

**IN SEARCH OF THE AMERICAN DREAM: UNDOCUMENTED YOUTH
AND THE JOURNEY NORTH**

A Thesis

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by

Linda E. Sanchez

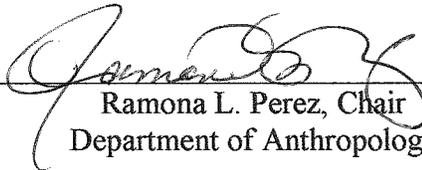
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In Search of the American Dream: Undocumented Youth and the Journey North



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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my nephew, Andrew Xavier Sanchez, and nieces, Hailey Sanchez and Charisma Lea Sanchez, because as children they are the future. It is my hope that they will find as much joy in learning as I have. It is also dedicated to my mother and father, Estela and Leopoldo Sanchez. My mother has always believed in my endeavors and in doing so has given me wings. The thesis is also dedicated to my brothers, Leo and Max, for always being there for me. Lastly, this work is dedicated to the rest of my family members (grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins) who are too many to mention. Thank you.

In memory of Jenny K. Gendel, beloved friend whose body lost the battle to cancer but whose beautiful soul lives on forever. Treasured in this heart of mine you'll stay until we meet again someday.

--Linda E. Sanchez

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

In Search of the American Dream: Undocumented Youth and the
Journey North

by

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Thousands of minors risk their lives every year by making the dangerous journey to come to the United States (U.S.) on their own and without the required documentation; these young people are termed unaccompanied minors by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). These youth come to the U.S. for a variety of reasons, including economic hardship, civil unrest in their indigenous country, and abandonment by their parents or other family members. Although there are about 500 of these young individuals detained every day, very little research has been conducted on them, as most immigration research focuses on other facets of immigration such as economic consequences. This study focused on unaccompanied minors from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico while they were housed at a shelter located in Southern California. It utilized both one-on-one individual interviews (20 participants) and a focus group (15 participants) which implemented open-ended questions. This research sheds light on the youth's reasons behind their motivations for coming to the U.S. It also unearths the realities experienced by these young individuals on their nearly always dangerous and extensive journeys from their homeland to the U.S. Finally, this study examines their narratives of the American Dream and compares those ideas with current main stream views of the Dream in the United States. An important aim of this study was that it would serve as an opportunity for the unaccompanied minors to describe their worlds in their own words.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Thousands of minors risk their lives every year by making the dangerous journey to come to the United States (U.S.) on their own and without the required documentation; these young people are termed *unaccompanied minors* by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) (Thompson 2008). The ORR defines “unaccompanied minors” as individuals under the age of 18 and without their parents or relatives when apprehended by immigration officials. Within the United States, approximately 85,000 of these youth are picked up by immigration authorities every year (Thompson 2008). Many of these youth will be repatriated across the U.S./Mexico border shortly after apprehension as documented in the film, *Children in No Man’s Land*. The directors note that more than 44,700 migrant youth are repatriated across the U.S./Mexico border each year (Prado 2009). One can only imagine how many more pass undetected by immigration officials.

With so many unaccompanied minors choosing to undertake such a perilous journey, it is vital to move toward a more comprehensive understanding of this issue. Suarez-Orozco (2000:4) has noted that while we may know much about the migration patterns of adults, issues such as child migration remain understudied. For example, much of the information found regarding immigration on the official website of the United States’ Department of Homeland Security included reports on the number of arrests, detentions, and removals of aliens for specific fiscal years, as well as the Yearbook, which is a compendium of tables aimed at providing data on which foreign nationals were naturalized (Department of Homeland Security 2012). The most significant data on migration tends to be reduced to macro perspectives that convert the human experience into statistical numbers, and the motivations, desires, and contributions of migrants into discussions on economic consequences. These discussions tend to be focused on the visible migrant, leaving those in the shadows, such as unaccompanied minors, invisible and thus outside discussions on immigration policies and reform.

This study focuses on Hispanic unaccompanied minors from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico currently housed at a shelter located in Southern California. In order to protect the youth, the shelter staff, and their neighbors I have given the shelter the pseudonym Estela Hope Shelter and changed the participants' names. At the time of the interview of each participant a number was assigned that coincides with the order of their interview. I conducted 20 open-ended interviews and a focus group of 15 participants to elicit the various reasons why these young people decided to come to the U.S. and what they expected to achieve by coming here. To many of the young men who chose to participate in this study, the United States is the illusive *el norte* (the north), or *el otro lado* (the other side) that holds hope for a better future. This research sheds light on the realities experienced by these young individuals on their journey to the U.S. and the youth's narratives of the American Dream. This research was constructed in a manner that would facilitate and provide the youth at Estela Hope with an opportunity to describe their worlds in their own words. For instance, the interviews were compromised of open-ended questions instead of using closed-ended survey type questions. The youth were able to talk as little or as much as they wanted since there were no time limits on the interviews. Because I did not want them to feel like they had time restrictions, I made myself available later in order for them to come back at a later time for further discussion if so desired. In addition, they were permitted to express their thoughts in different forms. One participant chose to write out his answers on a piece of paper saying that he expressed himself better through writing.

IMMIGRATION: AN IMPORTANT ISSUE

At the turn of the twenty-first century more than 125 million people lived outside of their country of birth or citizenship (Shweder 2003:260). Approximately one-third of this international migration moved in the direction of the seven wealthiest countries, including the United States. People leave their homes, families, and livelihoods behind and risk it all, including their lives, in search of a better well being. Poverty is one of the leading factors in migration. According to UNICEF, its devastating effects claim the deaths of 22,000 children each year, and it's the reason that approximately a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names. (Shah 2013).

Immigration is indeed a problem but not by the terms in which it is generally defined; that is, as a problem of outsiders invading a country and creating negative results that range from increases in violence and crime to stealing jobs from citizens. These views of immigration as a problem are tied to nationalist ideologies, isolationism, and closed, or in the case of the U.S., militarized borders (Martin 1996). In reality, immigration is a humanitarian problem (Chomsky 2007). People leave their homes not because they no longer desire to be part of their own country but rather because of increasing poverty, civil war, internal violence, drought, and other such phenomena. These issues prevent people from being able to survive if they stay; any effort to limit immigration then is clearly one that must address these issues.

Although idealistic, Chomsky has argued that the answer lies in “the creation of a new model of global economic integration—one that redistributes the planet’s resources more equitably among its inhabitants, and one that respects and nourishes traditional peasant lifestyles” (2007:166). Our current model holds that the richest 20 percent of the world’s population accounts for three-quarters of global wealth while only five percent of global wealth remains for the poorest 40 percent. It has forced half the world—three billion people—to live on just US\$2.50 a day (Shah 2013). These types of trends are completely unsustainable as economic models and detrimental to humanity.

Immigration is a crucial matter to the U.S. considering that it receives one million new immigrants each year (Gozdziak and Bump 2008). Unfortunately, the history of the U.S. is plagued not with humanitarian solutions but rather with ineffective immigration policies and unjust laws that exclude immigrant populations of their civil rights under the U.S. Constitution and their human rights under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR, passed in 1948 at the United Nations, states that there is no justification for any government in the world to exclude certain people of rights (Chomsky 2007). Article 6 of the UDHR states that “everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law” (Roosevelt 2000:3). It is made clear that these rights apply to all people. The 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution forbids states from denying any person “life, liberty or property, without due process of law” or to “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Madison and Stamper 2010:40). Yet, as documented in the film *Lost in Detention* (Young 2011), undocumented immigrants are

held in detention centers under sub-human conditions without due process and are denied equal protection not only under the law but also by the law. Despite these inequities, undocumented migration to the U.S. continues and although adult migration has decreased, migration by unaccompanied youth is increasing (Gozdziak and Bump 2008).

MAJOR QUESTIONS

This study aims to shed light on the reasons behind unaccompanied minors' decision to come to the U.S. without proper documentation. It is not possible to uncover every reason as each immigrant youth comes for different reasons and many of them have multiple reasons. Many of the research participants shared that there was a variety of factors that influenced their decisions for undertaking the arduous and dangerous journey north. The most common tended to be reunification with family members, civil unrest in their native homelands, and the hope for better economic well-being. In our conversations, they described the hardships of life in their native countries and how they felt as if they only had two choices – stay and die or leave in the hope of something better. Macario Fonseca, one of the focus group participants, summarized these choices as “either you die of hunger in your country or die trying to get to a better place” (interview with author, March 7, 2012). They all chose the second alternative because it at least offered a sliver of hope. “I could not just stay in my country and watch my younger brothers starve. I would rather risk my life to try to give them something more,” said Vicente Chavez (research participant #10, interview with author, April 16, 2011). This sentiment is true for many of the other minors. They saw themselves forced to come to United States in order to seek a better future for themselves and for their families. They did not come in search of glamorous jobs; in fact most of them came with hopes of working jobs most Americans are unwilling to work such as picking lemons, washing cars, gardening, and dishwashing. Because of the extreme poverty that many of these youth experienced, these jobs are a better alternative to what their impoverished homelands can provide.

This research also attempts to describe the experiences of the immigrant youth on their journey to the United States. Before research was conducted I expected that most stories about the journey to the U.S. would describe crossing the U.S./Mexico border. However, since the majority of research participants in this study were from Central America, with the

exception of one from Mexico, the experiences they shared focused on what it is like to cross through Mexico with the goal of reaching the United States. When asked to depict their journeys most did not care to share what it was like to cross the U.S./Mexico border because according to them, “that was the easy part”. This “easy” part is not so easy when closely examined because things like the militarization of the border have transformed it into an extremely dangerous venture. Regardless, since the questions designed for this thesis were open-ended and unrestricting, minors were not forced to discuss crossing the U.S./Mexico border. Hence, the majority of minors focused on what the 1,150 mile trek through Mexico was like. An unfortunate reality of the voyage through Mexico for most Central American immigrants, including the minors at Estela Hope, was being forced to ride atop freight trains (Nazario 2007). They talk about the fears of riding the train, which has been nicknamed *la bestia* (the beast) and *el tren de la muerte* (the train of death).

Last but not least, this thesis study aims to portray narratives of the American Dream as expressed by the unaccompanied minors at Estela Hope. It describes aspects of the dream that are important to them, and compares them with contemporary American views. This section of my thesis research also addresses whether false perceptions of the American Dream serve as a motivating factor and propel the minors to make the treacherous journey to the U.S. The youth identified sources for their narratives of the American Dream, which included not only people like family and friends but also things like movies, songs, and much more.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

This thesis, comprised of my research on my three major research questions, findings, conclusion, and recommendations, is organized into eight chapters. Chapter Two provides a discussion about the dangers of crossing the U.S./Mexico border illegally and various reasons why people undertake this treacherous task. It also presents recent unaccompanied minors’ histories as well as a brief record of the Estela Hope Shelters. In addition, Chapter Two explains recent Central American immigration to the U.S. as a result of war in the region. Chapter Three lays out the methods of this study including research design, data analysis, and theory. Chapters four through seven focus on the findings of this research. In Chapter Four the emphasis is centered on the main reasons for migrating which included: reunification,

fleeing violence, education, and jobs. Chapter Five portrays the youths' dangerous journeys to the U.S. and it includes their journeys through Mexico illegally, the train rides, and help along the way. Chapter Six presents my findings in regards to how the unaccompanied youth viewed the American Dream. Chapter Seven explores the unaccompanied minors' various sources for the American Dream. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations are discussed in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE DANGERS OF CROSSING THE U.S./MEXICO BORDER ILLEGALLY

Crossing the border illegally is dangerous and many times, fatal. Migrants must face exposure to the elements, drowning in rivers, sexual assault, suffocating in trunks or containers, abandonment in the desert, and violence of all kinds (Palma Rojo 2007). Between 1995 and 2005, there was an average of 350 documented deaths per year of immigrants as they attempted to cross the U.S. border (Nevins 2008). The true death toll is unclear as a result of the extremely narrow criteria for counting fatalities of unauthorized immigrant crossers that agencies, such as the Border Patrol, have employed. The true death toll is indisputably higher than the reported numbers based on actual recovered bodies and official counts (Guerrete 2007). Unfortunately, the number of immigrant deaths has been on the rise and is reflected in unpublicized information such as the rental of a refrigerated semitrailer by the Pima County Medical Examiners Office in Arizona to expand their storage space for bodies found in the desert (Nevins 2008).

When examining the dangers posed in moving across the United States border illegally it is important to look beyond physical violence and also look at structural violence and the ways it creates vulnerability and marginalization (Slack and Whiteford 2011). Structural violence is any form of violence where some social structure or social institution purportedly harms people in meeting their basic needs (Galtung 1969). It is not always as plainly visible as physical violence because it can lie underneath the surface, causing inconceivable amounts of suffering without firing a single bullet or landing a single blow (Farmer 2003). For instance, in the case of the various organizations in charge of border security and immigration, their attempts to control and/or punish undocumented immigration provide little to no formal support for migrant's basic legal rights (Slack and Whiteford 2011). Instead, the dominant forces at work aim to criminalize and dehumanize a process which was once overlooked (Slack and Whiteford 2011). The long periods of incarcerations

experienced by migrants caught attempting to cross the border make them more vulnerable because when they get out they are in greater need of immediate income and participating in illegal activities for fast cash can be tempting solutions (Slack and Whiteford 2011).

Although structural factors greatly limit people's choices, it is important to not overlook the agency of individuals as they make decisions to defray the vulnerability imposed by structural violence (Slack and Whiteford 2011). Individual reactions to repression can take many forms including engaging in illegal activities and/or participating in violent acts (Slack and Whiteford 2011). For instance, an individual might decide to join a powerful force, like a drug cartel or a group of smugglers in order to mitigate his vulnerability (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). This type of activity is often a response to people's feelings of lack of power and can be an attempt to take back control. It is important to understand how migrants act and react in attempts to subvert authoritarian powers who govern the spaces where they intend to cross (Slack and Whiteford 2011). These actions and reactions can include but are not limited to things such as: different crossing patterns and strategies, robbery, engaging in the drug trade, human smuggling, or involvement in the sex industry (Slack and Whiteford 2011). Violent forms of attempting to take back agency make the hazards of moving across the border illegally a more daunting task for all involved.

As an example of a hazard created by structural violence, the militarization of the border since 9-11 has resulted in most undocumented immigrants coming into the U.S. through deserts. Militarized operations such as "Operation Gatekeeper" in California, "Operation Hold-the-Line" in Texas, "Operation Safeguard" in Arizona, and the "Real ID Act" have not stemmed migration but rather have increased the death toll of those attempting to cross into the U.S. All of these operations call for barriers to be built on the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent illegal entrances (Chomsky 2007). This has been an effort to move people away from popular suburban migration routes in those states. For instance, in California people attempting to cross illegally must now enter through the Imperial Desert or over the mountains that are north of Tecate (Graham 2004). This is due to the fact that Operation Gatekeeper turned the entire Northern part of Tijuana into a wall. With construction of the wall separating the U.S.-Mexico border, as well as tighter border security, undocumented people trying to cross into the U.S. are forced to traverse through more desolate and unforgiving areas (Welch 2002). In 2005, the Real ID Act granted the U.S. department of

Homeland Security the right to waive all laws, including environmental regulations, in order to construct barriers and roads along the U.S.-Mexico boundary (Nevins 2008).

The end result of these operations did not have the desired outcome of reducing the number of people crossing illegally. In reality what these measures ended up doing was forcing migrants to go further and further into inhospitable areas in order to cross (Welch 2002). The harshness of the desert took more lives than would ever have been lost if these measures had not been taken but instead time and energy was spent on a workable migration policy (Cubbison 2009). Although the Border Patrol frequently discusses the vulnerability of migrants to things such as smugglers, “the United States government has not addressed the deaths in the desert and how it is related to border policy” (Slack and Whiteford 2011:15). A study released in 2009 by officials with the American Civil Liberties Union concluded that since the operations were launched in 1994 more than an estimated 5,600 people have died attempting to cross the border through rugged mountain and desert areas of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas (Jimenez 2009). As an alternative to spending billions of dollars on constructing fences, the report called for the creation of immigration and border policies that are both sensible and humane (Jimenez 2009). According to the documentary, *The 800 Mile Wall*, the government “had estimates on the amount of people that were going to die in the desert if walls were constructed but they went through with it regardless and the current death toll has already far exceeded those estimates” (Frey 2010).

In forcing the people to cross through more inhospitable terrain, one of the biggest dangers is exposure to the elements. It is not uncommon for temperatures to rise to 120 degrees in the deserts where immigrants cross; these same deserts can plummet to freezing temperatures at night (Welch 2002). Such extreme shifts in temperature cause severe stress on the body as well as the mind and can lead to serious health problems (Guerrete 2007). Both extreme cold and extreme heat can directly affect the heart as evident by increased incidents of hospital admissions due to chest pain, stroke, and acute coronary syndrome when climates reach such limits (Environmental Health Perspectives and the National Institute of Environmental Sciences 2010). The impact of exposure to the elements is experienced with more intensity among migrants because few come prepared for the journey through the desert as the resources needed are heavy (water, blankets, food, etc.) and it is difficult to determine

how much time will be spent in the crossing. Thus, a shortage of food, water, and adequate clothing leave migrants vulnerable to the elements.

When looking at the dangers that elements pose to individuals trying to cross, both the extreme cold and heat pose a major threat, especially when both extremes are experienced in one day due to the fluctuation of desert climate. However, heat is the number one cause of migrant deaths along the border, accounting for 35% of recorded deaths from 1999 to 2003 (Guerrete 2007). Guerrete (2007) argues that this high statistic is partly due to the fact that hyperthermia passes through six stages that leave its victim increasingly more disoriented and less able to take curative action. Extreme cold also accounts for immigrant deaths but not at the same rate as heat. From 1999 to 2003, only 3% of recorded deaths were associated with exposure to extreme cold (Guerrete 2007). Even though cold does not kill as many people as heat, it creates immense strain, especially to the already fatigued bodies of migrants worn out from their journey north. The extreme cold of the desert is magnified when migrants must cross bodies of water such as rivers or canals and are then forced to push forward with soaked garments. Since most immigrants cross at night, the soaked garments coupled with the severe chill of the desert nights place even more strain on individuals.

There are other physical dangers in crossing the U.S.-Mexico border illegally, such as drowning and suffocating, depending on where and how the undocumented immigrants are attempting to enter. Many immigrants attempt to swim across the Rio Grande and as a result, drowning is the second most common type of death among these immigrants, claiming 369 victims from 1999 to 2003 (Guerrete 2007). In addition to braving the desert or the Rio Grande, some choose to cross through regular U.S. entry points hidden in vehicles. These immigrants must cram into small, confined spaces, which can sometimes lead to death by suffocation, which claimed 1% of documented cases from 1999 to 2003 (Guerrete 2007). In this time period, deaths caused by unknown causes, most likely exposure to the elements, made up 22 percent of reported cases (Guerrete 2007).

THE DANGERS OF CROSSING MEXICO ILLEGALLY

Crossing the border through the desert or through a regular point of entry is only part of the process for individuals that do not live in Mexico. People coming from places such as

Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador must first make their journey through one or more countries (many times also illegally). One of the most documented is train hopping (see documentaries such as *La Bestia* by Pedro Ultreras and Hiram Gonzalez released in 2011). Hopping trains is a dangerous venture that risks both life and limb, yet it tends to be one of the most popular ways to travel as it eliminates weeks of walking, hitching rides, or using other forms of free transportation (Nazario 2007). Immigrants from faraway lands also risk the ill treatment of gangs, cartels, and immigration authorities in the foreign countries through which they must traverse in order to eventually reach the U.S. (Ribando 2005). Ribando (2005) notes that many migrants have been beaten, scorned, sexually assaulted and even killed on their journey, while others have been forced to join drug cartels or gangs. Refusal to join a drug cartel or gang often means execution on the spot.

Every year more than a million men, women, and children cross the Suchiate River, the border that divides Guatemala and Mexico (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). They leave the shore on the Guatemala side of the river and step foot illegally on the shore of the Mexican side with the hopes of reaching their final destination, the United States. It is a long 1,150 mile trek through Mexico in order to reach the U.S. border; it is estimated that less than 40 percent of them will reach it (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011).

It is almost impossible for natives of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to get the legal documents to cross through Mexico. In order for someone from Central America to get legal documentation to enter into Mexico they must show proof that their bank account has not dropped below the equivalent of US\$800 for the last 3 consecutive years (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). This is an astronomical amount for the large majority of people living in Central America because of the high rates of poverty, but the policy also neglects the fact that few trust in their national banks sufficiently to place their hard earned savings in an account. Father Flor Maria Rigoni, a priest who has dedicated his life's work to helping Central American migrants, accuses Mexico of not letting Central Americans cross legally because Mexico wants to be obedient to the wishes of the United States. He claims that Mexico acts as gatekeeper and buffer zone against immigration from Central and South America. "The Mexican Government wants to be obedient, one that serves the interests of the United States and takes care of their backyards more than it wants to help our Central American brothers," explains father Rigoni (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011).

Father Rigoni's solution to the issue is to let Central and South Americans pass legally through Mexico. According to him, the Mexican economy would reap the benefits of this solution since these immigrants would pay for hotel rooms, busses, planes, and taxes instead of paying for coyotes to smuggle them across. Although this is a wonderful idea, the reality is that there are too many people, including cartels, gangs, and individuals, making tax-free money smuggling people through Mexico for a legal alternative to be appealing. Organized crime gets the most money from drug trafficking, but human smuggling comes in close second. Smuggling people through Mexico is a 6.6 billion dollar industry (Beaubien 2011). A Guatemalan may pay a smuggler between 500 to 3,000 dollars, but an Indian or Chinese is ready to pay up to 30,000 dollars (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). Kidnapping people for ransom money is another way that these people extort money from migrants; it is estimated that at least 20,000 migrants are kidnapped every year in Mexico (Beaubien 2011).

WHY COME TO THE UNITED STATES? ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

At Estela Hope, the most common native countries from which unaccompanied minors travel are El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). Immigrants from these countries leave their natal lands for reasons that include economic hardships, civil unrest, and reunification with family members (Zamudio 2004). Out of these reasons, economic hardship appears to be the greatest reason for undocumented immigrants to leave their homelands to travel to the United States. The U.S. economy is in a recession at the moment, but even in times of trouble, our economy does not compare to the current economic disaster of the countries from where these children are coming.

A good example of this is Mexico. In the early 1990s, Mexico's economy seemed healthy because inflation was being reduced, foreign investors were pumping money into the country, there were billions of dollars in the central bank reserve, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) promised to bring about favorable developments (Pastor and Wise 1998). However, less than a year after NAFTA had taken effect, Mexico faced an economic catastrophe. On December 20, 1994, the Mexican government devalued the peso, which caused inflation to soar and started a devastating recession (Whitt 1996). One of the reasons for the crash was the actions taken by Carlos Salinas and his administration. Because it was an election year, Salinas went on a spending spree that created a large deficit. Also,

Salinas' family wreaked havoc on the country by setting up corrupt business arrangements with banks and accepting huge sums of money in bribes (Whitt 1996). Another large mistake that Salinas' committed was issuing Tesobonos, a debt instrument, to aid in financing the deficit he had created. A Tesobono is denominated in pesos but it is indexed with the United States dollar (Janczewski 2010). To add to the instability of Mexico's economy, investors were spooked by the newly erupted rebellion in Chiapas and the assassinations of two major political leaders (Pastor and Wise 1998).

The economic crisis decreased already scarce job opportunities throughout the country. Shortly thereafter, Mexican government policy eliminated most input subsidies and price guarantees in agriculture due to the NAFTA agreement. This led to the reduction of the production of many Mexican commodities such as corn (Zamudio 2004). In theory, NAFTA was supposed to make Mexico's economy stronger, yet it only benefited the wealthy. People in impoverished regions "entered NAFTA severely under-equipped in human, infrastructural, financial and technological capital to be able to take advantage of the new market opportunities" (Scott 2006:2). It soon became painfully clear that NAFTA had not turned out to be the miracle that was once promised. The agreement was supposed to make North American countries stronger by converging their economies, but Mexico's income inequality showed no signs of improving. The domestic distribution of income worsened, "the country's labor markets remained problematic and real wages remained 25 percent below the level achieved before the crash" (Pastor and Wise 1998:42). In 2002, over half of Mexico's population lived in poverty (Villareal 2010). The percentage of people living in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1 per day was 24.2% of the population in 2000 (World Bank 2008).

Other countries, such as Guatemala, are doing economically worse than Mexico. Guatemala's economic growth and foreign direct investment is hampered by concerns over security, poor infrastructure, and a low percentage of skilled workers (Central Intelligence Agency 2012).

The country's income distribution is extremely unequal with the wealthiest 20 percent of the population accounting for over 51 percent of its overall consumption (Central Intelligence Agency 2012). The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank reported that in 2009, approximately 75 percent of Guatemala's population lived below the poverty level (United Nations World Food Programme 2010). This level is defined

as an income that is not sufficient to purchase a basic basket of goods and basic services. People with incomes below the extreme poverty line is at 58 percent (World Bank 2008). This high extreme poverty rate has led the country to have one of the worst rates of malnutrition in the world, with an estimated 50 percent of Guatemalan children now suffering from chronic undernutrition (World Bank 2008). These levels of poverty and malnourishment are more pronounced in the indigenous groups who make up almost 40 percent of the country's population.

WHY COME TO THE UNITED STATES? CIVIL UNREST

Economic turmoil is not the only issue driving people to the U.S. Civil unrest in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador also plays a major factor. Currently these three countries experience some of the highest murder rates in the world (Ribando 2005). In 2004, the estimated murder rate per 100,000 people was 45.9 in Honduras, 41.2 in El Salvador, 34.7 in Guatemala, and 13.4 in Mexico (Ribando 2005). In comparison, that same year the U.S. only had 5.62 murders per 100,000 (United Nations Survey 2012). One of the reasons that Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico have such high murder rates is because of the various drug cartels and gangs who terrorize and destroy entire communities (Seper 2012). The U.S. Southern Command has placed the estimated number of gang members in Central America at approximately 70,000 (Logan 2009). These gangs are reportedly involved in human trafficking; drug, auto, and weapons smuggling; and human kidnapping (Welch 2002).

Estimates say that 60% of the 2,576 murders committed in El Salvador were gang related (Ribando 2005). It is thought that these massacres are due to the deportations of thousands of Salvadorans from the U.S., the majority of which were members of the Mara Salvatrucha or MS-13 gang (Welch 2002). The gang originated in the 1980s by Salvadoran immigrants who had fled the Central American civil wars, many settling in Los Angeles. Once inside the U.S., the nature of marginalization experienced by Latinos and Blacks creates gangs with territorial claims in urban centers. These newly arrived immigrants faced attacks from established gangs whose members were predominately Mexican and African American. Many of these Salvadoran immigrants were originally paramilitary and urban guerillas back in their country and they adapted the lessons learned from the brutal civil wars

to the streets of Los Angeles in order to fight back (Caldwell 2012). In the process they created their own gang and eventually built a reputation for themselves as one of the most ruthless and sophisticated street gangs in the world (Caldwell 2012). John Morton, director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), refers to MS-13 as one of the most violent transnational criminal organizations currently operating (Seper 2012).

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), MS-13 engages in an assortment of criminal activities that include robbery, home invasions, distribution/sale of illegal drugs, murder, rape, prostitution, child prostitution, immigration offenses, kidnapping, automobile thefts, and vandalism (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2008). They viciously control territories and illicit interests through murder, murder for hire, kidnapping, blackmail, extortion, assassination, beatings, and various scare and shock tactics (Logan 2009). Two of the gang's signature ways of killing victims are by hacking them to death with a machete or shooting them in the head, execution style. Their violent nature is perfectly portrayed by one of their mottos, "mata, roba, viola, controla" [kill, steal, rape, control] (Seper 2012). The common theme in the majority of crimes committed by MS-13 is extreme violence, and although most of their brutality is directed towards rival gangs or even their own members, innocent people are often caught in the middle (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2008). For instance, in 2004 the gang displayed their outrage at the Honduran government's proposition to restore the death penalty by opening gunfire on a public bus (Logan 2009). Six gunmen showered the bus with bullets killing 28 civilians, the majority of whom were women and children (Logan 2009). Due to the gang's high rate of violent and criminal activity, many of its members were deported back to El Salvador, and by the mid 1990s they were able to recruit more members from Central America, mainly Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, causing their numbers to soar (Terrazas 2009). The gang currently has members in the U.S., Mexico, Central America, and Canada; according to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment the gang is estimated to have 65,000 members and associate members (Logan 2009). In El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico members are estimated at approximately 50,000, with 10,000 in the U.S., and 5,000 in Canada. Although MS-13 is present in 33 U.S. states, they are most active in Los Angeles, the Mid-Atlantic, Rhode Island, and Connecticut (Ribando 2005).

One of the most feared gangs in Central America is the MS-13 and in Mexico people fear the Zetas drug cartel; intelligence officials now believe that these two groups have an alliance. In 1997, 31 members of the Mexican Army's elite *Grupo Aeromovil de Fuerzas Especiales* (GAFES) (Airborne Special Forces Group) defected and began working as hired assassins, bodyguards and drug runners for the Gulf Cartel. Zetas' name comes from the radio code used for top-level officers in the Mexican army (Grayson and Logan 2012). The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has described them as perhaps "the most technologically advanced, sophisticated and violent paramilitary enforcement groups" (Fox News 2009). This is most likely not an exaggeration since the Zetas fearlessly launch attacks against the state and operate with brutality and shock tactics that include: torturing victims, stringing up bodies, and slaughtering indiscriminately. Not only have they been able to establish drug-trafficking routes through Guatemala and Nicaragua into Mexico, but recent reports indicate that they may have also co-opted a cocaine trafficking route into Europe (Grayson and Logan 2012).

Out of the six cartels operating in Mexico today, the Zetas control the largest territory, with command over 11 of the country's 31 states (Vega and Luna 2011). Like MS-13, they control their claims with ruthless violence. This often takes the form of massacres and attacks on civilians and rival cartels as well (Vega and Luna 2011). In the 2010 San Fernando Massacre they killed 58 men and 14 women, all migrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador, and Brazil, who were trying to reach the U.S. (Rueda 2012). According to one surviving witness, they were kidnapped right before reaching the U.S./Mexico border (Grayson and Logan 2012). When a few of them refused to cooperate, the Zetas opened fire on all of them (Grayson and Logan 2012). The following year, the 2011 San Fernando Massacre took place claiming the lives of 193 victims (Rueda 2012). Several busses were hijacked and ordered to go down a desolate dirt road where a group of Zetas awaited their arrival (Rueda 2012). The passengers who were young men were given bats and forced to fight each other to death in gladiator style (Castillo 2012). The winners would be recruited into Los Zetas, and whoever refused to participate was automatically killed (Castillo 2012). The women who were considered attractive were raped repeatedly before being shot and all others were tortured and killed (Grayson and Logan 2012). In addition to the 2010 and 2011 San Fernando massacres, some of the cartel's most infamous actions were the Apocada

Prison riots which led to the death of 49 inmates and the escape of 30 Zetas members, the 2011 Durango massacres which claimed the lives of 249, and the Cadereyta Massacre where 49 bodies were found mutilated and decapitated (Rueda 2012).

In the recent past, many Central American countries experienced civil unrest not so much through gangs and cartels but rather through civil wars. During the 1970s and 1980s many Latin American countries were ravaged by international armed conflict and repression (Manz 2008). No other Latin American country experienced such a devastating toll on human life as Guatemala with approximately 200,000 people, the majority of them indigenous, losing their lives (Thelen 2008). According to a former *New York Times* correspondent in Guatemala, “ethnic cleansing was practiced on a scale beyond even that of Bosnia” (Kinzer 2001:2). Although this conflict took place decades ago, human rights violations seem to be continuing. A 2002 Amnesty International report described Guatemala as undergoing a “human rights melt-down” (Manz 2008). State terrorism is perhaps the cruelest type because the state is supposed to protect its citizens, but when it becomes the greatest murderer, it turns one’s entire world upside down. I will discuss the turmoil experienced by Central America in greater detail and its effect on migration in a later section titled “Recent History of Central American Immigration to the United States Due to War.”

WHY COME TO THE UNITED STATES? REUNIFICATION

Still another reason for many adolescent migrants to venture to the U.S. is to attempt reunification with their families. Post-September 11 border crackdowns and stricter immigration regulations have made many parents living illegally in this country more reluctant to leave (Graham 2004). In addition, illegal border crossing has been made more difficult and dangerous with programs like Operation Gatekeeper, further discouraging people from returning to their home countries (Hing 2010). Individuals who used to work a few months out of the year in the United States and then return to their families in Mexico or Central American are unable to do so. As a result, many have stopped being binational and are now sending for their families to come join them in the U.S. (Thompson 2008). In order to attempt to make their sons’ and daughters’ trips a little safer many families hire *coyotes* or smugglers that act as guides on the journey. In order to hire a coyote, enough money must be saved up first since the average going rate is a minimum of 5,000 dollars per minor (Nazario

2007). If a coyote can't be afforded, the young individuals must face the daunting task of crossing illegally on their own.

An estimated 48,000 unaccompanied minors from Central America and Mexico enter the U.S. illegally each year, and the majority of these individuals are seeking reunification with their parents (Nazario 2007). About 70 percent of them will pass undetected by U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) (Preston 2012). According to detention counselors in Texas, minors from Central America come attempting reunification at higher rates than Mexican minors (Prado 2009). Of the Central American unaccompanied minors that come in search of family, approximately 75 percent come looking for their mothers (Preston 2012). Many of these young men get to the shelters with no possessions at all except the clothes on their back, an important phone number scribbled on a piece of paper, and a picture of themselves still in their mother's arm (Prado 2009). Countless carry pictures of their mothers because they do not have memories of what their mothers look like. For many of these individuals the last time they saw their mothers they were toddlers or even babies (Preston 2012).

WHY COME TO THE UNITED STATES? THE AMERICAN DREAM

Last, but not least, the American Dream appears to be another force driving many immigrants to this country. It essentially proposes that anything is attainable through hard work. The concept plays on the idea that the United States is supposedly a classless society where people are not discriminated against on the basis of economic status, race, religion, gender, or national origin. James Truslow Adams first coined the term during the great depression in his book *Epic of America* (Cullen 2003). He described the American Dream as:

that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement... it is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. (Adams 1933:404)

However, the inspiration of the American Dream is older than the United States, dating back to the 1600s, when people began to come up with all sorts of hopes and aspirations for the new and largely unexplored continent (Johnson 2006). Currently, many countries around the

world idealistically embrace the idea of the American Dream and the U.S. as the land of opportunity.

U.S. high school history textbooks describe the American Dream as being comprised of three basic components. The first is esteem for the United States as a new Eden: “a land of beauty, bounty, and unlimited promise” (Leggett and Brinnin 2003:199). The second element is optimism, justified by the ever-expanding opportunity many people had come to expect in the years before World War I and the economic crash of the Great Depression (Leggett and Brinnin 2003). People in the United States had come to believe in progress; that life would continue improving and that wealth, justice, and joy are around the corner. The final element in the American Dream is the importance and triumph of the individual—the independent and self-reliant person (Leggett and Brinnin 2003). This ideal was championed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who played a major role in defining the essence of the American Dream, including its roots in the promise of the “New Eden” and its confidence that life would continue improving.

Horatio Alger popularized the concept of the American Dream in the 1800s (before the term was coined) by writing stories of young immigrants that went from rags to riches, emphasizing the importance of material wealth as part of the dream. Merriam-Webster defines the American Dream as “an American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material prosperity; also: the prosperity or life that is the realization of this ideal” (2008:145). Yet the reality of the working poor, many of whom are illegal immigrants, is forcing us to rethink what we have come to know as the American Dream. An estimated 40 percent of the poor in the United States have at least two jobs (Shipler 2004). The American dream suggests that hard work determines success, yet 40 percent of the working poor are still impoverished (Shipler 2004).

RECENT UNACCOMPANIED MINORS’ HISTORY AND ESTELA HOPE SHELTERS

Prior to the 1990s, unaccompanied minors were placed in detention centers and jails alongside adults. As one might imagine, this had negative consequences that resulted in the abuse of many of these minors. In 1985, a class action lawsuit, *Flores, et al. v. Janet Reno*, challenged federal policy dealing with unaccompanied children held in detention by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (Office of Refugee Resettlement

2008). The Flores agreement, which became effective in 1997, set out a national policy for the detention, release and treatment of children in immigration custody based on the premise that authorities must treat children in their custody with "dignity, respect, and special concern for their vulnerability as minors" (Thompson 2008:28).

In the 1990s Estela Hope Shelters opened their doors to unaccompanied minors who had been detained by border patrol (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). This organization is a national nonprofit organization providing education and safe shelters to hundreds of minors each day. During their stay, unaccompanied minors receive legal and medical services, counseling, and on-site schooling while awaiting their legal cases to be resolved. These shelters also provide minors with extracurricular activities such as sports and field trips. The 2 Southern California shelters house 2 children per room and a total of 15 minors per house. Reports indicate that in 2007, the number of children in the Office of Refugee Resettlement ranged from approximately 1,000 to 1,600 on any given day (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). 550 of these unaccompanied minors were cared for at Estela Hope (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). Of those, the majority were males (76 percent), with females making up 24 percent of the group, and 15 percent below the age of 14 (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008).

Dr. Sanchez and a team of 5 people working out of a basement in San Antonio, Texas founded Estela Hope in the late 1980s. Today they are the largest provider of shelter services to unaccompanied minors in the United States. In addition to providing shelters, Estela Hope also provides other services for the community, such as college preparation, alternative schooling, and workforce services. The team of 5 has grown to over 1,000 employees, and they are one of the largest Hispanic nonprofit organizations in the U.S.¹

RECENT HISTORY OF CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES DUE TO WAR

When looking at immigration from Central America into the United States it is important to pay special attention to the effects that the civil unrest that engulfed many of the

1. Reference for the shelter's history would negate the pseudonym and thus I am opting not to cite the direct reference.

countries in that region has had on immigration. After 1960 one of the leading causes for immigration into the United States by Guatemalans was the country's civil war, which ran from 1960 to 1996 (Sandoval Giron 2008). The war caused thousands of Guatemalans to seek political refuge in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The war plus an earthquake in 1976 caused a steep rise in migration to the United States, and rose further during the 1980s (Terrazas 2009). According to the International Organization for Migration, migration from Guatemala has remained at a steady rate of about 40,000 per year since the 1990s (Thelen 2008).

Guatemala's long civil war can be attributed to the CIA supporting a coup against Jacobo Arbenz (Thelen 2008). Affluent Guatemalans and U.S. investors, mainly the United Fruit Company, were upset that Arbenz had instituted a land reform (Sandoval Giron 2008). The coup was immediately backed by the CIA with guerilla movements closing in on government forces. Guatemala's government launched death squads to control the rebels, and by the time the war ended, about four decades later, an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 people had disappeared and approximately 200,000 were killed (Thelen 2008).

Like the war experienced in Guatemala, El Salvador's civil war also had a deep influence on immigration to the United States. The war officially started in 1980 and continued until 1992 when Peace Accords in El Salvador were signed in Mexico (Terrazas 2009). It claimed the lives of approximately 75,000 people, and estimates say that twenty-five percent of the country's population was forced to flee (Terrazas 2009). During this time, the violence and economic devastation brought on by the civil war drove as many as one million Salvadorans to enter the United States, frequently without authorization (Coutin 1993).

The civil unrest that plagued Central America occurred during the cold war at a time when the United States was afraid that other countries would follow Cuba's footsteps in becoming communist. It was because of this fear that they supported authoritarian regimes in Latin America (Sandoval Giron 2008). In El Salvador an elite group, two percent of the population, controlled 72 percent of private land (Garcia 2006). This unequal distribution of power was also seen in Guatemala where just 14 families controlled 60 percent of farmland (Garcia 2006). Guatemala and El Salvador were not the only Central American countries that experienced civil wars in the later part of the twentieth century. Other countries in that region

also experienced civil unrest and the violence of war often spilled over to neighboring countries.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

My research focused on Hispanic unaccompanied minors from Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico who were housed at the Estela Hope Shelter in Southern California. This site only houses males and therefore, for the purposes of my research, I only focused on their views. There is a sister shelter that houses females but this research focused only on the males' shelter. The number housed at this Estela Hope facility is 15 males and the average stay is two months. This consistent turnover rate allowed me to meet my goal of interviewing 20 individuals in just a few months. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and anonymous (see Appendix).

All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and stored on secured computer files. Each child received a pseudonym, which was used during the interview and was also used for filing purposes and to refer to that individual in the thesis. As stated in the Institutional Review Board protocol, this was conducted in order to insure the privacy of each and every child. A list with their real names and pseudonyms is stored on a laptop computer accessible only through a password. All interviewees were also assigned a number that corresponds to the order (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc) of their interview. For instance, the coded pseudonym Carlos Lopez was assigned number 3 because he was the 3rd participant interviewed. This was done in order to keep better track of the interviews and for organizational purposes, as well as to have ordinal reference points. It also allowed me to see how many interviews were omitted. The most common reason interviews were omitted was because the unaccompanied minor had grown up in the United States. As stated in my research objective, the purpose of this study was to interview Hispanic minors who had just emigrated from their home countries, not ones that grew up here and then were detained. In total 29 interviews were conducted but only 20 were used for the purposes of this study.

On average, the one-on-one interviews lasted approximately a half hour to 45 minutes each. After conducting all interviews, the recordings were transcribed, and subsequently

analyzed for ideas, perceptions, and narratives of the American Dream as well as their experiences on coming to the U.S. This was followed up with a focus group in which the youth were asked open-ended questions based on the information gathered from the individual interviews. Just like the individual interviews, the focus group was also digitally recorded, analyzed, and findings recorded in the research journal. 15 individuals volunteered and participated in the focus group that took place after class at the shelter. These participants were not the same individuals that took part in the interviews.

The next step in the research involved coding the transcribed one-on-one interviews for emerging themes based on the coding methods described in Kathy Charmaz's (2006) book, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. When different themes emerged, different folders were created and quotes of the interviewees discussing that specific topic were copied and pasted to those folders. In this manner, I derived category labels or "codes" that related to the major conceptual domains of my research (perceptions of the American Dream, reasons for coming to the USA, and the experience of crossing illegally). For example, one of the themes that first began to emerge was that some youth came here for a better future versus coming here to reunite with family members. All quotes of them talking about this were extracted and put into a folder with their pseudonyms and dates. Each folder then in turn allowed me to visualize the different codes or themes, as well as the number of minors who held each different opinion or belief. The different theme folders allowed me to compare and contrast conflicting ideas; for example, believing the American Dream is real versus not believing it is real. From these different broad themes or "open" codes I moved to the more discriminatory "selective codes" as subthemes emerged.

DATA ANALYSIS AND THEORY

In order to analyze the data of this research study, Grounded Theory was employed. Created by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, grounded theory takes an inductive approach to data analyzing, and proposes that systematic qualitative analysis has its own logic and can generate theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). It allows one to develop theories from data that is gathered without an attempt to guide the conversation. While most forms of open-ended qualitative research provide for modification to the research project based on

feedback from the participants, grounded theory assumes no beginning hypothesis or even over-arching position. That is, rather than deducing from testable hypothesis from existing theories or even existing ideas of what the research may prove, grounded theory (actually more of a paradigm) permits key themes to emerge from the research itself (Charmaz 2006).

Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory included a variety of key components. The simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis in order to conduct proper research was essential to their theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). They believed that the construction of analytic codes and categories must be derived from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses (Strauss and Corbin 1990). They emphasized that while conducting research one must constantly use the comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis to the data from participants (Charmaz 2006). According to Glaser and Strauss, one must advance theory development during each step of data collection/analysis, and memo-writing was important to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps (Charmaz 2006). As noted earlier, data on unaccompanied minors is scant, precluding me from comparing my emerging data to data from other researchers. As I worked through my data, I found that while the stories of the youth were similar in many ways, there also were stark differences. What grounded their stories was the theoretical paradigm of structural violence, discussed in the literature review earlier. Thus, while I began with grounded theory my ultimate interpretive framework rests on structural violence and mirrors that of most immigration researchers.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: REASONS FOR MIGRATING

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

According to Estela Hope records, the most common native countries of the minors housed are El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2008). There are few Mexican minors at these shelters due to the extremely low chance they have for asylum; they are most often repatriated as soon as they are detained by immigration officials. My own research reflects this statistic since in the individual interviews only one of the research participants was Mexican and the majority were from (in order from highest to lowest) Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador (see Figure 1). Nine out of the twenty research participants or 45 percent were from Honduras, and eight or 40 percent were from Guatemala. Two out of twenty or 10 percent were from El Salvador, and one or 5 percent from Mexico. They ranged in age from thirteen to seventeen, with the majority of participants in the ages of sixteen and seventeen (70 percent). Four out of twenty or 20 percent were age fifteen, two participants or 10 percent were age thirteen, and none were fourteen years old.

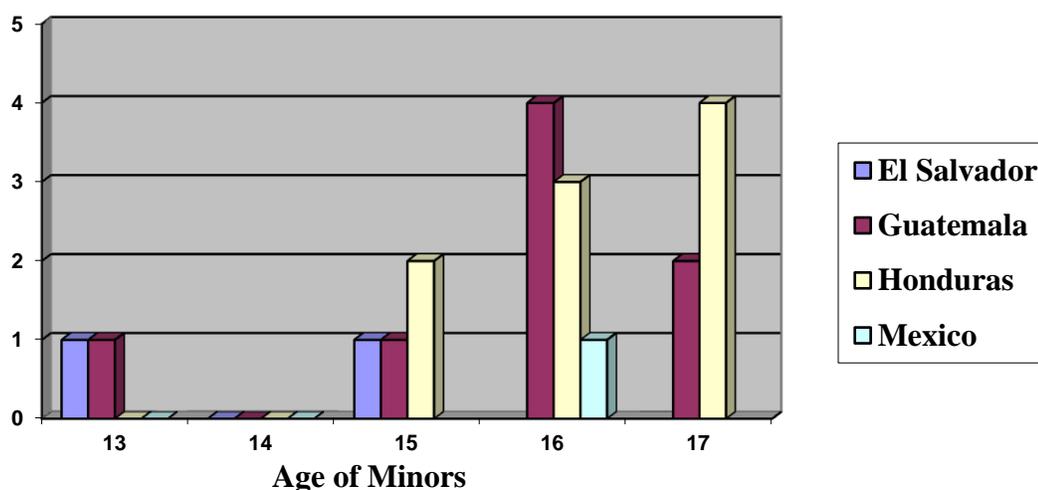


Figure 1. Participant profile.

REASONS FOR MIGRATING: AN INTRODUCTION

The unaccompanied minors at Estela Hope gave many reasons for making the dangerous journey to the U.S. For some, there was not just one reason for coming to this country but rather many reasons. In the sections to follow I have organized data based on the different reasons the youth gave for migrating to the U.S. One might notice that some of the minors are mentioned in two or more of the sections. This is due to the fact that they gave multiple reasons for coming here.

REASONS FOR MIGRATING: REUNIFICATION

Upon coding my transcribed interviews one of the recurring themes that emerged for coming to the U.S. was reunification with family members. Out of the 20 minors that were interviewed, nine or 45 percent claimed to have made their journey to the U.S. to reunite with family. This is not surprising since circulatory migration patterns that coincided with harvesting seasons were disrupted due to militarization of the border (e.g. operations Gatekeeper and Hold-the-Line) thereby making it too difficult for parents to return home between seasons (Hing 2010). The current trend is for parents or other family members to save up money in order to pay for a *coyote* or a *pollero* (slang terms for smugglers) to bring their loved ones across the border. Many of the family members that migrants send for are children and young adolescents; their sons, daughters, nephews and nieces. According to the documentary, *Children in No Man's Land* (Prado 2009), an average of 3,725 minors are repatriated every month along the U.S./Mexico border.

The research participants at Estela Hope who came to reunite with family members did it under an array of circumstances. Some were sent for and a *coyote* or *pollero* was paid to show them the way. Others had to do it alone, without the help of a smuggler because their relatives were unable to pay the high prices or because their family did not want to fund them as a way to discourage the dangerous act. Yet other minors came to reunite with family because they themselves started working from a young age and were able to save up enough money; most of the minors at Estela Hope are considered adults in their home countries and started working years ago. Borrowing from family, friends, and neighbors was another method of acquiring enough money for the journey north, usually in combination with money earned from working. Others make the journey not because they were sent for or because

they saved up or borrowed enough money but because they can no longer bear being away from their parents. Focus group participants Mundo Zambarita and Ernesto Rangel left their homes in Guatemala with almost no cash in their pockets, just a dream of reuniting with their loved ones. When asked why they undertook such a risky endeavor, they answered that a migrant's money is usually stolen by the first few days on the road anyway. "It is better to leave with just a little bit and try to find some day work along the way," explained Mundo (interview with author, March 7, 2012).

For the minors that claimed to have come here for reunification purposes, a great majority of them have not seen their parents in a long time. A few of them have not seen their parents since they were babies or toddlers and were eager to get to see them again and get to know them. For example, Cristian Roma, 13-year-old participant #9, told me that he had not seen his parents in 10 years. He was three years old when his parents moved to Kentucky and was raised by his grandfather who recently passed away. After his grandfather's death he moved in with an uncle, but he told me that what he really wanted was to be with his parents, so he decided to attempt the long journey to Kentucky on his own. Another research participant, Jose Rivera, came in search of his father and mother. He had not seen his mother in 5 years and his father in 16 years. His father left for the U.S. when Jose was just a newborn, and unable to make the trip back to Guatemala to visit his son, he has not seen him since.

Jose describes the hardships of being away from his parents during his interview:

¿Por que decidiste venir a los Estados Unidos o que te motivo a moverte?

A buscar a mis papas vine.

¿A buscar a tus papa?

Si

Ellos viven aquí?

Si aquí están los dos y me vine por que llevo mis papas un tiempo d' no verlos,

Tengo 16 anos. Ese tiempo tiene de estar aquí el, mi papa, 16 años.

Mi mama tiene como 5 años de estar aquí. No es lo mismo estar con mis papas. Lejos. Si por eso decidí buscarlos pa qua. Si. Si es mejor estar juntos al lado de ellos. Más seguro y todo.

[Why did you decide to come to the United States? Or what motivated you to move?]

I came to look for my parents.

To look for your parents?

Yes.

They live here?

Yes they are both here and I came because it has been some time since I have seen them. I am 16. He has been here that long, my dad, 16 years. My mom has been here for about 5 years. It is not the same being without my parents. Far. Yes that is why I came over here, to look for them. Yes. Yes, it's better to be together, by their side. It's safer and all. (Jose Rivera research participant #1, interview with author, March 9, 2011)

Out of the 15 minors in the focus group, a show of hands demonstrated that 6, or 40 percent, of the participants had come here to reunite with their family members. If participants from the focus group and individual interviews are combined, a grand total of 43 percent of the minors gave reunification as a reason for migrating to the U.S. “Llegar con la familia es muy importante,” [reaching one's family is very important] explained focus group participant Samuel Jaranda.

REASONS FOR MIGRATING: FLEE VIOLENCE

One of the most compelling reasons for coming to the U.S. is to flee gangs and all their associations, including crime, violence, and drugs. Out of the 20 individual interviews, four minors or 20 percent (two from Honduras, one from El Salvador, and one from Guatemala) claimed to have come to the U.S. seeking a safe heaven from the chaos brought on by gangs. Out of the minors that had negative experiences with gangs, every one of them had a story to tell about the notorious Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang. One of this gang's most defining characteristics is the extreme use of violence (Bruneau 2011). All the youth who had encounters with the MS-13 gang now fear for their lives.

Ronald Herrera, 15-year-old participant #23, described the incident that made him flee from his home country. He was at the park with nine of his friends when a car rolled up next to them full of Marero (MS-13) gang members. The gang members talked to them for a while and told them that they should join MS-13 so that they could be “somebody.” In exactly one week they were to return to the same park and give the Mareros a response of whether or not they wanted to join. This was not an invitation, but rather a threat, and when the day came, Ronald and all his friends showed up because they feared for their lives. Five of Ronald's friends decided to join, but Ronald and four others decided against it. The MS-13

gang told the new recruits that in order to prove their loyalty to the gang they had to beat the ones that did not decide to join. Sadly, Ronald was beaten twice by the boys that used to be his friends, but were now part of MS-13. The second beating they gave him left him bloody and unconscious in a ditch. He was under constant surveillance by the gang and they knew exactly when he left his house, what he did all day, and the time that he returned home. He heard rumors that the gang had asked their new members to kill their old friends that had turned down joining. Herrera had suffered enough of the painful beatings and was tired of living in fear, constantly having to watch over his shoulder. Gang violence had catapulted his decision to flee to the United States, as is true for many others in his situation; he sorrowfully explained to me that, “the majority of us that come from where I am from come here because of that.”

Carlos Tejeda, 16-year-old participant #12, also describes a violent encounter with the MS-13 gang. He told me the story of how his good friend, Feliciano, was killed by MS-13 gang members one night after going to the nearby grocery store. Carlos, Feliciano, and their friend, Raul, were walking to Carlos’ house. Feliciano and Raul decided to stop by the grocery store and Carlos went straight home. As it got later in the evening, Carlos began to wonder if his friends had gone somewhere else after the store, because they were taking an unusually long time. At about 1:00 am, Raul stumbled into the house out of breath with blood running down the back of his head, and told Carlos that they were attacked by members of MS-13. Raul explained that after going to the store, they were on their way to Carlos’ house when they were suddenly approached by MS-13 gangsters. He said that they delivered a powerful blow to the back of his head with the grip of the gun, and shot Feliciano in the chest. The whole horrifying incident had taken place right behind the town’s elementary school and Feliciano’s body was found the next morning in the same spot where he had been shot.

The individuals in the focus group also described their decision to flee to the U.S. as being influenced by violence and they expressed concerns about gangs in their home countries. Out of the 15 minors in the focus group, 4 of them, or 27 percent, said that they came here to get away from gangs. Just like in the individual interviews, in the cases where the youth were impacted by gang violence, the violence was brought on by the MS-13 gang.

One focus group participant shared that one of his good friends was on a bus that was unexpectedly held up by the MS-13 gang at a bus station. The gang members forcefully ordered some of the people that were on the bus to get off, and then executed them right outside with shots to the head. Unfortunately, his friend was among the victims. “Why did they make him get off the bus? Was it because he was a gangster for the rivals of MS-13?” I asked, trying to make some sense of the tragedy. “It is just that they...if only you could see what it is like there,” (focus group participant, interview with author, March 7, 2012) he responded with desperation in his voice. He went on to explain that there are many gangs in his home country and that they commit violent crimes at random. “I just spoke to my mother earlier today and she told me that she does not want me to return to Honduras because it is too dangerous over there and that it is better for me not return,” (focus group participant, interview with author, March 7, 2012) he explained sadly.

The other focus group participants agreed with the fact that many of their home countries have gang problems and that they have to live in constant dread for fear that something similar to the bus story might happen to them or a loved one. “They do not want to see people progress,” one of the focus group participants said (interview with author, March 7, 2012). “They want everyone to be gang members like them,” someone else chimed in (focus group participant, interview with author, March 7, 2012). Another minor shared that the sheer number of gang members is awfully alarming to him. He went on to explain that people in his neighborhood are reluctant to travel to other barrios because they are afraid to be singled out as outsiders by local gangs. If they do not recognize someone as a local, they hold-up that person right away and begin to harass them by asking questions like “where are you from?” They further intimidate non-locals by letting them know that they don’t belong there and are not welcomed to stay (focus group participant, interview with author, March 7, 2012). Still another focus group participant expressed that what bothers him most about the gangs is the huge drug problem now facing his community, which gang members perpetuate (focus group participant, interview with author, March 7, 2012).

REASONS FOR MIGRATING: EDUCATION

Another reason the minors gave for making the journey to the U.S. was to pursue an education. 7 of the 20 interviewees, or 35 percent, gave this as one of their major or sole

motivations for making the journey to the U.S. Although many of the other participants did not mention getting an education as the primary motivation for coming here, 16 of the 20 minors, or 80 percent, said that they would like to pursue an education if they are given the opportunity to stay in the country.

In many of the youths' home countries being able to get even an elementary education is considered a luxury. Their educational records as well as the evaluation exams for the Estela Hope Shelter reflect the lack of educational opportunity that many of the minors have experienced. For some of them, the schooling they receive at the shelter is their first exposure to a classroom setting. According to the Head Educator at Estela Hope, Berenice Raudales, about 15% of the youth who arrive at the shelter cannot read or write, and an estimated 85% are "far below grade level" (interview with author, June 30, 2012). Some expressed that in their home countries studying is more of a luxury and for some it was not an option since they had no money to go to school. Furthermore, they explained that even if one is fortunate enough to go to school, there are no jobs when one graduates. "If you are lucky to find a job, chances are it is not going to pay very much," told one of the unaccompanied minors.

In the youths' interviews as well as their behavior in the classroom, it is clear how much they value learning. Ricardo Gonzales, interviewee #5, shared that he did not like going on field trips because what he really enjoyed above all was to stay in class and learn. "I like to be here learning things," he says. When the teachers at Estela Hope hear these types of declarations, they cannot believe that students would rather be in class than on field trips. Ricardo is thrilled to be learning to read and write at the shelter and wants to be an architect in the future. He is one of the seven minors that rated studying as one of the main reasons for coming here; when asked why he migrated his response was "to know what the U.S. is like and to study if I can."

A drive to learn is not only evident in the interviews but also in the classroom at Estela Hope; time and time again I observed their attentiveness and cooperation during class time. As shown in Table 1, the 16 participants that said they wanted to get an education in the States aspire to be lawyers, doctors, professors, and more. Although most said that they were looking to start off in jobs like gardening or restaurants, they understand that they will have

Table 1. Professions/Subjects of Interest for Participants Who Want to Study (Number Signifies Interviewee's Number)

#	Architect	Computers	Doctor	Engineer	English	Lawyer	Mechanic	Professor	Soccer Player	Do not know
1							X			
4						X				
5	X									
6									X	
8					X					
9										X
11					X					
12							X			
13										
14										
15							X	X		
17		X								
18										X
20										X
22										X
23			X					X		

to get an education to get higher paying jobs. The minors seemed more enthusiastic about the possibility of an education when they took a fieldtrip to the local Office of Educational Opportunity and Ethnic Affairs, where they learned about a program that helps low income and educationally disadvantaged students throughout their entire college experience. They also learned about the different resources available to students like them such as scholarships.

Vicente Chavez, 16-year-old participant #10, did not come here to study but instead endured the long passage to the United States so that he could give his younger brother back in Guatemala an education. Vicente's mother tried to give them both an education, but they were in such a state of poverty that she was barely able to feed her children. Vicente is determined to provide his brother with the education that he himself was not able to have as a young child. This selfless act is not unique to Vicente and many of the other minors have also come here to send money back to their families; for some of them, the money is to be used specifically to give their younger siblings the opportunity to receive an education.

The fact that unaccompanied minors come here to study was further cemented by the minors in the focus group. They too expressed the desire to get a better education. The percentage of focus group participants and individual interview participants coming here in pursuit of an education was about the same: 30 percent. "I came here because I want to get a high school diploma and then go on to become a psychologist," said one of the focus group participants. He said that becoming a psychologist has always been his dream and he plans to make it a reality. Another of the focus group participants said that he hopes to become an immigration lawyer so that he may help other young people in his situation.

Not all the minors desire to get an education; many come strictly for other purposes like working. Upon arriving in this country they realize, many times to their surprise, that it's mandatory to attend school until the age of eighteen. Interviewee participant # 7, Noel Valladares, expressed that he did not like being in school by stating, "I wanted to work, I did not know that it was mandatory to go to school" (interview with author, March 23, 2011). When Armando Hernandez, participant #19, was asked if he wanted to get an education he replied that he simply wanted to work picking lemons and was not interested in an education. I responded by telling him that if he got an education he could get a job that paid more than working an agricultural job. Hernandez replied that he was not interested in other jobs and he wished to work in the same job as his father and uncle, which is picking lemons.

For the minors who do want to pursue an education, the reality of whether they are allowed to stay legally in this country will play a huge role on their journey to college and university. This is true because in California illegal students are not eligible for financial aid, grants, student loans, and until very recently, scholarships. If they did not complete three years of high school in the state of California they would also not qualify for the status granted by the California Immigrant Higher Education Act (AB 540), which allows undocumented students to pay resident tuition fees versus out-of-state tuition. Before AB 540 was signed into law, it was almost impossible for undocumented students to go to college because out-of-state tuition is so high and it was made even more astronomically high by the fact that they were not eligible for financial aid, student loans, grants, or scholarships.

According to the U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Hispanic students are more likely to pursue higher education if they are born or naturalized citizens. Data indicates that in 2000 the total Hispanic enrollment rates of 18 to 24 year olds in colleges and universities was 22 percent, compared to 31 percent for Hispanic U.S. citizens (U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Educational Statistics 2003). These figures became significantly higher when looking at Hispanic high school graduates; 36 percent for the overall population and 43 percent for U.S. citizens (U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Educational Statistics 2003). Hispanic U.S. citizens who completed high school had almost identical college and university enrollment to that of the White population rate of 44 percent (U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Educational Statistics 2003). Although the number of Hispanics obtaining higher educations has increased significantly from 16 percent in 1980 to the current 44 percent, the fact that there is a large high school drop-out rate among Hispanics, especially among immigrants acts as a deterrent from enrolling in college or university, since a high school diploma or GED is generally required.

Recently the California Dream Act became law through the passage of two state Assembly Bills; AB 130 and AB 131 (McGreevy and York 2011). AB 130 relates to private scholarships and AB 131 relates to financial aid administered by the State of California. The California Dream Act will allow students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under AB 540 and who are not eligible for federal financial aid to apply for state financial aid beginning in the spring semester of 2013 (McGreevy and York 2011). Also beginning in

2013, California Dream Act students may complete an application for the 2013-14 Cal Grant Program in addition to being considered for State University and Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) grants (McGreevy and York 2011). This will no doubt have a positive influence on the number of immigrant Hispanic students pursuing a higher education, and the full impact of this law in the years to come is still to be seen.

REASONS FOR MIGRATING: JOBS

Twelve out of 20 unaccompanied minors interviewed at Estela Hope, or 60 percent, said they came to the U.S. in search of work. It was the answer most frequently given when asked what motivated them to leave their countries. In the focus group it was also the most popular answer given to this question with 66 percent of participants, or 10 out of 15, saying they came here to find a job. Most of the minors that came in search of ways to make money had jobs back home in different occupations like agriculture, driving busses, construction, loading trucks, and much more. Many of them are the main breadwinners of their families, and some have been since a very young age. They say that if they are able to get a job here, they wish to send money back to their home countries to help family.

One of the questions asked during interviews was, “What do you want to buy when you start earning money?” I expected them to say that they wanted to buy things like iPods or other items that American teenagers usually like at that age. Surprisingly this was not the response given. “My mother is very ill and my family cannot afford her medications so I came here to help out. I want to send money back home to help my mother,” says Vicente Chavez, 16-year-old research participant #10 (interview with author, April 16, 2011). Time and time again similar answers were given. They came in search of jobs, not with the intention of buying nice things for themselves but rather to help family members back home. Although the minors did talk about things they would like to buy in the U.S., their priority is helping family first. Carlos Tejada, participant #12, the same young man that lost his friend to the MS-13 gang, not only came here to flee violence but also to help out his sister. His friend Feliciano, who was murdered, was his sister’s boyfriend and she was with child at the time of the incident. He wants to find a job so that he can help his sister provide for the baby since there is no one else that can help her. Another of the minors, Ilario Mendez, 16-year-old research participant #14, said “I want to help my parents because they are very old and

can no longer work” (interview with author, May 11, 2011). According to him, work and money are hard to come by in his home country of Guatemala. In order to make enough money to buy sufficient food to live on, one has to work extremely hard. He went on to say that therein Guatemala one is lucky to get enough money for food, never mind that your clothes are in rags and you have no shoes. He knows this reality much too well since he began to work as a farm laborer when he was a just a 6-year-old child so that he could help his family put food on the table.

Ilario Mendez is not the only minor at Estela Hope who began working as a young child. Because the homes where these minors came from are so poor, it is not unusual for children to be forced to start working at a young age due to necessity; some began working as young as age 5. When they say they started working at age 5 they do not refer to the usual money-earning endeavors that U.S. kids typically take on to have spending money, such as washing cars or walking neighbors’ dogs. They worked physically demanding jobs in agriculture, construction, fishing, farming, and loading. Others were fortunate not to work such physically demanding jobs; some sold gum at the park or did things like begging and scavenging in garbage dumps. However, these activities are still tiring, especially for a child who does not have the stamina of an adult, not to mention all the dangers children face when working on streets such as criminal elements, severe weather, and vehicle accidents (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). Children who enter the work force can become the victims of physical as well as sexual exploitation, as well as being approached and sometimes forced to become drug mules. According to the World Bank (1999) 17 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean between the ages of 5 and 14 years of age are involved in some form of economic activity. Out of the 4 countries where the research participants came from (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico), Guatemala has the highest rate of child exploitation, employing around two million children in hard, dangerous, and poorly paid jobs (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). Ecuador is the only country in Latin America with a higher rate of child exploitation. In Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, agriculture is the most child-labor intensive industry (U.S. Department of Labor 2011). This statistic is reflected in the testimonies of the minors at Estela Hope since the majority of those who started working at a young age worked in agriculture. Children who work in agriculture use dangerous machinery, apply dangerous pesticides, and carry heavy loads.

The unaccompanied minors that came in search of work are ready and eager to find jobs to be able to help their families out and try to make a better life for themselves. When asked what kind of jobs they hope to find in the U.S. they answered that they came in search of jobs in restaurants, construction, car washes, agriculture, etc. “I want to work in a restaurant but I will take any job that is given to me” said Julio Martinez, 17-year-old research participant #11 (interview with author, April 13, 2011). Carlos Lopez, 16-year-old research participant #3 from Honduras, said that he heard people back home talking about the “good” money one can earn working at car washes in the U.S. While most Americans probably would not consider the income made at a car wash “good” money, it is a relatively large amount compared to what most people make in the minors’ home countries. Carlos Lopez also explained that the minimum wage in his country is 5,000 lempiras a month (that is equivalent to about 246.67 dollars), but most employers in Honduras do not comply with minimum wage regulations. He said that he was making about 3,000 lempiras a month (US\$148.00), but according to him, someone working an agricultural job or “en el campo” and with little or no education only gets paid about 1,200 lempiras a month (US\$59.20). “That is not enough money for someone who is trying to support a family,” says Carlos (interview with author, March 9, 2011), and he feels fortunate that he does not have the responsibility of a family yet.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES

THROUGH HOSTILE TERRITORY

[Note: Since all of my research participants (except for one) were from Central America, this section will focus on the experience of having to traverse Mexico illegally in order to get to the U.S. border. These experiences are expressed in this section as told by the unaccompanied minors from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.]

As mentioned in the earlier section titled “The Dangers of Crossing the U.S./Mexico Border Illegally,” passage into the United States without legal documents is a very dangerous and arduous endeavor. This venture is made even more difficult and perilous if one must first cross illegally through Mexico. My research participants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras had to do just that, confronting thieves, cartels, gangs, and many others that prey on those heading. Most immigrants have to jump on freight trains in order to cross Mexico and this is a gamble that risks both life and limb. They risk all of this while also facing the elements, hunger, fatigue, and much more.

In the stories the minors told about their journeys to the U.S. through Mexico, 14 out of the 20 research participants or 70 percent described their experience as negative. One of the participants chose not to talk about his journey at all since it was so horrible, saying that he does not like talking about “bad” things. Vicente Chavez’s (research participant #10) experience serves as a prime example of just what kinds of things can go wrong along the long trek to the U.S. He retells how his trip was going very well up until he got to the Mexican state of Veracruz; this was where he was held up by immigration officials. He and his friends ran and tried to hide from the officials, but Vicente was caught. He was told that they were going to lock him up indefinitely unless he paid 500 pesos. Vicente gave them all the money he had left which was about 250 pesos and was allowed to walk away. He was extremely worried because at this point he was far from home and with no money left in his pockets. Fortunately the next day he found his friends by chance and they were able to help him out.

With so many perils along the route to the U.S. border, the incident with Mexican immigration officials was not the only negative experience Vicente had on his journey. When he and his friends arrived at Altar in the state of Sonora, they were kidnapped by a group of crooked taxi drivers. They reached Altar at about 11:30 at night, and not being able to find any vacancy in any of the hotels, they decided to take a taxi to Cayucan. When they were half way there, in what seemed like the middle of nowhere, the taxi driver pulled over and took out a gun and demanded 3,000 quetzals for each one in return for their freedom. About 5 to 10 minutes later, 2 more taxis arrived and threaten to kill them and throw their bodies off cliffs where nobody would ever find them. Scared and tired, Vicente Chavez and his friends had money wired to them from friends and family members back home.

According to the minors at Estela Hope, they would much rather have to deal with Mexican immigration officials and thieves than drug cartels and gangs. “You have to hope that the Zetas do not get you,” exclaimed one of the focus group participants.

“I would prefer to get caught by immigration than the Zetas because many of the guys that I was traveling with were pretty badly beaten by the Zetas,” says Carlos Lopez, research participant #3 (interview with author, March 9, 2011). He was grateful that he was not caught by the notorious Zetas because “that usually means certain death or having things done to you that are so horrible that you wish you were dead” (Carlos Lopez, interview with author, March 9, 2011).

On top of having to watch out for individuals who prey on Central Americans, the minors also had to endure hunger, fatigue, and extreme weather. “I was wearing three jackets, two pants, and had a blanket wrapped around me and I could still not stand the cold,” says Carlos Lopez (interview with author, March 9, 2011). Once he made it to the U.S. border he attempted to cross by jumping the fence at about midnight. He fell into a water canal that was very deep and its waters were freezing. He almost did not get out because he was weighed down by all the clothes he was wearing. “I am very lucky I did not drown there,” continued Carlos (interview with author, March 9, 2011). He explained that he saw a sign that read “Aguas Peligrosas” [Dangerous Water] when he stepped on the other side. “I thought to myself ‘surely that water is poisonous’ but I feel fine,” added Carlos (interview with author, March 9, 2011). In Calexico he was caught by immigration because he could no longer run due to uncontrollable shaking brought on by the cold and being soaked. [Note: I

explained to him that the canal he fell into was most likely the All American Canal which runs parallel to the Mexico/U.S. border for many miles, and that the sign said it was dangerous to get in the water because the current can be strong and people drown in it every year, not because the water is poisonous. He was relieved when I told him this because since the incident he had worried that he would get sick and die from swimming in what he thought was toxic water.]

Not everyone's experiences of getting to the U.S. were negative; 6 out of the 20 minors or 30 percent described their journeys as having been positive. Some of the minors' families had a little more money and could afford to send for them by way of busses or passenger trains instead of having to hop freight trains. "My experience getting to the States from Guatemala was beautiful because I rode the bus with my older brother and it was a very scenic road," explained 13-year-old research participant #9, Cristian Roma (interview with author, March 30, 2011). He added that he did not feel afraid at any point because his older brother was with him all the way. Javier Rosas, research participant #21, was among the minors that claimed to have had a good experience. The events that took place at the beginning of his voyage were optimistic but the way it ended can't really be described as positive. Javier and his cousin got lost in the desert, and having no other option were forced to turn themselves in to U.S. Border Patrol because they had not eaten in over 4 days. One could view this as positive because they were able to find help, whereas the other alternative would have been to perish in the desert.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

From the minors at Estela Hope I learned that there is some type of organizational assistance for Central Americans trying to make their way north to the United States. Many of the research participants spoke of *Casa del Migrante* (Migrant's House), a network of shelters designed to aid those along their journey. It was founded by the Catholic missionaries of St. Charles-Scalabrinians, and is part of an international community serving migrants and refugees of different cultures, religions, and ethnicities in 5 continents and 32 countries. The congregation was founded in 1887 by Bishop Scalabrini of Piacenza, Italy, at a time of mass migration from Italy and other parts of Europe into the Americas (Missionaries of St. Charles-Scalabrinians 2010). Their focus has always been to aid the

poorest migrants, and in present day Latin America the many migrants heading north are some of the most marginalized people. Thus *Casa del Migrante* was initiated along this route.

The shelters aid migrants by providing help in the form of basic things that are necessary for survival on their journey north. For example, because of the incredible amount of walking migrants have to endure, one of the things that some of the shelters do is swap old shoes with fresh ones. The soles from the old shoes are removed and replaced with new ones. “Most of the time, the rest of the shoe is in good condition so we just have to swap out the soles and then someone else can reuse them. We cannot afford to buy new ones” (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011), says one of the volunteers at *Casa del Migrante* in Arriaga, Chiapas. The shelters also provide lodging, showers, meals, garments, legal aid, and basic medical attention. These safe havens are, for the most part, run by volunteers and receive funding through monetary donations and contributions of food, clothes, medical supplies, and other goods.

The amount of time that migrants are provided with lodging varies from shelter to shelter. For instance, the shelter in Tecun Uman, Guatemala offers lodging for 3 days while the one in Tijuana allows for a stay of up to 15 days. Although they are allowed to stay anywhere from 3 to 15 days, the average stay in some of these shelters is only one night since the migrants are eager to reach their destinations (Rigoni 2010). The shelters located on the U.S./Mexico Border, such as those located in Tijuana and Mexicali, normally have rates of longer occupancy among those staying there. This is because many of the migrants there are waiting to cross or waiting to hear from family members after being deported or caught by U.S. immigration officials.

The youth interviewed utilized these shelters in an area spanning from Guatemala City, Guatemala to Tijuana, Mexico. The unaccompanied minors from Honduras and El Salvador must cross through Guatemala first and most of them made use of the shelter in Guatemala City. Central Americans sleep at the shelters that are located along their journey whenever they can, but many times they must sleep on the streets, on top of trains, or anywhere they can find a place to spend the night. They must continue to do this until they reach the U.S./Mexico border.

THE TRAIN

When the minors at Estela Hope were asked what methods of transportation they used along their journey, they mentioned walking, taking buses, hitchhiking, riding concealed in trucks/vans, and riding aboard inflatable rafts to cross rivers. Only one was fortunate enough to have made the long journey on an airplane. A widely used form of transportation that many Central Americans use to cross Mexico is riding atop of freight trains. 12 out of the 19 Central American research participants, or 63 percent, crossed Mexico on freight trains. People risk both life and limb when undertaking this dangerous venture; it is the reason that the train has been nicknamed *El Tren de la Muerte* (The Train of Death) and *la Bestia* (The Beast). Every year each of the *Casa del Migrante* shelters in Mexico help dozens of victims who lose arms, legs, fingers, and toes to the Beast (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). According to Red Cross estimates, in the Mexican State of Chiapas alone, U.S. bound Central Americans who ride the freight trains lose limbs at the rate of nearly one every other day (Nazario 2007).

Someone heading north to the U.S. by way of freight train must ride anywhere from 10 to 15 trains that can each take from 6 hours to up to 3 days to reach their destinations (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). After crossing the Suchiate River, the border between Guatemala and Mexico, immigrants must walk 170 miles to get to Arriaga, Chiapas, the place where they will catch the first freight train out (Nazario 2007). The trains used to run all the way down to Hidalgo City on the Guatemala/Mexico border, but a hurricane in 2005 demolished the railroad tracks and they have yet to be repaired (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). By the time migrants have walked all 170 miles to get to where they will wait for the first train, their feet are swollen, blistered, and bleeding. The walk can take anywhere from 10 to 18 days.

Many times immigrants are not exactly sure of what trains they are supposed to take in order to reach their desired destinations and can end up taking trains that take them way out of the way, actually making their journeys longer (Nazario 2007). The deeper into Mexican territory the trains go, the faster the speed at which they run, increasing the risk of accidents (Ultreras and Gonzalez 2011). Mexico City is the half way point on the flight through Mexico, and this is where the trains really pick up speed. Unlike further south where the trains do not depart as frequently, here the trains come and go constantly. If migrants

miss a train they do not have to wait around for days to catch the next one. The only disadvantage is that since the trains run at faster speeds, it is more difficult and dangerous to hop on and ride them.

Since the trains can take days to get to their destinations, immigrants must spend some nights sleeping on top of trains. Minors from both the interviews and focus group agree that nights aboard the top of freight trains are extremely cold. Focus group participant, Gregorio Izquierdo, reported that layers of pants, shirts, and jackets were not sufficient barrier against the chilly weather. Even though he was huddled with two other friends for warmth, none got any sleep that night. During the day, the opposite can be true, with the baking sun burning all who venture in its rays. The weather conditions are not the only thing that discourages people on top of freight trains from sleeping. Jesus Ortega, participant #20, says that there were many nights where he did not sleep at all because he was afraid that he would fall off the train and lose a limb or die. The very real fear of falling off the train was expressed by many of the other minors. The movement and sound of the running train was described by the minors in the interviews and focus group as “a force that tries to rock you to sleep.” Carlos Lopez, research participant #3, was traveling with a friend who fell off the train, was caught underneath it and lost a leg as result of it. His friend had to return home and now instead of him helping his family, his family has to take care of him.

Not only do immigrants aboard trains have to worry about falling, pests (bees, rats, mosquitoes, etc), the elements, and fatigue, they must also watch out for people that make a living by preying on those that are forced to ride trains. If one is not willing to give them money they are likely to kill, rape, cut off body parts, or throw one off the train. According to Fernando Aguilar, research participant #9, there are some people that actually live in the empty cargo wagons. “Most of them are drug addicts that will do anything to get money for a fast fix,” says Fernando (interview with author, March 23, 2011). Police authorities and Mexican immigration also harass these immigrants by chasing, arresting, and beating migrants, and often demanding bribes in exchange for freedom. “We would run and jump from one wagon to the next when immigration was chasing us. We would leap off the roofs of moving trains hitting the ground hard, and they also would hurl themselves off trying to catch us. I was not afraid” (Noel Valladares research participant #7, interview with author, March 23, 2011).

Although there are many people that take advantage of the vulnerability of the individuals on their voyages north, there are people that want to help. In some of the towns that the trains traverse, women go up to the train tracks pushing wheelbarrows full of water bottles, food, and sometimes even clothes or blankets. They put them in bags and hold them out for the people on the trains to take as they pass by.

The minors shared that they feel an incredible sense of accomplishment and gratitude when they are finally able to reach the U.S./Mexico border. Some reported singing songs, giving each other hugs and hand shakes upon realizing that they were just a few miles from the United States border. Carlos Lopez recalls the adversity he had overcome and the joy he felt as he boarded the last train: “On the last train we caught everyone kept saying ‘oh thank God’. It is true that we had much to be thankful for but I will never get on another freight train again. I had to get on 14 trains each lasting a minimum of 12 hours each. One lasted three days. Day and night without food or drink, well I did have a little bit of water” (Carlos Lopez, interview with author, March 9, 2011).

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: THE AMERICAN DREAM

THE AMERICAN DREAM VERSUS THE UNITED STATESIAN AMERICAN DREAM

Eight out of 20, or 40 percent, of the research participants that took part in the individual interviews said they had heard of the term “American Dream” and knew what it meant. Although some of the interview participants were not familiar with the term American Dream, they were aware of the concept. Nine out of the 20 research participants have heard of an idea similar to that of the American Dream but they did not have a word for it. Two had heard of the American Dream idea but did not know what it meant and only one had never heard of the term and had never heard of a concept similar to it.

If the minors did not know what the American Dream meant it was explained to them as “being able to achieve your dreams and being able to have a better future if one is in the United States no matter your skin color, language, or religion.” When asked if they believed this idea to be true, 95 percent said they thought it was real. Only one said that he did not think it was true but when asked why he thought this, his response was “I do not know.” The 95 percent that do believe the American Dream to be a reality described it to me in various ways: “Whatever people can dream of, they can do” (Ilario Mendez research participant #14, interview with author, May 11, 2011), “there is no work in my country and here you can be somebody” (Ulises Gamboa research participant #17, interview with author, June 1, 2011), “the American Dream is prosperity, people come to make something of themselves” (Bryan Ronaldo research participant #18, interview with author, June 8, 2011).

The concept of the American Dream takes on a different meaning and life for the minors at Estela Hope from what the average American refers to as the American Dream. It is important to note the different way in which they define the word “American” and in turn how that affects that which is known as the American Dream. For the most part, in the United States the word “American” is used to refer to those born or living in the United States. This is due partly to the fact that the full name of the country is *The United States of*

America (Definición ABC 2011). Most people in the United States use the word “American” to refer to a native or citizen of the United States (Definición ABC 2011). In Latin America, people from the U.S. are often referred to as *estadounidenses* (United Statesians). This word is not slang or considered offensive; it is the actual proper term for someone native to the United States. In the United States (or in the English language), however, such a word does not exist and most people simply refer to themselves as American. They refer to those born in Africa as “Africans” and those born in Europe as “Europeans”, etc., yet they do not call all those born in America “Americans”. This hegemonic grip on the use of this classification is something Hispanic artists *Tigres del Norte* (Northern Tigers) and *Calle 13* (13th Street) talk about in their popular song titled “America.” The minors explained that the songs says, “America is the whole continent and whoever is born here is American, skin color might be different, but we are all God’s children, we are brothers” (focus group participants, interview with author, March 7, 2012). The minors feel that they deserve a chance to go forth in search of the American Dream since they too are American. It is a sentiment shared not only by the unaccompanied minors at Estela Hope but also by many people south of the United States border. This sentiment is manifested in different ways; for instance, in Latin America “America” is a popular name for both men and women.

When the words “American definition” are looked up in one of the most popular search engines, Google, one gets a definition consisting of an adjective and a noun followed by a list of links such as dictionary.com and Merriam-Webster online. The adjective meaning of American is defined as “of, relating to, or characteristic of the United States or its inhabitants” (Google 2012). The noun definition of “American” is “a native or citizen of the United States.” On the other hand, if one goes to the same search engine, Google, but instead does a search on the Mexican Google (or www.google.com.mx), one will get different results. The first definition defines “American” as “someone from the American continent or something pertaining to the American continent” (Wordreference.com 2005). Notice how the English search of “American definition” did not define American as someone pertaining to the Americas (as in the continents). The second website listed under the Mexican Google results goes into a detailed explanation of why *estadounidenses* (United Statesians) exclude the rest of the continent from this category in a type of imperialistic power play (Definición ABC 2011).

Apart from defining the word “American” differently, one important difference is that to the youth at Estela Hope, the dangerous journey of coming to the United States is a crucial component of the American Dream. In comparison, I could not find a contemporary source that would list coming to the United States as part of the American Dream. For example, under the American Dream Contract in the Rebuild the Dream (2011) website, a conservative organization that claims to be upholding the American Dream, it identifies 10 steps to restore the economy and the American Dream but none of these steps identified coming to the U.S. as part of the dream. Over 100,000 Americans came together online and in their communities to rate over 25,000 ideas and identified these as the 10 steps: Invest in America’s infrastructure, Create 21st century jobs, Invest in public education, offer Medicare for all, make work pay, secure social security, return to fairer tax rates, end the wars and invest at home, tax wall street speculation, strengthen democracy (Rebuild the Dream 2011). Although this organization is not representative of all the United States population’s sentiments, with such a large amount of anti-immigrant policies such as SB1070 and systems like E-Verify, it would be difficult to argue that getting to the U.S. whether legally or illegally is part of what Americans today identify as the American Dream.

In previous centuries however, the journey of getting to the United States was an essential part of the American Dream. Two authors that had a big influence on the idea of the American Dream, James Truslow Adams (1933) and Horatio Alger (Leggett and Brinnin 2003), both described it as an immigrant’s dream. Horatio Alger’s rag to riches stories inspired many immigrants, and in James Truslow Adams’ *Epic of America* he stated that the American Dream had brought “tens of millions of all nations to our shores” (1933:405). This same sentiment was captured beautifully in Emma Lazarus poem “The New Colossus” which was inscribed in a bronze plaque in the Statue of Liberty’s pedestal in 1883. It reads:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
 With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" (NYC Insider Guide 2008)

An important inquiry of this research was the question of whether false perspectives of the American Dream propel the juvenile immigrants to make the journey to *el otro lado* (the other side). Upon discovering that they believe that the act of coming to the United States is part of their American Dream, one thing becomes evident: their perceptions of the American Dream are not unrealistic; they are simply a more traditional view of the dream as it was conceived in the 19th century. This view is closer to the original concept, a dream of immigrants whose voyage to the "New Eden" was included in the saga of the American Dream.

Out of the 20 minors interviewed, 11 or 55 percent explicitly stated that they believed that the act of arriving in the U.S. was fulfilling a large and essential portion of the American Dream. Research participant #17, Ulises Gamboa, stated that he believed that "se te fue el sueño Americano" [your American Dream leaves you] (interview with author, June 1, 2011) if something happens to you along the way that deters you from getting to the U.S., such as being killed, getting caught by immigration, or losing a limb trying to hop on a train. He went on to say that the dangers and obstacles of getting to the U.S. in order to make that portion of the American Dream a reality makes the Dream more interesting and irresistible. "Corren peligro y eso hace mas interesante hablar de eso del sueño Americano" [They (the minors trying to cross) are in danger and that is what makes it more irresistible to talk about that which is called the American Dream"] (Ulises Gamboa research participant #17, interview with author, June 1, 2011). When the issue came up of whether or not arriving in the U.S was a part of the American Dream in the focus group, all 15 participants agreed that one must get here safely and without getting caught by immigration in order to fulfill a crucial part of the American Dream. Not only do they think that it is part of what they consider the American Dream but they also made it clear that they think it is a key component of the dream. Focus group participant, Manuel Lozano, said, "el sueño Americano es llegar a este lado con bien" [the American Dream is arriving on this side safely] (interview with author, March 7, 2012).

Another key difference in the components of the American Dream is that to the minors at Estela Hope, the American Dream is dangerous, and with danger comes an element

of fear. Since getting to the United States illegally is so dangerous and since getting here is such a key component of the American Dream, this in turn makes the American Dream itself dangerous. The fear does not stop when the dangerous journey to the U.S. is completed. Undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S. live in constant fear of authorities because as research participant Ramon Perez put it “they could demand to see papers at any given moment” (interview with author, May 5, 2011). This fear is magnified in states like Arizona with its SB 1070 law which has legalized racial profiling in an attempt to catch and deport undocumented individuals.

Whether or not people reside in states with laws similar to that of SB 1070, authorities like police officers sometimes take on the role of immigration agents. One of the minors that participated in the focus group, Maximiliano Ayala was stopped by Oceanside Police in California. He was simply walking near the pier with other friends when two police officers demanded to see papers. Maximiliano and two other friends from the group did not have U.S. issued identifications since they were undocumented. They did show police their high school IDs, but the authorities did not accept these saying that they looked “illegal.” Maximiliano and the other two friends were immediately handcuffed and driven off in police cars as if they had committed a crime. The other two friends were over 18 and immediately deported. Maximiliano was still a minor and ended up in a detention center and eventually at Estela Hope.

As evident by Maximiliano’s story, just because laws comparable to Arizona’s SB 1070 have not been passed in states like California does not mean that local police do not engage in similar practices. Other fears the minors expressed in the interviews and focus group included being separated from love ones living in the U.S. if they were to be caught by authorities, deportation, and loss of job due to illegal status. A few of them, those that were caught after already having lived here for a period of time, said that they were not going out due to fear of being recognized by someone as undocumented. These young men went from home to work and from work to home. They expressed feeling like prisoners of their homes and jobs.

Another key difference between the United Statesian American Dream and the minors’ American Dream is that their conception of the idea seems to be more concerned with the family unit rather than the individual. According to James Truslow Adams, who

coined the term “American Dream,” the concept of the dream mainly pertains to the individual. He states that it’s “a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” (Adams 1933:404). Current California high school U.S. history textbooks also describe the importance and triumph of the individual—the independent and self-reliant person—as an important element of the American Dream (Leggett and Brinnin 2003). In contrast, the minors’ American Dream is more about the family unit rather than the individual. Many of the minors stated that their dream was to come to the U.S. in order to help family members back home. For instance, as mentioned in an earlier section, research participant Carlos Tejada’s main goal is to find a job so that he can send money back home to his sister who was pregnant when he left. The father, a friend of Carlos, was shot and killed by MS-13 gang members, and if he is unable to send money back, the baby and his sister might starve.

Last but not least, another thing that could be described as a difference is how real the minors believe the American Dream to be. More studies would need to be done on the opinions of United Statesians to see whether they believe that the American Dream is still alive and well, but the fact that thousands have joined the Rebuild the Dream organization and movements like Occupy are clear indicators that at least some believe that it has lost its integrity as a defining factor of being United Statesian. The tattered belief in the dream could be partly due to the fact that the U.S. is currently in a recession and that the gap between the rich and poor keeps widening; currently the top ten percent of the country’s population has a median net worth of \$883,600.00 while the bottom 20 percent stands at just \$7,900.00 (Shipler 2004). Movements like Occupy are clearly in favor of a different America and demonstrations are sprouting up all over the country. To the minors at Estela Hope, the United States is still the land of opportunity because it is so much better off economically than all of their home countries. Out of the minors that were interviewed all but one (Armando Hernandez research participant #19, interview with author, June 22, 2011) said that they believed the American Dream is real. Vicente Chavez, research participant #10, explained that he believed it to be real, “I think [the American Dream] is real. I believe that

the United States is the best example of a door to success” (interview with author, April 16, 2011).

THE AMERICAN DREAM RESTRICTION EFFECT

The original concept of the American Dream has changed through the centuries. As discussed in the previous section titled “The American Dream versus The United Statesian American Dream,” it is no longer seen as a dream of immigrants as obvious by long standing anti-immigrant policy and sentiment. One of the most important elements of the dream, the immigrant, has been taken out of the equation. Not only was the immigrant taken out, but also the term “American” was transformed into a word that excludes all Americans but those of the United States. United Statesians, as Spanish speakers call them, now lay sole claim to the “American” identity. The process of omission and exclusion that transformed the idea as time passed is what I call the American Dream Restriction effect. Its product, a dream that belongs only to an exclusive few United Statesians who are not immigrants (or Native American), leaves its bounty to the few, mostly Anglo United Statesians.

The reversal of the American Dream Restriction effect would go contrary to current U.S. immigration policy, especially when it comes to immigration from Latin America, since the hegemonic grip of the word “American” would have to be released and given back to all Americans. This would mean that Hispanic Americans like Mexicans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and many others would have as much claim to the American Dream as people living in the United States. It would mean that equal rights to enter the U.S. and work in the U.S. economy would be in order; at the very least it would mean a more open immigration policy. A picture of long gone times when droves of immigrants entered the U.S. legally through Ellis Island comes to mind. This of course, would not fly well in the face of current anti-Latino immigrant sentiment in the United States. This concept would also run contrary to those for whom organizations like Rebuild the Dream were created. Their contract of the American Dream states: “We, the American people, promise to defend and advance a simple ideal: liberty and justice . . . for all. Americans who are willing to work hard and play by the rules should be able to find a decent job, get a good home in a strong community, retire with dignity, and give their kids a better life” (Rebuild the Dream 2011).

Of course when they say “American people” and “Americans” it is understood that they are referring to individuals native to the United States of America.

It seems that throughout history once a group of people has been stripped of their rightful name it is sometimes difficult for them to take it back. For instance, descendants of the group of Native Americans known as the Anasazi have been trying to change their name since the 1990s (Waldbaum 2006:12). They argue that “Anasazi” is a derogatory term meaning “enemy ancestor” or “ancestors of our enemies” in the Navajo language (Waldbaum 2006:12). There is a history of bad blood between these two groups, and many descendants of the Anasazi have expressed to National Park officials that they do not wish their ancestors to be known by a slur they were called by the Navajo. Instead of being called Anasazi they want their ancestors to be known as “Ancestral Pueblo People” or “Ancestral Puebloans.” However, not all tribal members agree since “pueblo” is a non-native word; it is the Spanish word for town or people (Schaafsma 2002). These tribal members are not the only ones who are hesitant about the name change. “Many archaeologists familiar with Anasazi are reluctant to replace it with something bulkier and, for them, no more meaningful” (Waldbaum 2006:12).

The group of people that we have come to know as the “Anasazi” are not the only people who were barred from using their true name. Interestingly enough, the Navajo also feel that they were denied their rightful name. The Din’e people were bestowed the name “Navajo” by the Spanish sometime in the 1600s (Schaafsma 2002:208). The name “Apache de Nauajo,” or Apache of the Nuajo, first appeared in Memorial to the King of Spain by Benavides. The Spanish referred to all indigenous people surrounding the Rio Grande as “the great Apache nation” (James 1914:182). In his writing, Benavides used “Apache de Nauajo” to distinguish between a group of people that, unlike the rest of the “apache nation,” farmed rather than hunted (James 1914:182). Benavides wrote that the “Nuajo are very great farmers for that is what Naujo signifies-great planted fields” (James 1914:182). Still others think that the name came from the Spanish word for clasped knife (New York Times 1993). Whatever the case may be, in the 1990s they attempted to legally change their name back to Din’e, which is the name they call themselves (Norrell 1994). The word “Din’e” means “Children of God” and it is the name which they believe was given to them by the Great Spirit (Schaafsma 2002). Their Tribal President at the time, Peterson Zah, said that all groups of

people have a right “to determine by what name they are called” (Donovan 1992:B16) and that by changing their name they are “simply exercising self-determination and tribal sovereignty” (New York Times 1993:1). This effort was to no avail even with an estimated 80 percent approval rate by tribal members; the proposal was rejected and they were forced to keep the name “Navajo” (New York Times 1993; Norrell 1994). A person’s name is part of their identity and when it is deliberately changed or made to exclude some (but not others) who rightfully belong in that category of people, it marginalizes and discriminates. For most all of these youth, they too are Americans.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS: SOURCES FOR IDEAS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

FORMING CONCEPTS FROM MANY DIFFERENT PLACES

The sources for the ideas, views, and concepts for the American Dream among the unaccompanied minors at Estela Hope came from many places. They hear about it from people that used to live in the United States and migrated back or were deported. They read about it in books, learn about it through the media, watch movies depicting what it is like, and hear songs that help them form ideas about it. The majority of the interview participants heard about the American Dream from family and friends that migrated to the U.S. and kept in touch through telephone calls and visits; or moved back or were deported. Songs and television (movies, news, soap operas, shows, etc) were the second most stated source of information for having heard of the American Dream. Although it came in second, songs were among one of the most popular topics during the focus group. The least mentioned source was a booklet produced by the Mexican government intended for immigrants entering the U.S. illegally. This comic book style guide warns of the dangers of crossing the border and also explains basic laws in the United States and immigrant rights (McKinley 2005). It explains the symptoms and warning signs of things like hyperthermia and heat stroke, and also gives advice on what to do if one gets lost trying to cross the desert or mountains.²

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Globalized technology has made communicating over long distances much easier; we have email, chat rooms, cell phones, Skype, inexpensive long distance calls with calling cards, and social networks like Facebook and MySpace to name a few. That is why it comes

2. In 2005 the Mexican government drew fire from United Statesian advocates for tighter borders because they claimed the booklet is a manual on how to enter the U.S. undocumented (McKinley 2005). In reality this small booklet was published with the intention to reduce the loss of life along the border.

as no surprise that out of the research participants who knew of the American Dream, the majority heard about it from family and friends who had migrated to the United States and kept in touch. “I talked to my cousins and mother over the phone every week and that is how I first heard of that thing called the American Dream” says Leonel Ramos, research participant #4 (interview with author, March 16, 2011). Another minor, Vicente Chavez (research participant #10) said, “some people I knew back home came to this country. Eight to ten years have passed since they moved here and from what I can see, they have bettered themselves in many ways. They now have a nicer house, better things, and their families are happier” (interview with author, April 16, 2011).

SONGS

One of the most talked about sources of information for the American Dream, from both interview and focus group research participants, were songs. Music is an essential part of Latin American culture, due in part with these countries’ struggles with illiteracy, particularly among rural peoples. For this group it has become a crucial source of information for important issues (Sheridan 2009). Music is also a well-accepted form of communication, especially because in many of these countries radio is the most effective public communication medium (Sheridan 2009). Successful musicians are proficient at reading community sentiments and incorporating these shared beliefs and meanings into song, which in turn usually boosts the popularity of that response or expression (Gebesmair 2002). One can understand how a specific group of people responds to an issue by listening to what popular artists’ sing in their music concerning those issues (Gebesmair 2002).

In Hispanic culture it is essentially taboo for men to show and express sentiments of sadness and pain. The reason is that *machismo* dictates a large part of male identity and to show feelings is equivalent to weakness. However, one of the few ways that it is culturally acceptable to convey emotions is through songs. Because it is okay for men to talk about their emotions through songs, many mariachi songs almost sound like the singer is about to cry or crying. Men use a type of wailing that demonstrates high emotional states. Since the immigrant experience, especially the undocumented immigrant experience, is so emotionally overwhelming and a dominantly male experience, it is no surprise that there are many songs written about coming to the U.S., being undocumented, the American Dream, etc.

The songs that the minors talked about as sources of information for the American Dream and the immigrant experience, in the sense of both getting here and establishing oneself, came from a variety of different musical genres. Some of these genres included: rock, *norteña* (northern), trova (one of the great roots of the Cuban music tree), folklore, indie, rap, and hip hop songs. A few of the songs mentioned were the result of different artists coming together and doing a mixture of *norteña* with hip hop, *norteña* with rap or a mixture of any of the earlier mentioned genres. It is not rare for a single artist to add several different musical elements to his or her music.

One of the most popular songs among the Estela Hope youth is a trova/folklore song titled “Sueño Americano” [American Dream] by Honduran artist Paul Hughes, whose stage name is Polache. With about 50 percent of my research participants being from Honduras, it is important to understand the large connection they feel to Polache’s music. Born to a Honduran mother and German father, Polache became a renowned Honduran national icon for promoting Honduran national pride as well as pointing out the country’s beauty (Otis 2009). “Sueño Americano” is an upbeat bilingual song played on the guitar that has one Spanish line followed by another line of the English translation. It truly humanizes the experience of the Latin American immigrant in the United States. In the music video one sees Polache singing in different scenic parts of Los Angeles, California, next to working Latinos. Throughout it one sees the word “humano” (human) spelled out by various things like rose petals or the cloth scraps of a working woman’s sewing machine. The song starts with the voice of a man asking his mother for her blessing because he is about to embark on the dangerous journey north in search of the American Dream.

Madrecita déme su bendición me voy en busca del sueño Americano.
I am a human being looking for the American Dream
Yo soy un ser humano en busca del sueño americano.

[Mother, give me your blessing for I am going in search of the American Dream.
I am a human being looking for the American Dream (this line in English)
I am a human being looking for the American Dream (this line in Spanish).]
(Only Lyrics 2010)

Many of the songs the minors mentioned are part of the musical genre known as *musica norteña* (northern music). *Norteña* music evolved from polka music in the mid-nineteenth century after it was introduced into Mexico by the Germans. *Norteñas* are comprised mainly of *corridos* (ballads) that are played on the accordion, the main

instrument of this type of music, accompanied by a single drum, double bass, and on occasion, additional instruments such as the guitar or clarinet (Sheridan 2009:150). One of the most popular groups for this type of music, mentioned time and time again by research participants, are *Los Tigres del Norte* (Northern Tigers). They are known for having an assortment of songs that deal with a repertoire of different issues from the struggles faced by migrants when crossing to the U.S. to the hardships endured by these people once they have reached *el otro lado* (the other side).

A song titled “America” is one of the *Tigres del Norte*’s most trendy songs and it is a favorite among the youth at Estela Hope. This song is a *norteña* song done with the popular hip hop/rap group called *Calle 13* (13th street). A few of the minors expressed that the first time they ever heard the term “American Dream” was in the “America” song. The focus group explained that in the song, Rene, the vocalist sings about the American Dream. When asked what they learned about the American Dream from the song they said that we are all equal and that we can all achieve the American Dream. “It is not easy but nothing is impossible” said one of the boys in the focus group. “It is harder if you are illegal” added another (Damian Sanchez, interview with author, March 7, 2012).

soy la pesadilla del sueño americano,
soy America, soy lo que dejaron,
toda la sobra de lo que se robaron,
una fabrica de humo,
mano de obra campesina para tu consumo,
todo lo comparto con mis hermanos,
soy la pesadilla del sueño americano, ¡dile!

[I am the nightmare of the American Dream,
I am America, I am what they left behind,
all the leftovers of what they stole.

A warehouse of smoke,
fieldwork labor for your consumption,
I share everything with my brothers.

I am the nightmare of the American Dream.] (Coveralia Música 2012)

Since the American Dream is so intertwined with the journey of coming to the U.S., many of these songs also warn and talk about the risks involved in crossing. An example of such a song is titled *El Santo del los Mojados* (The Wetback Saint). In the chorus *Los Tigres del Norte* ask the patron saint of illegal immigrants, Saint Peter, to guide them and give them protection in order to get to the U.S. safely. “Send us your guidance, Lord, by seas and

deserts so that neither cold nor heat claims any more deaths.” They understand the incredible risk involved in coming to the U.S. illegally but they implore to the Wetback Saint to allow them “brincar el alambre pues nuestros hijos se mueren de hambre” [to jump the fence for our children die of hunger].

A song titled *A La Jaula de Oro* (The Golden Cage), another of *Los Tigres*’ hits, is about the illusion people have of this country versus the reality of being undocumented in the U.S. The song is about an undocumented immigrant who has established himself in the U.S. but is unhappy because he longs for his home country, his kids no longer speak his language, and all he does is work. “He feels like a prisoner in this country,” explained one of the focus group participants. “He also says that even though the cage is made of gold, it is still a cage,” added someone else. The character in the song remains indoors as much as possible because he is afraid he will get caught by immigration. So, he goes from work to home and from home to work.

De que me sirve el dinero
si estoy como prisionero
dentro de esta gran nación
cuando me acuerdo hasta lloro
y aunque la jaula sea de oro
no deja de ser prisión.

[What good is money if I am a prisoner
inside this great nation.
When I reminisce, I even cry
and although the cage is made of gold
it does not stop it from being a prison.](Lyrics Mania 2011)

MOVIES

Another popular source for ideas of the American Dream, but not as popular as songs, were movies. The movies that the youth at Estela Hope talked about were movies that depicted the Latino immigrant experience. Some were documentaries and others were feature films. One of the most talked about films was a documentary titled the *La Bestia* (The Beast) by Pedro Ultras and Hiram Gonzalez (2011). This Spanish documentary (available with English subtitles and voice over) is a perfect portrayal of the experience Central Americans live jumping from freight train to freight train in order to get to the United States. Many of the research participants were really able to relate to this film since so many of them were forced to ride atop the trains. In this documentary many of the illegal immigrants interviewed

said that the reason they risked their lives on the train was in order to reach the American Dream.

Another of the movies talked about was the film *Bajo la Misma Luna* (Under the Same Moon) which is about a young Mexican boy, about 8 years old, who comes to the United States by himself in order to reunite with his mother. “I love that movie because I had similar adventures on my way to the United States” said Jorge Garcia during the focus group. This movie has a happy ending with the boy safely reaching his mother after a few close calls on his way to Los Angeles. Although he endures hardships, he also has good luck. While hitchhiking, he is picked up by a van which happens to be the tour van/bus of the legendary *Tigres Del Norte*. They give him a ride to his destination and sing a song on the way titled *Letra ‘Por Amor’* (For Love) that talks about crossing the border illegally in order to be reunited with a loved one. The song ends with the line “y por amor es que voy a cruzar la frontera sin miedo” (Musica.com 2012) [for love I am going to cross the border without fear] which ties beautifully into the boy’s journey of reunification with his mother.

Section of *Letra ‘Por Amor’* (‘For Love’) lyrics in *Under the Same Moon*:

Si por amor soy capaz de parar con el pecho una bala
y es por amor que no voy a dejar que nos corten las alas
si es el amor la razón el motor en la tierra y el cielo

y por amor es que voy a morir
protegiendo tus sueños

si por un futuro contigo
yo doy por completo mi vida

que dios y la virgen morena
nos muestren la ruta bendita

para poderte encontrar
para volverte a abrazar

si por amor soy capaz de parar con el pecho una bala
y es por amor que me arriesgo a cruzar esta vez a la mala
si es el amor la razón el motor en la tierra y el cielo

y por amor es que voy a cruzar
la frontera sin miedo

[For love I am capable of stopping a bullet with my chest.
And it is because of love that I will not allow them to cut our wings
For love is the engine of the land and the sky
And for love I will die
Protecting your dreams

For a future near you
I would give my life completely
May god and the dark-skinned virgin
Show us the blessed route

So that I may find you
So that I may hold you once more

For love I am capable of stopping a bullet with my chest.
And it is because of love that I am taking the risk of crossing illegally
For love is the engine of the land and the sky

And for love I am going to cross
the border without fear.] (Musica.com 2012)

Many of these movies, just like the songs, warn about the dangers of crossing the border illegally. The young boy in *Under the Same Moon* almost asphyxiates because he tries to sneak into the U.S. hidden in a car on a hot day. The documentary *The Beast* interviews people that have lost arms and legs to the train. Another film also directed by Pedro Ultras, *7 Soles (7 Suns)*, is about a group of illegal immigrants attempting to enter the United States by crossing the Arizona desert. “Many of the people in the group die so you get a sense of how dangerous crossing really is” explained one of the focus group participants (interview with author, March 7, 2012).

CHAPTER 8

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

CONCLUSION

This project examines perceptions of the American Dream in Hispanic unaccompanied minors (mainly from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador) at the Estela Hope shelter in Southern California, their reasons for coming to the U.S., and their experiences on the journey north. In the eyes of the youth, one of the American Dream's most central components is the act of reaching *el otro lado* (the other side). A main goal of this research was to provide an opportunity for the youth at Estela Hope to tell their stories, beliefs, ideas, and perceptions in their own words.

The stories of their dangerous journeys to reach the U.S. were filled with courage but also fear. Even though there were some consistencies, such as riding atop freight trains, no two stories were the same. As Slack and Whiteford have put it, "border crossing is a dynamic situation changing quickly in reaction to border securitization" and navigation of dangers (2011:18). This makes an already difficult research topic even more elusive because strategies change in response to obstacles, making the experiences of each wave of migration an important arena of study.

The unaccompanied minors at Estela Hope shared various reasons for coming to the United States, with some individuals listing more than one reason. The majority, 60 percent, stated that they came in search of work and as stated earlier, they come in search of what most United Statesians consider to be low paying jobs; 45 percent claimed to have come to reunify with family since tougher post-September 11 immigration laws have restricted transnationalism; 35 percent came in search of an opportunity for education; and 20 percent left their home countries in order to flee violence brought on by the notorious MS-13 and other gangs.

One of the major questions that my thesis addressed was whether false perceptions of the American Dream propelled the minors to journey to the United States. Their perceptions

of the American Dream are not unrealistic; they reflect the American Dream that once defined the United States. It is a type of mirrored reflection of the way in which it was viewed generations ago, when the U.S. relied on the perseverance, cultural nuance, and fresh ideas of immigrants in order to grow and prosper. This Dream involved making the voyage to the U.S., an idea that has lost its value over time. This is especially true in the post 9-11 era where fear of the Other resonates throughout the nation. The American Dream is strictly for United Statesians who must overcome obstacles relevant within the U.S.; it is no longer intended to draw from outside the country. One has to wonder why the Statue of Liberty still stands in the harbor as a beacon of hope.

The way my research participants described the American Dream versus the way that the American Dream is portrayed in the United States varied in key ways. The first is that reaching the United States safely is a large component of their version. Another difference is that they believe the American Dream to be dangerous since the journey north, which can be perilous, is a huge part of the Dream. Last but not least, the belief in the part of the American Dream which states that people can have a better life in the United States is believed to be true among the minors, which can't necessarily be said to be true among present day United Statesians. The gap between the rich and poor keeps widening, there is currently an economic recession that thrives because of political stalemates and not because of a failure of economic strength, new college graduates can't find jobs, and a small percentage of people control most of the nation's wealth (Shipler 2004). And yet, the Dream still thrives, albeit within a much different framework. For the youth at Estela Hope the American Dream still exists since the conditions in the U.S. are so much better than in their native countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been a great epic and a great dream. What now of the future?

--James Truslow Adams

My research looks at reasons for coming to the U.S. illegally by unaccompanied minors, sheds light onto the realities experienced on their journeys, and illustrates the complexity in the meaning and understanding of the American Dream in their eyes. This study also demonstrates how the concept of the American Dream has changed through time (leaving its bounty to an exclusive few through the American Dream Restriction effect), and how the minors' narratives of the Dream are, in some ways, at odds with current United

Statesian rhetoric of the Dream. Based on the findings of this research, this section will focus on recommendations for the journey ahead.

The first and most important recommendation would be that further scholarly research be conducted on the illegal immigration of unaccompanied minors in order to better understand and find solutions to the issues they face. The fact that approximately 85,000 (Thompson 2008) unaccompanied minors are caught in the United States every year is a pressing matter that we cannot turn our backs on, especially living in the globalized world of today. As Suarez-Orozco argued and I cited at the beginning of this thesis, “While there is now robust scholarly activity on some aspects of immigration- for example its economic causes and consequences- the scholarship on other important facets is somewhat anemic” (2000:4). Proper and adequate research on youth will support these young men in the expression of their voice, agency, and the power to advocate for issues that directly impact their lives.

In order to give these youth a voice it is important to design research that will not treat them only as statistics but rather allows their humanity to be witnessed and heard. Each year, reports are provided on the estimated number of immigrants living in the U.S., their average household incomes, and poverty rates; we clearly do not lack statistical information. What we do lack, however, are the reasons for these numbers. Little is truly known about the motivations of the youth and their hopes, dream, fears, and goals for the future. It is not my intention to discredit or minimize the impact of quantitative studies. It is my intention to demonstrate that statistics often times have the effect of dehumanizing the very human experience that is immigration. In order to truly understand any issue that rests on human actions, qualitative research should be garnered and read in conjunction with the quantitative overview. I argue here that similar to the way this research was conducted, open-ended questions should be used along with closed-ended survey type questions in order to produce a more rounded and accurate understanding of youth immigration. Additionally, developing rhetoric that categorizes them as potential participants in criminal activity without evidence or with decontextualized data furthers our own ignorance, dehumanizes others, and creates an atmosphere of fear that is unfounded and unwarranted. In the journey ahead it is important to conduct research dedicated to understanding how to respond to the forces that drive youth to leave their homes, what can be done to alleviate these issues, and what forms of support

ought to be provided for these youth whose goals tend to be the same as most other youth. In this research, I have demonstrated that a great majority of the youth I worked with (60 percent of interview participants and 66 percent of focus group participants) came to the U.S. with the goal of finding jobs and contributing to their families. Immigration reform, then out to also include a program that aided in job placement for these minors. This type of program could be incorporated into Estela Hope, local high schools, or the community in order to address those individuals whose goals do not include higher education.

My research shows that the second most given reason for making the journey to the U.S. was reunification (45 percent of interview participants and 40 percent of focus group participants). Family reunification remains one of the primary reasons for allowing entrance into the U.S. and creating a pathway to legal residency. This must be addressed more fully during the apprehension process and a full program of support be developed. Assistance should be given to help find and contact family members prior to any deportation process. As with adult deportees, aid should be provided for any necessary bus, train, or airplane fares. Bringing family members together is just half the battle of reunification. “Family reunification is not easy, since all its members have changed during the separation period” (UNICEF 2011:39). As evident by my research this “separation period” can last years and sometimes even a decade or more. Counselors that provide support for the youth and their families during this difficult transition period could be beneficial. Again, research would be the best way to find out what reunification aid should look like.

As noted above, another important area of study that we need to focus on is understanding the short term and long term impact of out-migration by youth from their natal countries. Many of the communities where these youth come from are losing their next generation to out-migration. It is not uncommon for the populations of these communities to be made up almost exclusively of children, women, and the elderly (El Rincón del Vago 1998). This is due to the fact that their young working-age male population has migrated out in the hopes of finding a way to make a living. It is important to understand not only the economical impacts of this, but also the impacts on family and community dynamics and the emotional effects on them and the migrating person. Many of the research participants of this study were originally the ones left behind by parents or other family members, and this has in turn shaped the way they view the world. If we had a better understanding of this

phenomenon we would be better able to comprehend these youth and what they are up against.

Finally, it is crucial to consider what these minors shared through this research in light of their understanding of the world, their reasons for making the journey to the U.S., their experiences, and goals for the future. I believe that educating the general public on these things would help alleviate current anti-immigrant sentiments and fear of the Other. United Statesians would realize what drives a young person out of their natal homes and what these youths seek in coming to the U.S. An issue of great interest that evolves from this research is the way in which the American Dream is understood differently. The views of the youth in my research are at odds with current United Statesians' rhetoric primarily because the original idea of the American Dream has shifted. That is, these youth believe in what was the American Dream, not what exists today. Creating an awareness of these things has the potential to give their flight a more humanistic essence. In the end, undocumented immigration is a humanitarian issue, and true resolution to the issue of undocumented movement must be done through humanistic approaches.

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APPENDIX
DOCUMENTS

RESEARCH ANNOUNCEMENT

Would you like to take part in a study after class?

Title of Study: In Search of the American Dream: Undocumented Youth and the Journey North

Why am I doing this study?

Most books and information on immigration focus on adults. Not too many books focus on youth. I think this needs to change and this is why I am doing a study on immigrant youth, their experiences, and perceptions.

I would like to hear about your experience coming to the United States. Why did you decide to move? What are your thoughts about the American Dream? I want to ask you these questions because I believe that your ideas are important. This is a chance for you to describe your world in your own words.

What are the risks of this study?

There is a risk that you might feel uncomfortable answering questions during the interviews. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to and you can end the interview at any time. You will also be able to talk to a counselor if you feel uncomfortable.

Will this study be confidential?

Yes this study will be confidential. This means that I won't tell anyone your real name and what you tell me will not be used against you.

This study is voluntary. This means that no one can force you to be part of it. If you decide you want to join, you will be interviewed one-on-one by me. You can also choose to be a part of a group discussion with me and other kids at Southwest Key.

Questions?

If you have any questions, you can have any of the staff call me or you can email me at lindaes15@gmail.com Thank you!

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Demographic Data:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- Where were you raised?
- At what age did you leave your country?
- What was life like where you grew up?
- What language/s do you speak?

Questions to establish comfort:

- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite activity or thing to do for fun?
- Who is your hero?
- If you could take a vacation any place in the world, where would you go?

Questions related to personal history and establishment of U.S. connection:

- Why did you decide to come to the United States or what motivated you to leave your country?
- Did you have family or someone here that you hoped would support you while in the U.S.?
- What was your experience like coming to America?
- Have you ever heard of the American Dream? (If they have never heard of the American Dream, I will give them an outline of it in order to establish whether or not the rhetoric, which is the heart of the research, is one that motivated them).
- Did the way you thought about the American Dream or the way in which you believed the U.S. was change when you came to the United States? If so, how?
- Was the United States just the way you imagined it or is it different? If it is different, how so?
- What do you hope to gain from coming to the United States? In other words, what are your goals? How long do you think it will take to achieve your goals?
- If you could have your dream job, what would it be?
- What do you like best about the United States and what do you dislike the most?
- If you could change one thing about the U.S., what would it be?

Questions related to their current situation and its impact on their lives:

- When did you come to Estela Hope?
- How did you come to Estela Hope?
- How do you like living at Estela Hope?

- What advice would you give someone your age that is thinking about coming to the U.S. without documents?

CHILD CONSENT FORM

Hello. My name is Linda Sanchez, I am a graduate student at San Diego State University. First let me tell you a little about what I am doing...

Most books and information on immigration focuses mainly on adults. Not too many books focus on youth. I think this needs to change and this is why I am doing a study on immigrant youth, their experiences, and perceptions. I would like to hear about your experience coming to the United States. Why did you decide to move? What are your thoughts about the American Dream? This is a chance for you to describe your world in your own words.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview and one or two group discussions. The interviews and group discussion should take no more than one hour each. Both will be recorded on digital recorders. These will take place after class time.

It is possible that you might feel uncomfortable answering questions during the interviews. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want and you can end the interview at any time. You will also be able to talk to a counselor if you want feel uncomfortable.

This study will be confidential. This means that I won't tell anyone your real name and what you tell me will not be used against you. This study is voluntary. This means that no one can force you to be part of it.

You can ask me any questions that you have about what I am doing at this time. If you have questions that you think of later, you can have the staff at Estela Hope call me or you can email me at lindaes15@gmail.com

If you want to be part in this study please repeat after me: I, _____
(your full name) agree to take part of this study and know that I can stop at any time.

IN LOCO PARENTIS CONSENT FORM

a. Investigator.

Linda E. Sanchez is the main researcher for this study. The data collected will be used as part of her thesis in applied anthropology. She currently has a bachelors degree from San Diego State University, CPI training from Estela Hope and a substitute teaching permit. She is affiliated with the anthropology department at San Diego State University and the person supervising her research is Dr. Ramona Perez.

b. Purpose of the Study.

The main purpose of this study is to shed light on undocumented juvenile immigration experiences and perceptions. This is important because although there are approximately 85,000 unaccompanied minors detained every year, most immigration research focuses on adults. It is also an opportunity for the youth to describe their worlds in their own words. The research will examine perceptions of the American dream before and after coming to the United States without required documentation by Hispanic unaccompanied minors. More specifically, it will be focusing on the minors, most ranging in age from 14 to 17 years of age, at the Estela Hope shelter in the San Diego area. Participation will be open to all Estela Hope unaccompanied minors and participation will be voluntary and confidential.

c. Description of the Study.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, he/she will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview and a focus group with all the other kids that agree to participate. The one-on-one interviews will last approximately an hour and so will the focus group. These will be recorded on digital recorders and stored on my laptop. The research will take place at Estela Hope after school hours, and both the interview and focus group will be composed of open-ended questions.

d. Experimental Aspects.

None of the procedures or questions used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

e. Risks or Discomforts.

A potential risk in this study is psychological discomfort by way of disclosing feelings and experiences that might be unpleasant. If the subjects experience distress, they can choose to end participation in interview/focus group at any time and without penalty and will be immediately referred to the trained counselor at the shelter. Counselors are at the shelters at least twice a week and many times are available throughout the week; they are always on-call for these kinds of situations. In addition, all volunteers and employees at the youth shelters, including me, are trained and certified in Crisis Prevention and Intervention for youth. I also hold a Substitute Teaching Permit and have taught in the classrooms at the shelters for the last year.

As I am conducting interviews with my subjects, I will look for warning signs that could indicate that he/she might be unable to continue due to emotional distress. Some of these signs include: subject showing that they are upset (i.e. start to cry, use rude language or angry tone of voice, body language communicates that they are feeling hostile, stay quiet for a long time etc.), subject verbalizing that they are depressed, subject sounding sad, anxious, depressed, angry, etc. If the subject does not wish to continue, I will remind them that no one will be upset with them for ending participation. I will try to make them feel at ease by using the training I received at the Crisis Prevention and Intervention. I will ask them if they would like to talk to the on site counselor. If there are no counselors at the site when they child experiences distress, I will help the child schedule an appointment. I will let them know that they can also talk to any of the staff at Estela Hope. If the Subject wishes to continue participating, I will ask them if they would like to take a break and they can finish the interview later. I will remind them that they do not have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they have the right to have information that they have disclosed removed from the research data.

f. Benefits of the Study.

One of the potential benefits of this study is to shed light on the realities and perceptions experienced by unaccompanied minors in their journey to the United States as well as seek to understand their current perspectives of life after being detained. The data will unearth not only the youth's images and ideas of the U.S. prior to entrance and their current perceptions

after having spent time in the U.S. and being detained, it will also highlight their many journeys from their homeland to the shelter. For the subjects, the opportunity to describe their worlds in their own words is another potential benefit. : I cannot guarantee, however, that you or your child will receive any benefits from this study. Although there are approximately 85,000 of these young individuals detained every year, very little research has been conducted on them as most immigration research focuses on adults. I hope that a better understanding of their circumstances for the purposes of better immigration policy will be a potential benefit to society.

g. Confidentiality.

This study will follow certain procedures to protect the subject's confidentiality. Each child will receive a pseudo name that will be used when interviewing him/her and for filing purposes. This will be conducted in order to insure the confidentiality of the children. A list with their real names and pseudo names will be stored on my laptop computer accessible only through a password. I, the researcher, will be the only individual with access to the recordings. I will also keep a research journal that will be stored in a locked file. Both the journal and recordings will be stored for a period of one year after completing my research and then they will be deleted.

h. Incentives to Participate.

No monetary incentive will be awarded to participants.

i. Costs and/or Compensation for Participation.

No costs associated with participation. It is unlikely that participation in this project will result in harm to participants. If any complications arise, we will assist your child in obtaining appropriate attention. If your child needs treatment or hospitalization as a result of being in this study, you are responsible for payment of the cost for that care. If you have insurance, you may bill your insurance company. You will have to pay any costs not covered by your insurance. San Diego State University will not pay for any care, lost wages, or provide other financial compensation. However, if you feel you have a claim which you wish to file against the State, please contact the Office of Research Administration at (619) 594-6622 to obtain the appropriate claim form.

j. Voluntary Nature of Participation. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision

of whether or not to allow your child to participate will not prejudice your future relations with San Diego State University. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue his/her participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

k. Contact Information. If you have any questions about this research you can contact the researcher, Linda Sanchez on her cell (714) 651-2794 or by email at lindaes15@gmail.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact an IRB representative in the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu). If you have questions regarding your child's rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may call the Institutional Review Board at San Diego State University for information. The telephone number of the Committee is 619-594-6622. You may also write to the Committee at: SDSU Institutional Review Board, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-1643.

m. Consent to Participate. The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form as signified by the Committee's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to allow your child to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. *You have also been given a copy of "The Research Participant's Bill of Rights." You have been told that by signing this consent document you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

In Loco Parentis name _____

In Loco Parentis signature _____