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“It’s So Arbitrary”:

The Emotional Toll of Growing up in a Mixed-Status Family for U.S-Born Young Adult Latinas

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Education

by

Guadalupe Lopez Hernandez

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“It’s So Arbitrary”:

The Emotional Toll of Growing up in a Mixed-Status Family for U.S-Born Young Adult Latinas

by

Guadalupe Lopez Hernandez

Master of Arts in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Carola E. Suárez-Orozco, Chair

This study used a qualitative approach to examine the emotional and mental health of young adults that are members of a mixed-status family. The study incorporated a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of individuals living in a mixed-status family. A total of seven U.S-born young adult Latinas ($M_{age} = 23.42$) in a mixed-status family completed a 60-90-minute semi-structured interview. The data was analyzed using a hybrid approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and an inductive-deductive coding (Creswell, 2013). The narrative of growing up in a mixed-status family as a U.S-born young adult Latina was often less about themselves than about their undocumented family members. While their stories demonstrated striking resilience (i.e., sense of responsibility, being the “voice” and demonstrating empathy/compassion) it also came at an emotional toll (i.e., survivor guilt, anger, feeling stuck, expressions of sadness, and anxiety).

The thesis of Guadalupe Lopez Hernandez is approved.

Rashmita S. Mistry

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Carola E. Suárez-Orozco, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

Table of Contents

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Literature Review..... | 2 |
| Methodology..... | 8 |
| Findings..... | 14 |
| Discussion..... | 26 |
| Conclusion..... | 32 |
| References..... | 37 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Participant Demographic Information..... | 11 |
| Table 2. Interview Protocol..... | 33 |
| Table 3. Codebook | 35 |

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First and foremost, I would like to thank the seven women that shared their stories with me; I will forever be grateful for trusting me with the intimate details of your lives. Through your stories we will shed light on the experiences of U.S-born young adults with undocumented family members. Thank you for inspiring me to continue fighting for the rights of undocumented immigrants (and their children) and improving their mental health.

I would like to, also, recognize my committee chair, Dr. Carola Suárez-Orozco, who was instrumental to the development of this study. Despite her busy schedule, she never hesitated to provide me with detailed feedback; thank you for all your support and encouragement. Also, I would like to recognize Dr. Rashmita Mistry and Dr. Teresa McCarty for all the valuable feedback they provided me throughout this study. Lastly, I would like to thank UCLA's Graduate Summer Research Mentorship program for funding that helped support this study.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mixed-status family. Collectively they have all helped me obtain my Master's degree and they continue to encourage me to finish my doctoral degree. A mi madre, quien ha sido mi mayor influencia, Gracias por enseñarme los valores de la humildad, el cariño, la generosidad y la fortaleza; valores que han sido esenciales para completar esta vocación. A mi padre, quien sacrificó sus sueños y metas para proveer una mejor vida a sus hijas. Gracias por todo lo que me has enseñado. Siempre estaré en deuda con ustedes por todo lo que han realizado y sacrificado por mí. A mis hermanas, gracias por todas las noches que me escucharon cuando mas lo necesitaba. Espero un día ser una mujer tan fuerte tal como ustedes. To my U.S-born niece and nephews, I will continue fighting to get your stories heard. I fight for you and remember that I am your biggest supporter.

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Thank you all! Gracias a todos!

There has been a growing effort from the fields of sociology, education and more recently developmental psychology to explore the ways an undocumented status impacts the development of children and youth (e.g., Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011; Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). The evidence suggests that systemic factors, such as harsh immigration laws, shape the everyday life experiences of undocumented children and youth (e.g., Dreby, 2012. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). This body of work suggests that the “conferred disadvantage” (Suárez-Orozco, 2017) of undocumented status blocks access to public aid (e.g., Medicaid) and higher education (Yoshikawa, Suárez-Orozco & Gonzales, 2017). There is a robust literature examining the role of undocumented status in blocking access to academic achievement (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010) as well as the remarkable resilience among those who make it to college (Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado & Cortes, 2009). There is limited evidence, however, in regards to issues related to mental health problems when living in an undocumented household (e.g., anxiety or depression; see Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013, for an exception).

To date, most of the extant literature in this field has focused on undocumented immigrants, sometimes referred to as DREAMERS in the media, with limited attention to U.S citizen children living with undocumented parents or siblings. There are an estimated 4.5 million children and youth growing up in what have been termed mixed-status homes (Taylor, Lopez, Passel & Motel, 2011); these are citizen children who have at least one parent who is undocumented. A comprehensive Consensus Statement for the Society for Research on Adolescence found that the effects of an undocumented status have far reaching consequences on these citizen children and youth who are growing up in mixed-status homes (Yoshikawa et al., 2017). The status of parents has been linked to host of blocked access to services (Yoshikawa et

al., 2017) as well as fear of deportation (Enriquez, 2015) which, in turn, negatively impacts the well-being of these U.S citizen children.

Of particular concern is the emotional and mental health that living in mixed-status families may confer. Potochnick and Perreira (2010) found that adolescents living in a mixed-status family are at a greater risk of developing psychological maladjustment (i.e. depression, anxiety), as compared to their documented counterparts (that are not part of a mixed-status family). Delva and colleagues (2013) argue that if these mental health needs are unmet they may have detrimental effects in adulthood. Today, an estimated 9 million people are living in a mixed-status family—half are still under 18 and the other half have now emerged into adulthood (Taylor et al., 2011). There are very few studies, however, that examine the emotional and mental health of U.S-born young adults that live in a mixed-status family. Using an integrative risk and resilience model (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, Katsiaficas, in press), discussed further below, my proposed study aims to understand the emotional and mental health of U.S-born young adult Latinas that live in a mixed-status family.

Conceptualization of Terms and Definitions of Documentation Status

Immigration scholars have adopted different terminology to describe different legal statuses (e.g., illegal, undocumented, unauthorized, protected status) of immigrants. The terms “alien” and “illegal” have been denounced for their negative connotation, and intent to criminalize immigrants (e.g., Abrego, 2006; Rubio, 2011). Instead scholars are using terms such as, undocumented and unauthorized (e.g., Gonzales, 2011; Perez et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). From a legal standpoint, unauthorized immigrants are those with no legal authorization to reside in the U.S. (Motomura, 2008), while those that are undocumented may have some form of documentation with a pending legal pathway (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

For this study, I will use the term **undocumented**, unless the reviewed study uses other terminology. Passel and Taylor (2010), defined **mixed-status families** as those families with at least one undocumented immigrant and at least one U.S-born child. Other scholars have reported families with other patterns of documentation, including families that have one U.S-born child and one unauthorized sibling (Mangual Figueroa, 2012). For my proposed study, I will define mixed-status families as those that have at least one family member with U.S citizenship and one that is undocumented (e.g., parent and/or sibling).

An Integrative Risk and Resilience Model

The integrative risk and resilience model (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, Katsiaficas, in press) was used to advise this study. The model incorporates ideas and concepts from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, Hernández, & Casanova, 2015) and Masten's risk and resilience framework (Masten, 2014) to understand the adaptation of immigrant-origin (i.e., children that have at least one foreign-born parent) children and youth. At its core, the model argues that these children and youth's adaptation is shaped by four different contextual levels, including (1) the contexts of globalization and global phenomena; (2) the political and social context; (3) microsystems; and (4) the individual level context. The influences of each level trickle down to impact the adaptation of immigrant-origin children and youth and can either incumber or promote positive adaptation in their development (e.g., academic progress), psychological adjustment (e.g., mental health) as well as acculturative tasks (e.g., acquire host culture competencies; Suárez-Orozco et al., in press).

For example, the model suggests that global forces such as "ideas without borders" (e.g. xenophobia) has been a driving force behind the creation of harsh immigration laws and policies (manifested at political and social levels). Harsh immigration laws, for instance, toward

undocumented immigrants have resulted in family separations (as explained by the microsystem) and has detrimental effects on the development and well-being of their children (Dreby, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., in press).

The Implications of Living in an Undocumented Status Family

Being Undocumented. Abrego (2014; 2006) argues that stringent immigration laws and policies have been put in place to exclude immigrants from integrating into American society. At a basic level, undocumented immigrants are restricted from legally residing in the country, are subjected to deportation, cannot legally work, and cannot obtain a driver's license (with exceptions to DACA recipients; Gonzales et al., 2013, 2012). Undocumented immigrants are more likely to live in poverty, work under harsh working conditions with limited employee benefits (e.g., paid vacations; health insurance), and have blocked access to public aid (e.g., Medicaid; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, Yoshiwaka et al., 2017). A growing body of research has found that poverty and stringent working conditions have a negative impact on academic and behavioral outcomes for children and youth (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Yoshikawa, Weisner, & Lowe, 2006), but they tend to be worse for children and youth living in undocumented families (Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

Undocumented children and youth are deprived from obtaining resources that will positively impact their development, such as being restricted from mental and physical health resources (e.g., Medicaid) and nutritional assistance (e.g., food snaps; Yoshikawa, 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). However, the most destructive event that undocumented children and youth are exposed to are family separations; such experiences are detrimental to the well-being of these children and youth who are exposed to seeing a parent being detained and deported (Dreby, 2012; 2015; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). There is evidence to suggest that undocumented children and youth report an ongoing fear of being at risk of deportation (Dreby, 2012; Gonzales

et al., 2013). These difficulties continue to impact undocumented children as they become young adults. Undocumented young adults, for instance, report shying away from going to college due to their inability to apply for financial aid and continue to report high levels of anxiety about being deported (or their family; Abrego, 2011; Pérez et al, 2009).

Implications for Mental Health. Cumulatively, the stressors of being undocumented have been linked to negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and increased suicidal ideation among young adults (e.g., Gonzales et al, 2013; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010; Torres & Wicks-Asbun, 2014). For example, Gonzales (2013) found that participants “described symptoms of self-harm behaviors and suicide attempts as a last resource to try to escape their situation (p.14)” Other undocumented young adults have manifested their psychological distress with externalizing symptoms, such as excessive drinking, drug abuse, and anger issues (Gonzales et al., 2013). Lastly, undocumented college students have also reported loneliness, and feelings of isolation, in part because they want to distance themselves to avoid exposing their undocumented status to peers, faculty and university staff (Gonzales et al., 2013; Teranishi, Suárez -Orozco & Suárez -Orozco, 2015). While, those directly impacted are most vulnerable, research has documented that everyone that lives in an undocumented household is negatively impacted by an unauthorized status (Suárez -Orozco et al., 2011).

Living in Mixed-Status. Emerging evidence shows that even when a child is a citizen, if their parent is undocumented, they are likely to have a “conferred disadvantage” in a variety of ways (e.g., Suárez -Orozco, 2017). As stated above undocumented parents are more likely to have severe working conditions with minimum wage, few paid vacations, and harsh treatment from management, which place the whole family in poverty and financial insecurity (e.g.,

Abrego, 2014; Passel & Cohn, 2009; Suárez -Orozco et al., 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

While, U.S citizen children are eligible for government aid, such as public aid (e.g., food stamps) and financial aid for college, their parents fear of deportation or the restriction of their status often times prevents them from benefiting from these programs (Gonzales, 2016; Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

Mixed-status families are also vulnerable to family separation and are likely to engage in transnational practices (i.e., parents and children live separately) because of parent's threat to deportation (e.g., Abrego, 2014; Dreby, 2012). The American Immigration Council reported that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has issued more than 200,000 deportations to undocumented immigrants with U.S citizen children between 2010 to 2012 (2017; Trevizo, 2015). Dreby (2015) argues that deportation policies have a ripple effect on the well-being of children, including their economic instability and risk of being placed in the foster care system (Wessler, 2011). Enriquez (2015) termed these ripple effects as multi-generational punishment, a distinct form of legal violence. Multi-generational punishment tends to target U.S citizen children that have undocumented parents. For example, Enriquez (2015) found that U.S citizen children with undocumented parents learn to be hyperaware of police activity and to fear police or authorities like their parents. Fear of deportation has been found to impact the mental health of U.S citizen children (e.g., Enriquez, 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

In addition to threats of family separation, individuals growing up in mixed-status families also face other structural barriers as they transition through important milestones in adolescence and adulthood. While, there are limited studies on the current conditions of U.S-born young adults in mixed-status families, we know, for example, that these young adults are less likely to apply for financial aid for college or obtain governmental aid due to concern about their parent's fear of deportation (e.g., Yoshikawa et al., 2017). These stressors are likely to have

a negative impact on their mental health, yet there are few studies that examine the emotional and mental health of those living in an undocumented household.

Implications for Mental Health. As evident above, children and youth who grow up in mixed-status families have an array of educational, economic and mental health outcomes that are linked to contextual and psychological mechanisms (Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Previous research on U.S citizen children with undocumented parents demonstrates that parent's psychological maladjustment (i.e., anxiety) spillover to influence their children's emotional well-being (Enriquez, 2015). For example, parents' fear of deportation and anxiety is evident among U.S citizen children. Additionally, Delva et al., (2013) found that U.S citizen children with undocumented parents reported feeling depressed/withdrawn and having attentional problems. Parental detainment or deportation can add to the psychological burden of having undocumented parents. Scholars have found that deportation of a parent can increase the risk of PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Allen, Cisneros, & Tellez, 2015; Brabeck & Xu, 2010; Rojas-Flores, Clements, Hwang Koo & London, 2017).

Currently, there are few studies on youth or young adults living in mixed-status families. The qualitative evidence points to issues around feelings of guilt as well as frustration with the extra burden felt by U.S citizens when family members are unauthorized (e.g., Suárez -Orozco et al., 2011). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) for example describes how Anna, a young adolescent living in a mixed-status household, feels about her legal status as compared to her undocumented sister: "With tears streaming down her face, she talks about how unfair it is that her older sister, Clara, is the "good student" in the family but cannot go to college... Instead, her parents are pushing Clara to drop out (p. 443)." Earlier in the conversation Anna tells the author that her parents are pressuring

her to become a doctor, though she wants to pursue a career in the arts (Suárez -Orozco et al., 2011). Additionally, Mangual Figueroa (2012), argues that the identity formation of U.S-born children is highly influenced by their understanding of citizenship in relation to their undocumented sibling's restrictions. However, to date, few studies have examined how young adults are managing the emotional and mental health issues that may have arisen from growing up in a mixed-status family.

Current Study

The current study explored the emotional and mental experiences of U.S-born young adult Latinas in a mixed-status family. My specific research questions were:

1. How do second-generation Latinas describe their experiences of growing up in mixed-status families?
2. What do they think are the emotional and mental health implications of that experience?

Methodology

Positionality

My study incorporated both an emic and etic approach perspective (Yin, 2016). I arrived to the U.S. at age six along with my family. We were all undocumented for 18 years until three years ago. My family transitioned to a mixed-status family when I received my legal permanent residency (but they still are undocumented). Today, I am both an insider and outsider of the undocumented community, depending on the context. I understand well the emotional rollercoaster of transitioning from being undocumented to gaining new legal rights or being in a mixed-status family. I have given a lot of thought to the issues that are prevalent among individuals in undocumented and mixed-status households. Naturally, I went into the literature to understand this phenomenon, yet quickly realized there are few studies that examine the

experiences of individuals who are members of a mixed-status family. Thus, I consulted U.S-born peers that grew up in mixed-status families and they told me how their stories are often forgotten, and thus, I decided to take part in this study to shed light on stories like theirs.

Research Design

This qualitative study incorporated a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences of U.S-born young adult Latinas in a mixed-status family. The objective of the phenomenological approach was to understand the human experience of those impacted by a particular phenomenon. Phenomenological researchers aim to explore “what” individuals experience, and “how” they experience a phenomenon (e.g., living in a mixed-status family; Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Semi-structured interviews were used to understand the emotional and mental health of U.S-born young adult Latinas who are part of a mixed-status family.

Recruitment Process

Eligible participants had to be (1) U.S-born (2) young adult women¹ (18-30 years of age) (3) be part of a mixed-status family (i.e., with at least one undocumented parent or sibling). Given the difficulty of recruiting vulnerable populations, I used multiple recruitment approaches for this study, approaching prospective participants through gatekeepers, social media and snowballing techniques. After gaining IRB approval, I sought gatekeepers in the greater Los Angeles area, and at UCLA (e.g., those working in advocacy immigration organizations). I provided gatekeepers with the following documents: (1) study information letter and (2) an eligibility form to share with potential participants. Interested participants communicated both through the gatekeeper and in some cases, they contacted me directly (i.e., through phone).

¹ Note that I initially sought to include participants from an array of ethnicities as well as both male and female participants. I was only successful in recruiting Latinx participants and had more success in recruiting females. Thus, for the purpose of this Master Thesis I limited the study to Latinas.

Social media was also used as a recruitment tool. Specifically, I targeted 4-6 private Facebook sites, of which I am currently a member. These closed group sites have a mission to provide support to underrepresented students, and undocumented immigrants and their families. For example, these spaces are used to obtain and share educational resources (e.g., scholarships) for immigrant-origin students, as well as to seek emotional support. All of these sites require permission to enter the group; I have been a long-standing member of each of these groups (ranging from 2 to 5 years), and as such, I had already established credibility and trust in these groups. Lastly, I used sample snowballing techniques to solicit participants via "word of mouth" (Creswell, 2013). Participants contacted me through the person that informed them about study directly.

Participants and Procedure

A total of seven U.S-born young adult Latinas in mixed-status families completed a one-time semi-structured interview for the purposes of this analysis. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 27 years of age ($M_{age} = 23.42$) and lived in the Midwest ($N = 5$) or the West coast ($N = 2$). Most participants were current students (i.e., 5 undergraduate students, 1 Master's student) with the exception of one participant who already earned her Master's degree. For more information on participant's demographics see Table 1 below.

Each participant completed a semi-structured interview in a private confidential room, such as a library room or a quiet room at their home. All interviews were conducted in English. In several occasions, some participants said a couple of words in Spanish; their responses were transcribed and analyzed in Spanish. Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in-person ($N = 3$) or online ($N = 4$) through a video recording software (i.e., Zoom). Several qualitative researchers encourage the use of online interviews citing several benefits. (e.g., convenience for participant; Comley, 2002; O'Connor & Madge, 2003). Online interviews mirrored the same

setting as in-person interviews; in a private and quiet room. Nevertheless, participant’s responses, may have been impacted by external distraction in some cases.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

| Pseudonym | Age | Occupation | Major | Parent’s Country of Birth | Undocumented Family Member | Region |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Ely | 24 | Student | Family Consumer Science, Civic Engagement | Mexico | Mother, Sister | Midwest |
| Leslie | 20 | Student | Psychology | Mexico | Parents, Sisters | Midwest |
| Nicole | 26 | CPA* | Accounting, M. A | Mexico | Mother | Midwest |
| Daniela | 22 | Student | Political Science, Social Work | Colombia | Parents, Sister | Midwest |
| Ximena | 23 | Student | Sociology | Guatemala | Mother, Brother | Midwest |
| Fabiola | 22 | Student | Chicano & Chicana Studies | Mexico | Mother | West |
| Viviana | 27 | Student | History, Gender Studies | Mexico | Parents | West |

Note. *Certified Public Accountant

Privacy and Confidentiality

Several safeguards were put in place to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants. In particular, all users were asked to conduct the interview in a quiet, private and confidential space. Additionally, participants who conducted video interviews were asked to

complete the interview in a private space. Participants were allowed to turn off the video camera during the interview session. Verbal consent was provided by participants, instead of a written consent, to avoid leaving a paper trail with their names. This type of consent process is common when working with vulnerable populations, such as undocumented families (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2013). To ensure that participants' identity was concealed, interviews were de-identified, and given an individualized pseudonym. After every interview was transcribed and uploaded to Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, 2012) the audio and video tapes were destroyed. All of these procedures were approved by the UCLA IRB board.

Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interviews assessed participants' experience of growing up in a mixed-status family and questions about their psychological functioning. During the interview, I asked questions about their family's immigration history, experiences of living in a mixed-status family, and psychological functioning. The interview questions included "What are some the primary worries you have in regards to your family member's current well-being?" For a list of other sample questions on each section of the interview protocol, see Table 2 (in Appendix).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a hybrid approach of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and an inductive-deductive process of coding (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis can be useful when searching for themes and patterns in the data when describing a phenomenon (i.e., living a mixed-status family). Using an inductive-deductive approach in this study allowed me to develop theory-driven codes, as well as data-driven codes (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Creswell, 2013). Inductive-deductive coding was integrated within the six stages of thematic analysis: (1) familiarizing yourself with your data (2) generating initial coding (3) generating themes (4) validity and reliability of codes (5) defining and naming themes (6)

interpreting and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Broadly, I began coding inductively to determine what codes emerged from the data, and then, because I was interested in mental health implications, I specifically did a wave of coding to deductively code for mental health and emotional terms (e.g., anxiety, sadness, etc).

After transcriptions were completed, I began familiarizing myself with the data. At this stage, I read and re-read each interview and wrote early impressions of each interview. For example, my early impression of Daniela was; “Daniela showed a mixture of emotions throughout the interview; she reported being angry, sad and feeling “undeserving” of her status” During stage two, I began to organize my data in a systematic way to form initial codes. I coded relevant segments that helped answer my research questions. Initial coding was informed by the integrative risk and resilience model (i.e., Suárez-Orozco et al. *in press*), but also from the raw data. For instance, I started to develop initial codes such as *anger* and *undeserving* from Daniela’s transcript. In this stage, I also began to develop my codebook with all my initial codes and supporting quotes. During stage 3, I searched for patterns throughout my initial codes that could be organized under a theme or a broader category. I started to add these themes to my codebook. For example, I fitted the initial codes of *anger* and *undeserving* to the common theme of emotional consequences. In stage 4, I consulted my advisor to help me review my codebook and solve any discrepancies in my codes. Some of the questions we asked ourselves were: does the data support these themes? Are any themes overlapping or should we separate them? These questions lead us to modify various codes and re-organized my codebook. During stage 5, I was ready to define and name my themes to begin coding on Dedoose across interviews (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Creswell, 2013).

Findings

A total of seven overarching themes emerged in the course of the analysis (please refer to Table 3 in appendix). The most striking theme was the participants' tendency to focus on their family member's difficult experiences with less emphasis on their own needs or experiences. In listening to participants talk about their experiences of growing up in a mixed-status family, the narrative was often less about themselves than about others. While their stories demonstrated striking resilience, it came at an emotional toll.

Experiences of Growing up in Mixed-Status Family

I Did Not Understand It Until... When participants were asked to reflect on their experiences of growing up in a mixed-status family most of their initial responses were "I did not understand it" or "It felt like we were [a] normal family until..." Growing up all seven participants noted that they had been initially unaware about the differences in their family's legal status, including their own legal status, with little understanding about the implications of being undocumented.

As participants started to share more stories about their upbringing they identified the event(s) that led them to understand what it meant to have a family living with undocumented status. For some participants this realization came earlier, around middle school, with exposure to the 2006 immigration marches, immigration raids in their communities, or a deportation of a family member. For example, Ximena² was about 12 years old when she was exposed to the immigration system: "The immigration official showed up we ended up hiding [and] I had a lot of questions after that incident. My uncle was actually taken to jail that same day or taken to immigration." After his detention, Ximena was asked to translate in meetings with

² All names used are pseudonyms.

lawyers and immigration hearings and once again when her father was detained and deported when she was in high school. For other participants, they did not realize how unique their experiences were as a member of a mixed-status family until adolescence or once they were enrolled in college. Such realization happened when they saw an older sister be denied their driver's license permit in high school or after being part of a college immigration advocacy organization. Upon reflection, several participants understood why their parents were often scared when they saw news reports on *Univision* about immigration raids, why they were absent from family events, or why they [participants] were given extra responsibilities (i.e., driving around an undocumented family member). For example, Fabiola's mother rarely went to spaces where immigration officials may be present (i.e., dropping them off at an airport), but also atypical places (i.e., state fairs, amusement parks) "because she [mother] was afraid of 'what if la *migra* was there?'" Instead, Fabiola's father took her siblings and herself to a lot these family outings without their mother to avoid her risk of deportation.

Participants reported gaining insight about their sense of privilege, in relation to their undocumented family members, in a variety of ways. Daniela, for example, shared her privilege of moving through important rites of passages; something her undocumented sister was not able to do, such as getting her driver's license or applying for financial aid. She continued to share that her U.S citizenship allowed her to feel a "sense of safety" and certainty and that is something her sister does not have: "I don't have to deal with the fear and anxiety in the way that my sister has to deal with. And I think that is also very different. I have [that] privilege." Other participants acknowledged their privilege of being able to travel back and forth to different countries to visit family; yet their undocumented families are yearning to go and cannot go. Fabiola echoed this feeling: "I do have the privilege to be able to travel and she doesn't. I know

that it was very unfortunate that she couldn't...she wasn't there, her *tio* passed away, her mother passed away.”

Familial Hierarchy of Needs. As some participants began to understand the differences in opportunities between U.S citizens and undocumented immigrants, they began to adopt a familial hierarchy of needs. Four interviewees reported rank ordering the needs of people based on their level of privilege. For instance, many of these participants invalidated their own personal needs to place more importance on the needs of their undocumented family members. Fabiola outweighed her needs to focus on the needs of her father, who had just been deported, and her single mother: “I invalidated my feelings but I was just like this takes on higher priority so I would never talk about it.” Nicole also reported a similar response “when you think about your struggles and you see her struggles you are like ‘shut up.’ It is obviously nothing in comparison.” Other participants rank ordered the needs of their undocumented family members based on who was the most vulnerable or most in need. Leslie was more concerned for the well-being of her undocumented mother than her undocumented sisters as shown below:

My sisters, they have the language and they know their legal rights, and ...
let's say they do get stopped and the police asks them to search their car for
some reason they know... you need a warrant, you need a piece of paper,
and all that stuff so they are pretty smart about that but with my mom I
know she is more like “what do I do in this situation?”

For Daniela, she believes that her undocumented sister has higher priority in obtaining legal residency as compared to her undocumented father. She reported: “[My father] will figure it out and he has figured it out [how to live being undocumented]”. Later in the conversation when she spoke about her undocumented sister, she said: “[she] needs it so much more. It's such a determinant of the rest of her life.”

Risk and Resilience Associated with Living in a Mixed-status Family

All participants reported that their experience of growing up in a mixed-status family impacted their life journey with both positive and negative outcomes. As reported, initially, all participants were not aware about the different legal statuses in their family, but when they finally understood it, they implemented a familial hierarchy of needs. Yet, their desire to only address the needs of their undocumented family members came at a cost to their own emotional and mental health. However, these participants also identified a number of ways they chose to adapt positively to their difficult situation. This section captures both the resilience and emotional consequences associated with living in an undocumented household.

Emotional Toll

The discovery about their parents or siblings undocumented status forced participants to try to make sense of how certain events unfolded in the ways they had. They began to understand why their parents were often fearful around authority or why they avoided visiting certain places; little by little they understood the inequalities between U.S citizens and undocumented immigrants.

Survivor Guilt. Participants in this study frequently discussed “how lucky” or “privileged” they were to be a U.S citizen with an easier life journey than their undocumented family members. This sense of privilege led many participants to develop a form of survivor guilt, which is an “excessive worry about being in a better position than others, particularly parents and peers” (Tate, Williams & Harden, 2010, p.80). Six out of the seven interviewees reported feeling an “immense guilt” about having a better fate than their loved ones and often asked themselves: “why is it that I have this [legal status]?” Participants often acknowledged their privilege and worried that their undocumented family members will never have the same opportunities as them. Two

participants frequently discussed feeling “guilty” and “undeserving” of their educational journey as compared to their undocumented sisters. Daniela often spoke of how lucky she has been as compared to her undocumented sister: “I am undeserving ... of having the privilege of being a U.S citizen I did nothing different than my older sister...it’s like what did I do...it’s so arbitrary almost.” Daniela’s sister had to drop out of community college because she didn’t have the financial means to pay for her education; Daniela feels guilty about being a student at a four-year university with scholarships and financial aid.

At the time of the interview, Ely and her undocumented sister were both students at a four-year university. Ely reported feeling guilty about her financial package: “I just feel guilty when I see my tuition [and] what I have to pay and [what] she has to pay.” Ely continues to explain how unfair it is that they have the same background, grew up in a working-class family, and yet they have completely different educational trajectories. For many participants this sense of relative privilege, and guilt, has impacted their emotional and mental health as seen below.

Anger. For five of the seven participants, this realization led to anger and resentment; some channeled their anger towards certain people while others directed it to the broader immigration system. For example, the first memories Viviana had of growing up in a mixed-status family was spending five hours with her undocumented mother in a fast-food bathroom waiting for immigration officials to leave the surrounding area. She recalled being “pissed” about being forced to hid in a bathroom for hours just to avoid immigration officials.

When Ximena’s father was deported, when she was in high school, she never addressed her feelings or how such a drastic event impacted her well-being. Instead, she shifted all her attention to school and in helping her mother cope with their situation. As Ximena transitioned to

adulthood and she noticed her repressed emotions, anger, and decided to reach out for help. Below she discussed what she realized in counseling about her experiences of growing up in a mixed-status family and what it meant to her:

There was a lot of anger...I couldn't really blame anyone...There was really no one to blame beyond I can say it was the system, right? I don't think it felt any better if I said it was just the system. And I couldn't blame my parents because I was like "well, that's the reality" because of their reality I am in this position.

In contrast, two participants were directing their anger towards their parents due to different circumstances. Fabiola's mother often skipped family outings throughout her childhood to avoid being caught in immigration raids happening in their community. Fabiola recalls her childhood: "I know that it did take a toll on me, because I couldn't understand why my mom couldn't be with us, and it kind of snowballed into resentment and to anger [toward] her." While Fabiola is very cognizant about her mother's situation and today is her biggest ally, she still holds some resentment and anger toward her mother for missing important family events. When Daniela talks about her undocumented sister's, Jessi, educational trajectory she often brings up how unsupportive her parents have been of her sister. Daniela is very aware about the complexities of being an undocumented student; she knows her sister is not eligible for financial aid which has led her to attend community college and even then, Jessi has been forced to drop out multiple times because she cannot afford it. On the other hand, her parents don't know how difficult it is to be undocumented and go to school and they often call her "lazy" and think she "victimized herself." Their responses make Daniela angry: "But it does get me

angry that my parents are almost choosing not to understand her experience... which infuriates me.”

Feeling Stuck. Another theme that several participants articulated were feelings of being immobilized, helpless, or feeling like their “hands are tied.” Five participants discussed their frustration with their inability to change their undocumented family member’s situation. They knew they wanted to help them but they did not know how to do it. Nicole reports “just feeling helpless” about her mother’s situation and gets frustrated that she cannot help her obtain legal permanent residency (LPR). When Nicole inquired with lawyers about petitioning for her mother she was advised not to proceed because her mother would face a 10-year bar.³

Ely also feels frustrated and feels like her hands are tied when it comes to helping her older undocumented sister. Below she recalls one of the first conversation she had with her sister about her undocumented status:

I remember vividly me sitting on the other side of the counter, and just not having any words... and just in my head... thinking of things that I could do... to try to help her with money, I tried reaching out to our dad for help and told him about her situation. I tried doing a go-fund me, but I don’t know at that moment I felt like again... I think it was a lot of guilt, and a lot of frustration because I felt like I couldn’t help her, even though I really really wanted to.

³ After the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA) passed, those that entered the country for more than a year without authorization and are being petitioned by a family member for legal permanent residency, have to remain outside the U.S for 10 years before their application gets processed.

Daniela had a similar feeling to being stuck: “Like I also feel stuck that I can’t do nothing or that I don’t know how to deal with the pressure, I don’t know how to help my parents, I don’t know how to help my sister.” Two participants were not as vocal about their feelings but showed signs of learned helplessness by demonstrating avoidance in our conversation or with other people. They were likely to skip questions in the interview that elicited uncomfortable feelings (i.e., tearing up, crying, decision to turn off recorder) and occasionally reported that they avoided topics about immigration with friends or family members because it made them uncomfortable.

Expressions of Sadness. As seen above, many participants had feelings of being stuck, which caused a lot of frustration but for others it caused them to feel sad or bad about their inability to help their family members. About six participants reported feeling “hurt”, “devastated”, or “disheartened” of the ways their undocumented family’s member’s life played out as compared to their life. Generally, participants demonstrated getting emotional during this question: “In what ways do some of your daily experiences compare to those of your family member(s) who are not documented? This question elicited feelings of sadness about their inability share their opportunities of being a U.S citizen with them.

Ely is still trying to process what it means to be part of a mixed-status family: 'I think I still have to deal with it honestly...I feel like I still haven't fully processed it and actually like trying to deal with it, so I think that's why I cry every time I talk about it.' Throughout the interview, when Ely spoke her sister's hardships as an undocumented immigrant (e.g., financial struggles), such her limitations in higher education and constant worry of deportation, she reported feeling “hurt” and often began crying. Fabiola, also, reported feeling sad about her mother's well-being and the lifestyle she has to endure here in the United States. Today her mother works as a domestic worker, using “harsh chemicals to clean houses”, while in Mexico

she was an accountant. Fabiola also reported feeling sad about the tensions of living in a mixed-status family where not every family is supportive of her mother's well-being or needs. For example, her father rarely defends her mother when his family speaks poorly about her because she is undocumented or the ways her siblings say "I don't care" when she shares her stories:

And it's very sad because these stories are often neglected or they are kind of invisible, so it's hard for me to kind of just sit there at times and be like "wow, why do you think that my mom's story doesn't matter or why don't you care about what people have to say?"

Anxiety. All participants reported excessive worry or feelings of anxiety and/or fear. The excessive worry derived from being scared about their parent's risk of deportation as seen in Daniela's response: "I fear that my parents may be deported one day, or my older sister may be deported one day." Currently, many participants, like Nicole, find it the "new normal" to be constantly worried about the possibility that their parents could be deported under the Trump administration. At the time of our interview, Fabiola was waiting to hear back about her mother's case; she submitted a petition for her mother to obtain legal residency. Yet, she was anxious about her mother's application being processed after President Trump was elected: "[the] paranoia that is going through my head that it's like 'dam, now that my mom is in the system'"

For others, the anxiety was present even before President Trump took office; all throughout their childhood. After being exposed to her father deportation, Ximena was fearful of putting her mother through the same situation, so she was often hyperaware of her surroundings as a teenager. Throughout her college years, she avoided doing any illegal activities (i.e., drinking underage) so she wouldn't draw any attention to her family. Yet, Ximena has found a positive way to cope with her anxiety as well as other participants as seen in the next section.

Signs of Resilience

Sense of Responsibility

Six participants mentioned feeling a sense of responsibility to take care of their family needs, either in financial ways, legal ways or both. Below I will discuss each subtheme.

Financial Sense of Responsibility. As seen in the literature, undocumented immigrants often work in low-wage jobs and have financial strains (Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Thus, it is not surprising that many of the study participants mentioned financial issues in their household. About five participants reported supporting their undocumented parents or siblings financially. For example, when Ximena was a junior in high school she got a job helping her single mother pay the bills after her father was deported. Others have offered to help their parents as adults, such as Nicole. She has offered her parents multiple times to help pay their mortgage when they were having financial troubles. In other cases, Daniela and Ely have taken the financial responsibility of paying for their undocumented sister's DACA application fees, and other personal expenses (e.g., books, school supplies).

Legal Sense of Responsibility. Five participants discussed feeling a sense of responsibility to use their U.S citizenship to aid their undocumented family members in legal matters. For example, more than half of the interviewees have inquired with a lawyer to petition for legal permanent residency for a parent through the I-130 application. While many have been advised not to file the petition, due to the 10-year bar, Fabiola is waiting back to hear about her mother's case. A few of the participants that were not able to petition for their parents have suggested a contingency plan to their parents in the event they get deported. For example, Daniela discussed her ideas when asked 'what would happen if your mother got deported?'

I have tried to have that conversation with them ...[and] we are going to have to really think about what we are going to do and

like even to the point of assigning power of attorney papers [for my sister] the one that is 11.

Nicole, like Daniela, also developed a contingency plan in the event her mother was deported and suggested becoming the legal guardian of her younger sister. Both women were willing to drop their work and student life to take care of siblings.

Being the Voice. Four participants felt the need to be the “voice” for their undocumented community or defend their undocumented family members when they were under attack. All four participants spoke about times where they had to check another person’s privilege and inform them about the limitations of undocumented immigrants. Ximena prides herself in being the person who often advocates or informs people about undocumented immigrants: “If someone were to say “oh, we can just travel to this or why don’t they just buy a ticket” or anything like that where you would have to have U.S citizenship, I am definitely the person to say ‘wait, no, let’s talk about that... let’s talk about how you are not taking into context all these things...”

Fabiola spoke about the numerous times she has defended her undocumented mother from her father and his family, but also her community.

I know that my father would ...say stuff about undocumented folks.

And I am like “well, you aren’t that different from undocumented folks like you only have a green card, like how does that put you on another level as compared to my mom?” I always tell him ‘check yourself sometimes.

Daniela echoed a similar experience of having to advocate on behalf of her sister when her parents were being unsupportive. Daniela’s father believes that Jessi, her undocumented sister, is not in college because she is lazy, and Daniela often has to respond with: ““oh, you

don't understand how hard it is for Jessi.... 'no entiendes que dificil es para tratar de estudiar and you know... figure it out'.... But my dad has this picture that it's easy."

Empathy/Compassion. Four participants discussed how their experiences of living in an undocumented household allowed them to be more empathic toward other people's life struggles because they could identify with them. For example, Nicole reported: "My mom has taught me to.... relate to the struggle.... I think it is really important to be aware of people's situations." Daniela also expressed her ability to relate to other undocumented families, and her ability to engage in perspective taking: "I see these inequalities and I see the treatment of immigrants. I see the rhetoric about immigrants and like...and I see how hard immigrant families work and I know that...my family is living proof of that." Other participants, such as Ely, wanted to "do something with the community" and create change in vulnerable communities. Ximena attributes her experiences of being a member of a mixed-status family to her choice in career. She discussed how she choose her field:

I am studying higher education...I think a lot of that came from having these experiences where I was the only one and then when I started to read about these things... I was like 'I don't know want anybody else to have to go through that... let me go to a field where I...can do something about it.

Ximena often works with first generation high school students, who are also members of a mixed-status families, that are applying for college; she helps them fill out their FAFSA application and helps them through questions that ask about their parent's immigration status. When Ximena reflects back to her childhood, and her father's deportation, she can see anger, confusion, and sadness. Today, Ximena has learned to channel her emotions in a positive way and help other people like her, in which she

reports feeling “great.”

Discussion

This study serves to shed light on a generation of U.S-citizen children and young adults—roughly 4.5 million under the age of 18, and another estimated 4.5 million who have now aged into adulthood- who that have grown up in mixed-status families (Taylor et al., 2011). They are coming of age or have come of age in an era that has been dubbed a “deportation nation” (Kanstroom, 2010) in which xenophobia and anti-immigration policies continuously intensify (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Drawing from the integrative risk and resilience model (Suárez-Orozco et al., *in press*), this study sought to explore how U.S-born young adult Latinas describe their unique experiences and the implications for their emotional well-being. In all, the data suggests that being a member of a mixed-status family promotes positive adaptation among these young adults but has the potential to also hinder their psychological adjustment.

Study participants spoke to the ways in which they paid a high emotional toll for growing up in the shadows of an undocumented status. While they had the recognized advantage and privilege of citizenship status, nonetheless, there were costs. This study provides insight in the ways the political & social context, such as national and state immigration policies, negatively impact the emotional and mental health of U.S-born young adult Latinas. Several scholars have pointed out that family separations are most prevalent among mixed-status families, due to the harsh immigration laws focused on separating families and are most harmful to U.S-citizen children that are left behind (e.g., Abrego, 2014; Dreby, 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Between 2011 and 2013, there were about half a million U.S citizen children exposed to either an apprehension, detention or deportation of an undocumented parent (Capps et al., 2015). The majority of the

participants reported growing up with fear about the risk of deportation of a parent or sibling and one of the participants spoke to realities of being part of a transnational family at a young age once her father was deported.

Today many of these U.S-born children have grown up and come of age, such as the sample in this study, and their stories have been invisible in our narratives of undocumented families. While some studies have captured the experiences of U.S-citizen children in mixed-status families (Enriquez, 2016, García-Mellado, 2017), rarely have we seen how these children are managing their emotional well-being as they transition to adulthood. Today, there is an immediate need to address the needs of U.S citizen children and young adults as they continue to grow up in a “deportation nation” (Kanstroom, 2010) with much more immigration policing and xenophobia during the Trump era. For example, participants argue that after President Trump was elected their “new normal” was to worry about the risk of deportation for their undocumented family members. Such excessive worry appears to undoubtedly impact participant’s emotional and mental health.

Cumulatively, it appears that all the experiences of growing up in a mixed-status family, such as repressing their own needs or dealing with a parent’s deportation, took an emotional toll on U.S-born young adult Latinas. My findings align with qualitative responses from undocumented mothers with U.S-born children that reported observing signs of emotional distress among their U.S-born children (e.g., fear, anxiety; Enriquez, 2016). Generally, participants in this study identified feeling sad, angry, anxious, and feeling stuck. However, I argue that the most intriguing emotional consequence that participants reported was survivor guilt. Traditionally, we have understood survivor guilt as a response to a traumatic event such as a natural disaster or war-related trauma. While

this type of guilt is most commonly understood after exposure to trauma (e.g., Yehuda, Southwick & Giller, 1994), survivor guilt is a lot more complex and multifaceted. Modell (1971) argues that people develop a bookkeeping system that helps them keep track of the “good” and the “bad” that happens to each family member. Other works has found that those that develop this type of bookkeeping system, such as first-generation college students, feel guilty about their family member’s misfortunes (e.g., Piorkowski, 1983). My sample of U.S-born young adult Latinas reported feeling “immensely” guilty about being in a better position than their undocumented family members. Such guilt caused many participants to feel a sense of obligation to help their family members be in a better position, but unfortunately for them they did not know how to help them and caused them to feel immobilized or feel stuck.

As other studies have shown, many of the current study participants demonstrated remarkable resilience (e.g., Perez et al., 2009; Suárez -Orozco et al., 2015) in spite of the “conferred disadvantage” (Suárez-Orozco, 2017) that a generation of unresolved immigration policies has imposed upon their families. Participants reported coping with the risk of growing up in an undocumented household in adaptive, healthy and active ways. They expressed, for example, feeling a sense of responsibility of helping their family members either legally or financially. They were often the voice of their community or family when others were quick to misinterpret them or judge them. In other cases, participants reported expressing what Daniel Goleman (2007) explains as variations of empathy, such as perspective taking or/and compassion. Perspective taking is the emotional dimension of empathy, in which one has the ability to understand other people’s situations and viewpoints. Some participants noted their ability to understand the difficult life circumstance of other people due to their own experiences of having an

undocumented mother. This capacity to empathically imagine others' difficult circumstances, led some participants to developed the active dimension of empathy-- compassion—mobilizing them to do something about the situation they were concerned about. In these cases, a handful of participants choose to work in fields that were in the social service sector or aimed to help underrepresented communities. These findings are consistent with research that found that an undocumented status was a driver for Latino first and second generation young adults to choose professions that gave back to their community (Suárez-Orozco, Hernández & Casanova, 2015).

Strengths and Limitations

This research study contributes to a gap in the literature; to date there has been little research on mixed-status families—the little that has been done does not focus on mental health. More specifically, this study brought to light the stories of citizen Latinas who have grown up in the mixed-status homes and the ever-extending shadows of an undocumented status. Through qualitative interviews I was able to capture how U.S-born young adult Latinas describe their experiences of growing up in a mixed-status family, and how their experiences may have implications for their emotional and mental health. The sample is small, however, and is limited to the Latina women. While I had originally planned to recruit both male and female participants and across different ethnicities that proved to be difficult within the allotted time-frame for this study.

Implications for Practice

Results from the current study can help inform the types of services and interventions that would benefit children and youth growing up in mixed-status families. For example, participants reported that their sense of privilege (of being a U.S citizen) led them to develop a form of survivor guilt, and ultimately made them feel sad, immobilized

and angry. While, as of yet, there are no empirically supported interventions that address survivor guilt among U.S citizens with undocumented family members, this study could inform future interventions in hopes to address the guilt and promote positive adaptation. Future interventions, for example, could help these children and youth understand their relative sense of privilege, help them cope with feelings of being stuck or immobilized, and transform their guilt into a pro-social function (e.g., volunteering in immigration-related organizations). Examining other types of interventions, such as guilt reduction therapy, that address trauma-related guilt (e.g., among combat veterans; Norman, Wilkins, Myers & Allard, 2014) may also be helpful when developing new interventions for this population.

Mental health professionals should be cognizant of the current conditions U.S-born children and youth from mixed-status families encounter. For instance, mental health professionals should be aware when they see signs of avoidance or suppression of emotions, and cases when U.S-born children and youth invalidate their own needs to focus on their undocumented family members. Participants in this study realized that invalidating their own feelings, as children and adolescents, triggered anger, sadness, and anxiety as young adults. It would be beneficial for mental health practitioners to help these children and youth cope with these feelings, before they enter adulthood, and address the underlying mechanism or events (e.g., deportation of a family member) that are generating such guilt. As stated above, mental health professionals should know that survivor guilt may emerge among this group of children and youth and can have negative effects in adulthood. Lastly, mental health professional should also address and promote the incredible strength and resilience (e.g., their empathy and compassion) that is present among U.S-born children and youth in mixed-status families.

Implications for Future Research

Certainly, in future studies, it would be valuable to recruit participants of different ethnicities and forms of legal statuses. This would allow us to capture the nuances of various communities and families with undocumented parents or siblings and a U.S-born young adult. For example, a distinct but overlapping population to consider for future research are mixed-status families that are composed of temporary protective status (TPS) and U.S-born children and youth; currently they are under attack and at risk of family separations. This is especially pressing because President Trump has ended TPS for about 320,000 thousand immigrants from EL Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Haiti (Cohn & Passel, 2017; Lind, 2018). I anticipate that the end of TPS will have detrimental effects on the development of the 273,000 U.S-citizen children that would be left behind (Warren & Kerwin, 2017). Many of these families have been in the United States for decades, and they have established ties in their communities. These children and youth would lose the emotional and financial support from their TPS parents. Further research is needed to shed light on the experiences of these children and youth. Such research has the potential to support their emotional and mental health and understand how potential family separations may affect their development and psychological adjustment.

Lastly, there is a need to further explore survivor guilt among U.S-citizen children and youth that are part of mixed-status families. It would be useful to examine the relationship between different legal statuses (e.g., U.S-citizenship) and mental health, and explore whether survivor guilt mediates this relationship. Understanding this relationship would help practitioners, and researchers, develop mental health interventions; such interventions could help address the emotional consequences of living in an undocumented household, such as survivor guilt, and promote positive adaptation among these children and youth to avoid detrimental effects in their adulthood (e.g., Delva et al.,

2013).

Conclusion

This study was an initial exploration of how a generation of U.S-citizen children who are coming of age during an era characterized as a “deportation nation” make sense of their experiences growing up in mixed-status families (Kanstroom, 2010). Today many of their stories are invisible (and may become more so as individuals recede further in the shadows in order to protect their families). In spite of these odds, given their prevalence, it is imperative we consider and address the needs of these youth to help them transition to adulthood. This is increasingly important as we are seeing a new generation of U.S citizen children that are living in an intensified “deportation nation.” Future research should continue to shed light on the experiences of these children, and youth to support their emotional and mental health to build a stronger and more resilient generation; because they are our future.

Table 2

Interview Protocol

Immigration History

Every family has an immigration story. Can you tell me about your family's immigration journey?

Did your family come all together at the same time?

What are some reasons your family decided to come to the U.S?

Why did your family choose to immigrate to the U.S instead of another country?

What was it like coming to the U.S. for your family?

Can you tell me how the first years were like for your family? What were the best and/or worst parts of coming to the U.S. for your family? Who was (or what organizations were) most helpful in helping your family get settled?

Family Structure

Some families live in a mixed-status family in which some members are documented while others are not. Is that the case for your family? Can you tell be about what the makeup of your family looks like?

Who did you grow up with?

Do you have any family members who are undocumented?

Can you tell me who they are and what relationship do they have to you? (please make up names)

Tell me what it was like growing up in a mixed-status family. What do you think are the biggest advantages that come with being a U.S citizen? Are there any disadvantages, and if so what are they?

In what ways do some of your daily experiences compare to those of your family member(s) who are not documented?

Are there any ways in which you have been treated differently by your family members because you have the benefits of legal status as compared to members of your family who do not have the benefits of authorized status?

Some people that grew up in mixed-status families who have authorized status talk about having added responsibilities because of that status.

Did your roles and responsibilities in your family differ from those family members who were undocumented? (If so) Can you tell me a little bit about what those were and how that affected you and your family relationships.

Psychological Functioning

How, if at all, has your authorized status affected your view of yourself?

What messages have you encountered about being a member of a mixed-status family from: Peers? Teachers or other adults in the school community? Employers? The media?

Some people say that growing up in a mixed-status family makes the grow stronger in some ways but for others say that this status brings particular burdens while others say it is a little of both. In what ways would you say having grown up in a mixed-status family has impacted your life? Specifically, what impact (if any) do you feel these experiences have had on your emotional and/or physical well-being? What competencies (if any) do you think these experiences have pushed you to develop?

What are some the primary worries you have in regards to your family member's current well-being? How much and how often do you worry about these things?

What are your hopes and fears for your families' future? And what hopes and worries does your family have about your future?

What are some the primary worries you have in regards to yourself? How much and how often do you worry about these things?

Current Immigration Climate

During Obama's presidency, some termed the U.S. a "deportation nation."

What was it like, living in a mixed status family at that time?

Did it have any impact in your family? In what ways? And how did it affect you?

President Trump ran his campaign on anti-immigrant rhetoric and has set in motion aggressive deportation policies of his own.

Since the new administration has begun, has there been any changes in the vulnerability your family feels? If so, in what ways?

How are various members of the family responding?

How is it affecting you?

Has your family made contingency plans in case a family member is deported? Can you share with me what you all are planning?

How might these plans specifically impact you and how are you feeling about that?

Table 3

Code Book

| Themes | Definition | Sub Themes | Responses | Example Responses |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| I did not understand it until... | Not being aware of what it meant for their family to be undocumented until certain event(s) led to their realization | | 7 (100%) | “The immigration official showed up we ended up hiding [and] I had a lot of questions after that incident” |
| Familial Hierarchy of Needs | Rank ordering the needs of those that are undocumented and placing those that are U.S citizen in the bottom | | 4 (57%) | “I invalidated my feelings but I was just like this takes on higher priority so I would never talk about it. |
| Emotional Consequences | The emotional and mental risks of living in an undocumented household | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor • Guilt • Anger • Feeling Stuck • Expressions of Sadness • Anxiety | 6 (85 %) 5 (72%) 5 (72 %) 6 (85%) 7 (100%) | “I am undeserving ... of having the privilege of being a U.S citizen I did nothing different than my older sister...it’s like what did I do...it’s so arbitrary almost.” “I also feel stuck that I can’t do nothing or that I don’t know how to deal with the pressure, I don’t know how to help” |
| Sense of Responsibility | Taking an added sense of responsibility of the financial or legally needs of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Legal | 6 (85%) 5 (72%) | “[like] what we are going to do?... even to the point of assigning power of attorney papers [to] the one that is 11.” |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------|--|
| | undocumented family members | | |
| Being the Voice | Being the “voice” or advocate for the rights and wellbeing of their undocumented family members or the community | 4 (57 %) | “I know that my father would ...say stuff about undocumented folks...I always tell him ‘check yourself sometimes.’ |
| Empathy/Compassion | The ability to empathize with other peoples’ difficult situation and their desire to help their community; taking compassion action to bring about change through mentorship, volunteering, or career choices | 4 (57 %) | “I don’t know want anybody else to have to go through that... let me go to a field where I...can do something about it.” |

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