles compare to their counterparts in Mexico? How

does daily life for Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles compare to the daily lives of their relatives in the hometowns in Mexico? What role do remittances play in family dynamics and relationships and how do family members in the United States and in Mexico think and feel about remittances? Are kin in Mexico benefitting from remittances that relatives send? Do family members in Mexico depend on remittances from relatives in the U.S.? Do remittances (whether relatives in the U.S. send money to Mexico and, if so, how much money they send and to which family members they send it) create conflict in families? In some families and in many cases, some family members can travel back and forth – how do they compare with other family members who cannot? What are communication patterns like between kin in the U.S. and in Mexico in these different family situations? How do families in the U.S. and in Mexico describe safety in their daily lives (the extent to which they feel comfortable, at ease, or tense, fearful, etc.), and how do feelings and descriptions about everyday safety, in neighborhoods, at home, at school, or at work, compare among families in the U.S. and in Mexico? How do families in the sending and receiving communities discuss feelings of gratitude or resentment in families? Is gratitude more prevalent among families in Mexico or in the U.S.? Is it conceptualized differently? In many cases there are more similarities than differences, although in some cases there are significant differences, which stand out and underscore these different experiences.

Considering these important questions that emerge from interviews with Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles over the course of four years, this paper looks at the daily life experiences of Mexican-origin youth and families in Los Angeles and of their relatives in Mexico, how these experiences compare for kin in both places, and themes that were most salient across families. Mexican-origin families in the United States commonly face legal status constraints that prevent them from visiting their relatives in Mexico, which is a source of anguish

in many of these families. From among these families, I found that some of their relatives in Mexico can and do visit the United States, although many discuss their preference not to.

Overall, findings from ethnographic research and fieldwork with this subsample of relatives in Mexico sheds light on the family values and connections in families that persist, despite physical separation in families, and the constraints that can also arise in families, for those left behind in Mexico as well as for their relatives in the United States. This research adds value to the existing research on wellbeing, family obligation and family ties, feelings of gratitude, and the consequences for Mexican-origin youth growing up in the sending and receiving communities of their families, in different parts of Mexico and in Los Angeles.

Literature on immigrant families and connections with the sending communities in Mexico

There has been a distinct and growing shift in research on Mexican and other immigrant families in the United States to move away from an outdated focus on risk-centered approaches to understanding and promoting positive youth development and to focus, rather, on the sources of strength and resilience that already exist in these communities. A growing body of research has emerged from this shift in focus and in some ways has produced more questions than answers. A review of this literature on the Mexican-origin community combined with evidence from a subsample of transnational Mexican-origin families with kin in Los Angeles and in Mexico that derived from a larger mixed-methods and longitudinal research project, suggests that accounting for the heterogeneity of factors that matter to Mexican-origin youth in their everyday lives, including family members living across borders, could advance our understanding of the barriers that get in the way and the sources of resilience that strengthen positive youth development for Mexican-origin youth today.

In 2013 the Department of Finance projected that Latinos would represent the majority in

California by 2014, "for the first time since California became a state [in 1850]." Although the actual numbers reached just shy of this projection, as the Pew Research Center puts it, "Latinos remain an important part of the nation's overall demographic story" (Pew Research Center 2019). While the overall population growth of U.S. Latinos began to slow beginning in 2010, some parts of the U.S. saw dramatic shifts in the opposite direction, "The South saw the fastest Latino population growth of any U.S. region. The Latino population in the South grew 33% during this period [2008-2018], reaching 22.7 million in 2018, up 5.6 million from 2008. This growth was part of a broader increase in the Latino population in regions across the country since the 1990s. States in the Northeast (25% increase), Midwest (24%) and West (19%) also experienced growth in the number of Latinos from 2008 to 2018" (Pew Research Center 2019). In 2018, Los Angeles county had 4.9 million Latinos, representing 49% of the population, and more than any other county across the U.S. (Pew Research Center 2019).

The number of undocumented Mexicans in the United States grew steadily from 1995 until 2007, and in 2008 the numbers began to drop. As Politifact.com (2017) reported, citing from the most recent statistics from the Pew Research Center, "If the number is falling, that means more illegal Mexican immigrants are leaving the United States than entering it. The numbers include both immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally and those who overstayed their visas. According to Pew, key factors in the decline are the Great Recession, which meant U.S. job losses in construction and other sectors where Mexican immigrants are likely to work; a rising number of deportations; and increasing numbers of U.S. Border Patrol agents. Immigration experts from a variety of think tanks said Pew’s research on illegal immigration is well respected and saw no reason to doubt its methodology" (Litke 2017). Indeed, the Pew Research Center produces some of the most highly regarded statistics on important aspects of Latino and other populations

around the world and specifically data related to important aspects of the undocumented Latino population in the United States, however, what these overall estimates fail to account for are family ties.

A growing body of research examines the role of family obligation values for youth growing up in Mexican-origin families across the United States. More specifically, research has examined elements of familism (a commitment to family assistance, obligation, cohesion, and support) and its positive or negative implications for Latino youth's long-term development. Mexican-origin youth face a host of challenges including disproportionate poverty, disparities in health and access to health care, barriers to academic success, discrimination, and, for many, obstacles associated with legal status. Mexican-origin youth are also part of a population with strong and longstanding traditions of close family ties and connections, putting one's family first, above oneself and anything else, and family cohesion and support, all of which can provide youth with resources and sources of resilience which may help to buffer the negative effects of things like difficult economic circumstances, barriers to school success, and others.

Strong family ties and support may be a source of resilience for Mexican-origin youth. Some findings show associations between adherence to familism and beneficial academic and behavioral outcomes (Esparza and Sánchez 2008; Fuligni et al. 1999; Gonzales et al. 2008). Some point out that heightened academic motivation and effort do not necessarily translate into actual academic success (Fuligni 2011). Others find that substantial responsibility at home can create further barriers for youth (Behnke et al. 2010). The conflicting evidence on the implications of familism is not surprising for a number of reasons, among them, that research tends to look at the "family" in terms of the immediate family or those in the household, not accounting for family members in Mexico who commonly maintain ties with their relatives in

the U.S.

Despite being physically far away, many youth feel a strong sense of family obligation and connection to their relatives in Mexico, feelings of gratitude or resentment come up, and in many cases older relatives in Mexico provide youth with sources of support and motivation. Research on the implications of familism for Mexican-origin youth would benefit from more mixed-methods and longitudinal research designs, which are seldom employed, consideration of structural barriers, including legal status constraints, which can interfere with otherwise protective effects (Castro-Salazar and Bagley 2010; Hamann and Zúñiga 2011), and recognition of the fact that Mexican families are a heterogeneous population and that the definition of "family" extends more broadly in many Mexican families than it is often examined in this context. Research that looks at the implications of familism for Mexican-origin youth should consider legal status differences in families, which affect so many of these youth, as well as networks of extended family ties, which include kin in Mexico who are part of these families that matter a great deal in the lives of many Mexican-origin youth in the United States today.

Findings from previous research on the implications of familism in Mexican immigrant families are inconsistent. This literature also remains largely disconnected from the body of research that looks at the effects of undocumented status for youth, which likewise shows conflicting evidence related to the long-term implications of legal status for youth. Unauthorized status can magnify the hurdles that many Mexican youth face (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). While 51% of Mexican immigrants are undocumented, a growing number of their children (4.5 of 5.5 million) are U.S. citizens (Passel et al. 2012), and parental legal status as well as the legal status of other family members can also affect youth.

Evidence from the research to date on the estimated 4.5 million U.S. citizen children growing

up with unauthorized parents suggests that U.S. citizen-children who experience a parent's deportation suffer from a greater burden of anxiety and depression, attention problems, social withdrawal and rule-breaking behaviors (Allen et al. 2015; Dreby 2012; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). Research has also shown that experiences of parental deportation are linked to future emotional and behavioral problems, including substance abuse, unemployment and interpersonal difficulties with family members (Brabeck et al. 2014; Zuñiga and Hamann 2006), as well as an increase in mental health problems (Gulbas et al. 2016). But many researchers have also pointed out the strengths upon which young undocumented youth often draw, such as their families and communities, the feelings of gratification from, "doing things for my family," and ingrained cultural values that can equip marginalized youth with resilience to overcome barriers and which have enabled many unauthorized youth and other immigrant-origin youth affected by legal status to persevere (Castro-Salazar and Bagley, 2010; Espinoza-Herold, 2007).

The family, family ties, and networks of family support have been shown again and again to be central in the daily lives of Mexican-origin youth and definitions of family have been shown to include not only family members in the household, but also family who do not live in the household as well as kin in Mexico. For this reason, it is possible that some of these conflicting findings related to the role of familism, or the implications of legal status situations, on Mexican-origin youth's trajectories are due to a lack of attention to those family members who are not in the household and thus tend not to be front and center in research on these youth and their families despite the important transnational ties that connect many families and make up an important part of the everyday lives of many Mexican-origin youth.

The multiple and sometimes conflicting findings related to the implications of familism for

Mexican-origin youth are not surprising given the heterogeneity of the Mexican-origin youth population as well as the fact that familism refers to a range of beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. The meaning of familism, how youth experience family obligation values, and how family connectedness plays out in the lives of Mexican-origin youth depends upon different contexts. An adolescent who rarely eats meals with her family and seldom contributes to household chores could easily be interpreted as lacking a strong sense of familism. Her long-term outcomes, whether positive or negative, might then be attributed to this lack of familistic values. However, we could imagine that this same adolescent does not eat meals with her family because both her mother and father work long odd hours and are not home during meal times; she spends long hours doing her homework instead of contributing to chores because she strives to go to college and secure a high paying job so she can help her mother with the money that she struggles to send to her grandmother in Mexico and so that she can help support her parents in the future.

Family obligation and assistance are an important part of the larger concept of familism; yet an equally important but less obvious component involves the experience itself of contributing to the family as well as who the family entails and the role of these family relationships in youth's everyday lives – why do adolescents engage or not engage in family assistance tasks? Are things like doing chores, taking care of siblings, and translating for parents seen as meaningful or burdensome (Weisner 2001)? How do adolescents view the fact that their parents work long and difficult hours, in part so that they can send money to relatives in Mexico? Do they view this in the same way as their parents or do they dislike the fact that their family sends money to Mexico, making things harder for their family in Los Angeles? Some teens routinely participate in household chores but resent having to do so, which can elicit disagreement, stress, and intra-family conflict. Some describe their participation in household tasks as a meaningful part of their

daily lives, and others barely mention family obligation owing to its implicit nature – *it's just what I do!*

Multiple methods of analysis that include qualitative investigation and that account for what matters to Mexican-origin youth in their everyday lives, including relatives who might live far from them, are essential to capture these diverse experiences and the variation in the meaning and practice of familism and youth's different trajectories. In this paper, I use an ecocultural approach to explore Mexican-origin youth's experiences and feelings about family and family connections and the implications of different family relationships on their lives. I examine parent and youth's daily routines, the activities and practices they engage in, the people who are part of, or who youth wish could be a part of, their daily lives, the protections and resources available to youth and families, their fears and constraints, beliefs and values, and goals for the future (Weisner 1997; Weisner 2002).

Research dedicated to a better understanding of the significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in the United States today too often overlooks key elements of what has been shown over and over to be central in the everyday lives of these youth – that is, the family, as youth define it. Efforts in our research to better understand and promote sources of strength and resilience such as familism and family ties in Mexican-origin families would benefit from more holistic consideration of family contexts and a closer examination of the transnational ties that are important in the lives of many youth across these families.

Anthropologists have been at the forefront of including closer and more holistic accounts of family contexts and microcontexts in research on Mexican-origin families and ensuring that transnationalism and the transnational ties inherent to the immigrant experience are not overlooked in research that strives to better understand contemporary experiences and challenges

facing Mexican-origin adolescents coming of age in the United States today (Garro 2010; Garro 2011; Kasun 2015; Oliveira 2017; Smith-Morris et al. 2012; Yarris 2014). For instance, Espinoza-Herold, M. (2007) emphasizes the need for recognition of, "the power and influence of the extended family and that Latinos often operate within these family influences when making life decisions, such as attending college and planning for the future" (274). Others have likewise emphasized the importance of accounting for significant family and social ties in the lives of Mexican-origin youth in order to understand youth's long-term health outcomes (Viruell-Fuentes and Schulz 2009; Torres 2013), and mental health outcomes, in particular (Torres et al. 2016). Research has also underscored the importance of looking at the roles that different family members play, for example in raising Mexican and other Latino-immigrant children when, as commonly happens, children are "left behind" with relatives when their parents immigrate to the United States (Dreby 2007; Hershberg 2017).

It is important that our research with Mexican-origin youth examine the elements of youth's everyday lives that are most important, such as the family, and it is equally important that we do so using emic perspectives and definitions of what makes up the family that come from the community itself. As we strive to advance our understanding of factors that can influence positive development for Mexican-origin youth, it is important that we not lose sight of Mexican-origin youth's own definitions, for instance, of the family. The focus on Mexican-resident kin, or commuting relatives, is not the full story. But it is part of the story that is just harder to get ahold of and understand and I have thus made an effort to look at and account for this important part of the larger story. Examining the stories of kin in Mexico adds another part to the overall story of Mexican-origin youth and their immigration and family story, including emotional stories, that are too seldom included in research simply because it is harder to do.

Methods

The La Vida project (PI, Andrew Fuligni; co-PI, Thomas Weisner; co-PI, Nancy Gonzales), is a mixed-method and longitudinal study that set out to look at the experiences and developmental implications of family obligation values in the daily lives of Mexican-origin adolescents and parents in Los Angeles. The La Vida sample included a total of 428 Mexican-origin adolescents recruited from the ninth and tenth grades of two Los Angeles High Schools (M_{age} = 15 years; 51% females) and their primary caregivers (83% mothers), who were followed over two years. A ten percent nested random subsample of 42 adolescents and parents participated in the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI), a qualitative, open-ended, and semi-structured conversational interview (Weisner et al. 1997; Weisner 2002) that lasted approximately two hours each. In-depth EFIs captured parent and youth perspectives across multiple domains (family assistance and obligation; family cohesion and conflict; monitoring; disclosure; hidden activities; peers; school; economic circumstances; safety; health; family history; religion; ethnic identity; future aspirations). Laminated bilingual show cards with key topics in large print were used as reminders of discussion topics, although most topics emerged naturally through our extended conversations.

Two weeks prior to the EFI, interviewers gave teens given digital cameras and asked teens to take about 20-25 photos of anything meaningful to them in their daily lives. These unprompted photos were used in interviews with teens to focus and stimulate conversations. Adolescents' descriptions of the photos they took and their motivation for photographing particular peoples, places, and objects led to rich descriptions across a variety of topics. Adolescents and parents, interviewed separately, were each asked to, “walk me through your day,” which elicited descriptions of daily activities and experiences, and underlying motivations and feelings. The

EFI captured teen and parent perspectives across multiple domains and underscored the importance of family relationships in the daily lives of Mexican-origin adolescents, including relationships with kin living in Mexico.

After two waves of data collection additional topics emerged as central for families and were added as main topics for the wave 3 follow-up study (2013-14). Some topics expanded (e.g., meaningful family contribution and frustration with responsibility; physical and mental health; academic and social monitoring) and new topics were added that were salient across participant narratives (e.g., siblings and other relatives not living in the home; family in Mexico; gratitude and resentment; appreciation and giving back; legal status and the implications of legal situations in families). The second wave of data collection was completed in August 2011. Wave three returned to the qualitative sample of families in May 2013 to follow up with these same families in a final wave of data collection, with youth now ages 18-20, transitioning into young adulthood and entering into new circumstances and changed contexts.

After each Ecocultural Family Interview with youth and parents in Los Angeles, interviewers filled out "interview summaries," which worked much like fieldnotes, carried out as soon as possible following each interview. These were filled out on a template, which was refined and improved in each wave of interviews, as analysis from the prior wave of interviews was underway and I realized, for example, *oh, it would be really helpful if we had an outline of all members of the household that's immediately clear and outlined after each interview*. Likewise, as wave three incorporated the topic of legal status as a main topic of the study, I also revised the interview summary template to include spaces to comment specifically on issues related to this topic after each interview with youth and parents in Los Angeles. Generally, interview summaries included the following components: an overview of the family and specifically a

"cast of characters," to outline who was in the household and any important family or friends emphasized in each interview, a description of the community of origin (the size, whether urban or rural and a description of how urban or rural, the region, and a sense of the place), a description of the home and the neighborhood, what the interviewer felt and experienced during the interview, the circumstances of the interview itself including any context not immediately discernable from the actual transcript of the interview, any changes since the prior year's interview with the same participant, the topics best and least covered in the interview, the extent to which the interviewee was or was not forthcoming and loquacious, the extent to which the interview provided good evidence on the themes and topics central to the study (family obligation, responsibilities, support, respect, familial conflict or consensus, engagement with the community), and any other relevant information (the actual interview summary templates for all three waves of the study are included in the appendix, which show what each interviewer filled out following each ecocultural family interview and the evolution of these templates across each wave of the La Vida study).

Among the important contextual and other information that these interview summaries provide and which help to paint a holistic picture of interviewees and their families across participants in the study, one of the most significant contributions of these interview summaries was the fact that they provided a space for interviewers to immediately jot down notes about any conversations that happened prior to or following the official interview, that is, the part that was recorded.

Prior to the official, tape recorded, start of interviews, participants and interviewers commonly began with small talk, and in waves two and three, when interviewers and participants often already knew one another from prior waves and in many cases rapport had thus already

been largely established, this small talk sometimes included updates regarding topics central to the study, particularly because the central topics of the study are concerned with whatever is most significant in the everyday lives of participants, in other words, the very same kinds of things that would tend to arise in these small talk conversations.

When participants mentioned different important topics before the official interview began, it was easy to revisit these same topics during interviews, noting to the participant, "I know you already talked about this some, but I wanted to hear more about... " In some cases, however, for different reasons, participants sometimes shared additional relevant information during casual conversations after official interviews had ended and tape recorders had stopped. For example, sometimes participants mentioned something significant during casual conversations as interviewers filled out the receipt for participant payment; other times, because youth and parent interviews often took place simultaneously, there was often a period of time after whichever interview ended first, where that adolescent or parent interviewee and the interviewer continued casual conversation while they waited for the other interview to finish and then both interviewers would thank both participants and would leave the home together. Interview summaries provided a place to describe and comment on any additional and significant information that arose in these types of situations.

The travel and research grant that I received through the FPR-UCLA Culture, Brain, Development, and Mental Health program in summer 2013 and summer 2014 afforded me the opportunity to learn from Dr. Steven López about mental health disparities among Latinos in addition to adding a subsample to my study of relatives of La Vida participants who live in Mexico. This additional component added value to the study, as I was able to examine topics that emerged as salient for Mexican-origin youth and their parents in Los Angeles across entire

families (immediate families who are separated across borders as well as extended families).

Similar patterns came up in the accounts of relatives in Mexico in terms of topics that were most important for families. The family, family connections, and gratitude came up repeatedly across interviews and conversations with kin in Mexico. Families differentiated the importance that they place on family from others (non-Mexicans) who, in their view, do not value family in the same way. Evidence from the La Vida study shows that familism remains a salient feature of Mexican families, yet new and changing contexts in these families require that we employ new and additional research methods to better account for and understand new and changed meanings of family ties, family obligation values, and family cohesion for family members who commonly live separated across borders.

This subsample of relatives in Mexico included qualitative Ecocultural Family Interviews (EFIs) with a subset of relatives in Mexico. Youth and parent La Vida participants in Los Angeles identified "key relatives" in Mexico who might be interested in participating in the same kind of EFI interview. During our wave three interviews, I told families about this additional component of the study and, if applicable, asked if they had any close relatives in Mexico who they thought might be interested in participating. If so, youth and parent participants identified these "key relatives" in Mexico.

I developed a protocol for recruiting relatives for the additional subsample in Mexico, which required that families in Los Angeles first contact the relatives whom they identified in Mexico to see if they were interested in participating. If so, families from the main sample asked for their relatives' permission for us to contact and follow up with them. To carry out fieldwork and EFI conversational interviews with family in Mexico and, to make initial contact with family members in Mexico, I also followed up with families in Los Angeles. Inevitably, as is often part

of the fieldwork experience, this involved learning more about families and participating in their daily life events – celebrating and mourning with families, eating meals together, helping a new teen mom with her baby, baptism preparations, spending time with important relatives in family's lives, and going to birthday parties, the Family Clinic, the pharmacy, and the ER with youth and families. Participant observation with families with plural family circumstances and legal status situations complements the other methods used and adds value to the goals of this study.

Data collection in Mexico used the same EFI protocol in addition to extended time spent with families, which was followed up with extensive fieldnotes written up after time with families in different parts of Mexico. Fieldnotes taken after time spent with relatives in Mexico included much less of a template form (as compared to interview summaries, described earlier), and more of a combination between notes scribbled down in a fieldnotes notebook, written on bus rides following long periods of time spent with relatives, and also typed notes whenever possible, kept in a fieldnotes journal. Including the same photo component for interviews with relatives in Mexico as was used with youth participants in Los Angeles was slightly less feasible in terms of asking participants in Mexico to take photos prior to our EFI conversations. When possible, participants in Mexico took photos prior to our EFI conversations of anything meaningful to them (activities, places, people, relationships), helping to prompt and guide conversations related to meaningful topics in their lives. When doing so was not feasible (which was more often the case with the subsample in Mexico), photos were sometimes incorporated into EFIs, when appropriate. For instance, I gave participants a camera at the start of our time together and asked that relatives in Mexico take photos of anything meaningful if the situation arose during our time together. On occasion, relatives in Mexico brought the interviewer to a place that was significant

to them (e.g., somewhere they used to go with relatives who are now in Los Angeles, or important places in their current lives); also, participants sometimes showed the interviewer something meaningful to them related to their relatives in Los Angeles, such as photos displayed at the entry to their home. If not, "imaginary photos" were discussed (e.g., "I would have taken a photo of my granddaughter because…"). These photos, too, in some ways helped to prompt and guide conversations related to meaningful topics in participants' lives.

Interviews in Mexico also included kinship charts, with relatives who participants deemed significant, key demographic information for each person, and all names excluded. Kinship charts from interviews with relatives in Mexico typically ended up much larger than those made with relatives in Los Angeles and they made for a great resource to dive into different topics related to various important relationships within families. Connections with particular outside adults or older relatives can be important for adolescents and have been shown to influence youth's long-term academic trajectories. Conversational interviews with key relatives in Mexico adds to the array of methods used in the La Vida study and contributes to a richer, closer, and more holistic understanding of the experiences and implications of family values, family ties, close family members living far away, networks of family support, and associations with academic and mental health trajectories for a growing population of youth in complex family situations.

Interviews with participants in Los Angeles were conducted in English or Spanish, depending upon the preference of each participant and all interviews with relatives in Mexico were conducted in Spanish. All interviews were digitally recorded, translated (when conducted in Spanish), and transcribed, and each case is linked with survey data and measures of behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes, including official course grades and test scores across two

years. At the end of each transcription, the transcriber included "transcriber's comments," which provided a space for transcribers to include any additional relevant information to help contextualize the transcript.

Description of study participants

I carried out thirteen official interviews with family members in Mexico, but in reality, I spent extensive time with large families in Mexico, talking to various family members, gaining perspective on differences and similarities between their lives and the lives of their loved ones in Los Angeles. Ethnographic research with family members in Mexico included one-on-one interviews with one youth's grandmother, for example, as well as days spent with cousins and aunts and uncles of another youth. In total, I carried out thirteen sit-down tape-recorded Ecocultural Family Interviews with family members in Mexico of youth in different families in Los Angeles. These family members lived in different parts of Mexico, and included family members in the states of Puebla, Oaxaca, and Jalisco, Mexico. Some kin in Mexico lived in cities, like Guadalajara, and others lived in more rural environments.

I identify family members in Mexico who participated in this part of the study by their relationship to youth and parents in Los Angeles, respectively. For example, aunt-sister is the aunt of the youth La Vida participant, and the sister of his mother in Los Angeles. The following provides a description and brief discussion of the relation of relatives in Mexico to youth and parents in Los Angeles. This description itself illustrates the complexity when we reach the families themselves and the many variations of ties between kin in the U.S., kin in Mexico, legal status, family and kin relationships, and the history of their circumstances.

Uncle-brother: One uncle-brother lives in the city of Guadalajara, in Jalisco, Mexico. He is one of eight siblings and all but one sister (a mom in Los Angeles) live in Mexico. He went to

the U.S. to work for a year, about fifteen years ago, when his daughters were one- and three-years-old. He stayed in Los Angeles with his sister and brother-in-law, saved up money working there, and returned to his family in Mexico after a year, happy with the money that he was able to save up and grateful to his sister in Los Angeles, who only asked that he contribute minimally to expenses so that he could save most of his money for when he returned to Mexico.

Aunt-sisters: In another family, I carried out interviews with relatives living in two distinct parts of the state of Jalisco, Mexico. In one case, I interviewed two aunt-sisters simultaneously (two aunts of a youth in Los Angeles, and two of his mom's sisters), who asked if they could both participate, as they felt more comfortable carrying out the interview together. I believe this worked out well, aside from the fact that it undoubtedly added complexity to the transcription process. The transcriber's comments, at the end of the transcript, noted the following, "The intended participant felt more comfortable with her sister participating in the interview as well. It does seem like this helped because Aunt1 (the intended respondent) was a little more forthcoming and when she was not, Aunt 2 would talk more and give more in depth responses. However, the fact that each sister had their own life and set of beliefs (although they seemed pretty similar in nature) made it a little harder to keep up with each of the sisters and their respective lives (unlike a previous interview where the husband and wife were interviewed at the same time)."

Two of nine siblings, these two women sat side by side and I sat across from them. I carried out the Ecocultural Family Interview in the same way that I did with every other participant, except that in this case it went longer as each aunt both described her daily routine and feelings about different topics that came up, separately, and each participant also helped fill in details for each other, as they talked more generally about topics related to their larger family, which

worked out nicely as their accounts often complemented one another. This family lives on a ranch in the northeastern part of the state of Jalisco, Mexico. The main city is the sixth largest city in the state of Jalisco and many small rural communities surround it, like the one where this family lives. The area is known for industries including milk and dairy products, vegetable oils and meats, and agricultural machinery and footwear manufacturing. It is a place filled with contradictions – it is safe because, for instance, when children go out, given the small size of the community, which is made up mostly of relatives, everyone tends to know where everyone is; but it is indeed also dangerous, given the commonplace kidnappings, robberies, and police corruption, the latter two which took a big toll on the relatives in this family who live in Los Angeles.

Aunt-cousin: In this same family, I also carried out an interview with the aunt-cousin of her relatives in Los Angeles (another aunt of the undocumented, or *DACAmented*, male youth in Los Angeles, and his mother's cousin). This aunt-cousin does not live on the ranch with her other many family members in the highlands of Jalisco. Rather, this 64-year-old cheerful woman, a single mom, lives with her 27-year-old son, who is recently separated from his wife, her two sisters, and her mother, in the city of Tonalá, Jalisco, a city best known for its handicrafts and pottery, as well as the city's weekly handicraft markets. This aunt-cousin has lived in Tonalá for the last twenty years. She never married the father of their son, and she has raised their only son as a single mom all her life. She goes to church every Sunday with her mother (her father is deceased) and despite her 64 years, she still must ask her mother for permission to go out (she says that her mother has gotten her used to this bad habit). If she does not ask for permission from her mother, she explains that her mother gets angry and this could lead to health problems with her advanced age, so she complies.

Similar to the ways in which her relatives in the pueblo described their sister in Los Angeles, this aunt-cousin in Tonalá similarly described their relative in Los Angeles in the following way, "She was the light of the pueblo where she is from." This thread ran through every casual conversation and official interview that I carried out with every and all family members I had the pleasure of meeting in these different Jalisco towns. Likewise, this family in Los Angeles, including the mom, dad, and three children, all emotionally described what they missed most in their hometown in Mexico, descriptions that all included accounts of these same close relationships with family members and others in their pueblo and their way of life there – everyone knowing them, often having fun, getting together with family often, and the like, circumstances which largely contrasted, despite their persistent efforts, with their daily lives in Los Angeles, where work schedules and economic constraints often interfere with their ability to spend significant quality family time together. In Los Angeles, the male adolescent discussed his immediate and extended family, all, family, to him, and in all three waves of Ecocultural Family Interviews, the photos that he took of what he considered most important and most relevant to his everyday life in Los Angeles included photos of various family members. Tonalá is the fourth largest city in the state of Jalisco and had a much different feel than the ranch where most of this family's relatives live.

Grandmother-mother: In another family, a grandmother-mother of five children and seven grandchildren who live in Los Angeles, lives in a suburb of the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco. Her daughter in Los Angeles is the only one of her five children who lives in the United States. Her other four children live within walking distance of her home. Like her family in Los Angeles, she too talks about the importance of family and family connections at length. Faced with a deportation order, her daughter and some of her grandchildren in Los Angeles might never be

able to visit her in Mexico. One of these grandchildren was the older brother of the youth in the La Vida study. Despite having a pending deportation order and having aged out of DACA, as he was just at the cusp when DACA was enacted, he also successfully graduated from university and law school and he currently works as a lawyer and an advocate on behalf of immigrants and immigrants' rights. He works hard helping other immigrant youth successfully process their DACA paperwork. His case gained media attention and this grandmother-mother in Mexico spoke with great pride about when she had the opportunity to see her grandson on television, talking about his plight and his work on behalf of the immigrant community.

Grandmother-mother: In another family, another grandmother-mother, 71-years-old, lives in Mexico, and goes back and forth between the two places she considers home, one in Oaxaca and the other in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where she lives in the home of one of her daughter's, age 27, a professor and a geographer, who is single with no children, and where she seems to spend most of her time. She explains that this daughter is technically adopted, as she describes how she was brought into her household shortly after she was born and this grandmother-mother was put in charge of raising her as her own. She is also the only daughter in Mexico who has her visa and visits the United States. The male youth La Vida participant in Los Angeles likewise talks about this same aunt, *tía*, during our interviews; he describes how she inspires him to get ahead in life and he says that he enjoys learning from her. He tells me that she is a person who, "even though they didn't have much, got ahead, she made a career and everything." His *tía* wants her nephew to come live with her in Mexico and although her nephew displays excitement about this possibility, it is not so much his current undocumented, or *DACAmented*, status that makes this seem unlikely, but rather the many responsibilities that he feels are his in Los Angeles, including ensuring that his parents and his younger U.S. citizen sisters have everything they need, which

make the prospects of his ever doing this appear a bit far-fetched.

In total, this grandmother-mother has ten children, eight daughters, eight grandchildren in the United States, four grandchildren in Mexico, and six great-grandchildren in the United States. She helped raised her grandson when he was growing up in Mexico, and he now lives in Los Angeles, *DACAmented*, with his U.S. citizen younger half-sisters, and his undocumented mom and stepdad. As of the wave three La Vida study, this grandmother-mother now comes to the United States at least every six months, as opposed to a few years prior, when her grandson in Los Angeles lamented the fact that he had not seen his grandmother since he left Mexico as a young boy. These circumstances had changed only a few years later, but the grandmother-mother also says that she prefers her life in Mexico.

In Mexico, as she puts it, she can do whatever she wants, whereas in the United States, per her daughter's requests, she is not allowed to go out. In addition, when she comes to Los Angeles to visit, she stays with this daughter, this grandson, and his siblings, and she explains that she has to walk down the street to where another of her daughter's lives, where she is able to take a hot shower. Despite the great joy that his grandmother being able to come to the U.S. has brought for this youth in Los Angeles, who in wave one of the La Vida study spoke at length about missing his grandmother in Mexico, and the mutual love and respect that this youth and his grandmother clearly have for one another, his grandmother says that she does not enjoy visiting and staying in their home, largely because her daughter does not allow her to leave the home to go out or to do anything, as well as the fact that economic insecurity often leaves them without basic necessities such as hot water to bathe.

The grandmother-mother feels closest to her daughters in Mexico. The husband of one of her daughter's helped her fix her papers, which is how she is able to now travel back and forth to the

U.S., and, in fact, now she *must* travel back and forth in order to collect her husband's pension. Maintaining her residency in the U.S. requires that she is not out of the country for longer than six months, which is why she travels back and forth. However, she hopes to become a U.S. citizen so that she can more permanently stay in Mexico and still continue to collect her husband's pension. Her husband, now deceased, worked in the U.S. for some time, got injured, and for this reason, has a pension, which his wife, and the grandmother of the La Vida study youth participant in Los Angeles, now collects.

Her undocumented, now *DACAmented*, grandson in Los Angeles, was born and lived in Mexico up until primary school when his mother (grandmother-mother's daughter) brought him to the U.S. without telling her family. This grandmother-mother and her daughters in Mexico used to all look after her grandson when he was growing up in Mexico. She describes him as a, "calm child." Although their relationship is no longer as strong as it once was, this grandmother-mother voices her strong opinions and disagreement with the fact that her grandson in Los Angeles bares such a great deal of responsibility providing for his family; she believes that his mom in Los Angeles places too many responsibilities on him.

The interview with this grandmother-mother was carried out in Los Angeles. During the wave three follow-up study with the mom and the male youth in Los Angeles, undocumented and *DACAmented*, respectively, I learned that the grandmother happened to be there visiting at that same time. When I inquired with the youth and parent participants about this additional component of the study, both informed me that the grandmother was there now, as she happened to be visiting then, in July 2014, and would be there until August. The mom and her son both checked in with grandma, who was happy to take part in an Ecocultural Family Interview with me that same evening.

We sat at a table outside on a warm summer evening. Despite our proximity to the rest of her family, whom she spoke about at length, this grandmother-mother spoke candidly with me about her feelings on all topics. At one point during our interview I briefly interrupted and asked what she thought about us moving a bit further away from the door to the house. She smiled and together we moved the table a bit further away from the back door to the house.

Aunt-sister-in-law: In another case, an aunt-sister-in-law and her husband also happened to be visiting Los Angeles from Mexico during the wave three study with the mom and her son in Los Angeles, who had also participated in both prior waves of the study. This was the second of two cases in which I was able to see in person, firsthand, this social psychological network that exists in families. The fact that a close family member happened to be visiting from Mexico at the time of the family's wave three interviews came as a surprise, as in both cases, these family members' accounts from prior waves of the study suggested that the possibility of reuniting with these relatives living in Mexico, let alone sometime in the following few years, was uncertain at best. Nevertheless, as both cases show, despite the many barriers inherent to undocumented status in the U.S. and the great difficulty that relatives in Mexico have in attaining a tourist visa, as well as the implications this has for youth who yearn to see and spend time with their relatives in Mexico, sometimes circumstances change and relatives in Mexico are able to come visit their relatives in Los Angeles. This shift in possibilities in some families was significant, although it is important to note that in both cases, this was by no means an easy, nor inexpensive, process for these relatives. In both cases, these relatives' visits in Los Angeles just so happened to coincide with the wave three Ecocultural Family Interviews with the youth and parents in these two families in Los Angeles, however, this was after many years of these families enduring not being able to see or spend time with one another.

In this case, this was the first time that this aunt-sister-in-law (youth's father's sister) and her husband were able to visit the U.S. from Mexico. After many earlier attempts to secure a tourist visa to visit their children and other relatives in the U.S., specifically, in Los Angeles, on Catalina Island, and in Texas, this time their visas were successful, for reasons unknown to them in terms of why their visa applications were approved this time, as opposed to in their numerous prior attempts to secure this same tourist visa. This aunt-sister-in-law lives with her husband in Guadalajara, Mexico. She has a total of twelve children, all boys and one girl. Similar to the prior example of the grandmother-mother who notes that one of her daughters is technically adopted, this aunt-sister-in-law has a similar account. She explains that the girl, her only daughter, is actually technically her granddaughter who she raised as her own after one of her sons, now living in the U.S., immigrated soon after she was born and left her in Mexico in the care of his mother.

Her nephew in Los Angeles had taken many photos of his family, not only in this wave three interview, but in all three waves of the study. His photos included various photos of his family members and depictions of family connections and family traditions. As he described to the interviewer, "My family picture. [This is] my sister, the one that's getting married with her husband, me and my mom, my sister, my brother, and my dad, and my other step-brother."

Cousin-niece: In another case, a cousin-niece in Puebla, Mexico, is one of four siblings, and at the time of our interview she was in law school in the city of Puebla, the capital city of Puebla, Mexico. She lives with her brother and a close friend during the week and she returns home every weekend to Matamoros, Puebla, Mexico, where she enjoys spending the weekends with her parents. After graduating from high school, her cousin in Los Angeles went to Mexico to spend time with her relatives on both her mom's and her dad's side of the family. Her cousin in

Puebla is a cousin on her dad's side. She spent a few months living with her and her family in the summer following high school.

Different from her cousin in Puebla, Mexico, this U.S. citizen female youth in Los Angeles struggled with school and did not view school with the same level of importance. She went back and forth a bit in terms of her thoughts on this throughout our interviews together over the course of the three waves of the study, but overall she described viewing things like studying and getting good grades to not be of the utmost importance for her. For this reason, she often hid her report cards from her parents, who would ask about her grades and about whether her report card had arrived yet in the mail, but, as this youth explained to me, her parents would soon forget and she ultimately did not have to disclose her grades to them. This youth in Los Angeles was one of few in the La Vida study who struggled with behavioral issues in school. Her parents asked her questions about school and her mom began feeling discouraged when she saw her daughter become, as she put it, "rebellious." Also unlike in many other families in the La Vida study, this youth's parents did not tend to do things such as follow up about her grades or talk to her teachers.

The only U.S. citizen sibling in her family, this youth spent some of her early childhood growing up in Mexico with her two undocumented siblings, who were born in Mexico, and her mom and dad, who are also undocumented. She returned to the United States as a young girl, where her grandmother raised her for some five years until the rest of her immediate family returned from Mexico. About three years before we met this female adolescent in wave one of the La Vida study, when she was thirteen years old, her family, including her two younger siblings and her mom and dad were all living with her paternal grandparents, who also live in Los Angeles. But as of the first wave of data collection for the La Vida study, this adolescent

tells the interviewer that her grandparents no longer live with her family, "We had to move... When immigration came, to the house, 'cause I guess they were looking for my grandpa, and my grandpa wasn't there, and they like came inside and they checked and like they looked up my dad and they saw, so... well it was really hard at first, but, when he was coming back we were all excited waiting for him." As if this were not bad enough, the adolescent recounts, "and it was my birthday too." She goes on to describe what happened, "They didn’t let us go outside, we were just in the room waiting for something to happen, and they finally leave and then my mom’s crying and I’m like, *what happened?* And she tells us, *oh they took your dad*, and I was like, *oh*." This teen says that she did not see or talk to her dad until he returned home, and then, "after that we moved to my aunts house, and then from there, we were looking for houses, until finally we found this house, so yeah."

In wave two of the La Vida study, this female adolescent shows the interviewer the photos that she took as part of this study, and she describes that in one of her photos, this is where she hangs out during lunchtime at school. She goes on, telling the interviewer, "I’m like in the middle." The interviewer asks who she usually spends her lunch with and she says, "With my sister or my, everybody’s all separated in our own groups, so it’s just, mostly me and my sister. And then, when we feel like talking to one of our friends, we just walk up to them and start talking... Just like, ‘cause like everybody, ‘cause most of my friends are gay, and then we’re like a gay section, they’ll be pretty boys, and yeah... Like, the skater groups uh, the pretty girls that think they’re all that and stuff. I don’t really talk to them. So, I just like mostly hang out with like the gay people and like the, like the rocker type, or the skaters. Like them, I’ll hang out with those groups." But overall, she says that she feels, "in the middle." The interviewer asks what it feels like to be in the middle and she responds, "It feels, I don't know how it feels." Although

difficult to know with any certainty, feeling in the middle might have also been a reflection of the mixed legal status circumstances in her family, her personal experiences as a young girl in Mexico, her own U.S. citizen status and the fact that both of her younger siblings are undocumented, watching her dad be deported at the age of thirteen, and other consequences that she describes all of this having had on different domains of her life.

Her cousin in Puebla, the cousin-niece who took part in the subsample study in Mexico, draws contrasts between herself and how she views her cousin. While she describes having a very close relationship with her own immediate family, she explains, "Well I think that with, that with… because it is a different country but also because of the nuclear family that all of a sudden it becomes a bit distortional because what I understood is that she did not spend a lot of time with her parents and so I feel that the experience that she gained or her way of seeing things, she did not get that from her parents but rather what she saw over there and her friends and all of that." The two cousins spent over a month together when the female adolescent in Los Angeles went to Mexico after graduating from high school to see where she had spent a part of her childhood and to spend time with her relatives who live there. Her mom encouraged her to take this trip after graduating from high school, hoping that it would help with the conflict that had grown between them and with some of the behavioral issues that she described her daughter exhibiting.

In our wave three interview in the summer of 2014, this female youth had graduated from high school, then spent three months with relatives in two different states in Mexico, the same two places where she had spent a part of her early childhood with her two younger siblings and parents, and then moved to Arizona with her now boyfriend and his parents, where she decided to live for a while. She says that going to Mexico and spending time with her cousin and her other relatives taught her a lot about her parents' lives in Mexico and made her appreciate her

parents and, for example, the advice that her mom has often given her, and the kinds of things that her mom often tells her to do or not to do (things that she previously would feel frustrated about, or simply not understand why her mom repeats particular things).

In wave three, she describes her relationship with her parents as, "currently, a good one." She says that she has good contact with her parents, and she visits home/her family about every three months. She contrasts how she currently feels, in terms of her family and her feelings of appreciation for her family, with how she used to feel and the intra-family conflict that would result from this. Now, she says, she, "feels differently;" she describes that now she feels appreciative for things that she did not fully understand before and that she feels much closer to her family. She says, "I try to call them like, um, like [*pause*] um, three times a week, or something like that. But if I'm busy, I call them two times or one. 'Cause they, they can't answer me as much 'cause they're always working, and they get out late. Yeah, they're tired and they don't want to talk a little bit, and stuff like that."

In the assessment of her cousin [cousin-niece] in Mexico, this is where she and her cousin in the U.S. differ. She has always felt close to her family and especially to her parents, and she contrasts this with the lack of time that her cousin spends with her parents. She explains, "Well, I think that there is, well, in her case, well I do not know, I feel that she does not have responsibilities." I ask her, "why might that be?" and she responds, "Well, I do not know [*laughs*] I do not know, it is because, or you see, well, yes, I do think that they have responsibilities because from what she would tell me, her parents are not with her so she had the responsibility of taking care of herself, of feeding herself, and if she needed something or she had to do something she had to take care of that necessity, I say that, but not with money because they would give it to her but you know that money is not the only necessity." Indeed, her parents

work long hours in Los Angeles and as this youth herself describes in her account of how often she talks to her parents on the phone, her parents' long hours at work interfere with her quality time with them. Overall, her cousin feels close to her relatives and to her cousin in the U.S., but unlike most of the other relatives in this subsample study, she points out more contrasts than similarities between them.

Aunt-sister: In another family, a 32-year-old woman, the aunt-sister of her relatives in Los Angeles, lives in a beach town in Jalisco, Mexico, and is one is one of ten siblings, some who live in Mexico and others in the U.S. She is single and works as a professor. She is close to her family, and to her parents in particular, who also live in Mexico, and every week she looks forward to spending the weekend with them. She has a tourist visa and visits her sister, her sister's husband, and her nieces and nephews in Los Angeles every December. Likewise, her parents in Mexico also have visas in the U.S. and can travel back and forth. By contrast, her sister in Los Angeles is undocumented and cannot travel to Mexico. Her sister's husband is a U.S. citizen, as are her children (this aunt-sister's nieces and nephews), but they have not come to visit their relatives in Mexico.

Grandmother-mother: In another family, I interviewed a grandmother-mother who lives in a suburb of Guadalajara, Mexico. A single parent of two children, her daughter and three grandchildren live in Los Angeles, and her son, his wife, and their two children live just upstairs where they have a small business that her daughter-in-law runs so that she can be home with her kids. This grandmother-mother has not seen her daughter, who is undocumented and lives in Los Angeles, in well over a decade. Her daughter, and the mom in the Los Angeles La Vida sample, had talked a great deal about legal status over the course of the three waves of interviews, and she often talked about how she badly wished she could visit her mother in Mexico. She entered

the U.S. twice, unlawfully, and was not stopped or fingerprinted either time, she tells me. As a result, she wonders aloud, "maybe [my daughter; a U.S. citizen], when she turns 21, maybe she can arrange my papers for me, but I don't think so." She goes on to explain that if she wanted to have her do this, she would have to leave the country and go through all of that. I asked her about the 245i waiver, as described in chapter 2, which came up in two other families in this study, and she said that the 245i waiver does not apply to Mexicans, she didn't think, "they changed the law after 9/11," she told me.

She was not enthusiastic about the prospects of immigration reform, saying that she did not have her hopes set on this, as she did not think it would ever happen. The last time that she saw her mom in Mexico was when she went with her young U.S. citizen children who were around three and six years old at the time. She says that they came back fine, "we had no problems coming back, it was easier then. Now, I wouldn't do it again, crossing the border like that." She first came to the U.S. with her ex-husband who had promised her that if she did not like it, they could return to Mexico. She went on to explain, "but he was very mean and abusive and didn't keep his word." She often feels depressed, which she describes in the context of having not seen her mom in so many years. In all three waves of our qualitative interviews, her accounts about her mom and her family in Mexico are amid a mix of cries and laughter.

The mom and her daughter in Los Angeles, who had been La Vida study participants over the course of all three waves of the study, were particularly eager for me to visit their grandmother-mother in Guadalajara. After our wave three interview and before I left for Guadalajara in the summer of 2014, I visited this family again in Los Angeles after our wave three interview and before I left for Mexico (as I did in most cases, for the purposes of this subsample study). They gave me the grandmother-mother's contact information in Guadalajara and they had professional

photos taken of the new grandchild in the family, who the female youth in this family had recently given birth to. They had these photos ready, which they sent with me for the grandmother and great-grandmother in Mexico (or, the baby's great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother). They wrote a note on the back of each photo, as if from the new baby, and wrote the date on the back of each.

As we sat talking, there were many moments when the mom in Los Angeles could not hold back her tears as she expressed how much she misses her family in Mexico, and her mom, in particular. "What if they get sick?" she thought aloud, amid her tears. She talks to her mom in Mexico on the phone often, at least every day. Likewise, it was clear that the grandmother-mother in Mexico and her grandchildren in Los Angeles, particularly her granddaughter, and the female youth in the La Vida study, despite having only met one time when she was very young, also feel close to one another. The female youth in Los Angeles talks to her grandmother in Mexico at least two times per week, she told me.

We made a video that I brought for their family in Mexico. The mom and her three children each said some words and the youngest son, who has never met his relatives in Mexico, stumbled a little bit, not seeming to know quite what to say, and then quickly interrupted his own stumbling and said, "te quiero mucho [I love you a lot]," in a very sweet manner. The 19-year-old female youth was enthusiastic in her message to her grandmother. She said how much she loves her and that her grandma should not cry. Throughout the video that we made, the mom in Los Angeles cried, although she tried not to, and her tears were always mixed with laughter. She said how much she misses and loves her mom, that they are all okay, doing well, and that her mom should not worry. She talked about her new grandson, also featured in the video, and they all laughed as he did silly things. She communicated different thoughts and messages for her

various family members in Mexico, and she officially introduced her mom to her new grandson (her mom's new great-grandson) via this video that I filmed on my phone. I took photos of them, also with my phone, and fortunately for everybody, the youth's youngest brother, known by his family as, their, “tech guy,” as they told me amid laughter, showed me how to change and improve some of the phone's photo settings.

Unlike most every other family I met and spent time with, this family is relatively small – the female youth in Los Angeles has two brothers, and her mom, who was born in Guadalajara, only has one brother. I did not have the opportunity to meet the youth's great-grandmother (her young son's great-great grandmother), who lives in a rancho in Mexico, however, I did have the opportunity to spend time and share many laughs with her grandmother, whose emotion matched that of her daughter and granddaughter 's in Los Angeles. Not even minutes after we first met, the grandmother-mother in Guadalajara, with a smile ear to ear, modeled for me her daily exercise routine.

Aunt and uncle-sister-in-law and brother: In another family, Rita, an only child, did not really grow up with her mom, she tells me. She was raised by her grandfather, who passed away a year prior to our wave three interview, and by her *tía* (aunt) in Oaxaca, Mexico. Her mom, Patricia, is one of eleven siblings, and Patricia's daughter, Rita, an only child, was born in Puerto Escondido, a serene beach town in Oaxaca, Mexico. Rita asked if I would go to the cemetery where her grandfather was buried and take photos for her so that she could see it. She explained that when she was growing up, her grandfather raised her, and she remembers him often telling her about how he was going to be buried next to his wife, Rita's grandmother. However, she goes on to explain that before her grandfather died, an, "unknown somebody else died first," and was buried there, and then a son also died (an uncle of Rita's) before her grandfather, and, in the end,

her grandfather was buried, in the same plot as her grandmother, "on top of her," Rita was told, and she wanted some photographic evidence, given that her legal status situation prevented her from returning to Oaxaca for his funeral.

When I met Rita in wave one, she was in the tenth grade and was unauthorized, living in a two-bedroom apartment with her mom and stepdad, and her family's annual household income was 11-20K. Rita actively supported family rules and she described high consensus in her family, “I clean my room, vacuum, then I, it’s not my job, but sometimes I’ll clean the bird’s cage. Dishes, well, everybody has to wash their own dish. Number one rule: no guys in the house unless there’s a parent. Rule number two: what’s rule number two? I don’t know, like, no bad boys.” Rita also described rules about going out with friends, “I gotta tell her where I’m going, when am I going, what time, what time I’m gonna be coming back, and who’s gonna bring me back.” Rita's compliance with family rules and her active involvement in household chores extended to financial contribution as well. She described feeling motivated to contribute in any way she could, "My stepdad doesn’t have a job right now, and my mom isn’t paid as much as before, so we’re gonna move to a 1-bedroom… Money, it is a problem, but, how can I say this? We’re used to, when we don’t have money, that means no more going out, if I have to work with my mom to do like three jobs a day, then I’ll work with her, if I don’t, then I don’t. Usually she doesn’t tell me, she doesn’t show it, but you can tell." Rita’s mom also reported high salience of rules and responsibility and high intra-family consensus. She described the household routine in the following way, "I cook and she washes the utensils, or if she cooks, I clean. Today she cleaned the bathroom, the stove, sometimes without me telling her, she just does it."

Consistent with the idea that school success can be a component of family obligation and a way in which teens show their gratitude, unauthorized teens in wave one of the La Vida study

showed higher school engagement than some of their peers in the same sample. In wave one, Rita said that her academic goals were in line with her mom's expectations for her, "Doing well in school is really important to me, and to my mom. At the end of the whole semester my report card comes. If it's bad, then she gets mad. If it's good, then she doesn't say anything... after high school I want to go to college and become a nurse. I kind of wanna stay close because, I don't know, I feel like it's gonna be hard if I go far. Leaving would be hard." In wave three, Rita had received DACA and had a one-year-old daughter, Estela. Rita's family remained central in her everyday life and she talked a lot about the different possibilities, such as higher education, which were now available to her because of DACA, so she could, "make a better life for Estela."

Cousin-nephew: In another family, I met a cousin-nephew of a mom and female youth in Los Angeles. A 30-year-old male, born in Oaxaca de Juarez, Mexico, and one of four siblings, Sergio has two teaching jobs (one from 7am-12pm, and another from 12:50pm-7pm), which he appears to value. He has a good relationship with his father's side of the family and he does not speak to his mother's side because of, "a difference in ideologies," he tells me (psychological and physical abuse also appear to be a factor). Unlike many of his peers in Mexico, Sergio is single, lives with his mother, "happily," he says, although he is also sure to point out that he and his mother have separate spaces and that they always respect one another's privacy. Sergio is not interested in having a family anytime soon. His mother owns her own food preparation business and, as he describes to me in our interview, he feels proud of his mother and he also feels grateful for all of the sacrifices that she has made in her life in the name of her children. His father passed away about 12 years before our interview together, and Sergio for the most part avoided talking about him. His paternal grandmother, age 72, and the mother of his aunt in Los Angeles, is important to him in his everyday life, he tells me, as he spent some of his

adolescence living with her.

Sister-daughter: The sister-daughter in another family offers an example on a relative who was, "left behind." I interviewed and spent extensive time with Cecilia, the only sibling among a total of five siblings, who never came to the U.S. (her four siblings live in Los Angeles and all have different legal statuses; her cousin, recently deported for a minor offense, now lives with her in Mexico). Cecilia tells me, "Yo casi toda mi vida me la pase con mis abuelitos. Ellos fueron igual como mis papás, los que me educaron, los que me criaron. [Me, almost all my life I lived with my grandparents. They were the same like they were my parents, they educated me, they raised me]." She is happy to have her recently deported cousin living with her, as she misses her family in Los Angeles. When she was a young nine years old, her grandmother died, and her family in Los Angeles all came to Mexico. During this time, her responsibilities dramatically increased, as her parents returned to the U.S. for a period of time and left Cecilia responsible for all of her siblings, her cousins, and her aging grandfather. She described this time in her life as, "very stressful for a nine-year-old." She was made responsible for all of her relatives because, despite her young age, she was the only one who grew up in Mexico and she knew more. After she described these few years of her life, she wondered aloud, "maybe that's why I don't do drugs, don't drink alcohol." She felt close to her grandparents who raised her and although she clearly felt some feelings of resentment about her family situation and being the only sibling who was left behind in Mexico, forced to marry young, and responsible for more than she felt was appropriate from a very young age, a central part of her narrative revolved around her feelings of gratitude, for her family, and for the good morals and values that her grandparents who raised her instilled in her.

Aunt-ex-sister-in-law: Finally, I interviewed and spent time with an aunt-ex-sister-in-law in

San Salvador el Seco, Puebla, Mexico, which began in an interesting way for several reasons. I was initially skeptical that the ex-sister-in-law of the mom in this family was an important figure in this family's life. She had not been a key figure in my interviews with this mom or her son in Los Angeles, however, after our wave three interviews, when I told the family about this additional subsample and asked if they had any close relatives who they thought might be interested in participating, the male youth quickly and enthusiastically told me about his aunt. I had not learned a great deal about their relationship from his part and given his and his mom's infrequent communication with the youth's dad, and her ex-husband, I wondered how close this relationship in fact was.

Nevertheless, in my interview with this aunt-ex-sister-in-law, she closely described her nephew, time that they have spent together, and their close relationship, "The first time they came [male youth and his sister] with their parents and then the two of them on their own. Because mom and dad, I think that they were working and they could not come but they wanted to come and yes, they were here with us, [male youth and his sister]. The time that [male youth] came, when they came on their own, he was older and he really liked the pueblo because he came during these months and these months are the times where there is a lot of corn, a lot of apples, eh, I mean, you can see everything and it is green, he really liked it and he said, *tía, I am going to go back to the United States but when I am older, I am going to work, I am going to make money, and I am going to come back to the pueblo and I am going to build a house...* I would say, *yes mijo, I think that your grandfather can give you a piece of land so that you can make your house to your taste.* And that is his idea, that he is going to save up money and that in the future he is going to come over here and live in the pueblo. Even though I tell him that it is a little bit hard because unfortunately, there are not a lot of jobs over here... but he says that he is

going to make money, he is going to build his home, and he is going to start his own business so that his grandparents can live there, that is what he says, so he worries about his grandparents. He says, *my grandparents are already old and I am going to make them a business so that the family can live here,* my nephew is really sweet. He is really sweet, I love him a lot, I think that he also knows that I love him because despite the distance, we have not lost contact, he always writes to me or he calls me and I get his letters with a lot of love and affection and he says, *tía, I remember when I was over there in Mexico, I remember you very well,* because it makes me laugh..." She goes on recounting fond memories of her nephew and their time together.

Further, as I learned from our interview, despite the fact that her nephew does not stay in contact with his father, whose marriage to his mother ended with his leaving for another woman, he maintains close ties to his aunt in Mexico, and his mom also maintains some contact with her. She also described how her nephew has talked with her about dad and his parents situation, "he would tell me, *tía, how is it possible that my father went with another woman and he left us here and we are his family,* and I would tell him, *look son, I cannot justify your father because in reality, I am not there, I do not know how his problems are but from what he tells me, it seems like the matrimony problems that he has are really bad,* but he would say, *yes, but still, I want my dad to be here,* and I would tell him that it was something that was hard, no? It was hard because of all of the problems that they had, that it was really hard for them to be a united family again and well, sometimes my brother is, how should I tell you? Sometimes he does not tell me honestly because he does not want us to worry but I think that if we think logically, well, the problems are problems and the ones that are affected are the children. I think that that is what made [nephew; youth in Los Angeles] go to the marines and now that he is there, I ask him how he feels and he tells me that he feels good, that he is happy, that is comfortable with his job, and I

think that he is good, he has changed a lot, a lot."

The importance of family interconnectedness and gratitude: a theme that cuts across families in Los Angeles and in Mexico

Relatives in Mexico who participated in ecocultural family interviews, the siblings, parents, aunts and uncles or nieces and nephews of relatives in Los Angeles who participated in the La Vida study over the course of three waves of data collection and four years of time, often compared and contrasted their own daily life experiences, expectations, concerns, and otherwise, with those of their relatives in Los Angeles. A common theme that cut across family lives was the topic of close family ties and family interconnectedness. Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles, and likewise their relatives in Mexico, talked extensively about the value they find in doing things with and for their family. As described in the previous chapter, Mexican-origin adolescents growing up in Los Angeles commonly described their desire to contribute to their families now and in the future, and the desire to support and contribute to family members, "after all they did for me," and these feelings tended only to increase over time, as youth grew up. Similarly, for their relatives in Mexico, helping to support family members was an obvious and gratifying part of life.

As one aunt-sister in Mexico said, "Right now, I do not feel like I have an obligation. I have never felt…for example, to support my parents, if I want to I can do that if not then I do not have to, they do not require me to do it, it is not an obligation because I have a career and I have to help them, I do it because it is a tradition, you are here now and you help them from the bottom or you help them because they already put in so much effort and now it is your turn to help them." This sentiment was expressed across families in Mexico, and it echoed the feelings that were described by their relatives in Los Angeles. This same participant, aunt-sister in Mexico,

went on to explain her views of the family, "I think that without family, there would be no reason for people's lives. Without a family, a person's life would have no purpose because for example, I am fighting, I am working to help someone out that is my family. I worry about the well-being of the family, to be close to them to know how they are, to know if I can help them out with anything, or that if they can help me with anything, so I am always with them asking them and being close to them and everything."

For relatives in Los Angeles, maintaining close ties with family members emerged as an important theme, despite the fact that in many cases the lack of physical proximity to their family members in Mexico meant that family closeness was necessarily expressed in other ways. After the first wave of interviews with ninth and tenth grade Mexican-origin adolescents and parents in Los Angeles, one finding that early on became clear was the importance of family connections for many of these adolescents. Two weeks prior to ecocultural family interviews with adolescents and their parents, we gave digital cameras to the ninth and tenth grade teen participants and asked them to take about 20-25 photos of anything they considered important in their daily lives. This same exercise was repeated in all three waves of the study.

During ecocultural family interviews, adolescents walked the interviewer through each photo they took and they described the significance of each photo, why they chose to take that photo, how the photo related to their daily lives, and why they viewed it as important. After going through all 20-25 photos, the interviewer asked if there was anything else that the adolescent would have liked to take a picture of but could not for whatever reason, owing to time constraints or if some other factor got in the way. When adolescents added additional things they would have liked to take a photo of but were not able to, these photos were deemed, "imaginary photos," and were listed at the end of each transcript alongside the actual photos that adolescents

took as part of this exercise. This question was important in a few cases where there was a malfunction with the camera, as it gave youth the opportunity to describe what in their daily lives they would have liked to illustrate as important to them even when they did not have the opportunity to actually show it among their collection of photographs taken prior to our interviews. Most adolescents, however, captured what was most important to them in the 20-25 photos they took, and they showed each photo to the interviewer and described the importance of each thing that they decided to capture in each of their photos as the interview went on. After adolescents had discussed all their photos, interviewers then asked adolescents to choose from among all their photos, which were the three that they viewed as most important. The three photos that teens selected as most important to them were labelled as, "starred photos." Various themes emerged from these unprompted photos that adolescents took prior to interviews, one of which was the importance of family and of relatives, living near and far.

Among the unprompted photos that adolescents in Los Angeles took were many photos of framed photographs of their relatives in Mexico, some of whom they knew, some who they remembered from when they were young, and others whom they had never actually met but who they all the same felt strongly connected to. In many cases, adolescents took photos of photographs they had of different relatives who they described as important in their lives. For example, one male adolescent showed the interviewer a picture that he took of a photograph of his grandfather who had lived in the United States and who passed away in recent years. In another case, a female adolescent showed the interviewer a photo that she took of a photo of her grandmother, "That's a picture of my grandma," she tells the interviewer. "And, are you guys close?" the interviewer asks. "Yeah. She took care of me for a while," the adolescent explains, "'Cause, when, 'cause my mom and dad brought me here first, and they stayed behind. But, I

was with my grandma, so she took care of me for like, almost like five years." From this photo, we learned that this adolescent was born in the United States and then moved to Mexico with her family at a young age and then she returned to the United States, while her parents and two younger siblings, who were both born in Mexico, remained in Mexico. During this time as a young girl in Los Angeles with all her immediate relatives in Mexico, her grandmother raised her. From this photo that this adolescent took, we learn that her grandmother is an important person in her life, and, as she tells the interviewer, "I used to call my grandma my mom, so."

Likewise, at least three different adolescents took photos of framed photographs of their parents' wedding in Mexico and various adolescents took photos of different relatives in the United States and in Mexico, in some cases, photos from events that happened recently and in other cases, photos of photographs of events that took place years ago. One male adolescent took a photo of a photograph that he had of his sister's wedding in Mexico, from which we learned that this adolescent was born in the United States, lived for about six years in Mexico with his siblings and parents, and then returned with his family to Los Angeles about three years ago.

Across interviews with adolescents in the La Vida study and across all three waves of interviews, many adolescents took photos of different relatives and, in many cases, took photos of photographs of different relatives, in Los Angeles and in Mexico. Photos of, "my family," were also often among the three "starred photos," which adolescents described as most important. All these photos led to rich descriptions and discussions about adolescents' relationships in their families, with siblings, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, cousins, and others. Adolescents discussed the importance of family and family connections with their different relatives, in the home, in other places, some who live in Los Angeles and others who live in Mexico.

Relatives in Mexico likewise emphasized the importance of family. Across interviews with relatives in Mexico, all participants discussed the importance of family, of doing what they can for their family, the enjoyment they get from spending time with their family members, and the different ways that they maintain contact with their relatives in the United States. One aunt-sister in Mexico says that she is close to her nieces and nephews in Los Angeles. Since they have become adolescents, and gotten cellphones, specifically, she lovingly points out, they are not as close as they once were, but they still communicate regularly. She explains that in the case of one of her nieces in Los Angeles, they developed a close relationship, as she used to sleep in the same room with her when she would come to visit her relatives in Los Angeles. But since this niece has grown up a bit and started to use a cell phone and a computer, she says, they do not talk as much as they once did. In every other case, however, participants in Mexico and in Los Angeles discussed computers and cell phones, and, specifically, Facebook and text messaging through services such as WhatsApp, in the context of increased communication with family members who live far away.

Many relatives in Mexico said that they communicate with their family members in Los Angeles as often as every day, even if it is just to send a text message to check in and say hello. Older family members sometimes communicate through their younger relatives who pass on messages for them. One grandmother-mother in Mexico said that she sometimes talks to her daughter via internet, if not just by phone. She does not have internet in her house, so she explains that she will go to a nearby place with internet, where she is able to not only talk to her daughter and grandchildren in Los Angeles but they can also see one another.

Like many of their relatives in Los Angeles, spending time with family members was also a salient part of daily life for relatives in Mexico. One aunt-sister says that during the week, when

she feels tired at the end of long days of work, she enjoys just going home, but then she lights up as she describes how she looks forward to spending time with her family every weekend, "on the weekends I really like to go out with my family. On Sundays, we are always looking for a place to go." Family members in Mexico, like many of their relatives in the United States, know a great deal about their families' histories. Stories passed down about hardship that one's parents and grandparents endured serve as strong motivation for many to work hard and get ahead, in Mexico as well as in the United States. Knowing the stories and struggles of one's relatives was associated with feelings of appreciation for family and higher levels of determination and motivation among youth.

One young woman in Puebla who is currently studying law, the cousin-niece of La Vida participants in Los Angeles, is very close to her family and she talks about the importance of family values in her life. For her, family is central, as is knowledge of one's family history. In describing her own current aspirations for the future, she tells me, "Mmm, yes, my father's family, they were… his grandparents were really poor and the father of my father, his grandfather, he also lived through a lot of tough times but he had a saying, well he would always tell my father and my uncles that the inheritance… that the only inheritance that he could leave was an education, so I think that, that because they always worried a lot about them studying and them getting ahead, so that they would not be conformists and yes, I think because of that, my father is the same, well, and my mom is as well."

Decisions to go north: family members who immigrate to the United States and their relatives in Mexico

The daily life of close-knit families in Mexico often involves family members deciding to leave and immigrate to the United States. Family members in Mexico talked about their many

relatives, and sometimes, they, themselves, who had at some point decided to make the journey north. There was consensus among La Vida participants, both in the main study in Los Angeles and likewise among their family members in Mexico, with respect to the reasons for deciding to immigrate to the United States. Economic opportunities that are available in the United States and which simply do not exist in Mexico are a key motivating factor for those family members who make the decision to leave Mexico and immigrate to the United States. More specifically, La Vida participants in Los Angeles and likewise their relatives in Mexico, explained that they or their family members immigrated to the U.S. so that they could offer better futures to their children, so that their children are able to, "seguir adelante."

Nearly every participant I spoke to in Los Angeles and in Mexico cited the aspiration to, "seguir adelante," as central in their daily lives. One participant in Mexico elaborated on what this means, specifically, for her. She explains, "That, to not stay in one place or with dreams but that you accomplish those dreams, and to *seguir adelante* means to get further than you thought, to do it, to make a dream or something come true. To *seguir adelante* is to overcome situations and everything and to continue, to make it through, and you continue, continue, and you look for a goal. For example, I wanted to have a car, I wanted to travel, and I started little by little, with the mentality that one can do it, with a lot of confidence and perseverance, but always with the family, without the family well no."

Undocumented family members in Los Angeles talked extensively about the costs of living in the United States without documents and how it affects their lives, but across these narratives, undocumented parent participants expressed the feeling that it was worth it for the opportunities that their children will have in the United States, which they otherwise would never have growing up in Mexico. As one undocumented mom in Los Angeles explained to me, "I tell you, I

think that they've had more opportunities here, because there, look, they graduate, sometimes in a Bachelor's... they graduate as engineers, in everything, as nurses and there isn't work. We have two godsons who are both nurses and they don't have work. Do you know how long one godson lasted working for one year, as a volunteer and they never gave him money. Years... 3 or 4 years it took him working at his career as a nurse. For nothing. That's why I tell you that there are more opportunities here than there... Here, I have seen that they study and they do find more work. And over there, no. There aren't any. They end up, finish their work, and in anything... this young kid ended up as a chauffeur delivering gas. And having his nursing degree, you tell me. Do you think that if he had studied here, that he would end up as a chauffeur? No, right? I don't think so. I see that there are more opportunities here, than over there. I tell you, that's how this young boy ended up. And he's still doing it. And look, he finished his studies, his program and everything and what did he end up doing? I tell you... that's why I tell you that it is difficult. Life." I ask her if she believes that her children, who came to Los Angeles with their parents at young ages and currently have DACA, have more opportunities living in Los Angeles than they would if they were still in Mexico. She replies, "Than there, yes. That's why, it's due to that that we have stayed here... hopefully they become someone, right? Those are our hopes [*pause*], I tell you, because it isn't easy."

Family members in Mexico talked about different relatives who at some point or another immigrated to the United States. It became clear that having family members who had at various times made the journey to the United States was incredibly commonplace across families in Mexico, although the consequences of these commonplace experiences varied across families. One interesting finding that emerged from interviews and ethnographic research with the subsample of relatives in Mexico was that the situations of family members in Mexico with

undocumented relatives in Los Angeles were not necessarily as you might expect. Many undocumented parents in Los Angeles struggled deeply with the fact that they could not visit their relatives in Mexico. Thus, in many cases, you would expect that their relatives in Mexico likewise cannot visit them in the United States, but, in fact, in some of these cases it was surprising to learn that despite the constraints described by undocumented participants in Los Angeles, some of their family members could, and did, travel back and forth. This was not always the case, however it came up several times and seemed to suggest that in addition to these close family relationships, for some Mexican-origin parents and families in the U.S., it is also ties to the place, to their homes in Mexico, where they cannot visit, that also causes distress.

Research on Mexican-origin families in the United States and in particular research that has looked at the experiences being undocumented has brought to light various struggles and hurdles that arise for Mexican immigrant families in the United States. Indeed, findings from the La Vida study likewise underscored numerous ways that legal status affects parents and youth living in Los Angeles, many of which are described in this chapter and with much greater specificity in chapter two. Key among these struggles and a salient topic of conversation for undocumented parents in Los Angeles is the fact that their undocumented status means that they are not able to visit their relatives in Mexico. In most cases, whether or not they can visit one another, these relatives often maintain close ties. Interviews with relatives in Mexico shed additional light on this topic and in somewhat unexpected ways. Less commonly discussed or reviewed is the fact that among families in the United States who cannot travel to Mexico to visit their relatives due to their undocumented status, in many cases, some of their relatives in Mexico, by contrast, do have a visa and can travel back and forth freely.

Differences emerged between family members in Mexico who can travel back and forth

between the United States and Mexico without any problems and their relatives who immigrated to the United States, typically well over a decade prior, who cannot travel to Mexico without the very real risk of quite possibly never again being able to return to the U.S. Family members in Mexico, like their relatives in Los Angeles, talked about the unlikely chances of their undocumented relatives in Los Angeles ever again being allowed to travel back to Mexico to visit their relatives there. This limitation, participants described, have many serious and lasting consequences, especially for their family members in Los Angeles who suffer the costs of these restrictions during some of the most difficult moments, such as when a close family member in Mexico becomes sick and they are forced to make the decision of whether to attempt to go to Mexico to see this relative (this was often the case with parents in Mexico of parent participants in Los Angeles, and the grandparents of youth in these same families in Los Angeles).

Contrasts between the narratives of family members who are undocumented in the U.S. and various family members who have the freedom to travel back and forth brought up interesting questions. As one family member in Mexico explained to me, among their ten siblings, "The one that is over there that I tell you that she can come over [travel to Mexico] but she does not, she is the one that is the furthest from everyone. She has two daughters; they live in Los Angeles. And she lives over there and... she does not like Mexico and does not want to come back. They have everything, everything, everything [in terms of visas to travel back and forth to and from Mexico]. They are the ones that don't want to come. How strange, no?" And yet, another of her siblings, an undocumented mom participant in the La Vida study, who lives in Los Angeles with her husband and U.S. citizen children, desperately wishes she could visit her relatives in Mexico. Her sister in Mexico goes on, "Mm, it is really strange, I don’t know, there are things that I do not understand of life, if you can say that, that the darker women want to be white and the whiter

women want to be darker, the ones with curly hair want it straight and the ones with straight hair want it curly, the one that has papers does not want to come and the ones that do not have papers want to come, those are things that I do not understand. It is like when you have it you no longer want it and when you do not have it, you want it, you desire it, and then you have it and that’s it, I don’t know."

Descriptions of similar experiences came up in other families also. In another case, an undocumented mom and her husband live in Los Angeles with their three children whom they brought to Los Angeles from Mexico at young ages for better opportunities. They have lived in the United States for nearly fifteen years waiting in the infamous "line" for legitimate immigration paperwork, which may one day get processed. In their case they are in the meantime undocumented and there is a waiting time around 15 years to hear something. They are stuck in a situation where the mom desperately misses her family members in Mexico and she has been greatly affected, for example, by not being able to visit her mother in Mexico who was sick and recently passed away. In the year prior to her mom's passing away, in our interview, she tells me, "At my parents', they have their own house and everyone [most of her siblings and their children] lives there. He bought his land, and so they're close to all of my brothers and sisters. They do live close by to my parents. I tell you, it's only this boy, that, 20 years ago... he's in Pennsylvania. Right now he's in Pennsylvania. He called me yesterday. And I tell you... he's coming soon, but look, he hasn't fixed his family. I tell him, ay, what indecisiveness when you... They're still in Mexico. Because of, it's that he doesn't like life here. He just comes and works for a period of time and he goes. And that's how it is. Coming and going. He has been doing that for 20 years. Working, no [*exclaims*], he has like 25 years working, because a while ago he fixed his residency, with the Amnesty, he fixed it. And just like that, he comes and goes, and the oldest

girl is 19 years old and she doesn't come. He says, no, I'm not bringing my family here. Well, you know, just him and I left from my parents'... and one of my brothers that lives in [another city in Mexico]." As is clear from this excerpt from my interview with this undocumented mom in Los Angeles, she is almost in disbelief that, in contrast to her own experience and that of all of her immediate family members, all of whom emphasize how much they miss spending time with their relatives in Mexico and how they so badly want to be able to go visit but cannot, her brother who lives in Pennsylvania got his residency some 25 years ago but almost seems to take it for granted. She explains that he does not like his life in the United States, so although he could petition for his immediate family members to become residents in the United States as well, instead he just goes back and forth, just coming to the United States to work.

This mom also talks about the situation of another brother who also left their family's home, where the rest of her siblings and their children all live close to one another on a ranch in Mexico, and moved with his family to another city in Mexico. She says, "I tell my husband, I wouldn't have done that, to have left within Mexico, from one city to another, that, no. More likely, I think that if he were to have come here in the beginning, he would have been more prosperous. Because it has cost him a lot of work, to pay for his children's careers and over here there is more help, concerning that, right? If they want to study, yes, concerning that... they've come out intelligent, his children. But I tell you, I think that they would have had more opportunities here." She goes on to talk about the lack of job opportunities in Mexico and how this affects her nieces and nephews there, who work hard, do well in school, but in the end are unable to secure well-paying jobs that match their level of education. On her husband's side, his parents, she tells me, had been contracted to work as braceros in the U.S., and for many years after they did not risk coming to the United States illegally. But many years later, they fixed their

papers, "They have their pension, medical, and everything, they're citizens. But they don't like it here, so they come and go as they please."

In yet another example, a grandmother-mother in Mexico has a similar situation. Her daughter, an undocumented mom in the La Vida study, lives in Los Angeles with her undocumented son, who currently has DACA, and his younger U.S. citizen sisters. Her daughter and grandson in Los Angeles detail the consequences that their undocumented status has had on their lives and, specifically, the great deal of economic insecurity that they face. Meanwhile, for the grandma-mom in Mexico, she is actually obligated to return to the U.S., much to her dismay, to collect her late husband's pension. Like the paternal grandparents of the adolescent in the previous example, in this grandmother's case, she talks about how she does not enjoy coming to the U.S. to visit, while the undocumented relatives in Los Angeles in both of these examples, suffer various consequences (probably the most from among the larger sample) as a result of their unauthorized status.

The complex emotional costs of family members immigrating to the United States

One aunt-sister in Mexico was young when her siblings decided to leave home and go to the United States, so she is not sure how this affected her mother or her other family members, "because I was small and I never…my mom when her daughter left or something, I was not able to see that because I was five or six or seven years old." She is, however, able to speak to her own experience growing up with a dad who was often away working in the United States, "When I saw that my dad was home, I wanted him to leave because I was not able to eat comfortably because he was there and everything, I was used to being with my mom only."

Relatives in Mexico discussed numerous emotional costs of their close family members – often a daughter or a son, a father or a mother, a sibling, or another close relative – deciding to

leave Mexico to make the journey north and the many implications that this inevitably has, especially in the context of family closeness being such a salient part of everyday life. Further, in the immediate aftermath of a family member making this decision, there are also very real and pressing concerns that set in all too quickly for relatives in Mexico. The risks that one takes to make this journey north without legitimate paperwork are no secret to their families in Mexico.

Several families described their experiences, sitting terrified, some for days, others for weeks, and some for as long as months, not knowing if their loved one made it safely across the U.S.-Mexico border, while knowing full well, sometimes from firsthand experiences, what can happen to individuals when they attempt to cross the border. After two summers of ethnographic research with the subsample of La Vida study participants' relatives in Mexico, one thing that became clear was the extent to which the immigration experience affects the lives of those in Mexico, and likewise, the lives of their relatives in the U.S. Nearly every encounter I had, well beyond participants in this subsample, but also taxicab drivers, people I met on the street, nearly everyone I met in Mexico, either knew somebody or is somebody who has at some point made the journey north. As such, many described horrid tales of what this journey sometimes involves. Among participants' accounts of these experiences, many described, for instance, crossing rivers or deserts, passing bodies, and not knowing whether adults and babies laying on the desert floor were dead or alive and with no ways to offer any help. Many accounts of making the journey north to the United States involved traumatic experiences, not only for migrants themselves but also for their loved ones in Mexico. Common across the narratives of relatives in Mexico were accounts of the consequences that many relatives in Mexico suffer when their relatives leave for the United States.

Some family members recounted how their relative left without telling them, to postpone

the inevitable worry they would experience, and many described the different periods of time they had to endure not knowing if their loved one had made it there safely. One aunt in Mexico described how her family had to wait an entire year before hearing from her eldest brother who left for the United States. For her mom, the grandmother of the youth La Vida participant in Los Angeles, she says, "se puso mal; triste todo el tiempo, enfermo [it got bad; she was sad all the time, she got sick]." When family members decide to leave Mexico and immigrate to the United States, as one family member in Mexico describes, "For us? It was really hard for us because we were sad because we called her and she had not gotten there and she had not crossed and the kids were alone over there and she was over here and we did not know if she was okay, who she was with, what was happening with her, and the husband as well, he was unhappy because he had told her not to come, that she should wait because he was going to get her papers so that she could become a resident, and she wanted to come [to Mexico] because she, because she, how do I tell you? She always likes to come, she wants to be over here and she asks for everyone and she sends gifts to everyone and like that and she thought it was going to be easy because she had come here before and it was harder but not anymore, it went bad for her. They got her four times and she was about to cross when they discovered her, and they would send her back."

In several interviews with relatives in Mexico, grandmothers, mothers, cousins, aunts, uncles, or siblings recounted what it was like for them and other family members when their relatives left for the United States. Repeatedly I was fooled by initial projections of strength in the narratives of family members in Mexico about their family members' decisions to leave for the United States. Some spoke about these experiences with nonchalance, others with a certain distance from the experience, and others described, at least initially, the experience of their loved one going to the United States with assertion. Some mothers or siblings, for instance, initially

talked about their daughter's or sister's decision to leave for the U.S. in the same way they talked about any other routine part of their daily life. Others spoke with clarity and confidence about their family member's decision to leave for the U.S. and, in some cases, relatives spoke about this time with some distance, as if they did not have a clear recollection of this experience. But in all of these cases, conversations at some point revisited this same experience, often as the result of other intersecting and interrelated themes and topics, and, each time, narratives that had initially sounded genuinely nonchalant or certain or foggy ultimately transformed into detailed, often tearful, accounts of a very difficult experience. This may have been the result of the rapport that inevitably builds over the course of these kinds of qualitative interview conversations, however as various relatives again and again recounted these similar stories, nonchalantly, with certainty, or with initially unclear memories, it became clear that these family members were, rather, shielding themselves from having to grapple with these difficult thoughts and experiences, which in many cases appeared to continue just as difficult today as they were many years ago when their loved ones left for the United States.

For instance, one grandmother in Mexico talked about changes in her family since her daughter left for the United States, well over two decades ago. She nonchalantly recounts, "Si han muerto muchos familiares, como la mitad yo creo, pero tiene ella allá como unos veinti... años... y, sí, ella se mortifica porque dice, está muriendo mis familiares, pero aquí estoy yo [Yes, many close family members have died, probably half, I think, but she's been there some twenty... some years, and, yes, she becomes horrified, because she says, all of my family members are dying, but, here I am]." It is here that she breaks down in tears, which contrasts hugely with the tone with which she had just been speaking, confidently, unemotionally. She goes on to describe how her daughter and her daughter's whole family being in the United States affects her.

Through her tears, she explains, "but I don't want her to come back until she's fixed her papers."

Indeed, her daughter in Los Angeles lives in a very precarious situation. She continues, struggling to get the words out through her tears, while also struggling to hold back her tears, "Yo sabía que, al irse, iba a ser muy difícil que regresaba. [I knew, when she left, that it was going to be very difficult for her to ever return]." She repeats, a few different times, that her daughter lives, "muy apenas [very uncertain]." She elaborates, "Viviendo al dia. No con hambre, no, pero sí al dia. [Living day to day. Not with hunger, no, but they live day to day.]" Her initial nonchalance is also followed by her account of the ways that she and her daughter in the United States share bad news with one another when negative events occur. When her daughter has bad news to deliver, for example, when her granddaughter in Los Angeles had to have surgery, she explains that sometimes her daughter waits to tell her until after it is over, "Han pasado cosas que ella no me comunica hasta que pasó, el peligro, y... yo aquí... [Things have happened that she doesn't tell me about until after it has passed, the danger, and... well, I'm here...]." As our conversation continued, this grandmother-mother in Mexico talked about how she understands that in the United States, they have, "mejor escuela, mejor de todo [better schools, better everything]," so it is not that she does not understand or respect her daughter's decision to go to the U.S. over twenty years ago, but just that the pain that she has to endure as a consequence has never subsided.

In another case, a dad in Mexico talks about the emotional consequences of separating from his family so that he could go to the United States for one year, where he went to work and save money for his family in Mexico. "There is always nostalgia," he tells me, "I think there is always nostalgia among family members because, you turn back, and... when I went to the United States, I turned around, when I was on the plane, and I said [to myself], my wife, my daughters,

my mother, my brothers, and one starts to get, like into a ball." In his case, unlike the situations of so many others in this study and likewise in the larger Mexican immigrant population, he went to the United States for one year, where he was able to work and save up relatively much more money than he could have working in Mexico, after which he returned to his wife and two daughters in Mexico, satisfied with what he had been able to accomplish and the money he was able to save up for his family in Mexico. He recounts his experience, which, he, too, describes as relatively unique from other immigrant stories, including that of his sister in Los Angeles, an undocumented mother in the La Vida study, who immigrated to the United States with her husband and their then young daughter.

This uncle-brother in Mexico described the time when his sister decided to go to the United States, "She was happy because she was going to a new life and she wasn't leaving with problems. She had her documents, her passport, and her little daughter and they were recently married, two, three years before. Then, we are going with dreams of moving forward and, deep inside, I like to think she was nostalgic about what she was leaving behind, I don't know, mother, brothers, family, customs, overall customs. You arrive at a strange place and, where is the pozole? No, they have hamburgers and sometimes we want *birria*. I mean those things that they call hot dogs. You know, I'll trade you the hot dog for the *birria* or a wet *torta*, but it's the same, you get used to it, and then you get a liking for things."

Relatives in Mexico discussed the many consequences for their family members who immigrated to the United States. Relatives in Mexico often described the personal angst that they themselves have felt for their family members in the United States, when their family members are faced with situations where they learn that a relative in Mexico is ill and they then have to negotiate the decision of whether to try to return to Mexico, to attempt to see their sick relative

before they died. Very real questions arise in these situations – whether they can make it there before this family member is likely to pass away, and, if they do, whether they will be able to return to their families in the United States. Many undocumented parents in Los Angeles feel anguish about the fact that they were not able to see their parents before they passed away due to these various constraints and many described the pain that endures for them long after a loved one passes away who they were not able to visit to say goodbye.

In other cases, the decision to return to Mexico to see and spend time with sick relatives, also leaves lasting consequences. For instance, one mother in Los Angeles went back to Mexico six years ago when her mother fell ill, and she describes the consequences of this decision. This undocumented mom, who lives in Los Angeles with her husband and her U.S. citizen daughter and undocumented son, was planning on and was in the process of adjusting her legal status in the United States, but, as she explains, "I lost the opportunity to fix my papers here, because my mom, in Mexico, got sick and I went on my own, and when I came back, they got me... in a part of Tijuana, they got me, they took my fingerprints, and that caused me to lose the papers that I was in the process of getting." She talks about conversations that she has had with her children, to make sure that they understand the situation and why she made the decisions that she did, "This last time that I came was... about six years ago. So, they [my children] know that I lost that opportunity because I went to Mexico. I've talked to them about why I went, how we lived there, and how I came here, through the desert. So they know. My daughter [the younger one] tells me now, *mami, I want to fix your papers, how can I do that?* I tell her, mija... right now we have a lawyer, he is the one that is fixing my son's papers. I tell her that right now it is not convenient for me to do anything. For me, what is convenient is to wait to see if there is an amnesty and to see if the laws change because I have to wait ten years to ask for a pardon. I do want to go back

to my pueblo but not as much as before, my mom died that time that I went to Mexico to see her. My dad died, no, my dad died first, then my mom, not even a year after my dad died my mom then died. So, the motivation to go has gone away because in reality one as a... how do I tell you? How do I want to tell you?"

But for many undocumented relatives in Los Angeles, their inability to visit their loved ones in Mexico, especially in cases where none of their relatives in Mexico can visit them in the United States, is a constant source of pain. In one family in Los Angeles, a single, undocumented mother of three U.S. citizen children had for years spoken at length in each of our ecocultural family interviews about her close relationship with her mother in Mexico, who she misses terribly. Her adolescent daughter likewise talked about her grandmother in Mexico, who she had only met one time when she was very young, with great love and affection. Before going to Mexico to carryout fieldwork and ethnographic interviews with relatives who live there, including the grandmother in this family, they asked if I would record them in a video message that I could bring for their grandmother. In this pre-Mexico video, recorded in the summer of 2014, this mother and her three children sat squeezed together on their living room sofa, and the mom said the following, "Ay ma, quisiera decirte mil cosas, pero ya sabes... eres mi reina y... y... échale ganas... Cuentas con nuestro apoyo con todo. Un saludo a mi hermano, te quiero mucho, te extraño, este, tu sabes que aunque estemos lejos, ustedes siempre están en mi mente y en mi corazón. Y sus hijos, aunque no nos conozcamos, ellos van a ser parte de nosotros. Mando saludos a mi abuelita, que le quiere mucho, que te extraño, aunque estemos lejos, ustedes están siempre en mi mente... [Ay ma', I'd like to tell you a thousand things, but you already know... you are my queen and... and... *échale ganas* [give it your all]... Count on our support with everything. A hello to my brother, I love you a lot, I miss you, you know that although we are far

away, you are all always in my mind and in my heart. And your children, although we have never met, they will be a part of us. I send greetings to my grandma, that I love her a lot, that I miss her, although we are far away, you are all always on my mind...]." At the end of the video, each of her children say hi to their grandmother and send their love as well. The emotion in this video recorded for their grandmother in Mexico was a good reflection of the emotion with which this mom in Los Angeles spoke about her mom in Mexico each time that she brought her up.

Many relatives in Mexico talked about the fear of deportation that their relatives in the United States have to contend with, and, specifically, the decision that relatives have to think about with respect to their children who become accustomed to life in the United States. For example, in one interview with the aunt-sibling of relatives in Los Angeles, she explains, "Imagine that all of a sudden they take her out [referring to her sister in Los Angeles being deported] and she is going to come over here with us, but her children that are used to the style and were born and accustomed to a certain life that is different from here..." Many relatives in Mexico discuss these different situations that they see their relatives in Los Angeles having to contend with, almost impossible situations with no good answers, and they feel for them.

"Es como una realidad diferente [It's like a different reality]:" contrasts in the daily lives of close-knit families living in Los Angeles and in different parts of Mexico

Stories of family closeness, of relatives near and far who maintain close contact with one another, and adolescents in Los Angeles who feel strong connections to their relatives in Mexico, sometimes even despite having never actually met them, were all salient themes that emerged from interviews with families in Los Angeles and in Mexico, and from photographs taken by adolescents in Los Angeles. Despite the overwhelming agreement across families in the La Vida sample that family connection and closeness was central to their everyday lives and wellbeing, it

is also true that family is not always positive and cohesive. Conflicts arose in some families because of the burdens that family members left behind in Mexico sometimes had to take on because of their relatives' decisions to immigrate to the United States.

Family members in Mexico often drew contrasts between what daily life was like for them in Mexico and for their relatives in the United States. For some, this was based on firsthand experiences from having spent time in the Unites States themselves, visiting their relatives there, and in other cases this was based on their perceptions of the differences from what they heard from their relatives and from what their own experiences have been since these relatives left for the U.S. As one family member in Mexico put it, life in the United States, "es como una realidad diferente [it's like a different reality]. Life in the United States, people move a lot faster in their daily lives. Here, things are harder, you have to work harder for what you get, but you appreciate it more."

In a few different families, relatives in Mexico referred to this same idea of time and the notion that time is faster in the United States. One aunt-sister in Mexico explained, "Over there, time is faster. Well, it is really different because over there, for example, it is as if time goes by faster and time over there is like... what I perceive is different is like, how do I want to tell you? Like a plate of food here is not the same as one over there." "In what sense?" I ask her. She continues, "For example, here, to prepare food, it is like a ritual and over there it is something that is so mechanical and it does not have the affection that you give to the food here, it is something really superficial, like, how I see it, and over here it is, like a different reality." She goes on trying to make her point more clearly, "So over there, for example, you can buy a pizza without thinking about how much it costs and here you do check to see how much it costs. [Over there], you say, *get this, get that from the store, that, that, this, and that, get that from the store...*

so it is like, money is easier to earn over there, it is easier. I feel that if you earn it quickly then you spend it quickly. If it takes you more time, then you think more about it more before you spend it."

She moves from talking about food to finishing her point by offering another example, with respect to the extent to which one puts thought into other things that they buy in Mexico as compared to in the United States, "It is like, life over there is more, more... how do I want to tell you? Like less hard. In the sense that you have everything, you can dress better than here. Over there with $20 you can dress nicely and here with $500 pesos you can dress, somewhat nice. That is a really harsh contrast." Economic hardship and safety were two themes that emerged across the narratives of participants in Mexico. Nearly everyone I spoke to in Mexico talked about the striking differences in terms of economic possibilities and what is realistically achievable with respect to economic circumstances for those living in Mexico and for those living in the United States. This same aunt-sister in Mexico went on to offer one final example, "ah, I am going to buy some shoes for [my nephew in Los Angeles], so you go and you see the prices and you see the brands and here, no, you do not buy shoes like that in one weekend and then another weekend, you are buying shoes every two months. So, it is easier over there, it is like, life is more practical. And over here, you think about it a lot, because the prices go up as well. For example, when you go, when I go... over there [in the United States] I see it, I see the price, and I like it and I buy it. And over here, I see, I see the price, I get scared, and I do not buy it [*laughs*]."

In other cases, relatives in Mexico discussed this same concept of time as faster in the United States, but with more literal examples. One uncle-brother in Mexico, for instance, who raised his niece in Mexico for two years when his sister first went to United States without her daughter,

likewise shed light on this notion of things being faster in the United States. He explained, "alla lava los trastres con máquina... más tecnología [over there, you wash the dishes in a dishwasher... more technology]," and he went on, "sí, tenemos internet, pero es más lento, allí es rápida, aquí es lento [yes, here we have internet, but it's slower, over there it's fast, here it's slow]."

Relatives in Mexico also talked about the difficulty of sometimes having to care for the children of relatives, when their parents decide to leave for the United States and ask their relatives in Mexico to care for their children for different periods of time, in some cases for a few years, and in other cases, indefinitely. This same uncle-brother in Mexico who raised his niece for two years, explained, "cuando se va salir para alli, es duro para los dos. Porque, se encargaron, pues [when they leave for other there, it's hard for both of us. Because, well they put you in charge]." His sister left for the United States when her daughter was about five years old and was in kindergarten in Oaxaca. Her brother and his wife, this young girl's aunt and uncle raised her in Oaxaca for two or three years, until her mom returned to Mexico and brought her daughter back with her to the United States.

In another case, another aunt-sister in Guadalajara, Mexico, has ten children, all boys, three of whom immigrated to the United States. One of her sons had a young daughter when he decided to leave for the U.S. and this aunt-sister has raised her in Mexico as her own daughter. Like in most families, she too talked about the importance of family in her daily life and of maintaining close ties to her family. But she also discussed the difficulty that this has entailed for her and her husband in Mexico, having to raise another child, in fact their grandchild, as her own daughter in Mexico.

Many family members in Mexico emphasized the importance of, "el apoyo económico, pero también el apoyo moral [economic support, but also moral support]," and indeed, it was

important to relatives living in both places to offer the most that they could of both forms of support to their family members. While remittances from family members who immigrated to the United States proved helpful for many relatives in Mexico, in most cases, families in Mexico talked about how relatives in the United States typically sent remittances to their parents in Mexico, which would ultimately help out their siblings and other family members as well. After parents in Mexico had passed away, however, most relatives in the United States no longer continued sending money to their other relatives in Mexico. Conflicts did not emerge from these situations, however; rather, relatives in Mexico talked at length about the difficult situations of their family members living in the United States and how in many cases they face a great deal of economic insecurity themselves and they therefore had no expectations that their relatives should send them any money. One grandmother-mother in Mexico, talked a lot about the economic insecurity with which her daughter lives in Los Angeles, having to live, "very day to day." When her daughter was thirteen years old, coming out of primary school in Mexico, she got married, and this was when this grandmother-mother in Mexico, "me puso a vender afuera [I went to sell outside]." She went on, "Sigo trabajando y yo no voy dependiente de nadie [I continue working and I am not dependent on anybody]." She says that she makes about 500 pesos per week and, "si yo no vendo, no gano, y si la gente no trae dinero, no compra [if I don't sell anything, I don't make any money, and if people don't bring any money, they don't buy anything]." She paints a picture of a clearly difficult economic situation, but yet also appears to feel a great deal of pride in the work that she does, even when she is not able to make much money, and she feels proud that she is not dependent on her children or anybody else.

In another family, the aunt-sister in Mexico also draws comparisons between her own daily life in Mexico and that of her sister and her sister's family in Los Angeles. "Yo soy muy feliz aca

[I am very happy here]," she says, and she continues, "if people had economic resources, if people had a career, if they had a job, they would not leave because they leave longing for their family, they leave and they miss everything and they want to come back but they cannot." Indeed, this sentiment rang true for various families in Los Angeles, who immigrated to the United States for better economic opportunities so that they could provide better futures for their children, but for many relatives living in Los Angeles, they are often faced with a whole new set of challenges related to legal status constraints in their daily lives as well as, like this aunt-sister in Mexico said, "longing for their family, and... they want to come back but they cannot."

Among the various families for whom this experience was evident, is one family, a mom, dad, and three children, who left their home in Mexico for a better life in the United States. The male adolescent, Rafa, and his mom, who took part in three waves of the La Vida study in Los Angeles, expressed a great deal of nostalgia for their home and relatives in Mexico. I could feel the pain of this mother, for instance, as she talked about the fact that her mother in Mexico had passed away and that she could not be there with her. Rafa and his family described a great life in Mexico. Everyone in Rafa’s family lit up as they described their hometown in Mexico – what it was like and how everyone in the town knows them. Left with few other alternatives than to move to the U.S. after everything was stolen from their ranch in Mexico and the local police asked for 10,000 pesos from the family if they wanted them to investigate the robbery, Rafa’s family decided to move to the U.S. They were robbed of their sole source of income and, without a large bribe, the police were of no help. Rafa's mom explained, "in Mexico, we weren’t rich, but we were *agusto* [comfortable; at ease]. I didn’t have to work." Rafa’s mom dreams of having her own house one day but without a social security number and unable to prove what she and her husband earn at work, they have no other choice but to rent their home. They pay $1,700 per

month, plus bills, and without a social security number, Rafa's mom explains, "you pay taxes and get nothing back, we pay $500 every year in taxes but we get nothing back."

Meanwhile, Rafa's mom works the night shift at the fast food restaurant where she has worked for over a decade and despite repeatedly asking for different shifts so that she can spend time with her family, she is typically stuck with the shift where she is not home until three in the morning, everyday. Her request for different hours is consistently denied, she explains, as a result of the reality of the experience of working in the United States without papers. Rafa and others in his family all describe the importance of family closeness. Whenever they have the opportunity, anytime when their work schedules are not in complete conflict with one another, they take advantage of this time to spend it together, cooking, eating, joking, and laughing.

Unlike some of his undocumented peers in Los Angeles and others with undocumented parents or other family members, Rafa seems to have a more keen awareness of the implications of his and his family's legal status situations. He also has much more clear memories of Mexico, of where he grew up until he was eight years old, and of his many family members who still live there, who he seems to miss very much. Rafa's family provides one example from among various others of a family that immigrated to the United States for better opportunities, but more specifically, due to very difficult economic circumstances in their hometown in Mexico. But in their experience, like in those of many others, despite the optimism that comes across in interview conversations with him and his mom over the course of three waves of data collection and four years of time, it is also clear that Rafa and his family have had to endure a whole new set of financial and emotional hardships living in the United States as a result of legal status constraints. I talked about remittances with his relatives in Mexico, who likewise face serious economic insecurity, and they were sure to point out the fact that they do not expect their

relatives in Los Angeles to send them money, as they are familiar with the similarly difficult economic circumstances that their relatives in Los Angeles also face.

Discrimination that families feel and describe in Los Angeles and in Mexico

Comparisons between daily life in the United States and daily life in Mexico often emerged in the context of discrimination that family members in both places described feeling. The exploitation of the immigration system was one topic where this most clearly emerged in conversations with relatives in Mexico. Many family members in Mexico described the process, or lack thereof, involved in applying for a tourist visa to visit the United States. Relatives in Mexico described a system that is devoid of any reason and many shared their personal experiences with this system. As one study participant described, "and sometimes, they don't even look at your papers, they say, *no*, and that's it. You've paid $200 and you turn around and go back." For those who do not live in or close to one of the nine cities in Mexico where U.S. consulates are located or to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, the travel necessary to appear for the required Consular interview adds yet another cost on top of the visa application processing fee of $160 American dollars, followed by notoriously long wait times for these Consular appointments, and considerable time and energy often spent gathering the required supporting documents prior to in-person consular interviews, where, as it was repeatedly described to me, consular officials may decide to review the required documents or they may decide to reject an application without any review of the documentation and without explanation as to the reason for this rejection. Nevertheless, as the state department notes on their website, visa applicants are invited to apply again, "if you feel circumstances have changed regarding your application."

Stories that relatives in Mexico again and again recounted about these experiences applying for a tourist visa, sometimes year after year going through the same process and considerable

money all over again in the hopes to visit relatives in the United States, revealed a real and pervasive sense of a lack of respect felt by seemingly anybody who had ever interacted with this process. In one case, a cousin-niece in Mexico, Laura, talked about her own experience applying for a tourist visa to potentially visit her cousins who live in Los Angeles. Laura described feeling fortunate for her relatively unique circumstances, a law student in Puebla, Mexico, with bright aspirations for her career as a lawyer in Mexico following the completion of her degree, with immediate family members who all live in Mexico who have a stable business and economic security from their business. Indeed, her family circumstances largely contrasted with most stories I heard from relatives in Mexico. Laura likewise pointed out the difficulty that most people in Mexico endure in their similar attempts to secure a visa to visit their relatives in the U.S.

And yet, despite the contrasts that she drew between her own circumstances and those of most people in Mexico who have a far more difficult time attempting to prove their legitimate ties to Mexico, even for Laura, a law student in Puebla, Mexico, with strong ties to all of her loving family members who also live in Puebla, Mexico, and who are comfortable economically, her prospects for successfully securing a tourist visa to visit her relatives in the U.S. are likewise uncertain. "They will not give you the visa," she explains, "you have to cover a lot of pre-requisites, so I think that it is also an obstacle for us to go." "Have you tried?" I ask her. "Actually, it is in the process, in reality I have not checked but it has taken a long time." I ask her about the process of applying and she says, "Well yes, you have to go [to the consulate]... well, for me it is a little bit easier because of the fact that I am a student so I think that it is faster but I have to show, for example, my income, uh, to say why I am going to go over there, and I cannot say that I am going to go see my immigrant family, right? [*laughs*] So yes, you have to cover a

lot of requirements." I ask her why she believes that she cannot say this and she explains, "Because, well, I do not know, I think because they are illegal and all of that topic, no?... the majority of people that want to go over there from Mexico, it is precisely for that, to go see their family because they cannot come." Rather than wait an unpredictably long time to find out if she is granted a tourist visa to visit her relatives in Los Angeles, she says that she will probably go to Europe because it will be easier for her to go there.

The disrespect that relatives in Mexico felt related to the visa application process was a theme that came up repeatedly in conversations with families in Mexico. One grandmother-mother in Mexico, 69 years old, described having gone twice to the consulate to try to get a visa to go visit and maybe work in the United States. Among the things they required, she said, are that you have a bank account and that you are in a good economic situation. She said, "it's a good business they have, they get money from everyone who applies, because, everyone here, we all pay." A good friend of hers was planning to go to the United States, an older woman who was going to visit her family and grandchildren, and she recounts what happened for her. "Her daughter," she explains, "had a good idea. When she went to the consulate, her daughter said, I'm going with my mom (who had already been given a five-year tourist visa), to accompany her and take care of her while she visits our relatives." The consular officials, apparently, did not have the same perspective and not only rejected her daughter's visa, but also revoked the five-year visa that had already been approved for her mother. All of her adult children, with the exception of her daughter who immigrated to the U.S. over two decades ago live within blocks of her in a suburb of Guadalajara, Mexico.

Another participant in Mexico, the aunt-sister of her relatives in Los Angeles who participated in the main part of the La Vida study, was eventually granted a tourist visa. She likewise

described the arduous process that she went through before successfully securing a tourist visa to visit her relatives and since successfully doing so, she now visits her relatives in Los Angeles every year. Despite her eventual success with this first hurdle of being granted a visa to visit her relatives in the U.S., however, she also talks at length about her experience when she goes to the U.S. and her frustration with the ways that she has been treated, both by immigration officials at the airport as well as by everyday people when she is in the United States.

She recounts an experience that she had at the airport when officials there noticed that her tourist visa was expiring soon, "Ay, when I go to the United States, there in the airport, they are very rude. They always want me to speak to them in English and I tell them that I do not know how to speak English and I tell them... this last time that I went, the guy was really rude. He went to get someone who would translate and, because the visa was going to expire, they thought that I was going to stay over there. They said that, because it was going to expire that I was going to stay. I said that, no, that I had a round-trip ticket and that I had to come back to work." Indeed, as stated by the rules and regulations concerning those visiting the United States with tourist visas, an approaching expiration date of a visa should not preclude visit to the United States, in some cases, even if the visa will expire while the individual is still visiting before their planned return trip and certainly not in cases where the visa is set to expire after the date of the planned return-trip, as was the case for this aunt-sister. Additionally, the aunt-sister went on to talk about the discrimination that she feels when she visits her relatives in Los Angeles. She offers examples to show how even mundane interactions that she has had with people just walking by make her feel constantly marked as different in the United States, "Yes, really, really overbearing, when you walk through the streets as well, like they notice right away, *ay, they are from Mexico*, like that."

Mexican-origin parents in Los Angeles talked about their children's different experiences

throughout their high school years and many offered their opinions about their children's different teachers who they viewed as contributing to their children's ultimate success or failure. While parents in all families in Los Angeles who immigrated from Mexico said that top among their reasons for coming to the United States was to provide their children with opportunities that they would not otherwise have in Mexico, their experiences after living for many years in the United States did not always correspond with their prior expectations of what life in the U.S. would entail. Although some parents in Los Angeles praised their children's high school teachers and attributed their children's advancement through high school and going on to attend college, at least in part, to some of these teachers who they viewed as a source of support for their children, other parents described a lack of care or attention among their children's teachers, which they viewed as a significant impediment to their child's progress. In one interview summary, written up following a wave two interview with a parent in Los Angeles, the interviewer wrote, "Following the interview, P [primary parent] told me she is disappointed in school teachers who do not push students to go to college. She said in Mexico teachers have cause for alarm when a student scores a seven out of ten [on an exam]. She went on to say that she attributed this lack of motivation by U.S. teachers to a government plan that is in place so that students go into different types of jobs. She thinks teachers do not inspire all students to go to college so that some will be future professionals, others will be white collar workers, blue collar, etc."

Youth in Los Angeles who spent some period of time growing up in Mexico

Across conversations with immigrant parents in Los Angeles about their experiences coming to the United States and their motivations for doing so, nearly every parent I interviewed, perhaps unsurprisingly, emphasized their hope to provide their children with better opportunities

than they would otherwise have growing up in Mexico. Three waves of data collection with Mexican-origin youth and their parents in Los Angeles provided the relatively rare chance to spend time with and talk at length with the same sample of youth and parents each year and during a critical developmental period of youth's lives and to see whether and if so how and in what ways parents' expectations for their children changed over this important period of time.

The research literature to date on Latino youth development and the experiences of immigrant families in the United States has largely, certainly most recently, centered on sources of resilience for Latino youth growing up in different parts of the United States and ties to the family and familism values have long been examined as one possible source of resilience. This important body of research has looked extensively at the relationship between strong family ties and commitments that Latino youth in the U.S. often feel to their families and markers of positive academic or psychological outcomes, however findings that have emerged across this significant and still growing body of research are far from consistent.

One interesting pattern that emerged from longitudinal data collection with youth in Los Angeles suggested differences between youth who grew up their entire childhoods in the United States and those who spent some period of time in Mexico and then returned again to Los Angeles. The research to date on Mexican-origin youth in the United States has looked at differences between immigrant and U.S.-born youth. Findings have underscored, for example, that for immigrant youth in the United States who grow up undocumented, many go through their childhood and adolescent years able to experience everyday life just like their U.S.-born peers, given the protections in place for undocumented children under 18-years-old, however as they approach high school graduation, many are suddenly confronted with a number of barriers and harsh realities related to their undocumented status.

Scholars have looked at differences in the experiences of children who are separated from their parents for extended periods of time and the implications of family separation for children later in life. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) found that children who were separated from their parents were more likely to experience anxiety and depression than children who were not separated from their parents, but that the psychological distress also declined over time (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). Common variables that have been examined in prior literature on Latino youth have included, for example, parental nativity, parental legal status, and youth legal status, which have been highlighted as possibly related to different youth outcomes.

As discussed in prior chapters in this dissertation, while findings from the La Vida study showed important implications that legal status situations in families have for youth growing up in the United States, findings did not show major differences between undocumented youth and their U.S. citizen peers, in terms of post-high school trajectories. Despite legal status barriers that affected youth in the La Vida sample in ample and numerous ways and this included youth who were affected not only by their own undocumented status or that of their parents but also U.S. citizen youth who felt the effects of other relatives' precarious legal status situations, overall, legal status barriers did not prevent youth from succeeding academically.

But another variable emerged and suggests that further investigation would be worthwhile to better understand Mexican-origin youth's different trajectories. Specifically, youth who returned to Mexico for some period of time with their families emerged as a salient topic for some youth in this study. To my knowledge, this topic has not been examined in prior research on Mexican-origin families, and evidence from youth and parent accounts about this topic and the impact of these experiences for some youth suggest that continued research with a focus on these experiences would prove valuable for our understanding of this important population.

Various youth across the La Vida sample talked about the fact that they had spent some period of time when they were growing up living in Mexico, for different reasons. Youth who discussed visiting Mexico for a short trip or vacation with their family are not included in the analysis discussed here. For example, one male adolescent said that he visited Mexico when he was two-years-old and that he has no recollection of it, or, in another case, a female adolescent talked about the trip that she and her brother took to Oaxaca with their uncle, "he took us because... he has his papers fixed so it's easy for him to come and go. So meanwhile my mom was like, *Okay, we should send them*." These cases and others like them are not included as part of this discussion. Rather, I refer here to cases where youth spent a relatively significant part of their lives, and one or more academic terms, living in Mexico with different combinations of family members.

Families who decide, or who are forced, to move back to Mexico is a commonplace experience across the larger population of Mexican-origin youth. More often, these experiences are discussed in terms of situations when a relative is deported and, consequently, the rest of the family must decide what they will do. Often, as is discussed in chapter two and as prior research has likewise shown, Mexican immigrant families tend to have a plan in place for these types of situations, an, "earthquake plan," as it has been described (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011; Suárez-Orozco 2012).

Evidence from the La Vida study showed various youth who had experienced these very situations, which typically involved a father who was deported, while the rest of the immediate family remained together in Los Angeles, often distressed by both the emotional and economic costs of dad's sudden and unexpected departure as well as by the unknown and unpredictable future that would follow. For La Vida youth who had these experiences, in all cases, by the

conclusion of the study, the father, who had previously been deported, ultimately made it back safely to Los Angeles and to his family, typically, after at least a year of trying to get back. Despite these relatively fortunate endings after experiencing a parent's deportation, La Vida participants also described a number of negative impacts that this experience had on youth and in families, including dramatic changes to school engagement for youth, and for parents, mothers who were now raising their children alone, who had never been financially responsible for their family and who suddenly had to find a job and cope with severe economic insecurity. Depending on different factors, it appeared that in some cases these negative effects can persist for youth, even long after dad's return, and in other cases, youth are able to overcome these tough times that they endured during their father's absence.

But reasons for why some youth spent some period of time growing up in Mexico typically was unrelated to a relative’s deportation. Youth in the La Vida sample who had spent some period of time growing up in Mexico did so because at some point their families for different reasons had decided to return to Mexico, either because they had considered returning indefinitely and then changed their minds and came back again to the United States, or in some cases a relative was sick or another similar circumstance motivated their family to return to Mexico for a period of time.

The decision to move back to Mexico for a period of time while children are growing up is commonplace across the larger population of Mexican-origin youth and an examination of these experiences among youth in the La Vida study shows some possible difficulties that may result from these experiences for youth. Youth discussed growing accustomed to one or another place and the surrounding friends and family, and then having to leave and grow accustomed or re-accustomed to being far away from this environment, and these family members and friends.

While findings from this sample are too small to suggest any definitive findings related to these experiences and are thus only suggestive, the patterns that emerged appear to warrant further investigation. Among the youth in the La Vida sample, some of them spent some period of time when they were growing up living in Mexico, with or without their parents or went back and forth, in some cases, living in both places for some significant period of time while growing up. In one case, a U.S. citizen adolescent female talks about the time she spent in Mexico with her family, when her two siblings were born, and then how she returned to the United States where her grandmother raised her for many years, before her parents and siblings returned as well. She is one of the few youth from across our sample who later struggled in high school, behaviorally and academically. In our wave two ecocultural family interview, she described a photo that she took to the interviewer and said that she feels that she is, "in the middle." This seemed to extend to other parts of her life as well, and may have been impacted by her family circumstances, a U.S. citizen youth (then, in the tenth grade), in a mixed-status family, who spent some of her early childhood in Mexico, and then years separated from her immediate family, and was raised by her grandmother in Los Angeles, who she referred to as, mom.

In another example, another U.S.-born male youth lived in Mexico for about six years. He came back with his U.S. citizen siblings and his parents about three years ago, when he was in eighth grade. Among this youth's photos were a few different photos of his family. In the first, the interviewer asks, "did you take a picture of a picture?" "Yeah," the teen responds. "Very cool. So, tell me who's in that picture." The teen continues, "It's me, my mom, my sister, my dad, my brother. That's a picture at my sister's quinciñera." "Great," the interviewer says, "Was that recent?" The teen goes on, "Umm, no, about three years ago... 'cause this to me resembles like years ago we were still happy. In the picture it seems different than how we are right now. It's

changed a lot since then... because when we were young, three years [old], and we came from Mexico. So it’s kinda different now that we're back. Then we were getting used to the lifestyle and now we're getting used to it." Like in the previous example, this youth later describes difficulties that arise for him academically and in his general life, and his mom likewise reflects on some difficulties that he has been having in school.

His mom recounts, "My daughter was about six years old and the boy was five. My youngest, I took him when he was about two years old, something like that. We were there for about six years, something like that. Later on, we came back. This son (youth's younger brother), he loved it since the moment we got there. It was like he had just got home... he was happy." She describes her different children's reactions to moving back to the United States, "All of us were over there and... we arrived here and my daughter resented it. The change really affected her, from there to here… my son, the youngest one too. The older one… not him, from the moment he got here, we’d ask if he wanted to go to Mexico and he’d say, *no*. He’s in love with it here. But... that’s why I told you... I feel very proud of them because I feel that they’re doing well in school, despite... well the kids had to start from the bottom in acquiring the language. They started off with that language and at a young age and they didn’t remember anything. So I was constantly pushing them and telling them that they can, and I have always told them... my father made them very intelligent, but it depends on what they want. Whatever it is that they want, they’ll end up achieving it... and yes, they’re on their way."

And yet, mom goes on to talk about the difficulties that her children, particularly her son who was at the time in the tenth grade, has been experiencing with the English language and in English class, but does not seem to consider what he, separately, relays to the interviewer about it being tough having recently moved back from Mexico. His mom goes on to say, "Well I think

[this male youth] likes... well right now he’s having problems with his English class. This year has been very difficult for him. It’s been difficult for him because of the language. The year he got here, he was in eighth grade and he graduated with honors... without knowing the language or anything. He’s very bright but one of the problems he had... his English teacher always gave him A’s, not because he knew a lot, but because he was a good kid; he wasn’t very rebellious or dumb. When he got into ninth grade, we filled out an application for him to be in the Magnet program. The classes are much more advanced and difficult. I was scared that he wasn’t going to be able to, I felt uneasy... as if I was pushing him to do too much. I would always tell him that he could do it and in the end he did. Unfortunately... last semester and this semester, he has a new teacher that is very demanding and he wanted everything much more perfect and clear and at the level my son is at, he should be doing it in that way. I still went to talk to the counselor and he explained that... well he said that it was because the teacher said... he’s a history teacher and at that time they were doing essays. I feel that for him, essays are his undoing, the end of his world. It’s his biggest problem, the same with his spelling. He does his work and he concentrates very hard doing it. I see him and he does his homework and finishes." While this mom is reflective about the different impacts that going back and forth to Mexico may have had on her children, she does not appear to believe that this has had any negative implications for her son in the La Vida study. However, from his own description of his photo and his discussion about the differences in his family before as compared to now, and that they are trying to, "become accustomed to living again in the United States," it indeed appears possible that this has been difficult for him.

Again, while still suggestive as of yet, these patterns that emerged from youth and parent narratives in family situations where youth spent some period of time growing up in Mexico and

then returning to the United States suggests that further research that pays attention to this variable could prove interesting.

The paradox of safety and lack of freedom in the U.S.

Despite the diversity of places where research participants in Mexico live (in different states in Mexico, some in cities and others on a ranch), concern regarding safety was a theme that emerged in the narratives of nearly every family I spoke to. Family members in Mexico described specific examples of things that have happened to them or to others they know, due to the more dangerous context in which they live. Accounts from family members were sprinkled about with numerous examples of problems with gangs, robberies, and kidnappings, for instance, in the present-day where they live, which cause them to worry about themselves and their loved ones. There was also consensus across families in Mexico in terms of their views that the cities in the United States where their relatives live are much safer, either the cities, in and of themselves, or some family members also talked about their perception of the police in the U.S. and how they are more orderly and attentive to things like violence in cities. Yet, what emerged through interviews with relatives in Mexico was also the perception that, "Over there, it's safer, but you spend all of your time locked inside. Here, it's more dangerous, every day, when we go out onto the street, it's a risk, but..."

Many family members in Mexico talked about the differences between family members who live in Mexico, some who are able to travel back and forth and visit their relatives in the United States, and their relatives in the United States, most of whom cannot leave where they live if they wish to return again to their families. They spoke about the lives of their relatives in the United States as restricted – as confined to their homes for fear of being caught without documents, and unable to travel to Mexico to visit their relatives.

One uncle-brother in Mexico points out the contradiction in the lives of so many immigrants in the United States, in the goals that immigrants have and their reasons for immigrating, and the experiences that inevitably follow. As he puts it, "so many people live with all of this fear, with the goal being to one day be tranquilo." He talks about his own experience of going to the United States for a year to work, about fifteen years ago, "I arrived to a factory that had, I don't remember but there were forty or fifty employees, and the majority of them were without documentation... we were given talks, to be careful with immigration and, do not commit any infractions so they don't have to stop you and investigate... if you drive, first teach yourself to drive and be aware." He went on, "People would talk about fear... If a cop, for any reason, stops you and you do not have, most likely you will end up in immigration and you are going back. I think all of that is part of the fear... and, and for the majority of the people [*short pause*], they live with all of that fear with the intention [*short pause*], of one day being in peace... they endure feeling constantly fearful with the hope that in the long run they are going to be in peace."

The purpose of immigrating is to have an easier life, to have more possibilities to make money, and for their children, educational possibilities. Their goal is to, one day be *tranquilo*, and yet their daily life experiences in this pursuit are made up of the opposite of *traquilidad*. One 32-year-old woman, the aunt-sister of her relatives in Los Angeles, lives in a beach town in Jalisco, Mexico and is one is one of ten siblings, some of whom live in Mexico, others in the U.S., a sibling who lived for a period of time in the U.S., did not like it, and returned, and another sibling who does not like Mexico and lives in the U.S. She has a tourist visa and visits her family in Los Angeles every December. In our interview, she describes the stress that accompanies life in the U.S. without papers. "My sister, for example, just to take me to the airport, she would want to, but she cannot. Or they are seeing on the news all the time that, *ay,*

this, or that, or the immigration laws or the promises that the government makes about when this will happen or when that will happen. They are always paying attention, that is what generates stress."

She goes on to explain, "How can I tell you? Well, I think that people think that everything is easier over there [in the United States], however, they live separated, they live discriminated, they live almost inside all of the time because they cannot go out, so I think that they have to... like the people, unfortunately, they think too much about money. They think that going over there means that they are going to earn money, like the saying, *I am going to earn dollars*, it is a lot of money, but at the cost of what? Of not being able to go out? Of not seeing your family? So they are tired of working too much here, they are going to go work over there as well. I think that they have a mistaken concept of what the United States is." And she goes on, "What else... they cannot, well, go out, go to other places, to go, freely, um, to come here to Mexico... ah, when I went, for example, driving, before [my sister] did not drive but now she does drive. When I went, I would get there and then she would give me the keys so that I could drive over there, she felt comfortable because she felt that they could not do anything to me because I was a tourist, she told me to take my driver's license and my visa and that if they stopped us... it did not happen... she was more calm [with me driving]. When she is driving, she is always making sure... always [aware of] those things. She does not talk a lot [about this], but she is conscious of that... or all of a sudden…her husband yes, her children yes, and she could not, that they can be freely, it is hard."

This aunt-sister was not alone in her sentiment, drawing attention to these contradictions that arise for family members who immigrate to the United States with hopes to offer their children more and better opportunities, and yet, for many, rather than becoming more free, their lives in

fact often end up being less free. Several relatives in Mexico commented on their similar observations about their family members in Los Angeles who are not free to live their lives in the same way that one can in Mexico; instead they are constrained working long hours indoors, often apart from their families, and constrained inside also as a result of legitimate fears about immigration, especially as their children grow up and a new reality emerges where their children now see their home in the United States as the only home they really know.

La Vida participants in Los Angeles likewise echoed these same sentiments. One undocumented mom in Los Angeles paused for a moment to reflect on what she misses in Mexico. Then she said, "What do I miss? I miss the food from Mexico. Also, over there, there is much more freedom. Over there, people have the opportunity to go out in the evening to the town square and walk around and right here no – from work to home and from home to work and of course family. I also have family in Mexico. I have a lot of uncles, cousins and people like that." Another undocumented mom in Los Angeles similarly contrasted the expectations that she had about what life in the United States would be with the reality that she and her family now live, "It is very different here than in Mexico, oh, yes, very different! Everything! For instance, paying rent. I was not used to paying rent. I took care of my son's expenses and whatever I gave to my mom but that was it. When I came here then I learned what a real responsibility was." Asked about whether she ever thinks about going back to Mexico, she says that she has become resigned to the fact that her going to Mexico would carry consequences that are too great. She explains that given her family's situation, like those of an increasing number of families in the U.S. today, her going to Mexico would entail upending the life that she has built for her family in Los Angeles, as she and her two older sons who are undocumented would then face the hugely difficult, if not inevitably unknowable prospects of being able to return home. Thus, when asked

if she ever thinks about going back to Mexico, she replies, "No, because it was very hard to cross the border. So, I said to myself, *Now, I have to stay*. I thought that [my son] could have the opportunity to at least learn English or something else. Then, I met my husband, my daughter was born, and [eldest son] came. So, we are here."

It is more dangerous in Mexico in the experience of many as well. "Well, it is as if before it was safe here [in Mexico], maybe it was because I was younger and I did not see a lot of delinquency and right now, all of a sudden, there are a lot of robberies, abductions... Here, even though it is a small pueblo, they will abduct the girls, the children, before you would not see any of that, before it was safer, but now there is a lot of delinquency maybe because there is a little bit of work and a lot of people, I don't know, they steal..." (sister-daughter, Puebla, Mexico).

Discussions of violence were not just in the abstract. Nearly everybody I talked to had stories of specific and recent incidents of violence. In this same case, the same sister-daughter described recent examples of violence, which caused her to worry, "it does worry me because for example, I have my daughters and then you see cases…like, for example, last week there was a case where a girl that was 18 years old that would not show up and they put photos on the poles and all of that and she turned up dead in a house in a pueblo near here. I mean, the guys were on drugs, they raped her, they buried her there in the patio of the house, it was a classmate. Right now, the guys are in jail, the girl lived around the corner. [I knew] the girl that is also locked up because she participated in that, yes, so I tell you that San Martin is not that safe anymore. There are a lot of abductions here or like one time they tried to raise the curtains [referring to the curtains to her home, to break in]."

An aunt-sister lives in a small city known for its tourism and for this reason, safety is a priority in this city, which wants to keep up a good reputation so that tourists will continue to

visit. Her account about safety thus began in this context. She said, "They talk about Mexico being unsafe and things, but we do not live that. You see that a lot in the places that are isolated and in the big cities, so, here, it is neither a big city, nor far away, and so I think that the safety is fine. They assault and there are police, there are patrols 24 hours a day and everything." But she goes on to describe what was once a, "calm," city, where her sister lives. She says, "[it] was a calm place and in the last couple of years it has become... that is where the delinquents pass by so it has become a little less safe but the people are still there. There is more insecurity in cities that are larger where they cannot control the masses of people. [She points to one of her sisters on her kinship chart that is in progress.] The only one that has had things happen to her is, her. Her, they have assaulted her, they have gone in her house, they have assaulted her in the streets."

But still, even in the context of the violence that study participants who live in different parts of Mexico described and the unnerving reality every day that, as one dad says, "here, we live with this risk, that something can happen every time we walk out onto the street," there also seemed to be consensus among relatives in Mexico about the also unsettling contexts that surround their family members living in the U.S., where, as several participants noted with the same suspicion in their voices, "no se ven niños en la calle [you don't see kids out on the street]."

A cousin-niece, whose cousin about her same age lives in Arizona, likewise described the types of violence that have been happening close to where she lives, "Yes, the truth is that it is really... unfortunately the situation is really critical here in Mexico and here really close to Puebla, I do not know if you know Veracruz? ...yes, the situation is really bad because they would come in white vans and they would take children and you would find them but they would not have organs so... it is really bad here." She goes on to describe how, although she is not related to anyone that this has happened to, she knows of many cases, "well, I do know people

but I am not related to them, I know them through my teachers because... some of them are government workers... they are MPs, they work in Ministerios Publicos [public ministries] and there are a lot of cases and the MP will do all of the verification and everything that has to do with proof, well yes, I have known of a lot of cases."

A grandmother-mother in Guadalajara also talks about robberies, kidnappings, and that older people are injected with something so that they can steal their jewelry. She tells me, "here, four of my friends, they've all had their earrings stolen... straight from her ears, ripping them straight down through the cartilage of her ears." Her granddaughter had brought her pretty "coquetas [earrings]," and her son warned her, "mom don't wear those, you're going to get hurt." Still, despite the serious safety concerns that relatives living in different parts of Mexico reported, families in Mexico and in Los Angeles, alike, pointed out the lack of freedom in the United States, which they contrasted with daily life in Mexico.

Discussion

There is a complex balancing of money, opportunity, hope and also risk, being trapped, split lives between the U.S. and Mexico, and split families, all of which face Mexican-origin families living across borders. Fear and danger are now more prevalent in both locations than before. And yet, despite nearly every participant's descriptions about the terrible violence in Mexico that worries them in their daily lives, across locations in Mexico where research was carried out with these different families these same participants also contrasted their own daily life experiences with the truly trapped nature of undocumented status that their relatives in the United States must endure. Despite good intentions and plans, for instance, to immigrate to the U.S. in order to provide better futures and opportunities for their children, it is clear from the narratives of family members on both sides of the border, that these decisions have costs for families.

Study Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size of the ethnographic subsample of relatives in Mexico and that this subsample was comprised of various kin (siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents, etc.). Ethnographic interviews and time spent with families in Mexico, the close relatives of parent and youth participants from the main La Vida study that took place over the course of three waves of mixed method data collection in Los Angeles, was intended to elucidate comparisons between families in the sending communities in Mexico and their relatives in the receiving communities in Los Angeles. However, it proved challenging to draw any definitive comparisons between, for example, youth growing up in Los Angeles and their siblings left behind in Mexico, as the sample of relatives in Mexico was made up of family members, some who were youth's grandparents and others who were a sibling, or a cousin. This was expected, however, as the design of the study purposefully asked youth and parent participants in Los Angeles to identify any relatives in Mexico who they felt closest to, if they believed that or those relatives might have an interest in participating in this additional part of the study. In addition, youth and parents' close relatives in Mexico would inevitably consist of different kin relationships, given the various makeups of different Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles. While interesting findings and comparisons indeed emerged, the relatively small subsample of relatives in Mexico made it difficult to discern the patterns and findings related to family members in the sending and receiving communities of Mexico and Los Angeles that were most salient across the representative sample of Mexican-origin families in Los Angeles.

Nevertheless, the additional ethnographic subsample of relatives in Mexico analyzed in this paper was intended as an exploratory and descriptive study, to examine, for instance, the experiences of and the perceived costs and benefits for children left behind in Mexico with

different relatives and for different periods of time, for youth who stayed in Los Angeles while one or both parents returned to Mexico, and for youth who spent parts of their childhood or adolescence growing up in both countries. This exploratory research with a subsample of family members in Mexico also sought to examine and illustrate comparisons between the daily lives of families in the sending communities in Mexico with the daily lives of their relatives in Los Angeles. Prior research on Mexican-origin families in the United States and youth in particular has time and again found that family closeness and strong family ties and connections to relatives, both in the United States and in Mexico, are salient features of daily life across Mexican-origin families and for many youth, even after generations in the United States. Evidence from this subsample further underscores these findings. Given the well-documented and significant connections between Mexican-origin youth growing up in the U.S. and kin in Mexico, and the fact that *family* for many Mexican-origin youth tends to be defined more broadly than only the immediate family to include also grandparents, godparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, all of whom may live near or far from youth and some of whom likely live, have lived, or are living in Mexico, our research with Mexican-origin youth would benefit from continued focus on these connections between youth and kin in Mexico.

Evidence from the growing body of research on Latino youth development has underscored the importance of family ties for Mexican-origin youth in the United States. Research has looked at the implications of close family ties for youth, but rarely includes the perspectives and experiences of relatives in Mexico who, indeed, often contribute to different youth trajectories. The family in Mexico, the family in the U.S., those who can move back and forth, those who cannot move back and forth, the financial, divorce, and educational circumstances of family members, connections by skype and phone, language ability, the preferences of various family to

stay in their homes or move (the cultural worlds they prefer) and more – all affect the contrasts between kin in the U.S. and kin in Mexico. This is an important and fascinating part of the story of Mexican youth in the U.S. that deserves more attention.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

Conclusion

The population of Mexican-origin youth in the United States today is diverse. Unlike other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, the Latino population is made up largely of its youth. The majority of these youth are of Mexican-origin and are U.S.-born, and many are growing up today with family members in plural legal status contexts. This dissertation has aimed to advance our understanding of this significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in the U.S. today, including the challenges that they confront and the sources of strength that help defend against these challenges.

Among the core defining characteristics in Mexican-origin families is a commitment to the family through various forms of family obligation and assistance. Despite these longstanding and enduring cultural values that emphasize strong family ties, family obligation, assistance, and support, known collectively as *familism*, many parents of Mexican-origin youth today have sacrificed family separation in order to improve the possibilities for their children and as a result many of these youth are growing up today in families with various mixed legal status situations. This dissertation has attempted to advance our understanding of the experiences and effects for youth growing up in these different legal status situations, including youth who are themselves undocumented, those who have DACA, youth whose parents are temporary or permanent lawful residents, U.S. citizen youth whose siblings are undocumented, and others. For too long, Mexican-origin youth have been thought about only in terms of the risk factors that they face, but the enduring cultural values of familism appear to play a significant role in the successful realization of academic and other goals across Mexican-origin families and for youth growing up across these diverse contexts.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to better understand the pathways that lead to the widely

cited goal of academic achievement for Mexican-origin youth, most of whom are growing up across these more nuanced and consequential legal status contexts. I have also examined the degree to which and in what ways longstanding cultural values of familism can promote positive development for Mexican-origin youth. In an effort to gain a richer understanding of the daily lives and experiences of Mexican-origin youth in Los Angeles today and different experiences of family connections, this study also included a subsample of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with immediate and extended relatives of youth who live in Mexico.

With the benefit of following youth through the critical transition of their high school years and learning from youth and parents about youth's educational pathways and post-high school outcomes, this study reveals the effects that legal status circumstances in families can have on youth and also that legal status can account for some of the variation in youth's different experiences of family obligation, cohesion, and gratitude. Using a comprehensive, longitudinal, and mixed methods dataset with three years of qualitative and contextual evidence, I look at the implications of familism, family ties, and legal status across the critical developmental period of late adolescence. Results show a significant connection between gratitude and familism for Mexican-origin youth and that legal status can account for some of the variation in how familism is experienced. The additional barriers of unauthorized status do not weaken family cohesion and connection, but rather appear to be associated with youth's feelings of gratitude and finding meaning in high levels of family responsibility and connection to immediate and extended relatives in Mexico.

In this dissertation I have aimed to bridge the gap between research on familism, research on gratitude, and research on legal status implications for Mexican-origin youth, by looking at plural and changing legal status situations in the family context and how familism is experienced

by youth across families with plural legal status situations. The topics of familism and legal status can together contribute to a more holistic understanding of the actual experiences of Mexican-origin youth and how we can promote successful pathways.

Determination to "seguir adelante" (push ahead), in spite of it all, is a central theme that emerged from interviews with youth and families in this study. To succeed academically is a desired outcome across families. This dissertation accounts for the heterogeneity of factors that matter to Mexican-origin youth in their everyday lives, including family members living across borders, to advance our understanding of the pathways that lead to these desired outcomes, the sources of resilience that strengthen positive youth development, and the barriers that can get in the way for Mexican-origin youth. We have much to learn about this significant population, but this dissertation sheds light on the complexity of legal status situations in Mexican-origin families and the consequences that these legal status differences can have for the significant population of Mexican-origin youth growing up in diverse family contexts in Los Angeles today.

Appendix

Appendix A. Recruitment Script

Ecocultural Family Interviews – La Vida Study – UCLA – Recruitment script

- "Hello! We want to thank you for all of your time and help in our study. Your participation means a lot to us. The surveys and daily diaries that you filled out are very helpful for us, and we really appreciate your doing them.

- Some of the families in our project have been selected to participate further. You are one of them – congratulations! ☺ We did not know beforehand who would be picked– like a lottery. I did not pick any of the families myself – other people on our team did the lottery picking, and the things that you said before in the survey portion have absolutely nothing to do with why you were chosen.

- We certainly hope you agree to participate. Just like before, your answers are confidential and we will not share what you say with anyone not on our research team. If you do participate, we will provide you [the parent] with $50 cash, and you [the teen] with $30 cash for doing one more visit and interview. We will come back in 2 weeks to come and talk with you and learn from you about your individual experiences. Just like before, we are paying you for your time and for your help.

- *If talking to teen* – We will give you a digital camera for you to use over the next week to take about 25 photos of the activities, people, places, objects and other things that you feel are **important in your everyday life.**

- This will be different than the other visit. When we come back to talk with you, there is nothing to fill out. It is just a conversation, about how things are going for you. We will talk about how things have been going, and you will show us the photos you have been taking.

- *Only if needed to provide further explanation:* We are interested in parents', kids' and families' everyday lives and routines. What you are doing everyday is influencing how kids are doing inside and out of school. We really want to learn from **you** about **your** experiences and in **your** own words. We are talking to hundreds of people from different schools over this whole year; [x high school] is only one of the schools in our study. Talking with you will really help us to better understand the experiences and everyday lives of families in Los Angeles.

- If at any time you have any questions or concerns, you can always call us at (310) 794-3640.

- We hope that you will be able to participate – does this sound like something you would be interested in? Great! Then let me get you started.

- *Begin informed consent process*

- *Explain camera use to teen, go over instructions, signature*

Appendix B. Camera Kits

The following were made into half page laminated show cards and were put into plastic kits together with the corresponding digital camera and given to youth participants two weeks prior to qualitative EFI interviews.

(Card 1 - frontside)

Photography Instructions: La Vida Study – UCLA

- Over the next week take about 25 pictures of the activities, people, places, objects, and other things that you feel are important in your everyday life. When we return, we will ask you about your photos, and give you $30!

    o **Activities & situations**, such as your daily life routines, school classes, school activities, after school programs, sports, street life, parties, work, chores, homework, and so forth

    o **People,** such as your family, friends, teachers, church people, sports teams, boy/girlfriend, bosses, workmates, and so forth

    o **Places,** such as your favorite places to hang out, your room, your house, places you like to go and eat, church, work, friends' houses or rooms, and so forth

    o **Objects**, such as your favorite possessions, clothes, jewelry, games, electronics, cars, books, and so forth

    o And anything else!??? **Be creative!**

(Card 1 - backside)

- Your photos are only for you and your participation in our research project; no one other than you and our researcher team will ever see them. They will not be published or otherwise ever made available outside of research use with any identifiable people or non-public places in them.
- Please do not take photos of any illegal activities, nudity, or anything else that would be inappropriate to have in a photograph. Otherwise, however, please take photos of anything you feel is important in your daily life. Do not upload any of these photos onto your computer or onto the Internet. The photos are for the purposes of this research study only.
- Remember that we are loaning you the camera; we cannot give you the camera! We have to use the same cameras to give to many other teens in our research project after you have finished with it. (All your photos are deleted from the camera, of course, before we give the camera to the next person.)
- Most importantly, enjoy using the camera during the next week or so to capture whatever it is that is important to you! Have fun doing it!
- If you have any questions at any time about the photos or using the camera call this number and someone will get back to you: **(310) 794-3640**

(Card 2 - Nikon Coolpix)

Camera Instructions (Nikon COOLPIX L20):

IMAGE of Nikon Camera

- **Turn on the Camera**: Press the power switch to turn on the camera. The power-on lamp (green) will light for a moment and the monitor will turn on. If you do not take a picture within about 30 seconds of turning on the camera, the monitor will turn off automatically and the camera will enter standby mode. Pressing the power switch or the shutter-release button turns on the monitor. If the camera turns off, press the power switch to turn it on again.

- **Frame a Picture**: The camera automatically focuses for you. Press **T** to zoom in on the subject or **W** to zoom out (**6**). The camera automatically determines an appropriate shooting mode depending on the subject or composition.

- **Focus and Shoot**: Press the shutter release button halfway, stopping when you feel resistance. The camera will automatically focus on faces for you. When shooting non-human subjects, focus will be in the center of the monitor. Position the main subject near the center of the monitor. When the subject is in focus, [[ ]] (focus area) will glow green. When the camera is unable to focus, the focus area will blink red. Change the composition and try pressing the shutter-release button halfway again.

- **Take Photo**: Press the shutter-release button the rest of the way down. Do not use force when pressing the shutter-release button, as this may result in blurred pictures.

- **Turn Off the Camera**: Press the power switch (**4**) to turn the camera off. Do not forget to turn off the camera when you are done using it, as the AA batteries will run out. If the batteries do run out, call (310) 794-3640 and we will get you new ones. Or put in new ones yourself and we will pay you back for the batteries when we come to do the interview and collect the camera.

(Card 2 - Casio EX-Z33)

Camera Instructions (CASIO EX-Z33):

IMAGE of Casio Camera

- **Turn on the Camera**: Press the Power [ON/OFF] switch **(3).**
  Options: Press **REC button (10)** to turn on camera and begin taking photos.
  Press **PLAY button (16)** to turn on camera and view photos taken.

- **Take Photo**: Point camera at the subject. While keeping camera still, half-press the **shutter button (2)**. When image is in focus, camera will beep, **backlamp (8)** will light green, and **focus frame [[ ]]** will turn green.

- Continuing to keep camera still, press **shutter button (2)** all the way down. The recorded image will remain on the **display (17)** for about one second, and then it will be stored. Camera is now ready to shoot the next image.

- **Deleting a photo:** Press **PLAY button (16)**. Press to the **right** or to the **left** on the **Control button (15)** to select the snapshot you want to delete. Press **down** on the **Control button (15)**. You may then select to **Cancel** (not

delete the image), **Delete** this image, or **Delete All Files** by pressing **Set (12)**.

- **Take Photo**: Press the shutter-release button the rest of the way down. Do not use force when pressing the shutter-release button, as this may result in blurred pictures.

- **Turn Off the Camera**: Press the Power [ON/OFF] switch **(3)** to turn camera off. If the camera battery runs out, you can charge the battery with the charger included in this camera kit. If you have any problems or questions, please do not hesitate to call Mindy at (310) 794-3640.

Appendix C. Initial Family Visit & Camera Drop-off – Checklist

Initial Family Visit & Camera Drop-off – Checklist

______ Check teen's age to determine appropriate *consent/assent forms*.

______ Check language used in prior EFIs to determine appropriate *consent/assent forms*.

______ Bring appropriate *Parent Consent* form (*Parent only* or *Parent Consent*; English or Spanish).

______ Bring extra copy of *Consent form* for parent.

______ Bring appropriate *Teen Consent/Assent* form (depending on teen's age; English or Spanish).

______ Bring extra copy of *Consent/Assent form* for teen.

______ Camera Kit: charged camera w/ no photos, 2 extra AA batteries or charger for battery, instructions.

Appendix D. Wave 3 Show Cards

Wave 3 Show Cards (Laminated, Double Sided, and Spanish/English 4.25 x 5.5 cards)

CARD 1

Family Rules, Responsibilities & Obligations / Scripts for Conduct

- **Specific Rules / Responsibilities**
    - Implicit vs. explicit expectations
    - Childcare, domestic tasks, translating
    - Moral, behavioral, transportation, & dress rules

- Shared Assistance / Gender specific rules
- **Enforcement**
  - Negotiation, flexibility
  - Conflicts & disagreements
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Feelings**
  - Salience & importance
  - Perception of burden or of opportunity
  - Pride / shame
  - Sees reasoning / fairness / balance
  - Relative to others
  - Ambivalence, conflict, concerns
- **Family obligations overall**
  - I am asked to … I can ask [X] to do…
  - Responsibility; Respect; Reliability
- **Changes in rules, responsibilities & obligations in the last year**
  - What would you change or not change?

CARD 1

Reglas familiares, Responsabilidades y Obligaciones/ Guiones de conducta

- **Reglas especificas/Responsabilidades**
  - Expectativas implícito vs. explicito
  - Cuidado de niños, tareas domesticas, traducir
  - Reglas morales, de comportamiento, de transportación, y de vestir
  - Asistencia compartida/normas especificas a genero
- **Ejecución**
  - Negociación/flexibilidad
  - Conflictos y desacuerdos
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/abuelos**
- **Sentimientos**
  - Prominencia e importancia
  - Percepción de la carga o de oportunidad
  - Orgullo/Vergüenza
  - Ve razón/ igualdad/ balance
  - Relativo a otros
  - Ambivalencia, conflicto, preocupación
- **Obligaciones familiares en general**
  - Se me pide que…. yo puedo pedir que [x] agá
  - Responsabilidad; Respeto; Confiabilidad
- **Cambios en las reglas, responsabilidades, y obligaciones en el último año**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 2

Overall Family Daily Routine

- **Daily Routine Overall**
  - Predictability / Patterns
  - Specifics days (Weekdays / Weekends / Vacations / Holidays)
  - Sleep
- **Time together / Joint activities**
  - Communication
  - Mealtimes
  - Best and worst times together
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Care & Support by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Transportation**
  - Car? Getting around? Who provides?
  - Costs of transportation
  - Future goals – car
- **Overall balance in daily routine**
- **Changes in daily routine in the last year**
  - What would you change or not change?

CARD 2

General de la rutina diaria de la familia

- **Rutina diaria general**
  - Previsibilidad/ actividades recurrentes
  - Días específicos (Entre semana/Fin de semana/Vacaciones/ Días de fiesta)
  - Dormir
- **Tiempo Juntos/ Actividades conjuntas**
  - Comunicación
  - Horas de la comida
  - Tiempos juntos mejores y peores
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Atención y apoyo de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Transportación**
  - Carro? Moviéndose de un lugar a otro? Quién proporciona?
  - Costos de transportación
  - Metas para el futuro - carro
- **Equilibrio general de la rutina diaria**
- **Cambios en la rutina diaria en el último año**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 3

Peer Integration

- **Peer group**

    - Friends / peers
    - Boyfriends / girlfriends
- **Activities**
    - Concerts / Music
    - TV / Movies / Actors
    - Risk-taking activities
- **Friends/Peers-Family: Conflicts, Integration, and anything else**
    - Peers integrated into house hold routine?
    - Positive or adversarial integration
    - Peer/family balance
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Changes in peer relationships / integration in the last year?**
    - What would you change or not change?

CARD 3

Integración de compañeros

- **Grupos de compañeros**
    - Amigos/ Compañeros
    - Novios/Novias
- **Actividades**
    - Conciertos/Música
    - Televisión/Películas/Actores
    - Actividades de alto riesgo
- **Amigos/Compañeros- Familia: Conflictos, Integración, y cualquier otra cosa**
    - Compañeros integrados a la rutina diaria del hogar?
    - Integración positiva o contradictoria
    - Balance de compañeros/familiares
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Cambios en las relaciones con los compañeros/ integración en el último año**
    - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 4

Hidden Activities: Communication

- **Hidden activities from Mom/Dad**
    - What is and is not talked about / shared
    - Activities w/ friends outside home
    - Whom do you talk to?
    - Imaginary photo
    - Secrets
- **Trust**
    - Checking on one another
    - Openness and disclosure to teen/parents
    - Worries

- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Changes in hidden activities and communication in the last year**
    - What would you change or not change?

CARD 4

Actividades Ocultas – Comunicación

- **Actividades Ocultas de mama/papa**
    - Que es de lo que se habla o no se habla/ compartido
    - Actividades con amigos fuera de casa
    - Con quien habla usted?
    - Foto imaginaria
    - Secretos
- **Confianza**
    - Vigilancia de uno a otro
    - Apertura y divulgación de adolescente/ padres
    - Preocupaciones
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Cambios en actividades ocultas y comunicación en el último año**
    - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 5

History & Family Stories

- **Relationship to larger family story & ethnic identity**
    - How / Why did you come to the US. How / Why LA?
    - Sending community in Mexico?
        - Who lives there?
        - Have you been there? What is it like?
        - Imaginary photos of Mexico
- **Feelings / Relatives' feelings about Mexican origin**
- **Changes in history / knowledge of family stories in the last year**
    - How it used to be vs. how it is now

CARD 5

Historia e Historia de la familia

- **Relación con la historia más grande de la familia y identidad étnica**
    - Como/Porque vino a los Estados Unidos. Como y porque Los Ángeles?
    - Comunidad de origen en México
        - Quien vive haya?
        - Ha estado allí? Como es?
        - Fotos imaginarias de México

- **Sentimientos/ Sentimientos de familiares sobre origen Mexicana**
- **Cambio en historia/ Conocimiento de historias familiares en el último año**
    - Como era antes vs. Como es hoy

CARD 6

Family Roles

- **Siblings; Step-parents**
- **Kin / Older kin; Kin living in Mexico or elsewhere**
- **Father & mother roles w/ teen**
- **Family identity**
- **Connectedness**
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**

CARD 6

El Papel de la Familia (Roles Familiares)

- **Hermanos; padrastros**
- **Familiares/ Familiares mayores; Familiares viviendo en México o en otra parte**
- **El papel de el padre o la madre con el adolescente**
- **Identidad familiar**
- **Conexión**
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**

CARD 7

Mexican / Ethnic Identities

- **Connection to ethnicity/culture**
    - Family plays a part in this connection?
- **Family traditions, celebrations**
- **Diversity of community**
- **Spanish/English language in home**
- **Discrimination: Related to ethnic identity / family history**
    - Work, School, Peers / Friends
    - What people say about discrimination?
    - Stories heard / experiences with discrimination
    - Influence on behavior problems?
- **Changes related to Mexican / Ethnic identities in the last year?**
    - What would you change or not change?

CARD 7

Identidades Étnicas/ Mexicanas

- **Conexión con el origen étnico/ cultura**
  - La familia juega un papel importante en esta conexión?
- **Tradiciones familiares/celebraciones**
- **Diversidad en la comunidad**
- **Idioma en el hogar español/ingles**
- **Discriminación: Relacionado a el origen étnico/ historia familiar**
  - Trabajo, Escuela, Compañeros/amigos
  - Que dice la gente sobre la discriminación?
  - Cuentos que haiga oído/ Experiencia con la discriminación.
  - Influencia en los problemas de conducta?
- **Cambios relacionados con la identidad Mexicana/étnicos en el último año?**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 8

Religion

- **Institutional affiliations**
- **Impact on daily life**
  - Participation
  - Religious rules
  - Spirituality
  - Shrines and prayer in the home?
  - Parents vs. teen – conflicts?
- **Religion, church, and spirituality in family life and daily routine**
- **Part of family history and story? In Mexico?**
- **Changes in religion in the last year?**
  - What would you change or not change?

CARD 8

Religión

- **Afiliaciones institucionales**
- **Impacto en la vida diaria**
  - Participación
  - Reglas religiosas
  - Espiritualidad
  - Santuarios y oración en el hogar?
  - Padres vs. Adolescentes – Conflictos?
- **Religión, Iglesia, y espiritualidad en la vida de la familia y la rutina diaria**
- **Parte de la familia historial y historia? En México?**
- **Cambios en religión en el último año?**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 9

Work & Resources

- **Family Money and Incomes**
  - Stability; Impacts; Fairness
  - Obtaining a job
  - Public sources (fresh food; social security; SSI; other….)
- **Teen Money and Income**
  - Desire/need to work (teen)
  - Current ideal jobs (teen)
  - Allowance at home?
  - Pay for doing household work or work for family members?
- **Income Contributions**
  - Mom / Dad / TC
  - Siblings / Grandparents / Other family members
- **Teen's Awareness of Financial Related Stress**
- **Changes related to work & resources in the last year?**
  - What would you change or not change?

CARD 9

Recursos y Trabajo

- **Dinero y ingresos familiares**
  - Estabilidad, Impactos, Equidad
  - Obtención de empleo
  - Fuentes Publicas (alimentos frescos; seguro social; SSI; otro….)
- **Dinero y ingresos del adolescente**
  - Deseo/Necesidad de trabajar (adolescente)
  - Actuales puestos de trabajo ideales (adolescente)
  - Dinero semanal?
  - Pago por hacer tareas de hogar o trabajo por miembros de la familia?
- **Contribución de Ingresos**
  - Madre/Padre/ TC (Adolescente)
  - Hermanos/Abuelos/ Otros familiares
- **Conocimiento del adolescente sobre estrés debido a las finanzas**
- **Cambios relacionado al trabajo y recursos en el último año?**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 10

School

- **Parental involvement**
  - Connectedness - School/home
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**

- **Engagement in school**
    - Identities
    - Favorites – teachers, classes, friends, activities
    - Grades & tests
    - Mentoring / tutoring
    - After school activities
    - Clubs and sports
    - Attendance, behavior in school
- **Current goals / expectations**
- **Changes related to school in the last year**
    - What would you change or not change?

CARD 10

Escuela

- **Involucramiento de los padres**
    - Conexión- Escuela/Hogar
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Participación en la escuela**
    - Identidades
    - Favoritos – maestros, clases, amigos, actividades
    - Grados y exámenes
    - Orientación y tutoría
    - Actividades después de escuela
    - Grupos y deportes
    - Asistencia, comportamiento en la escuela
- **Metas actuales/ expectativas**
- **Cambios relacionados a la escuela en el último año**
    - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 11

Future Aspirations and Expectations

- **All domains of life**
    - Work / School
    - Childcare / Elders
    - Marriage/ romantic partner
    - Having children
    - Income
    - Where to live
    - Relationships to family of origin
- **Specific / Practical plans to meet these goals**
    - Actually doing … to lead you to goals
- **Changes in future aspirations and expectations in the last year**
    - How it used to be vs. how it is now

CARD 11

Aspiraciones y expectativas futuras

- **Todos los ámbitos de la vida**
  - Trabajo/Escuela
  - Cuidado de niños/ Ancianos
  - Matrimonio/Pareja romántica
  - Tener hijos
  - Ingresos
  - Donde vivir
  - Relación con la familia de origen
- **Planes específicos/prácticos para lograr estos objetivos**
  - En realidad asiendo…. Para conducir a los objetivos
- **Cambios en aspiraciones futuras y expectativas en el último año**
  - Como era antes vs como es hoy

CARD 12

Health

- **Concerns**
  - Parents / teens health now and concerns
- **Health insurance and costs**
- **Family deaths**
- **Changes in parent / teen health in the last year**
  - What would you change or not change?

CARD 12

Salud

- **Preocupaciones**
  - Salud de los Padres/Adolescente ahora y preocupaciones
- **Seguro de salud y costos**
- **Muerte de familiares**
- **Cambio en padres/salud del adolescente en el último año**
  - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 13

Safety

- **In different contexts**

- Home as a haven?
    - Safety in neighborhood?
    - Safety at school?
    - Safety while traveling?
    - Safety in other situations?
- **Gangs?**
- **How do you ensure safety?**
- **Monitoring by parents / older kin / grandparents**
- **Changes in safety in the last year?**
    - Moved? Changed schools?
    - What would you change or not change?

CARD 13

Seguridad

- **En diferentes contextos**
    - El hogar como un refugio?
    - Seguridad en su vecindad?
    - Seguridad en la escuela?
    - Seguridad durante viajes?
    - Seguridad en otras situaciones
- **Pandillas?**
- **Como garantiza seguridad?**
- **Supervisión de los padres/ familiares mayores/ abuelos**
- **Cambios en seguridad en el último año?**
    - Mudanza? Cambio de Escuela?
    - Que cambiaria o no cambiaria?

CARD 14

Economic Strain

- **Current economic situation**
    - Income, job issues, moved, why
- **Changes in family household**
    - How circumstances have/have not changed since last year
- **Teen's sense of economic situation**
- **Parents shield or share**

CARD 14

Tensión Económica

- **Situacion económica actual**
    - Income, job issues, moved, why
- **Changes in family household**

- How circumstances have/have not changed since last year
- **Teen’s sense of economic situation**
- **Parents shield or share**

CARD 15

Monitoring

- **Monitoring (social)**
- **Monitoring (school related)**
- **Monitoring by … parents, older kin, grandparent, others?**
- **Changes related to monitoring since last year**

CARD 15

Vigilancia / Controlar / Supervisión

- **Vigilancia / Supervisión (social)**
- **Vigilancia / Supervisión (escolar)**
- **Vigilancia / Supervisión de … los padres, familiares mayores, abuelos, otros?**
- **Cambios relacionados con vigilancia o supervisión en el último año**

CARD 16

Gratitude & Thankfulness

- **Gratitude and Thankfulness**
- **Giving Back to the family in the future**
- **Showing Love**
- **Religious and spiritual meanings**
- **Saints and Other Figures**
- **Meaningful Connections**
- **Social Trust**
- **Solidarity**
- **Helping one another**

CARD 16

Gratitud y Agradecimiento

- **Agradecimiento**
- **Apoyar a la familia en el futuro**
- **Demostrando Amor**
- **Dar gracias a Dios / Enseñar Respeto (a Dios, la Virgen, Familia, Cristo, etc.) / Peregrinación**
- **Santos y Figuras Religiosas**
- **Lazos de amistad / amor**

- Relaciones personales y significativas
- Confianza en la comunidad
- Solidaridad
- Ayudándose uno al otro

CARD 17

Immigration Status

- Where were you born?

- Which of the following best describes your residency status?
  - U.S. citizen
  - U.S. Permanent Resident / Green Card (I-90)
  - Temporary Resident
  - Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
  - Student Visa (F-1, M-1)
  - Work Visa (H-1A, H-1B, H-3, E-1, L, O-1, O-2)

- Other statuses?
  - Refugees and Asylees
  - Humanitarian
  - VAWA self-petitioner
  - T nonimmigrant status (T visa)
  - U nonimmigrant status (U visa)
  - Undocumented status
  - Under evaluation; pending review
  - Deferred Action (DACA)

CARD 17

Estatus migratorio

- Donde nació usted?

- Cuál de las siguiented opciones describe mejor su estatus de residencia?
  - Ciudadano de los Estados Unidos
  - Residencia Permanente / Tarjeta Verde (I-90)
  - Residente Temporal
  - Estatus de Protección Temporal (TPS)
  - Visa de Estudiante (F-1, M-1)
  - Visa de Trabajo (H-1A, H-1B, H-3, E-1, L, O-1, O-2)

- Otro estatus de residencia?
  - Refugiados y Asilo
  - Permiso Humanitario
  - Solicitud/Petición relacionada con la VAWA

- **Estatus T de no inmigrante (Visa T)**
- **Estatus U de no inmigrante (Visa U)**
- **Indocumentado**
- **Bajo Revisión / Solicitud Pendiente**
- **Acción Diferida para los Llegados en la Infancia (DACA)**

Probes & phrases that may be useful at various points in the EFI conversation for interviewers to guide the conversation

- Give me an example of…
- So, for example, what's the last [big fight you had; job your son had; change of schools you had to make….]?
- Oh, what happens next after you get home from school usually?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Maybe we'll come back to that later …
- I'd really like to know more about that … if you'd like to tell me …
- Tell me more about that activity; what's that like?
- Tell me how you do that?
- How are you feeling when that happens?
- Is anybody else there with you when…?
- Who's there where you're [having lunch]?
- Whom do you talk to about …
- Whom do you turn to for …
- How important is it to you that … ?
- If you could have taken a photo with/of …relatives in Mexico; your boyfriend; your grandmother; going to the mall, etc…. what would it have been like?
- What's a typical [Saturday/Sunday] like?
- If you could change 2 - 3 things now, what would they be?
- If you could be sure 2 - 3 things happen in the future that you really care about, what would they be?
- If you could change some things in your routine, what would you change?
- Why would you change that?
- What would you change about your relationship with …your mom, your boyfriend, your brother etc … if you could change some things ?
- Why do you get up at 6am?
- Why do you wait after school… for your mom to pick you up… etc?
- Chores – why do you do it that way? Some people say that they do it another way… i.e…. why do you do it that way?
- Why do you drive to school? (Why the script, or normative pattern, for doing X, is the way it is)
- You haven't talked much about [your dad, stepdad..] can you tell me more about him? When did you meet?
- What do you fear [or worry, or be concerned] most about…?
- Do you know anybody in the neighborhood who has [dropped out of school…; gotten into trouble over drugs… gone to college….]?
- What are the main problems [something respondent has mentioned as stressful] has caused you? If you could do something to improve your situation that you have not been able to do, what would you do?
- If you could talk to the head of our project about what issues are most important for you in your own life– what would you tell him? In your child's life?
- If you could talk to some of your son/daughter's teachers at school – what would you tell them

Probes and Phrases that may be useful at various points

- Dame un ejemplo de …
- Por ejemplo, cual fue la ultima [pelea grande que usted tuvo; trabajo que tuvo su hijo; cambio de escuela que tuvieron que hacer…..]?
- Usualmente que pasa después de que llegas de la escuela?
- Me puedes platicar mas sobre eso
- Tal ves volveremos a ese tema mas tarde….
- Realmente me gustaría saber más sobre eso…. Si te gustaría contarme …..
- Dime más sobre esa actividad…. Como es?
- Dime como haces eso
- Como te sientes cuando eso ocurre?
- Ahí alguien mas contigo cuando…?
- Quien esta allí cuando tu estas [almorzando]?
- Con quien hablas sobre….?
- A quien recurres cuando estas en busca de….?
- Como de importante es para ti que…..?
- Si tu podrías haberte tomado una foto con/de… familiares en México; tu novio; tu abuela; ir al centro comercial etc….. Como seria?
- Como es un [Sábado/Domingo] típico para ti?
- Si ahora podrías cambiar 2-3 cosas, que serian?
- Si podrías estar seguro/a que 2-3 cosas pasarían en el futuro que realmente te importan, que serian?
- Si podrías cambiar algunas cosas de tu rutina diaria que cambiarias?
- Porque cambiarias eso?
- Que cambiarias de tu relación con…. Tu madre, tu novio, tu hermano, etc….. Si podrías cambiar algunas cosas?
- Porque te levanta a las 6 de la mañana?
- Porque esperas después de la escuela…. Para que te recoja tu mama… etc.?
- Tareas – porque lo haces de esa manera, otras personas dicen que lo hacen de otra manera… por ejemplo… porque lo haces de esa manera?
- Porque manejas a la escuela? (porque el guion, o la secuencia normativa, por hacer X, es la manera de ser)
- No has hablado mucho sobre [tu papa, padrastro…] me puedes hablar mas sobre el? Cuando lo conociste?
- Que es lo que temes [te preocupa, o te inquieta] mas?
- Conoces a alguien en la vecindad que [ha abandonado la escuela…; metido en problemas por drogas… ido a la universidad…]?
- Cuales son los problemas principales [algo que el encuestado ha mencionado como estresante] que te ha causado? Si pudieras hacer algo para mejorar tu situación que no has podido hacer, que harías?
- Si pudieras hablar con el jefe de nuestro proyecto acerca de los problemas que son los mas importantes para ti en tu propia vida – que le dirías? En la vida de su hijo/a?
- Si usted pudiera hablar con algún maestro/a de la escuela de su hijo/a – que les diría?