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Moral career of migrant il/legality: Undocumented male youths in New York City and Paris negotiating deportability and regularizability

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Abstract
As undocumented youths transition from arrival to adolescence to adulthood, regimes of migrant il/legality shape their lives in varying ways. Over the life course, undocumented youths' legal status may also shift, creating different "careers of il/legality," sequences characterized by changes to legal status over time that re-shape self, mobility, and social roles. Longitudinal, comparative ethnographic data with undocumented male youths in Paris and New York and schools, municipal and civil society organizations show how shifts in legal status reshape youths' social identities based on access to institutional roles and evaluation of current and future conditions. Showing how undocumented youths simultaneously navigate deportation and regularization possibilities over time reveals the possibilities of, and constraints to, life after regularization.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 50 years, nation-states have increasingly sought to manage immigration by restricting the conditions for obtaining a visa. Despite formidable immigration regimes, the socioeconomic and political forces that pull migrants into new countries persist. Furthermore, once unauthorized migrants are in the receiving country, immobility stemming from lacking legal status encourages them to settle (Massey et al., 2016) rather than engage in circular or return migration. As a long-term settled population, undocumented immigrants suffer the effects of migrant "illegality." States use immigration status categorization to manage immigrants, a legal violence that ensures precarious labor (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). This racialized, spatialized social and political condition, a means of marking individuals and communities subordinate/illegitimate, facilitates criminalizing, racializing, and exploiting immigrants (Chavez, 2007; De Genova, 2002; Hiemstra, 2010; Willen, 2007). For undocumented youths, the condition of illegality unfolds over time as bureaucratic constraints and fears of deportation intersect with their biographies (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012).

Nation-states have used legal status to implement contrasting policies. Governments use deportation as punishment for immigration violations. Regularization is a governmental practice that gives undocumented immigrants, on a case-by-case or group basis, a legal residence visa. This

bureaucratic inclusion is the first and most difficult step toward naturalization, and bestows many rights. Although each of these strategic policies simultaneously shapes the self and life chances for undocumented residents, scholars have typically examined them in isolation. Beyond deportation itself, the principal means of disciplining undocumented residents is deportability—the possibility that immigration enforcement could arrive at any time—which creates fear and shadows current action and future plans (De Genova, 2002; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). In contrast, countries have used regularization to mitigate the contradictions of excluding long-term residents who have integrated. Undocumented youths often hold greater hope for regularization, reflecting contested if popular policy narratives of less culpability for entering without legal residence and potential contributions (Nicholls, 2013). Both deportability *and* regularizability (i.e., regularization possibility) affect undocumented youth, including molding aspirations in social roles.

This article examines how these possibilities shape the lived experiences of undocumented youths coming of age in the largest cities of France and the United States. Paris and New York City have large populations of undocumented youth and different approaches to incorporating them (Ruszczyk, 2018). Within each national context, each city represents particularly undocumented-friendly contexts, with significant associational and governmental support, robust public transportation, and ethnic communities (cf. García, 2019).

This article draws from scholarship on immigrant incorporation and integration, migrant "illegality," and the transition to adulthood. The project aims to describe how social processes overlap for undocumented youths in different national contexts. This effort joins recent research seeking to understand the conditions in which undocumentedness plays out and to identify how and when legal status matters. Scholars have emphasized that undocumented youths[1] face the grave consequences of migrant illegality (Abrego, 2006; Bloch et al., 2014; Cebulko & Silver, 2016; Dreby, 2012; Gonzales, 2015; Silver, 2018). Undocumented youths transitioning from adolescence to adulthood discover changes in how undocumentedness affects them (Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, 2015), coming to understand how the protections of childhood and adolescence end at adulthood with immigration status-based employment and educational exclusion. Specific exclusions stem from governmental stipulations that require state-issued identification to apply for state and federal financial aid, most jobs, and driver's licenses.

This article asserts that the scope of such a pattern of learning to be "illegal" may be limited. Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic data collected with undocumented youths in New York and Paris, I extend theorization about learning illegality with the concept of *moral career of il/legality*[2] to refer to the sequence characterized by changes to legal status over time that re-shape self, mobility, and social roles (see Aranda et al., 2020; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Many undocumented youths are ineligible to shift their legal status, but some are. Most such youths in Paris, and some in New York, have moved from undocumented adolescence to the penultimate step before citizenship. While their initial experiences of adulthood broadly follow the assumptions of the theory of learning illegality, undocumented young adults may regularize their status and begin a process of remaking themselves, using space and occupational change to do so.

UNDOCUMENTED YOUTHS AND IMMIGRATION REGIMES

Below, I discuss how scholars view the mechanisms of social exclusion and inclusion for undocumented youths, followed by a framework for conceptualizing the changes in self that accompany changes in the salience of il/legal status. I highlight mostly US-based literature on migrant illegality and undocumented youth because French scholars have focused more on the political aspects of

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[1]Undocumented youths include those who entered a country as a minor without inspection by customs officials, overstayed a temporary visa, or lost a legal residence status (e.g., asylum-seekers). Each country has particular definitions of what constitutes being out of status, but these categories fundamentally produce uncertainty of deportability and regularizability.

[2]I use il/legality to call attention to the constructedness of illegality and the possibility that legal status may change over the life course.

undocumented experiences. Migrant illegality rests upon the state's power to deport noncitizens. Legal status, used as a bureaucratic gatekeeper, brings the border to the interior (Bosniak, 2006; Hiemstra, 2010). Negotiating this bureaucratic exclusion represents a major challenge in undocumented youths' transition into adulthood. Relatively little research has examined transitions into legal status (cf. Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016).[3] Building on research highlighting the contingent nature of undocumented status, this article extends these findings by showing how the lived experiences of migrant illegality shift over time as undocumented youths' legal status changes.

Negotiating exclusion

In France and the United States, immigration enforcement has sharply increased over the past two decades. Fundamentally, this increased possibility of deportation for themselves, friends, and family causes undocumented or liminal legal-status resident's fear, stress, and anxiety (Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2015). Bureaucratic categorization also leads to obstacles (e.g., access to a driver's license, financial aid for college, housing, jobs, health care, banking) that shape how and when youths most feel the effects of migrant illegality (Gonzales, 2011). As the legal right to public education fades at adulthood in both countries, bureaucratic exclusion compounds. Consequently, the transition to learning to be illegal centers on the timing of this sudden bureaucratic exclusion at adulthood. For undocumented young people, obtaining a driver's license, most financial aid, and employment require proof of legal status (Gonzales, 2011).

Bureaucratic exclusion impedes access to respected civic and social characteristics that shape the rituals of adulthood (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Thus, such obstacles steer many undocumented youths away from their documented peers' trajectories and into unregulated sectors of the economy, limiting their social and spatial mobility, blocking opportunities that might fulfill their aspirational dreams, and suspending, even crushing, their future selves. Enduring exclusion leads undocumented young adults to cope with their limited access to the mainstream (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2011) by curbing aspirations. For these reasons, legal status can act as a master status, a primary identity that overwhelmingly reflects social identity (Gonzales, 2015).

Immigration status combines with race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social characteristics to shape lived experiences (Cebulko, 2018; Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2020). Intersectionality theory views individuals' positions concerning these axes of stratification as anchored in broader systems of oppression, including racism, classism, and—in this case—migrant illegality (Crenshaw, 1994; Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2020, p. 5; Enriquez, 2017). The salience of legal status depends on how young people navigate their social positions regarding these and other characteristics in the various social contexts that they encounter as they age. For example, in California higher education, ethnicity, gender, and class, including being first-generation college students, co-constructed undocumented college students' identities (Enriquez, 2017; Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2020). Those social contexts differ based on location, especially concerning the educational opportunity structure (Cebulko, 2018; Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018). Gender performances also shape expectations for male undocumented youths.

However, this broad pattern of experiencing social exclusion can shift over time. Youth experience some (and can gain greater) bureaucratic inclusion. A change in legal status offers one possibility.

Negotiating inclusion

Undocumented youths develop a complex sense of concurrent inclusion and exclusion. Inclusionary policies at local or national levels encourage a deeper sense of belonging, despite other restrictive

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[3]Research *has* emerged on the US Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which offered qualifying undocumented youths a renewable two-year reprieve from deportation and a work permit (i.e., not regularization).

policies. Undocumented youths' perception of the practices of a wide variety of actors (Hiemstra, 2010; Jessop, 2006) also informs their sense of inclusion. For example, state policy may classify a young person as out of legal status while guaranteeing their right to schooling. Thus, schools do not tend to mark students' legal status, though the latter may associate certain backgrounds with illegality (Dreby, 2015). Educators likely perceive every student as deserving of the same rights as other students (Marrow, 2009). Nevertheless, undocumented youths need access to postsecondary education and mainstream work opportunities to make good on the long-term economic returns to schooling. Perceptions of this obstacle reduce their educational aspirations (Abrego, 2006).

New access to in-state tuition, financial aid, driver's licenses, travel visas, and work permits shape access to mainstream opportunities and the associated social roles. The new opportunity structure influences the aspirations and sense of belonging of il/legalized youth, changing social identity by altering social roles and future aspirations.

The mere possibility of greater rights can shift the identity, practices, and experiences of undocumented people (Abrego, 2008; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016). In a pioneering study, Abrego (2008) followed changes in legal consciousness for college students gaining access to in-state tuition through California's AB-540. Providing a socially acceptable identity transformed students' identities. AB-540 students felt a new sense of legitimacy that helped counterbalance their previous stigma. Foreign-born citizens become more likely to enroll in college in states with in-state tuition aid policies (Flores, 2009). State financial aid, while relatively new in the few states that offer it, is seen to have similar legitimizing effects to in-state tuition, while allowing more students to attend (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018).

President Obama's opposing policies regarding undocumented youths capture the mixed signaling these youth experience. While deportations remained at historic highs under Obama's tenure, immigrant activists successfully pressured his administration to implement DACA, which offered 2-year renewable relief from deportation and access to work permits and driver's licenses. DACA is notable for its scope, encompassing 800,000 recipients over its existence. DACA allowed many undocumented youths access to new, better-paying jobs, banking, and health care (Wong et al., 2014). Many reported that DACA made them feel legitimate, especially when obtaining driver's licenses (Abrego, 2018). For example, in Southern California, access to driver's licenses facilitates mainstream access to universities and workplaces (Abrego, 2018). Other scholars have emphasized differences in how DACA recipients feel in state and local contexts (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). In more immigrant-friendly places, DACA produced optimism and a greater sense of inclusion, while recipients in less immigrant-friendly places felt restricted in their social mobility (Cebulko & Silver, 2016). For some undocumented young people, contact with the legal system when applying for DACA revealed other opportunities for regularization (Wong et al., 2014; see also Têtu-Delage, 2009).

While DACA has received much scholarly attention due to its broad impact, other means of entering a liminal status also can shape undocumented youths' paths. DACA follows the model of Temporary Protected Status, a renewable temporary status with work permit, that offers no direct path to citizenship. In the United States, other targeted policies have a limited scope, including the Violence Against Women Act, U-visa, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), which offer a green card and a path to citizenship (i.e., regularization). Those who overstay a visa may adjust their status through marriage to a US citizen or family petition. French law also permits adjustment of status through marriage to a French citizen under certain limitations. The Prefecture, the administrative center of a county-size department, often allows undocumented youths to regularize their status despite not meeting the necessary formal criteria.

These bureaucratic processes change the legal status, the associated rights, and much more. Regularizing status (i.e., moving from undocumented status to a visa with legal residence) catalyzes changes to the self and social roles (Gomberg-Muñoz, 2016). Adults' deep-seated values and norms may shift with gaining status (Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016). While these changes may begin in efforts

to conform to legal expectations, good citizenship behaviors, from civic engagement to a positive (legitimate) self-identity within a marriage to a US citizen, may persist beyond the required legal "performance" (Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016). Given the distinct experiences for those socialized into migrant illegality as adults versus as children (Gleeson & Gonzales, 2012), regularization may produce distinct effects as well.

A CONTINGENT MORAL CAREER NAVIGATING DEPORTABILITY AND REGULARIZABILITY

To track how changes in the sociolegal structure shape changes in identity and experience, I apply Goffman's concept of moral career (Goffman, 1959, 1961) to undocumented youths and their moral career of migrant il/legality. Goffman used *career* to mean "any social strand of any person's course through life" (Goffman, 1959, p. 123) and *moral career* to mean the "the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person's self and in his framework of imagery for judging himself and others" (Goffman, 1959, 123). Self-perceptions and "felt identity" change over time as undocumented youths face public risk in key institutions which "constitute the local contexts for the ways social events and transitions are implicated in the evaluation of persons" (Heinz & Krüger, 2001, p. 35) including education, work, family, and social welfare (Goffman, 1961, p. 119; Evans, 2006).

Those who experience similar changes in identity and self-conception due to similar social roles and social positions share a moral career. Identity refers to a set of "meanings applied to the self in a social role or situation defining what it means to be who one is" (Burke, 1991, p. 837). Access to social roles and group affiliations, which immigration status may promote, diminish or not affect, shapes role identity development (Hagelskamp et al., 2011; McCall & Simmons, 1966). The dynamic and multi-faceted self-cultivates meaning relating to individuals' role-related behaviors throughout life. A role is fundamentally "a set of expectations prescribing behavior that is considered appropriate by others. Satisfactory enactment of roles…reflects positively on self-evaluation" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 256). Context influences the negotiation of those roles within family and other social relationships and through social attributes such as immigration status, race/ethnicity, and gender, which "are considered to have an indirect impact on self through their effect on the role positions people can hold, the relative importance of their role identities, and the nature of their interactions with others" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 257; Hagelskamp et al., 2011, p. 338). Undocumented young people also construct the meaning they attach to family-based, school-based, work-based, and other roles related to structural contexts including race/ethnicity, religion, and immigration (Hagelskamp et al., 2011, p. 338).

Accompanying undocumented young people over a lengthy period of time revealed their responses to their senses of deportability *and* regularizability. The analytical framework of moral career shows how undocumented youths navigate these opposing possibilities, demonstrating agency in how they navigate the complex moral questions of becoming an adult. For some (but not all) undocumented youth,[4] this career involves the possibility of regularization, changing how undocumented young people think about themselves.[5] The moral career concept allows consideration of sociolegal structures, intermediary institutions such as family, educational institutions, civil society, and individual lived experiences. Deportability is one essential part of migrant illegality; however, regularizability also disciplines undocumented people in structured ways. Both possibilities shape the

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[4]As legislation stands in the United States, and to a lesser extent in France, large numbers of undocumented people cannot regularize. US legislation (e.g., IIRIRA) has created distinct regularizabilities for those who have entered the country without inspection, that is, without Customs and Border Patrol processing. They are subject to a 10-year bar, living outside the United States, before adjusting their status through marriage to a US citizen or family petition. French CESEDA law asks for the use of discretion in judging integration, including language proficiency, in accordance with other objective criteria involving years of residence.

[5]Local context and social position shape this possibility beyond the purview of federal policies governing entry and deportability (Gonzales & Burciaga, 2018; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016).

constant contingency of coming of age with undocumented status. The examination of lived experiences does not assume legal status as an inclusion/exclusion binary, rather seeing it as one of several social factors that can make up the social position/s of undocumented youths (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014). Thus illegality/citizenship is a spectrum offering different possible positions (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; De Genova, 2002).

Engaging this concept clarifies the changes to self as sociolegal structures shift (Liamputtong, 2006). In particular, the concept emphasizes the development and referents of self over time. The moral sense of career comes as undocumented youths navigate and negotiate with the normative role identities for young people becoming adults. Different moral experiences, from "that register of everyday life and practical engagement that defines what matters most for ordinary men and women" (Yang et al., 2007, p. 1528), follow institutional involvements typically centered in family of origin and school to new involvements in work, romantic partners, and family of destination. Legal status shapes establishing and negotiating normative expectations for roles within these institutions. A civic expectation of loyalty to the receiving country also affects expectations of this transitional phase (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016; Nicholls, 2013). Other significant coming-of-age sources of moral judgments include family bargains, peer-group expectations, and religious expectations. Though their sociolegal context for coming of age is embedded in a "discourse-policy nexus regulating the construction of irregular migrants as more or less illegal" (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014, p. 247), the degree to which legal status matters is an empirical question.

Gonzales (2011) underscores that learning to be illegal is a three-step process of discovery, deepening illegality, and coping as undocumented youths come of age. In the lives of such youths in Paris and New York, I observed ongoing strategizing about legal status, even after bearing the weight of undocumented status at adulthood. Regularizability buoyed certain current role identities and future aspirations, in turn regulating young people's behaviors. The process of tracing the career of il/legality does not assume all undocumented youths follow this path or follow it uniformly but sheds light on the complexity of such a process. The young people that I worked with arrived in the United States or France old enough when they remember the unauthorized trip and the arduous adjustment to schools. All faced some movement away from mainstream settings with the onset of adulthood. With challenging access to postsecondary education due to partly to legal status barriers, but also social class, language proficiency, and family aspirations, most young people moved into work at a younger age than their documented peers. Many worked to support their family of origin and their emergent family of destination. Regularization opportunities depended on the local context. Those who regularized status developed aspirations marked by their new legitimacy and mobility. However, identity commitment shifted as other barriers became visible to them. In this way, experiencing illegality is not mutually exclusive to experiencing legality.

Individuals perceive and manage deportability and regularizability differently (Asad, 2020). Protective factors may mitigate experiences of migrant illegality, such as a sense of being invisible to government surveillance, city sanctuary policies, and access to public transportation (Asad, 2020; Ruszczyk, 2019). Some undocumented adults see their deportation risk as contingent on how hard they work and their self-sufficiency (Andrews, 2018) and thus deserve protection. Likewise, as they regularize, adults internalize certain behaviors to meet state expectations (Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016). Youths, in contrast, have already spent significant time in mainstream institutions, most notably public schools, which socialized them at an important developmental age. Undocumented youths are more likely to already perform American-ness (or French-ness), partly for impression management (García, 2019) as they navigate deportability and regularizability. To paraphrase Alba and Nee (2003), this state-driven form of assimilation is something that often has happened to undocumented youths as they made other plans.

METHODS

I collected data in Paris and New York using comparative longitudinal ethnography with undocumented youths and organizations that support them, including an analysis of relevant organizational

and legal documents. Although pragmatic time considerations in the field constrain most research (Castañeda, 2018; Smith, 2005) this participant observation see-sawed between the two cities over 5 years, followed by revisit interviews and check-ins over 4 additional years, supporting a rich, longitudinal representation of young undocumented people's lived experiences as they moved from adolescence to adulthood.

Having previously worked with immigrant youth in each country, I selected two immigrant-rich neighborhoods in two best-case scenario cities for undocumented residents. Each city offered the largest immigrant population in each national context. In New York, I began recruiting a dozen male undocumented Mexican-origin youth from two high schools in 2008. In Paris, I recruited a dozen male undocumented youths, beginning in 2010, with associations that supported them. My mentor/teacher persona, based in prior organizational and teaching experience in each context, helped me build relationships with informants, with time rooted in trust and allyship. When relevant, I offered youths assistance in homework, language, and navigating immigration bureaucracies, including applying for DACA and regularization. I also interviewed and informally spoke with teachers from youths' schools. Another element of my ethnographic toolkit (Reyes, 2020), sharing gender with primary informants, facilitated the acceptance of teenagers, their parents, and educators, during entry and the extended time of data collection. The centering of male experiences limits the generalizability of the findings. Research shows immigration enforcement disproportionately target males, especially Latinos in the United States and Maghrebins in France. Other research (e.g. Dreby, 2015; Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales, 2015) suggests that gendered experiences of undocumented youth shape family, partner, work and school dynamics, among others.

A third of the Paris cohort were Chinese, a third sub-Saharan African (from Cameroon, Mali, Comoros, and Côte D'Ivoire), and a third mixed between Tunisian, Armenian, and Brazilian, roughly representing the ethnic proportions of undocumented youths that I encountered in the two neighborhoods in Paris where I initiated my field work. Although ethnoracial backgrounds of primary informants differ, extended time in the field and similarities in age, age of arrival, neighborhood contexts, and of course legal status allow me to document and analyze the lived experiences of these youths' transition to adulthood. Previous research has found racial-based exclusion for Mexican immigrants in New York (Smith, 2005) and for North African, West African, and Chinese immigrants in Paris (El Qadim, 2008). I began recruitment in schools and at a school-based organization, and theoretical sampling logic pushed me to recruit four Paris and five New York informants through snowballing techniques to better represent more socially isolated youth in Paris and more organizationally integrated youth in New York.[6] With three exceptions, all informants migrated between the ages of 9 and 14. Most undocumented youths who arrive in France before their 13th birthday and reside for 5 years are regularized (Art. L.313-14 CESEDA). This study's informants in France arrived at ages 13 and 14, with one arriving at age 15. Two families in Paris had attained middle-class status through marriage to French citizens; the others were working class. French proficiency and *lycée* (high school) grades varied. A quarter had near/native French fluency and literacy skills. Another quarter had basic conversational skills, and half had strong fluency but weaker literacy skills. In contrast, all New York respondents were from working-class families, and two young men in New York moved into the middle class. All undocumented New Yorkers had English fluency in high school, though one third had weaker literacy skills in English. Grades ranged from exceptionally high to low-passing.

Experiences with informants and means of capturing data

In each city, I accompanied youths in daily routines, including with family, at home, in school, at leisure, and in other settings. Working with these youths over the long-term built trust and a "zoomed-

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[6]Organizational participation has been correlated to access to resources and more diverse social networks. Each city cohort includes individuals closely connected to organizations, loosely connected to organizations, and unconnected to organizations.

out" sense of youths' concerns. Participant observation extended to other contexts, including young people's homes, churches, parks, parties, festivals, and sometimes families' transnational contexts. In homes, I conducted conversational, unstructured interviews. With informants, I conducted life-course interviews (ranging from 3 to 11 hours over 3 days) and many individual grounded interviews. I also conducted unstructured group interviews with different groups of the young people's peers. Representations of social life are based on 25 to well over 200 interactions (e.g., hang outs, talks, or observations) with each informant. I combined interview data with field notes from participant observation to co-construct biographical-logic narratives with informants to capture the fullness of informants' social lives. Analyzing comparative data from this perspective denatures the assumptions of national context and identifies similarities in the condition of undocumentedness across contexts. For example, a development occurred when I observed how Paris undocumented youths' regularization engendered social changes—a surprising discovery that led me to test its application to New York youths (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The results highlight how undocumented youths experienced their social roles, expectations, turning points, and aspirations as they aged into adulthood. My longitudinal ethnography—collecting data over an extended period as youths engaged with family, in schools, with peers, in church, and at work—overlapped with this coming-of-age process.

CAREER OF IL/LEGALITY

To better conceptualize how young undocumented people grow into and through migrant illegality, I present my findings, mostly shared across Paris and New York, as five sociolegal transition periods—entering, growing, narrowing, widening, and accounting—constituting a moral career. The career of il/legality begins as children, adolescents, and their families migrate outside of the legal visa system that characterizes modern immigration regimes. Family-based decisions regarding children's migration center on family reunion and improving their educational and work possibilities (Louie, 2012). The second phase involves bureaucratic inclusion, based on legal rights given on a basis other than citizenship, connected to mainstream role identities. Youths build linguistic and cultural resources in public schools that facilitate integration in American and French societies, which they can use to meet family, peer, and state expectations. Third, undocumented youths age into severe bureaucratic exclusion at adulthood but continue to strategize for regularization. Despite constraints, youths strive for educational attainment, family formation, steady work, and personal responsibility, goals that align with norms of American and French deservingness, and most deepen work- and family-based identities. Fourth, pathways specific to national and local contexts, more prevalent in Paris than New York, provide some young people legal inclusion through regularization. Fifth, some realize with time that earlier aspirations will be difficult to meet, given their current social position, especially for those in New York who spent more time as undocumented adults.

Entering: arrival

Children who immigrate very young may discover their status as they seek the rites of passage into adulthood (Gonzales, 2011). Young people's career of il/legality often begins earlier when family members emigrate, vivid episodes for children. After his parents left their hometown in Morelos, Ernie said, "I was scared and every day, just thinking why they left me, why they told me nothing." For children like Ernie, Chen, and Christian, physical separation from their parents lasted years, ending once funds could be secured. Grandparents and other extended family acted as primary caregivers for Chen while his parents were establishing themselves in Paris. "My grandparents were my parents," he explained, "from 6 years old." Many children did not understand the illegality of their parents' migration but learned of it by migrating to rejoin them. Christian was living in Mexico

when his father returned, who told him "*la Migra* arrived at work one morning… my two uncles hid in the trash" but his father was deported. As his father readied to return to New York, 10-year-old Christian convinced his father to take him along. His father's stories taught Christian about immigration enforcement and how to avoid it. When he was in middle school he learned "[his father] uses another name at work for his social security [card]…everyone at work calls him Aaron." Later, Christian's mother and sister joined them.

Entering without authorization provided an early, noteworthy experience of the deportation risk associated with migrant illegality. A legal residence visa was generally out of reach for these children. Means of obtaining a legal resident visa had been highly limited for these children. Children eventually became aware of unauthorized strategies for family reunification, though details were vague. Modes of entering undocumented status varied, but three main patterns emerged in Paris and New York. Some crossed the national border without seeing customs officials, while others entered with a tourist visa and overstayed. Some entered, requesting legal status such as asylum or humanitarian aid, and were rejected. Many experienced trauma to reunite with family, a painful marker of migrant illegality. For example, Ernie described his US–Mexico border crossing, "I was so scared, [the smuggler] made us hide in a ditch on the side of a road … for hours" before being moved to a safe house. Chen's parents paid 20,000 euros to a smuggler, and he found traveling through unknown spaces frightening: from Russia to Ukraine and then through the European Union.

These traumatic crossings, and the undocumented status enacted through them, shape legal status distinctions in the city in two essential ways. Immigration regimes distinguish between different modes of arrival, potentially leading to different careers of il/legality for youth depending on how their entry is legally classified. For instance, undocumented residents who have overstayed a visa are sometimes able to adjust their status in the United States through marriage to a citizen. In contrast, those who entered without inspection by US Customs and Border Patrol (i.e., crossed the border illegally) could not adjust their status this way. For those unable to gain a tourist visa, unauthorized migration entry often carries high smuggling fees (Bloch et al., 2014). These reasons lead to a lesser possibility of adjusting status for young people who crossed the border illegally. Those coming from China to Paris often enter the European Union without inspection or use another's passport.

Second, the smuggling and human costs associated with these modes of entry are extremely high, imposing family separation (fees to smuggle the entire family at once are too high to pay at once) and shifting subsequent family practices to paying off debt. Youth whose families have incurred smuggling debt often feel they must prioritize work over education. "I thought [my mother] was super poor … and thought I was going to be working," Bao said of his expectations upon arriving in Paris. For some youths, poverty and indebtedness establish the context for growing up without legal status.

Parents also held vague expectations that their children will be able to regularize, often based on earlier examples of regularization. For example, Davis' father Ruben said, "We knew that [previous migrants] from Cuautilla had their kids in school … we heard something about if you pay your taxes you can get papers." In Paris, Bao explained, "My mother was able to send for us because she had married a Frenchman … my sister and I could [later] do the same." Souleymane lamented that because, "my grandparents had regularized everyone thought I would be able to do the same."

While reuniting brought nuclear family members together, the distance problem remained for transnational families. Interactions with grandparents or caretakers during family separation became limited to phone calls. In addition, youths' nuclear families grew: Chen and Liang met French-born younger sisters when arriving in Paris, and Luis and Leo met their mother-in-law. Thus, the trauma of the journey can be complicated and/or soothed by reuniting with family. Young people showed resilience in adapting to their new families, while missing caretakers and family who stayed in the hometown (Dreby, 2012). The family, managing often difficult living conditions, became the locus for moral decisionmaking.

Growing: youthful inclusion

In each city, newly undocumented preteens and teenagers entered schools,[7] adapted to their new home, and moved into the public context of migrant il/legality. As Chen, Christian, and others entered school in their new cities, they bargained with family members about how to define success. Youths weighed these notions with other goals emergent in the school setting: making friends and negotiating social life, meeting individual teachers' academic standards, and navigating the normative school-based discourse of success. Schools' acknowledgement of legal-status issues also varied, orienting students in different ways about confronting regularization possibilities or going along with mainstream expectations for undocumented futures.

Immigrant parents often hold long-term hopes for their children to achieve in their new context, redeeming the sacrifices they made in leaving their country of origin (Smith, 2005). Undocumented parents with undocumented children harbored uncertain hopes that regularization would enable these family aspirations. All parents had heard of youths and adults regularizing but were unsure and nervous about how to go about it. As Chen came close to turning 18 years old, his father pushed him to ask at school where he could get help on immigration questions. Chen and his father met with me at a legal clinic where I volunteered. Other undocumented youths from Wenzhou obtained visas.

Parents supported their children's school-based roles in different ways and encouraged educational goals. Parents like Chen's and Christian's expected their children to become proficient in French or English for both daily interactions and job opportunities. Young people gained status from playing varied family roles with their acquired language skills, reading and translating official letters, medical documents, postal interactions, school-based documents like report cards, and more. Failure to play this role well had its sanctions: "What's the point of being here for 4 years and not knowing English?" Ernie's father derided when he wanted Ernie to translate, comparing him negatively to a girl who learned English quickly after arriving.

Parents also expected children to use their education to access a job in a better-paying sector. These parental expectations, whether rooted in entrepreneurialism, white-collar, or semi-skilled work, differed by social class, gender, and ethnic group. Nevertheless, uncertainty about regularization created doubts about pursuing social mobility through secondary and postsecondary education. They had few (extended) family-member models with postsecondary education. Families understood that children's ability to enter (and profit from) the labor market depended on their legal status and educational and linguistic attainment, among other factors. While entrepreneurial Bao told me, "My French is good so I'll be able to help my mom['s restaurant]," professionally-oriented Alex's mother said, "With papers, he could do whatever [career] he wants."

Schools were the primary public institution structuring undocumented youths' access to their new social environment. In large cities like Paris and New York, a large administration arranges the new language learning for newcomers and, consequently, school life. In Paris, students who did not speak French began their schooling with a *classe d'accueil* that exclusively welcomed new students with intensive French language classes. Students were subsequently assigned to other neighborhood-based schools. Liang, like most undocumented students, moved into vocational high school (*lycée professionel*). He was the only Chinese student in his class. The schools strengthened his French proficiency, he rarely had to look up a word, though he told me his French was weak and spoke quietly.

Most undocumented students in New York City attended schools serving predominantly working-class Latino students, which eased cultural adjustment. New York schools placed students in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in an English-language environment or in a bilingual program with coursework in both Spanish and English. The bilingual programs supported

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[7]In France and the United States, primary and secondary schools are institutions of bureaucratic inclusion for undocumented immigrant children, based on the 1982 *Plyler v Doe* Supreme Court case in the United States and the equal access clause of the Constitution of 1958 in France.

students by allowing Spanish-language academic work. The predominance of Spanish-language interactions among peers and friends in both bilingual and ESL programs eased the cultural transition and arguably slowed English language learning, disappointing some parents. With unequal access to opportunities and resources, schools thus offered experiences of both inclusion and exclusion. Schools presented them with exposure to the native language, peers, educational resources, and mainstream activities, but students often faced social disadvantages.

New York schools exhibited varying sets of external expectations for undocumented students. School-based influences on the future roles of undocumented youths can conflict with the expectations and needs of their households. For example, while New York high schools oriented students toward college aspirations, some schools did not offer guidance in the process of applying for or understanding the role of college. Other schools recognized what education scholars have termed the unwritten curriculum. In both contexts, teachers operated on the assumption that students would continue to postsecondary education, aiming to earn higher salaries.

Generally, undocumented students tried to meet these college-bound expectations, sometimes with the meritocratic belief that they would help with regularization. For example, David said, "Maybe [good grades] will help me get papers." However, sometimes family finances made compliance more difficult. Miguel, who as a 16-year-old worked after school until midnight, then had an hour-plus subway ride home, recounted, "I was sleeping in class … a diploma is nice, but you don't know if later it's worth it." Lacking insight into such obligations, his English teacher told me in a judgmental tone of voice that she wasn't going to be able to pass him if he "can't do the basics" such as showing up for class.

Paris schools' expectations were broader. The few who had learned academic French in their country of origin were recommended an academic *lycée général*, after which most students attend postsecondary schools. Most undocumented students attended *lycées profesionnels*, linked to limited social mobility (Alba & Silberman, 2009), where teachers were more oriented toward internships and work experiences. The parents of most undocumented youths encouraged these experiences. "All I want is to find a job! I'll do anything," Tarek pleaded, "plumbing, restaurants, whatever." Some of the apprenticeships, including cooking, required legal residence, however. "I wanted to go into cooking [as a major], but I couldn't because of papers," Bao explained. "It's an apprentice school, and you need to have papers to enroll, people have to report their taxes." Nonetheless, within school, he did not view his being undocumented changing his experiences substantially. In fact, some *lycée professionel* features, including longer class periods and extended time with a lead teacher, facilitate trusting teacher–student relationships.

Undocumented youths must perform for peers in school, too, balancing family- and school-based expectations with friendships. As outsiders, students felt vulnerable to mockery, especially (but not only) due to weak language proficiency. Mario said, "I started in bilingual class. I met a lot of … people that spoke Spanish … I was very comfortable until when I reached … high school. That's when the whole thing started with having to adjust to English and … maybe sometimes I make a fool out of myself trying to speak." For students who remained in maternal-language-centered networks, family roles remained prominent, and peers were likely to include some other undocumented students.[8] When students mixed in maternal- and dominant-language networks, those mixed friendship circles represented broader social capital that tended to have higher educational expectations than those in more maternal-language networks.

Masculine performance shaped interactions and idealized interactions in school. Especially in New York, some worked after school to buy clothes and gear and contribute to the family income. This coincided with various school peer-oriented performances of masculinity, including joining athletic teams and extracurricular clubs, joining street-based crews (FN), and playing video games with co-ethnics. For example, Luis benefitted from his performance as an athletic young man, earning a place in more male-dominated social spaces. Though teenagers achieved belonging in different ways, once they felt a sense of belonging in a group of peers, they had a sense of success and stability. Because legal status acted to destabilize this sense, many, including Luis, avoided speaking about it.

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[8]With Chinese friends at school, Bao and others recounted their clandestine immigration stories and their circumstances.

Nevertheless, "once you say you're Mexican they automatically assume, oh illegal," Mario recalled. When students learned about his real undocumented status, he said, "people ma[d]e fun … being an illegal you get teased a lot by everybody. There's always a joke, like oh. I'm going to tell the immigration. Oh, I'm going to tell ICE, I'm going to tell this, I'm going to tell that … la migra's coming, la migra's here! That's the worst feeling, especially growing up. The truth became my shame." Legal status also represented social status (Dreby, 2015).

Deportability undermines these students' certainty about their acceptance, studies, and presence. Mario described how, as a high school student, he "imagined like, like a SWAT team swooping in and collecting people and putting them in like trucks, shipping them off from there back to your country." That lack of ontological security impacted his confidence and ability to make bargains with family members and broader society. "There's no point for me to struggle right now and work hard … I get depressed, as well," Mario said. Generally, anxiety, fear, and stress negatively affect mental health, but exclusion from the promise of payoff that other students pursue has its own effects.

Many schools ignored their students' legal status challenges, making it difficult for young people to navigate between different sets of expectations, and opportunities, based on immigration status. Other schools oriented undocumented students toward minimizing deportation risk and enabling regularization. In these situations, school functions as locus of civil society-integrated networks. Within these schools, activist educators knew of the consequences of illegality at adulthood and work to mitigate them in different ways. Some worked to support college-based aspirations through offering social, emotional, and financial support toward attending college. Others worked to support DACA or visa acquisition.

As school ended, whether involving graduation or dropping out, undocumented youths compared their own paths to those of peers and adjusted their moral obligations accordingly. Those having strong college aspirations and resources to attend college postponed financial contribution to their families. Continued educational success might bring the chance for regularization. Those with strong college aspirations without resources to attend college experienced a strong sense of discrimination and sacrifice, with the awareness that family needs justified deferring college until regularization opportunities arose. Those with clear work or entrepreneurial aspirations expressed confidence in their paths and the moral good of providing for their households.

Narrowing: learning illegality

Expectations that emerged from playing these family-, school-, and (to a lesser extent) community-based roles intermingled as undocumented youths became adults. As public schooling ended at adulthood, undocumented youths' engagement in mainstream institutions shifted. Moving from high school into college and/or work settings newly spotlighted the context of migrant illegality. Individuals' role identities shifted as their student-based roles shifted or waned, with moral implications. This stemmed more from decreased bureaucratic access to mainstream educational and work opportunities[9] than the immediate threat of deportability. Youths sought out regularization opportunities, especially in Paris. Strategizing around these possibilities, while having reduced access to mainstream opportunities/bureaucracies, affected how undocumented youths negotiated the immigrant family bargain and other moral considerations at adulthood. Stricter work controls in Paris stifled work-based roles, and thus the earnings to contribute to family, and adulthood responsibilities.

College and family

In each city, a quarter of undocumented youths—with strong academic language proficiency—pursued college aspirations and extended their schooling into college. These young people expressed

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[9]In each context, conditions stemming from immigration status made it more difficult than other students to pay for postsecondary studies.

faith that regularizability would arise and further educational attainment might help. When I asked college-bound Mario where he saw himself in five and 10 years, he said, "Five years… hopefully then I'm like somewhere in management." His answer, typical of responses for this group, reflected hopes for social mobility and eventual legal inclusion. At the same time, most of these young people minimized the deportation risk by not entering the less-regulated workforce while attending college (Gonzales, 2015) or after dropping out due to lack of financial support (Conger & Chellman, 2013).

These youths understood that the college bargain—work and pay through college and you will enter a middle-class position—was less of a given for them. Mario thought, "What's the point of going to college if I can't get a job?" However, deportability also shaped strategizing about college, for example, returning to the country of birth to attend college there should deportation occur. Mario's parents told him, "Oh! Even if you can't do anything here, you can go to Mexico and put your career to the test, or if you don't want to go to college here, you can go to college in Mexico." Mario protested, "but my life is here. My roots are here now, they've grown, and it's hard to relocate back to where I'm from."

In New York, continuing to study, followed by eventual regularization, would allow these college-attending young people to make good on a family-based bargain, an American Dream bargain, including maintaining their peers' social milieu. The nearly universal expectation of college attendance encouraged youth to choose education over work, incur the set of financial obligations, and minimize family-based obligations that enabled that path. The experiences of youths who had won special recognition perceived themselves as rightful winners in a meritocratic system. Their peers' social expectations encompassed college attendance followed by a "better life" than that of their parents, sometimes characterized as professional careers. Many on this path expressed a sense that such meritocratic achievement would facilitate regularizability. "Study hard, earn good grades, and this country will reward you," David's parents told him. Parisian students who had attended *lycée généraux*, where peers headed to postsecondary studies, had a sense that continuing studies was necessary to attain middle-class status. Andre asked, "How can I have success without university?"

Undocumented youths viewed acting on college-based aspirations as a family aspiration. This college-based articulation of the immigrant bargain positioned undocumented youths as redeemers of the immigrant bargain, the family as an American Dream family. This future contribution to the family, both symbolic and material, justified the family's continued investment in their education (and the opportunity costs of not working full-time). This social status justified the family's making internal re-negotiations of financial needs.

In Paris, a college diploma translated less directly to social mobility, according to my informants. The constrained labor market, especially for immigrant young adults, pushed undocumented college students to choose more applied fields, such as business, that they saw as having a clear job outcome. Their postsecondary studies relied on internships to build experience and a social network. Armand said, "I almost failed a class because I couldn't find an internship." This lack of confidence subsequently weakened the immigrant bargain within families. It was harder for children to feel confident that postsecondary studies would give them what they needed to make their lives easier (and achieve social status). The opportunity costs for college attendance were also less well defined: college costs were lower, and the potential payoff of working instead was unclear.

Work and family

Most working-class or working-poor families—who are excluded from access to most social welfare[10]—expected their undocumented children to work postgraduation. The extra income added financial stability. Thus, family-based roles reflected expectations for more responsibility as young people completed or dropped out of high school and sought work. In New York, where jobs were

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[10]France makes health insurance available.

seen as readily available, this expectation was particularly strong. Before age 18, Christian had dropped out of school in order to help his parents make rent. The payoff of finding work depended on the availability of jobs in less-regulated sectors outside the mainstream, involving less-formalized paperwork. His first job was at Burger King, but he quit when employers learned a colleague's social security card was false. Instead, he found work manufacturing water tanks, a less-regulated sector. He told me after working there for 3 years, "I am paying rent … and electricity and gas." An older co-worker told him he was wasting his talents, and he felt increasingly stuck without job mobility. Nevertheless, the steady income, helped pay his relationship and customized tricycle hobby costs.

Young people felt future regularization would strengthen occupational stability, job rights, and spatial mobility. In New York, strategizing centered on getting a better job without exploitation. In Paris, strategizing centered on getting a first job. Work-oriented youths who could not meet their family-based work expectations struggled. In Paris, the challenge of finding work without legal status influenced work in two ways: finding the rare jobs that disregard work visas and connecting with employers who hired flexible workers for those positions. Such employers' desire to minimize salaries and maximize flexibility, in both scheduling and firing, motivated them to hire people like Tarek. Before and after Tarek received his vocational diploma, he worked short stints in a restaurant, pizzeria, butcher shop, advertisement distribution, and part-time plumbing, dismissed every month or two, told that, without papers, the possibility of a raid or inspection was too risky. "I don't want to look for a job all the time," he complained about these brief stints. "I don't [even] make the *SMIC* (minimum wage)."

At the same time, his uncle began pressuring him to begin contributing financially to the household. A large gap loomed between his vision of becoming a foreman and his inability to obtain freelance plumbing gigs. Tarek lamented, "All I want is to find a job! I'll do anything … plumbing, restaurants, whatever … all my cousins [with legal residence] are working." A kebab spot used him as a fill-in worker, but sometimes, he lacked employment for weeks. While his classmates worked full-time temp jobs over the summer, lacking working papers eliminated that possibility. Yet Tarek was not interested in getting false papers that would make temp work a possibility. His Prefecture appointment was in September, and if regularized, he would receive working authorization.

When the Prefecture rejected his application for regularization, he and his brother moved out of his uncle's home. His cousin's friend said he could do plumbing work for him, though it would not involve regular hours. Tarek accepted. He likes the work, he says, though he works one or 2 days per week: insufficient to make ends meet. "It's hard to make the 200 euro rent," he complained, "I have to ask family to help." Despite his plumbing and welding skills, he could only fantasize about how he envisioned plumbers' earnings: 3000 euros/month to start plus extra for extra work.

Liang also eschewed obtaining a false national identity card for jobs he found on a Chinese-language online forum. "I don't want to do something against the law," he told me. Liang worried about being caught in a workplace inspection, after which he would lose his chance at regularizing. While he did not qualify for regularization, he hoped such a possibility would arise.

Though immobility resulting from immigration status stifled the strong sense of maintaining links with transnational family members, working allowed undocumented youths to play other moral roles as an older sibling or for their own children. This was equally prevalent in Paris as in New York, perhaps because the educational discourse in Paris centered less on social mobility. "On the weekend I try to spend time with the kids…we go to the park, visit my mother or my wife's parents. Or sometimes we go to Chuck E. Cheese with the kids. We try to be with them," explained Christian. If most undocumented youths focused on work aspirations (without necessarily losing educational aspirations), they shifted postsecondary educational expectations on others (who were better positioned) within the family, including partners, siblings, and their own children. Undocumented youths who worked acknowledged and internalized the importance of education in their immigrant bargain. Ernie vowed, "With my [money], [girlfriend] Leticia and [son] Daniel will be able to go to college." Christian supported his family as his fiancée attended college. Younger siblings sometimes played this role. In Paris, Chen and Huang Fu imagined supporting their younger,

French-born sisters, who would experience an idealized mainstream success. Chen said, "She does not like our [Chinese] culture…but she is strong at school."

Christian has used his earnings to play the role of supportive son, husband, and father in his family life. With his marriage, he expected to continue residing in New York, and the arrival of a daughter in 2012 and son in 2015 further rooted his future in the city. He worked to support the family as April studied. All of his earnings went toward his family's rent (his parents lived with them), phones, and food; anything beyond his regular earnings could be used for clothes, gifts, and child expenses. Thus, he remained engaged with his parents, his new family, and his peers.

Some respondents, especially those in New York, remained at this sociolegal stage. They were not eligible for DACA due to past encounters with immigration enforcement or decided against applying, estimating the costs outweighed the benefits. Their own subjectivities about illegality matured as they became older, especially for those who had children and partners.

Widening: entering liminal status

Legal status is tied closely to distinct sets of moral roles. Expectations regarding contributions changed as youths regularized status. The expectations and moral considerations varied based on work and educational opportunities, as well as individuals' social position. Scholars have emphasized that migrant illegality continues to mark the experiences of those with liminal legality—statuses that offer more rights than undocumented status but less than full citizenship. Yet young people's expectations after obtaining legal status were more sanguine. While undergoing the bureaucratic process involved, youths envisioned shifting their legal status as a coming-of-age romantic story that would empower them to act on their dreams free of the shackles of migrant illegality. Immediate family-based roles, providing for family, siblings, partners, children, and *their* aspirations, became more complicated to navigate between those roles and new ones centered on themselves and their own future promise. Those with college experience felt this romantic story strongly—they could now seek mainstream employment and other opportunities.

First, some undocumented youths remained stuck without regularization possibilities, especially in New York. Regularization pathways differed based on entering a shifting labyrinth of laws, policies, and discretion. A major distinction in the United States is how status is classified bureaucratically. Overstaying a visa leaves open regularizability, by marrying a US citizen, for example. Meanwhile, entering without inspection does not. In France, the age of arrival, the legal status of family members, and other proofs of social participation increase the likelihood of regularization. Though DACA status represents neither regularization nor a path to citizenship, I include DACA experiences in New York as a gateway to advanced parole status and subsequent regularization, reflecting the growth of liminal-legality statuses. Lastly, a few youths returned to their country of citizenship in order to make good on their citizenship rights there.

New York

Between 2013 and 2016, Christian acquired DACA status, obtained advanced parole, and then gained permanent residency thanks to his 2011 marriage to a US citizen. As he gained status, Christian maintained and tried to strengthen his family obligations, encompassing transnational, extended family, and negotiated how to make good on his new opportunities.

DACA, obtained in 2013, gave Christian new expectations for work: "DACA gave me wings to leave [my previous job]…now that I have DACA, I *have to* look for a better job" with better pay and a regular schedule so he could play an engaged family role for his children. He looked into the next tier of jobs, which required training or a certificate, like becoming a medical assistant or logistics officer. With his work permit and driver's license, he eventually found seasonal and, eventually, regular work in logistics.

He told me in 2010 that he had reservations about marrying April because she might think his motivation was papers. The marriage did not advance his regularization chances: having entered without inspection entails a 10-year ban to admission, meaning he would have to leave and wait 10 years before being eligible for re-entry. Because traveling outside the metropolitan area might heighten deportation risk, they stayed local.

As DACA permitted travel in the United States without threat of deportation, Christian began to make good on his spouse April's wishes to travel. In 2014, flying for the first time since entering the United States, he traveled to Chicago to visit April's relatives. After he learned of and applied for advanced parole,[11] which permits a specific instance of international travel, Christian said, "If [USCIS] accepts my advanced parole [application], we have to leave [the country]. I can't go backwards [in terms of rights]." The new right felt like an achievement, allowing him to reconnect with this extended transnational family after nearly two decades.

After being granted advanced parole, Christian purchased tickets for his spouse and two children to fly to Mexico. He was most excited to see his grandparents, who had helped raise him and whose goats he had herded as a boy. He and his family were nervous about making the trip. "With advanced parole on the paper it says there is a chance they won't let you back. My mom started to cry. I said, 'Don't cry, I am going to come back.' She said, 'what if they don't let you back? You know, for your kids, you're not going to see them [anymore].' I felt confident because if immigration checks … I don't have a bad record, I'm not a criminal or anything [bad]." April also felt confident. However, upon his return, Christian was taken to airport interrogation. His wife sobbed with worry until he was released.

A few weeks after returning from Mexico, Christian's lawyer told him, "April is going to [sponsor] you, and you will definitely have your papers." Christian responded, "That easy?" The lawyer confirmed, "Because you entered with a visa. You're not illegal in this country anymore." In addition to being married to a US citizen since 2011, Christian has filed a tax return regularly since 2007. Although adjusting his status cost him over $2000, he reflected, "Now," he said, "that we can go wherever together, we are without worries," adding that these family-based transnational possibilities, shared by his partner, made him feel more confidence in his relationship. They have returned to Mexico to visit her family's hometown.

Moving up the gradations of legal status, Christian has experienced more pressure to deliver on his opportunities, feeling he had been given an advantage his parents lacked: "My father would like to do more things, but he can't because he doesn't know English, doesn't have papers … I want to be more things because, as I said, now there are no limits…there's nothing holding you back." Christian has made good on several new expectations tied to his new legal status: mainstream work, travel with family, and strengthening nuclear and extended transnational family bonds.

Whereas Christian saw his legal status as reigniting his (previously stagnant) personal achievement possibilities, Mario managed to pursue his postsecondary studies. An organization shepherded his sister's SIJS case through DHS and then the courts, and appended his case. "My hopes are a little up, but at the same time it's like, are they really going to get us permanent residency? Like, how is that possible. It's nearly impossible if you cross the border," he said. SIJS felt like a Faustian bargain, pitting "us against our parents … it meant putting my parent at risk of … deportation or exposed to that."

The attorney convinced him of their safety, and his permanent residency went through. He lost his shame, gained self-efficacy, pursued a mainstream career, and invested in a family bargain of sacrificing (i.e., working hard) for his family's success. Cognizant that his green card opened "more doors. Opportunities, here, there," Mario said, his hopes were to "graduate … so I can after that just put what I studied into practice and get more experience off of it and just dedicate myself even more to working and family … That way, people can be dependent on me, like my wife." He reflected on

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[11]From 2012–2016, DACA recipients could apply to travel to another country for a humanitarian, educational or employment program, and be granted advanced parole.

the newfound pressure, after the "luck that took to get this green card … I have to do better for myself … I got all these opportunities now."

His newfound confidence led to dreaming about future possibilities, including having children, earning an MBA, and ending up somewhere in management, "eventually opening my own little tax firm after enough exposure and experience in the business world." This status gave him a pathway connecting his personal academic work with family roles: "I can provide [for] myself … for others and also give back to my parents who like fought through hell just to get me to where I am now."

Like Christian, Mario experienced a more positive relationship to family in Mexico connected to his new ability to visit: "Knowing that you're going to see your family that you love after so many years, especially my grandparents … it's the best feeling ever. I was able to replace all the bad memories with good ones when I was there." Travel was a release valve for tensions that had been simmering. Legal status also lessened the weight of illegality being associated with Mexicanness: "[Embracing being Mexican] has to do with not being discriminated because you're (not) illegal anymore."

Paris

Outside, after the Prefectural clerk told him he would receive a student visa, a relieved Chen told me, "Now I can work." Chen's mother had told him that once he works, he will be able to help them. They had discussed different possibilities, from supermarket stocker to restaurant kitchens and interior renovation. The renewal requirements for the visa included maintaining school attendance, which Chen accepted reluctantly, explaining, "That's not going to help me with a job." Chen immediately took a part-time job close to home, in the kitchen of a Chinese buffet restaurant.

After regularization, his earnings allowed him to build friendships and relationships that New York undocumented youths had experienced after high school. He used his earnings to update his clothing, get fashionable haircuts, and pay for coffee for himself and friends in cafés. He also contributed to his family's rent, where he continued to live with his sister and parents, bolstering his father's day laborer and his mother's seamstress incomes. He learned how restaurants are run, and decided he no longer wanted to work in that area, if possible. In particular, he and his parents prized independence from a boss who exploited even workers with legal status. "I want a job where I don't have to work every day … or if I work everyday, it's for me!" They hatched plans together to buy a house outside of Paris, and raise money to open a Paris-based ethnic products store. His aspirations acquired a thickness that had not been possible outside the labor market.

Chen's grandfather died in China, leaving Chen was the only adult in his family with the right to re-enter France. Reconnecting with his transnational family was a treasured experience for him and his parents, who were able to maintain social status in their hometown.

Souleymane and Armand, undocumented youths with academic fluency in French, lived with their extended families. These family members expected less of an immediate financial contribution from them. Armand said, "[My aunt] wants me to do what my parents want for me … to be a success … to have a good life … with a career." Upon completing their high school *baccalauréat*, they sought to continue their education in advanced vocational tracks housed in high schools. When each regularized his legal status—a protracted process—each strategized to enter a master's program. There, previously out-of-reach mainstream opportunities would help them find success. Each studied while working in a related field to pay for their education.

Although raising money to travel was a challenge, Souleymane and Armand returned to see their parents and siblings. Souleymane's mother asked if he could start a business in Abidjan and had him meet with extended family there. Armand and Souleymane balanced such possibilities with their knowledge of France, where they matured. The advanced education, exclusion from insider social networks, and a sense of being caught between France and their countries of origin made them envision stability, prestige, and belonging in or around their native country.

Accounting: lingering effects of stratification

Steps toward legal status brought relief to much of the immediate stress of undocumented youths. Gaining liminal legal status and regularization reshaped aspirations (especially social and transnational mobility) and expectations for those in work-only and college-work trajectories. Particularly, remuneration and opportunities associated with those trajectories shaped how young people could support the immigrant bargain for their parents, partners, siblings, and children. Experiences were similar in Paris and New York. Most strategized to increase their earnings and mobility, while facing new constraints. Time without legal status had diminished youths' human capital, compared to their peers, affecting their expected return on work. For example, labor market experiences led Paris youths, without the social networks and internship experiences to land a commensurate job, to strategize transnationally. New expectations for a transnational family role also faced constraints. The new inclusion sometimes led to feelings of guilt for having an advantage that family members or friends lacked (Abrego, 2019). Cost, time away from schooling, and family obligations made it difficult to study in New York.

Work roles

Chen and Christian thought that overcoming legal status would liberate them to follow their aspirations, including mainstream work, college education, and entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, they encountered further obstacles for social and transnational mobility. While undocumented, Chen and Christian had lost time and mainstream experiences, remaining rooted within stratified social networks. Additional obstacles to education persisted. Vertical work possibilities required education. Although others' expectations changed with legal status changes, they often felt unable to make good on those rooted in school or work.

Christian recounted in 2017, a decade after leaving high school, "Now I'm thinking of going to college … to do a trade. They said I qualify for [financial aid] …." His new access to federal and state financial aid helped while his family obligations and the overall cost added difficulty. He weighed the payoff of electrician work against seeing his children less and being "tired from the classes, the work, family …."

He explored jobs, such as medical assistant, that required a certification rather than a degree, posing less stress on family responsibilities. Certification-based jobs offered him less pay than degree-based ones (e.g., electrician). The feminine associations with medical assistants made him lose interest; he found work with a shipping company. Christian saw his move from factory work to shipping as a move up, but felt not much had changed overall. The shipping companies offered less than full-time work, making him ineligible for benefits. In 2018, he decided 2 months of training away from his family, seeking certification as a truck driver was the best means to gain stability, including benefits for his family.

In Paris, Chen wanted to work in restaurants. Undocumented student status meant ineligibility for studying hospitality in vocational high schools because he could not be paid for an internship. "Now the only way for me to work [in restaurants] is by working." Instead, he spoke of his French-born younger sister as "the one who will go to university." By 2017, Chen was 24, working in the same kitchen where he had started at age 18. Explaining the fatigue of his work routine, he said, " … Chinese people, they work *a lot* … if the chef is not there, I do his work, too." Low earnings exacerbate the long hours. He mentioned one of his friends, who lives alone in Alsace, far from his family in Paris, but earns a good deal more than he does. Pooling their money together, his friend's family recently bought a small house outside Paris resembling Chen and his family's dream. Chen and his parents planned to move out to a nearby suburb and were saving to open their own store, countering their sense of unmet expectations, but realizing these entrepreneurial aspirations felt distant. Chen has retained liminal status as temporary visa holder and intends to apply for a 10-year visa (*carte de résident*).

Family roles

A dual frame of reference diffused each young man's familial expectations among family of origin, family of destination, and transnational family. Gaining legal status activated both expectations for social mobility and the immigrant bargain on one hand, while simultaneously kindling transnational family expectations of visiting and more. Meeting family expectations was difficult.

Chen, not in a long-term relationship, felt challenged to meet renewed role expectations—especially financial obligations—from his family of origin and his transnational family. "I make a lot of effort for my family [here in Paris] … it's natural [because] we live together and we will live together." In 2015, his parents' goal was to buy a house outside Paris. By 2016, the cost had become more daunting: "Our earnings are not enough … when my sister starts working after college, maybe then." That goal was at least 5 years ahead, he estimated.

Finances imposed constraints on family-oriented travel. Chen's minimum-wage earnings made international travel difficult. After his grandfather's funeral, family in China asked when he would return. He was enthusiastic about returning to Wenzhou despite his sense that his life was better centered in Paris. His family in China also expected him to demonstrate increasing financial success. Added to the airline ticket, each return trip involved bringing costly gifts, including clothes, souvenirs, and money. Chen saw transnational family as his obligation, not that of his French-born sister. "I am lucky to go back, [but] it means one more thing to pay for," he said.

Likewise, Christian's family valued his children's engagement with Mexico-based family. Christian could not fully realize this value, however: "I would like to go for vacation [to Mexico] for a whole month, to be with family … but because of work, it's not possible. And money, we don't have the money." He also felt the sting of his parents' inability to travel due to lack of legal status: "I wish my mother went to Mexico to see [her father] … who is very sick. The same thing is going to happen [as with his other grandmother who passed away] … and she will get depressed." Even after traveling to Mexico with his newfound mobility, Christian felt he had not met his transnational family obligations. His sense of not being in Mexico when needed pervaded: "I was also feeling sentimental because my grandmother wasn't there, she had passed away. We went to her house, and I felt sadness. This is where I used to go to sleep … now that I'm back I can't see her. I dreamt of my abuela, and I started to cry."

Prioritizing family-oriented travel was difficult given burgeoning aspirations associated with social mobility: "Now [that I have a green card], we are thinking of how in maybe three years we'd like to know if we can buy a house or something." April strove for travel associated with social mobility, too. "She wants to go to Hawaii, to China, to Italy … I told her, you only want to go to expensive places … like maybe we can go driving from here to visit Canada."

Finally, Christian had a sense that he needed to maintain a clean record to keep his legal status, meaning he could not sponsor his parents' legal residence. "Supposedly, if you are a citizen you can bring your parents here. But your parents have to never have entered before … my parents have a record of being here." For Christian, family was at the crux of the blessing of legal status and the wounds of not having it beforehand. Even with advanced parole, he and his wife were acutely aware of the possibility of family separation.

Those who had managed to study as they aged into undocumented adulthood experienced the sting and loss associated with undocumented years less than those without college experience. They also expected to keep up with transnational family and make good on the immigrant bargain but were in a better position to do so. "I still worry about passing my classes, but I'm sure that I'll be here tomorrow," said Mario.

For those in Paris, postregularization transnational experiences included the possibility of getting a job that leveraged their college education. Marcelo, who studied at a university in Paris, obtained a family visa after his mother remarried (to a French citizen). A few visits and years later, he began evaluating what opportunities he could find near his hometown in Brazil: "The kind of jobs I could find in Brazil was better than the kind of jobs I could find in France," he judged. He continues to

work in both locations, seeing as an advantage that "people in Brazil like that I know France, and French people like that I know Brazil."

Armand obtained a student visa and hoped to find a job in France commensurate to his post-secondary degree. Despite many interviews, he found employers reluctant to hire him because of the additional cost and steps of hiring someone with a student visa. His lack of internships while undocumented spell also left him at a disadvantage compared to fellow students. His mother judged it better to keep studying in France. He completed a master's while working weekends as a parking lot attendant. He tired of "deal[ing] with ignorant French people," eventually concluding that businesses in Dakar, Yaoundé, or Abidjan would value his international experience. He moved with a friend to Abidjan and visits Paris regularly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The concept of a moral career of migrant il/legality elucidates how sociolegal phases shape undocumented youths' self and social roles over time. This article contributes the understanding that youths' mental maps of deportability *and* regularizability shaped their experiences as they transitioned through the career. Each phase of the moral career provides insight into how contextual, intermediary factors shape the uncertainty experienced by undocumented youths. *Entering* the moral career highlights how illegality impacts their family-based networks, often exposing children, even before leaving their home country. Families assess and strategize around deportability and around regularization, which they often see as more possible for children than themselves. *Growing* up in mainstream settings, especially schools, grew these youths' aspirations to reflect a mix of possibilities shaped by educators, family, and peers, under financial, educational, and legal-status constraints. Mostly, these aspirations, including redeeming the immigrant bargain, cast youths as deserving of regularization. Such aspirations, some of which depended on regularization, included striving for education, financial and other support of family, steady work, and social mobility. *Narrowing* highlights how social roles persist despite the cruel closure or constant challenge of maintaining mainstream roles. How youths navigated this phase influenced the duration of the penalty for having been undocumented, as young people projected the consequences of exclusion and inclusion on their and family members' lives, adjusting their social roles accordingly. Many remained without legal residence, especially in New York, though regularization remained significant in youths' mental maps of illegality. *Widening* possibilities occurred for many youths, who enter semi-legal and temporary statuses, activating counterfactuals regarding how legal access to mainstream spaces would change their lives. This process was more protracted for undocumented youths in New York. Young people and their social networks re-assessed aspirations, expectations, and identities in this new sociolegal context. Newfound transnational mobility and expectations for social mobility created new pressures and challenges for regularized youths as they tried to fulfill new work, family, and educational roles.

Accounting for the time without legal status highlights the importance of time to post-regularization experiences, an extension of previous research on illegality (cf. Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016). Youths' experiences after legal status changes showed how undocumented status continued to shape young people's roles in school, work, and family. Most of those who had not continued to college found themselves unable to return to study. Instead, they resembled their immigrant parents in terms of expectations for their children, the ones to reap the benefits of an American education and be able to experience the American Dream. Lacking legal status at entry catalyzed "processes of cumulative disadvantage [that] make it difficult to attain more upwardly mobile jobs over time" (Kreisberg, 2019, p. 848). Socialization in schools, redemption of the immigrant bargain, and state-driven role expectations, reinforced in the regularization process, influence youths' embrace of good, deserving immigrant examples (Andrews, 2018; Menjívar & Lakhani, 2016).

The longitudinal data presented here support an understanding of the time-based effects of being without legal residence. When their individual legal obstacles dissipated, the time lost to obstacles

had harmed youths' ability to pursue aspirational dreams. Without time to integrate social networks, gain internships, study, and live with fewer family obligations, regularized youths faced a lag penalty. Attempts to regain a mainstream position illuminated other obstacles, including social class, race, and immigrant status (Gomberg-Muñoz, 2016). These understandings cloud the assumption that access to legal status leads to social mobility. Educational attainment matters, and time spent out of that system amounts to punishment.

Including both deportability and regularizability as reference points in youths' mental schema can strengthen the comparison of the experiences of undocumented youths across different socio-legal contexts (Ruszczyk & Barbosa, 2017). The social and geographic locations of formerly undocumented youths impacted the timing of the moral career, regularization chances, and placement in the labor market, essential to how youths made good on other social roles. In Paris, regularized youths without college experience were most likely to contribute to a family-based strategy like their parents. Those with college experience followed individual paths promising social mobility; and transnational engagements extended from family to work to accomplish this outcome. The more liberal labor market in New York facilitated earning money to fulfill obligations. Nonetheless, regularized youths in New York also followed a family-based strategy for stability, deferring the immigrant bargain to the next generation. College-going New Yorkers felt best-positioned to respond to transnational and local family pressures.

This argument reinforces scholars' call to highlight how multiple social locations inform experiences of illegality (Enriquez, 2017; Gonzales & Ruszczyk, 2021). Furthermore, the length and nature of time without status into account is essential. This article reveals how long experiences with undocumented status continue to cast a shadow on those who have transitioned into legal status. Comparing those in the Unites States who overstay a visa and have better possibilities for regularization versus those who do have poorer chances, or those with or without access to DACA, the coming-of-age experiences while undocumented can be diverse. Hope for change can mitigate some of the uncertainty that comes with undocumented status.

Regularization shapes the nature of undocumentedness, whether people perceive it to be a closed or open category. "Open" includes fluid individuals who can move in and out of the category, changing the operative metaphor attached to the uncertainty of status from oft-employed limbo, which has no known end, to purgatory, which ends—eventually. Future research can benefit from examining what guides perceptions of the temporality of undocumented status, and how those perceptions may differ by age, home country, social networks, and more.

Finally, these findings speak to experiences of a logic of distributing citizenship rights, *jus domicili* (Kaufmann, 2019), where residence time earns access to rights. This logic figures in most citizenship regimes today in the waiting time before eligible noncitizens can apply for full citizenship. In certain sociolegal contexts, this logic also allows undocumented residents to enter the pathway to citizenship, mitigating damage to the promise of youths.

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