Project Wings: Exploring Migration Effects on Mexican Adolescent-Parent Communication and Connectedness Using Photovoice

Final Narrative Report

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IN THE US

To all Mexicans in the Minneapolis community, in Minnesota, but in particular to those who agreed on participating with us in this enriching experience for all.

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IN MEXICO

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i. ABSTRACT

Amidst stressors commonly experienced by adolescents, there are stressors uniquely experienced by many immigrant Mexican adolescents. These include difficulties associated with acculturation, balancing between cultures, familial separation, and fears related to immigration status. Importantly, the protective nature of parent-adolescent connectedness becomes reduced or absent for these youth. Minnesota is home to a fast growing Mexican immigrant community, with many immigrants arriving from Morelos.

Our study acknowledged migration-related stressors, and sought to build understanding of migration impacts on adolescent-parent communication and connectedness. Our purpose was to examine the feasibility of a trans-national photovoice intervention with Mexican parents and adolescents and describe their perspectives as portrayed in the group-created photo exhibit. In this study we formed 4 parent/adolescent groups, two in Morelos, Mexico and two in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The photovoice method was used, in which 60 Mexican parents and adolescents used digital cameras to portray their perspectives specific to migration, family, and communication/connectedness. Each group participated in 8 weekly sessions, developing and discussing the different themes as a group then taking pictures on their own throughout the week, with a final product of a group-created photo exhibit presented to the community at the end of the program. Findings helped inform family-centric policies that promote connectedness and overall well-being of Mexican adolescents. Participants were also empowered through this experience and able to be part of promoting awareness of migrant issues within the community.

Project Objectives
The purpose of our project was to test the feasibility of a trans-national photovoice intervention with Mexican parents and adolescents. We formed parent-adolescent groups bi-nationally to gain insights into the effects of migration on these families. Participants used cameras to describe their perspectives on migration, family, and parent-adolescent communication and connectedness. Each group created a photo exhibit that was shared with the community. Created by the participants, the exhibit reflected issues that are most important to their families while also empowering them to raise the awareness of others. The exhibits aimed to bring awareness to migrant issues within the community and to help inform family-centric policies that promote connectedness and the well-being of Mexican adolescents. Through this process we hoped to foster healthy parent-adolescent relationships, communication and connectedness.
ii. INTRODUCTION

Global Context
Even though the 21st Century is considered to be the Century of Migration, the global context of migration has grown increasingly negative in part due to shifts in societal policies and perspectives regarding migrants and their contributions to receiving communities. Despite documented economical contributions, migrants continue to experience maltreatment, discrimination, and to be treated as disposable commodities. This context provides a sober background to our project addressing how migration affects relationships among family members residing in sending and receiving communities in Mexico and the United States (U.S.).

Mexican Context
Mexicans migrate to the U.S. for economical, educational, and quality of life reasons. According to the National Population Council of Mexico (CONAPO), 2 million Mexicans crossed the US-Mexico border in search of improving their living conditions over a 6 year period. In the past 5 years political factors in Mexico that have influenced decisions to migrate to the U.S. include those associated with the drug war, such as increased violence and homicide rates, and a socioeconomic climate that has made it difficult to find employment.

According to the National Population Council (CONAPO, 2000), Morelos, located in the Central region of Mexico, is a ‘high’ state in terms of migration intensity. Traditional reception sites of Morelos’ emigrants in the U.S. are, among others, Minneapolis (Minnesota), Chicago (Illinois) and Los Angeles (California). The higher rates of emigration from Morelos are within the states’ southwest and southeast regions, where seasonal agriculture, low agricultural product prices, and the proliferation of intermediaries is typical (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map of Morelos, Mexico

Source: Estimaciones de Conapo con base en los resultados del Censo de Población y Vivienda 2000

U.S. Context
Efforts to reform immigration have failed nationally but have been advanced in varying degrees at the state level. Current immigration policies and attitudes in the U.S. have led to heightened fears and awareness among immigrant Mexican adolescents and their families. Dedication of national resources to U.S.-Mexico border security has heightened risks associated with undocumented border crossing and over 400,000 Mexican individuals were deported from the U.S. in 2011.
Enforcement has resulted in heightened fears and concerns among all immigrants, regardless of documentation status. Anti-immigrant sentiments pervade in the U.S. and contribute to their poor treatment including racism and discrimination as well as a lack of appreciation for their societal contributions. In Minneapolis, immigration raids and deportation have had a chaotic, stressful impact on families and the broader community.

**Bi-national Context**

The North American Free Trade Agreement among Mexico, the U.S. and Canada (NAFTA) deepened economic and social development inter-dependency in Mexico in part due to U.S.-based growth and production demands. The economic crisis in the U.S., combined with anti-immigration sentiments and political initiatives as well as increases in legal immigration mechanisms, have coincided with a slowing of Mexican undocumented migration (EIM) (Durand, 2011). According to the Pew Hispanic Research Foundation, Mexican undocumented immigration reduced from 7 million in 2007 to 6.5 million in 2010.

Latinos now make up the largest minority group in the U.S. at 15.8 percent of the total population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008) and are second to Mexico as the largest Latino population in any country. Latinos represent the fastest growing and youngest minority group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and Latinos of Mexican origin comprise the greatest proportion, at approximately two thirds or 66%. Minnesota is home to a fast growing Mexican immigrant community, with many immigrants arriving from Morelos, Mexico. In November of 2008, Minneapolis and Cuernavaca became official sister cities with leadership in both cities recognizing the mutual impacts resulting from migration patterns. Certainly, the health and well-being of Mexican immigrants and adolescents specifically, will impact the state health care system and contribute to the future health and well-being of Minnesota. Equally, the migration patterns between our states are likely to impact the well-being of those who return to or remain in Morelos.

Attention is needed to examine migration, and its effects and consequences, for Mexican families residing in sending and receiving communities in Mexico and the U.S.

The Health Initiative for the Americas, the Research in Health an Migration Program (PIMSA) from the University of California, USA, the Health Ministry of Mexico and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT) have combined efforts and resources to promote bi-national and transnational collaborative research. The aim is to inform recommendations for changes in public policies so they address these complex realities and effects of migration on health and well-being.
Our project was conducted in awareness of these challenging contexts, and a recognized need for policies that reflect factors of migration when promoting health of Mexicans in Mexico and the U.S. Our study acknowledged the stressors associated with migration, and sought to build our understanding of the impacts on adolescent-parent communication and connectedness. By involving families remaining in Morelos, and families who have immigrated to Minneapolis, we positioned ourselves to advocate for reasonable and family-centric policies.
iii. PROJECT PURPOSE

The Issue
In the U.S., 1 in 5 adolescents has a mental health problem such as depression and anxiety (Knopf 2008; DHHS 2001). In Mexico, one out of eleven adolescents report having a serious mental health problem. Women are more affected than males (Benjet et al, 2009; Benjet et al, 2008); in the U.S. Latina youth report higher rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts than white adolescents (Ozer et al. 2003). In Minnesota, 40% of 9th grade Latina adolescents have thought about killing themselves in the past year (García et al. 2008); the rates among Latino boys are nearly as high and equally concerning. In Mexico, national survey data indicate that over 50% of the high school students reported feeling sad, 13% attempting suicide, and 8% thinking about suicide (Avilés, 2008) and self-injurious behavior within this population has increased, from 8.3%, in 1997, to 11.1% in 2003 (González Forteza et al, 2008).

Amidst stressors that are commonly experienced by adolescents, such as pubertal development, peer relations, and typical family conflicts, there are stressors uniquely experienced by many migrant Mexican adolescents. These include difficulties associated with acculturation, balancing between cultures, familial separation, and worries related to immigration status and gang-related pressures (García & Lindgren, 2009; Korbis & Reyes, 2000). In Mexico, paternal absence due to migration has been associated with school drop-out for young adolescents and increased risk of depressive symptoms (Aguilera, 2004).

In spite of relatively high rates of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, immigrant Mexican adolescents do not seek out or receive help at the rates of their adolescent counterparts (Brindis et al., 2002).

The negative implications of untreated mental health in adolescence might include mental and physical disability, employment limitations, and unhealthy relationships. Latina adolescents have the highest teen birth rates (139.5 per 1,000 female) in the U.S. and represented 12% of all U.S. pregnancies in 2004 (Ventura et al, 2008). Twenty six percent of Latino females age 19 and below are teen mothers. In Mexico, adolescents represented 15.4% of all births in 2008 (CONAPO, 2008). These high rates of reproduction, combined with adolescent mental health symptoms and problems, are a source of concern for a population growing toward comprising 1 in 4 persons in the U.S. by 2050 (U.S. Census 2008). New insights regarding migration-related stressors experienced by Mexican adolescents are needed to inform strategies that improve prevention, early identification and treatment of mental health problems.
Migration and Familial Stress

Many Mexican adolescents arrive to the U.S. alone or with few family members, joining parents or an uncle who arrived to the U.S. years earlier (CDC, 2002; Mitrani, Santisteban, & Muir, 2004). Many adolescents have been raised in their home country by aunts, or grandmothers, and arrive to the U.S. at a developmental stage in which experimentation, risk-taking, and increasing independence from parents are normal (Steinburg, 1996). This can create familial conflict and stress as parents struggle to implement control, rules, and protection for newly arrived adolescents (Schapiro, 2002; Schmitz, 2006). Yet connectedness to parents is protective and necessary; Mexican-origin adolescents reporting higher levels of connectedness to family report lower levels of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation compared to adolescents reporting low levels of family connectedness (García, Skay, Sieving, Naughton, Bearinger, 2008).

The additional stressors experienced by Mexican adolescents who migrate from a rural setting in Morelos to an urban Minnesota city can be hypothesized but have not been adequately described. This is important because interventions to promote familial connectedness and emotional well-being among Mexican adolescents that are not informed by their experiences migrating between these distinct geographic/ cultural settings might not effectively address what these youth need. With advances in communication technology (e.g., low cost internet-based phone calls), family members are able to see and hear each other regularly. Yet, they remain far away and cannot readily help when a stressful situation ensues.
iv. METHODS

Participants and Setting
Participants were recruited from Minneapolis, Minnesota because it has a growing Mexican migrant population (6.1%) and Morelos, Mexico, a central Mexican State that has a history of sending many migrants to the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Additionally, Minneapolis has been a traditional settlement for immigrants from Morelos for over 20 years.

Recruitment
We relied on a referral chain of participants and face-to-face invitation of potential participants as well as use of fliers distributed to homes and posted in public areas. The facilitators for each photovoice group had strong ties with the Latino community and were able to successfully recruit participants without difficulty. Once recruited, participants would often spread the word to others in the community that might want to join. The lack of support from officials in Morelos made the recruitment process more difficult although two young Mexican women facilitated recruitment because they had recently returned to their community of origin from Minnesota. Their prior experience with photovoice projects make them reliable sources of information for community members approached to participate in the project.

Data Sources
Pre- and post-program self-report surveys were completed. Surveys collected data including demographics, emotional health, family connectedness and communication. In addition, some participants participated in focus group discussion at the end of the project to provide feedback about the photovoice process, what they liked, and what they thought might be improved. Process data were also collected by facilitators, including participant attendance at each session.

Photovoice Overview
We used the photovoice technique to carry out our groups (See Figure 2.). Photovoice is a participatory-action research method in which photography is used as a means to understand participant’s experiences (Wang et al, 2004). Photovoice aims to engage participants in the storytelling process through photography. Participants use digital cameras to portray their perspectives specific to a theme (in our case to migration, family, communication and connectedness). Participants are provided a camera to use. At the program conclusion the participants keep the camera as a token of appreciation.

Figure 2. Photovoice Use

For eight weeks participants met together with a facilitator to discuss issues related to the chosen theme and share the pictures they took over the past week. In the week that follows the participants continued to take pictures to clarify their opinions about aspects of the theme. In the weeks that followed the group combined their photos
into descriptive categories and identified messages that include potential policy recommendations for viewers. The photovoice technique can be used as a tool to dig deeper into their personal experiences and sentiments and to yield a collective voice advocating for something to be improved or to change. Photovoice projects should always include a goal toward influencing policy at a local, regional, national, or international level.

**Program Course**

Our photovoice group programs included 8 sessions, each lasting 3 hours. The day and time were determined with input from the group. Food, childcare, and transportation were provided as needed, so that no minor restrictions would keep the participants from coming. The eight sessions followed a prescribed sequence; the initial sessions provide an introduction to photovoice, civic engagement, photography and use of digital cameras. Participants dialogued as a group about the project focus/theme and then took photos over the next days and weeks, which portrayed aspects of the theme they care about. Subsequent sessions involved discussing the meanings of the photos, clarifying the theme, identifying descriptive categories of messages, and taking additional photos. Group participants helped identify their target audience (e.g. policy makers, community leaders, family members) and they were subsequently invited to the exhibit that was held on the final session. Participants determined how the photos were displayed and what messages they wanted to include in the final exhibits. Then they spent the final two sessions organizing the exhibit and implementing the final event.

Each of the six groups contained 8 – 16 participants, the majority of families had one adolescent and one parent participate, but some families had two parents or two adolescents (See Table 1). All sessions were co-facilitated by skilled leaders to guide the group throughout the process while letting the participants lead the direction that the project themes and outcomes took. The facilitators were there to keep the group progressing, and to give guidance.

Table 1. Photovoice Participants in Mexico and the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UNITED STATES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>MEXICO</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=14)</td>
<td>(n=10)</td>
<td>(n=8)</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=8)</td>
<td>(n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Sessions</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
v. IN MEXICO

We organized three photovoice groups, and we decided to offer just one camera per each dyad rather than to each individual. We did this to promote greater communication between the adults and adolescents as they took pictures with the same camera. This decision also allowed us to include a greater number of participants.

The first two groups occurred simultaneously during the weekends from July 10th to September 11th 2010. It was decided by all participants to show their work to the community and its authorities at one combined exhibition, with the shared title of “Atlacahualoya, Migrants’ Land”. The exhibit took place Sunday, September 12th, in the context of the Holly Patron, Saint Miguel Arcangel, celebration, which lasted until September 29th.

The first group was composed of 16 women, eight adults and 8 youth: four mothers with their daughters, two grandmothers with their granddaughters, and aunt and her niece, and an older sister with her younger sibling. Sessions took place at the Plaza and at the Community Health Center. The main topics addressed were grouped into three categories:

1) Reasons for Emigration: unemployment, lack of opportunities for development among young and natural disasters;
2) The end of the American Dream illusion: abandonment, nostalgia, addictions, discriminations, racism, forgotten traditions, and being able to survive multiple dangers along the road, and in some cases the recognition of those who died in the attempt, with just their bodies returning; and
3) Propositions to avoid further deaths: returning to the normality of temporary work permits in the US in order to allow migrants to come and go, thereby lowering the risks to their lives.

Within the second group we included eight participants, four male adults, all in their role as fathers, two young male (sons) and two young women (daughters). All the sessions took place at the Community Plaza, with the exception of one, which moved to the field, at land owned by one of the participants. It was relevant, for this group, that the researcher noticed the extremely difficult conditions in which they, as peasants, do their labor, but also to corroborate the multiple dangers they are exposed to while doing their work: hailing, frozen field, strong winds, and heavy rains that destroy the crops. Topics were grouped in the same categories as from the first group, but with different content:

1) Reasons for Emigration: non-existence of warranted prices for the agricultural products, higher inputs costs for agriculture such as fertilizers, insecticides and other products to prevent plagues, lack of transportation to bring product to other places where prices could be more attractive to producers, Policia de Caminos (highway police) agents corruption with them imposing high and arbitrary fines and asking for ‘mordidas’ (‘dog bites’) when producers transport their products, the monopolized intermediaries who buy cheap, and the absence of governmental public policies supporting peasants;

2) The end of the illusion of the American Dream: changing the mentality among peasants, showed in the recipient society values such as pairing the American Dream success to acquiring and consuming material goods, making of alcohol and drugs
consumption a normal thing, not being able to avoid their children getting engaged in gangs, and the feeling that parents lose all control over their children’s education; and

3) Proposals to lower emigration: ‘creating squads (cuadrillas) (agricultural workers groups) and not gangs’ and promoting practicing sports among the community youth. These are the only possible actions available, in part due to a lack of support from the governmental authorities to pursue additional programs or interventions.

Each dyad selected three topics that showed their concerns around that was discussed in the photovoice sessions, and created a poster. Everybody asked to keep their poster at the end of the project in order to have it shown at future community activities and other surrounding communities nearby. This was a valid request and in support, the researcher in Mexico with support from colleagues from the Audio-visual Department, Teaching Direction, at the National Psychiatry Institute, obtained photographs of the posters, and created replicas for their exhibition.

The groups decided to send invitations for their work’s exhibit, addressing diverse municipality and community authorities. Some participants felt uncomfortable with the absence of the president of the municipality, whom not only showed indifference to the researcher at the beginning of this project, but expressed a similar attitude with the people. The exhibit took place at the community plaza, outside the Municipal Assistantship building. Refreshments, including jamaica and horchata fresh water and potato and curd (requesón) fried tacos were served. The posters stayed in the plaza from 11 AM to close to 6 PM. During that time, around 150 people visited, commenting and discussing their content.

For the third group there was a slightly different recruitment process. In this group no flyers or invitations were made. There were only eight cameras available and we did not want to raise false expectations among people. The researcher in Mexico invited, this time, one mother and two young who participated in the previous groups of 2010 to be part of the team as ‘facilitators’. The mother knew some deported young individuals, and we made verbal invitations to these youth.

Five recently deported individuals participated in this group; each had been deported within the past year and a half). Their average age was 22.6 years. Sessions took place every Saturday between April 16th and June 11th 2011. Initiating the groups was a difficult task because the young people initially did not want to discuss migration because it caused them to reflect on unpleasant memories surrounding their deportation. The group started with just two young participants. By
the second session, two more joined, and at the third five participants had enrolled. Attendance was not perfect, in part because of issues related to their jobs, as well as family or friends and previous commitments.

Exhibit discussions among the boys who had been deported took place in private locations, with the exception of the first discussion that occurred on the benches in the plaza. Participants requested for the exhibits to take place at quiet places and some expressed feeling uncomfortable being seen by all in town at a very public location. Topics discussed during these meetings included:
(1) ‘Is it worth risking your life to reach a dream?’ which consisted of topics such as:
- ‘Poverty’ as an expulsion factor.
- The dangers of crossing the border, such as dying of thirst in the desert or drowning in the Rio Bravo.
- Maltreatments received from ‘polleros’ and the possibility of being kidnapped by organized crime gang.

(2) ‘Emigration balance’ including topics such as:
- Not all is negative, there are many places in the U.S. that are worth knowing, particularly those designed for the youth’s fun.
- There is a lot of luxury, enormous shopping malls, big and well illuminated highways, schools and hospitals.
- But there are also many temptations pushing people down to ‘vices’.

(3) ‘We all deserve fair treat’ including topics such as:
- What is the reason we are treated indignantly, as if we were serial killers!!?
- Deportations divide families. For a better future, they should not deport us all.

With the suggestion of one of the participants, and with the groups’ approval, an exhibit took place on Friday, June 17th 2011, in the Telesecundaria Niños Héroes de Chapultepec School facilities, with the purposeful intention of engaging students in junior high-school (secondary school) because they are at the age that many youth first try to emigrate from Mexico. It was felt important to give these youth the opportunity to hear about the life experiences that the participants had lived through, including deportation. The activity was titled ‘They cannot deport us all’.

The final exhibit included a discussion of posters that was held at the Telesecundaria School. Parents were invited and there were also teachers and authorities. The first showed great interest in knowing about the reasons the participants had migrated and they asked participants about their children’s perspectives on the migration decisions. Teachers suggested that the best thing that could happen to students who were there, was to complete their studies, including college-level studies. Another suggestion was to encourage students to combine their school efforts with their work responsibilities in agriculture; this would encourage opportunity for good employment and possibly, to save money and travel to the U.S. as tourists rather than job seekers.
### Table 2. Mexico-based Participant Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key photovoice group themes</strong></td>
<td>Causes: Unemployment, lack of opportunities for young, natural disasters. 'Whatever remains from the American Dream': abandonment, addictions, racism, discrimination, forgetting the traditions, surviving or not. <strong>Reducing costs:</strong> Normalize migration.</td>
<td>Causes: No prices of warranty for the agriculture, expensive inputs, greedy persons, inexistent support from the government. 'The end of the illusion of the American Dream': consumerism, change of mentality, adoption of different values, consumption of alcohol and drugs, gangs, parents losing control over their children's education. <strong>Reducing emigration:</strong> ‘Let us form squads, no gangs’, and promote practicing sports among youth.</td>
<td>'Is it worth risking your life for a dream?': multiple dangers in crossing the border. <strong>Balance of emigration:</strong> Not everything is negative in the U.S.; if you can take care of yourself, not falling into addictions. ‘We deserve a fair treatment’: Do not treat us as killers. You cannot deport us all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Implications</strong></td>
<td>• Promote visas and temporary working permits</td>
<td>• Guarantee fair prices for all agricultural products. • Public policies supporting agricultural development.</td>
<td>• Family re-unification promoted. • Option for deported individuals to return to the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mexico-based Participant Themes:**

**Whatever remains from the American Dream**

'Very often, poverty pushes us to take some roads, without knowing that those are full of danger roads, but the illusion fills us of dreams. Without knowing that, quite often, those dreams end in deep sorrow, pain or death.'

**Abandonment for a dream**

'Very often, a Mexican migrates to the U.S. looking to reach the dream of his life. This dream could be buying a house, a car or just simply looking for a perfect live, a live that, at the same time one ends abandoning. However, not thinking about what they left abandoned, since sometimes they tend to forget the live they had here in Mexico: the family, friends, roots and their country: Mexico.'

**Changing Mentality**

'When we are in the U.S., we tend to forget easily our roots and the family. You change your ways to be, your ways to act and living. That is making us falling easily into many temptations such as the alcohol, drugs, gangs, drug trafficking (easy money). We get used to that living but sooner or later we are kicked out, without them caring if we are delinquents or not. Just for the sole fact of being illegal, for them, we are.'
Consequences of migration

‘Why would it be that whenever I migrate, I am carrying with me good intentions of progressing, but once I arrive to the U.S., everything changes and I do not measure the consequences of my acts?’

Balance

‘Good or bad? So often, migrating parents do that to offer their children ‘the best’ (material things), but in fact, are they giving them the best? What parents do once they are there, is sending things from the U.S., such as electronic devices, school supplies, clothes, video games, among many other things, but children receive all that stuff without putting any effort (therefore they are fostering parasites) and they do not value things that are really worth such as the family.’

Temporary Working Permits

‘It is a way for your youth being able of opening their paths and success, since they are highly valued persons, who are worth for the work they know to do and then it will also help to avoid that their path does not become a point of no return.’
vi. IN MINNESOTA

We had three photovoice groups. The first group took place in April and May of 2010 and consisted of 14 participants initially, with 4 mother and daughter dyads, and two mothers that each participated with 2 daughters. However one mother and daughter dyad dropped out of the study three weeks in, so we were left with 12 participants for the rest of the process. Group 1 had 8 sessions and a final exhibit event. The final exhibit for this group was titled: “Know Your Rights and Fight for Them. Themes that emerged from group 1’s exhibit were: economy, drivers’ license, comprehensive immigration reform, education, how to defend the rights of immigrants and deportation.

The second group in Minnesota took place in October and November of 2010. The group consisted of four families, 10 participants in total with one mother-daughter pair, one father-son pair and two daughters with both parents. However, for the families that had both parents involved, often only one of the parents would attend the sessions instead of both. Sessions were held at El Colegio charter high school in Minneapolis and co-facilitated by a male and a female. The final exhibit was titled: “Our Voices Through Dreams, Culture and Values.” The themes of group 2’s exhibit were: nostalgia, culture, family union and education. For the second group’s final event, participants displayed and presented their photovoice poster boards as well as a digital exhibit, and explained to the Exhibit attendees about the process and the significance of the chosen photos and themes. Many members of the community came out to support the groups during the final exhibit. Families and friends of the group participants came as well as a representative of a local Latino senator (Patricia Torres Ray). In addition, the local Spanish speaking television station (Univision) came and conducted interviews with the families.

The third group in Minnesota took place in October and November 2011. The group consisted of four families, 8 participants in total. All were mother and son dyads. Sessions were held at El Colegio charter high school in Minneapolis and co-facilitated by a male and a female. The final exhibit was titled: “Learn from Immigrants: A world of cultures and risks all through art and photography.” The themes of group 3’s exhibit were: traditions and culture, support for the dream act, immigration with challenges and dream, and cultural impact. For the third group’s final event, participants displayed and presented their photovoice poster boards as well as a digital exhibit, and explained to the Exhibit attendees about the process and the significance of the chosen photos and themes. Many members of the community came out to support the groups during the final exhibit.
Table 3. U.S.-based Participant Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key photovoice group themes</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Union</td>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgia</td>
<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drivers License</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Migration Reform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know Your Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support the Dream Act.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Migrant families may benefit from polices that support their children education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support deportation laws that don’t separate families so that Latino youth can benefit from having healthy and united family support systems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections for Separated Children Act to protect children’s interests when deportation does take place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Policy Implications**

• Encourage Comprehensive Migration Reform.
• Protect Migrant workers to protect and strengthen our economy.
• Propose and support laws that permit undocumented worker’s rights and protection from exploitation.
• Support driving laws that protect migrants.

• Support the Dream Act.
• Pass on traditions so children don’t lose their identity.
• Encourage clear and short goals for new immigrants.
• Families should work together to not lose faith, keep dreams alive.
• Support English language learning opportunities.

**Minnesota-based Participant Themes:**

**Family Union**

“Family values are very important in the development of our children. It’s important that our adolescents learn from our culture. When we immigrated to this country we came with many dreams for a better future for our family; however, we shouldn't forget our customs and should teach these to our youth.”

**Culture**

“It’s an honor for us immigrants to being a piece of our land to this beautiful country.”

**Nostalgia**

“When we came to this country, we left behind family members, traditions, cultures, beliefs and customs that have produced sentiments of solitude with time. It is for this reason that some families wish to bring those same customs we used to have in our countries that identify us.”

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**Family Union**

**Culture**

**Nostalgia**
Education
“People need education because being educated helps you to function in society. We should all have the right as humans to have the opportunity to overcome and improve life conditions for our families, our community and this country though education.”

Driver’s License
“If only the law would give immigrants the privilege of driving safely on the streets things would change a lot. We ask for the right to obtain a driver’s license that permits stability and safety in this country.”

Economy
“Immigrants in the United States are a very important part of the economic support of the country. We cannot permit that their work is not valued.”

Deportation
“The separation of families is not a healthy response to immigration in this country. It is worsening the conditions of life for families.”

Comprehensive Migration Reform
“For undocumented immigrants this is the opportunity to leave the shadows and finally have an identity in this country. This is the only possibility to dignify their lives in a safe manner.”

Know Your Rights
“It is important to know and spread the word about immigrants’ rights in the United States. In this way we will know how to defend ourselves in any situation where we feel threatened.”
Traditions and Culture
“We must continue to motivate our children so that they don’t lose their identity and continue to pass on the traditions and habit from generation to generation.”

Challenges and Dreams
Even though we may come across these challenges throughout our lives, we must keep going forward and not lose faith in everything that is possible...we continue forward together.”

Cultural Impact
“We arrived here and thought all our dreams would come true immediately, but that is not the case. There are many phases of transition in adapting to this country; one of these is language. We pass through many obstacles and ups and downs, but perseverance and clear and short goals, have enabled us to adapt and better ourselves.”

Traveling Exhibit
After the first two Minnesota groups’ final exhibits we decided to create a combined traveling photography exhibit highlighting some of the photographs from each of the themes from the 2 groups. We used 5 pictures from each of the 9 themes, one large 8x10 and 4 smaller 5x7; 54 photographs in all. We chose multi colored frames and used different colors for each theme. Students from El Colegio high school in Minneapolis helped us put the pictures in the frames and decide which color to use for each theme. We created titles for each picture that help explain the significance of the picture. Notes and discussions from the group sessions were used for this purpose as well as home visits to a family from each group to act as a representative for the group in helping to create the picture titles.

The tiles of each picture were printed on foam board and displayed under the framed picture. Each theme of five pictures was grouped together with a paragraph explaining the meaning of the theme.

We included a framed picture of the participants from each group. We had our first photography exhibit showing in the art Gallery of El Colegio high school from March 5th - March 16th. We had an opening event to kick it off on the afternoon of March 5th with food and informational handouts about the project. All the families from the groups as well as the local community were invited. Approximately 30 people attended. We did a second exhibit showing at Centro, a local Latino community center, from April 1st to April 7th. We held the opening event the evening of April 1st, once again with food and handouts. Approximately 40 participants and local community members came out to support the project this time. Plans for subsequent locations to show the exhibit are underway.
vii. RESULTS

Successes and Final Products

Our main goal was to examine the feasibility of a bi-national photovoice intervention with Mexican parent and adolescents. This project turned out to be feasible and we were able to successfully carry out all planned aspects of it. All proposed groups were conducted (plus two additional groups) with all 8 sessions carried out. Final exhibits were produced and revealed to the community with each group.

Final results for each group included having a final exhibit in which the groups presented to the community posters displaying chosen themes with their pictures and explained their significance.

The environment of the group sessions was able to foster parent-teen relationships and create more communication and connectedness between participants. During an evaluation of the project by Minnesota group two, both parents and adolescents made it clear that these groups helped them to be more connected with each other. One parent said; “being close to my daughter, the thing is that she is very shy and doesn’t want to talk, that helped us a lot.” One of the adolescents said “mom is mostly in a hurry... so it was nice having to have time to spend with my mom,” or in another’s adolescent’s words, “Before this class, I wouldn’t talk to her as much about things that were happening in my school, but after the class I was kinda starting to talk to her more and more about stuff.” And a third adolescent said, “Like I tell her most of my things now. And like I didn’t use to do that, I use to just like keep things to myself ... but now I like give her more trust.”

Participants additionally found this project empowering; they stated that this project gave them the opportunity to express themselves in new ways.

Through the themes that emerged from the groups we were able to see which issues were important to the families involved and to share these concerns with the larger community through our exhibits. We also created a policy brief from these themes and messages that should help inform family-centric policies that promote connectedness and overall well-being of Mexican adolescents.
CONCLUSIONS

This pilot project successfully demonstrated the feasibility of a bi-national photovoice intervention for Latino adolescents and their parents. This project has created a strong foundation upon which we can build for future research and policy-making. We can consider applying the photovoice method in an expanded project or process with immigrant families. It would be our intentions and hope to continue parent-adolescent photovoice groups and expand the scope to include more immigrant populations throughout Mexico and the U.S., particularly seeking to involve youth and families in the public school systems.

Students Supported
This grant supported University of Minnesota students: Therese Genis, Grecia Camarillo, Jessica Schumacher, Medhawi Giri, and Sarah Eichenberg.

Scholarly Papers in Progress
Manuscripts are in development for submission to peer-reviewed journals in the U.S. and in Mexico in 2012.

A report of this photovoice project was published in the quarterly magazine for the University of Minnesota School of Nursing. It can be read at:
http://www.nursing.umn.edu/magazine/StrengtheningtheBond/index.htm

Ongoing Dissemination
Traveling photography exhibits of the photovoice groups continue to occur in Minneapolis and St Paul.

Website for more details:
https://sites.google.com/site/projectwingsphotoexhibit/

A website through the National Institute of Psychiatry in Mexico City is in process and will increase the accessibility of participant photos and their stories.

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