

Meeting the Needs of Central American Migrant Youth in Schools

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Abstract

The goal of this qualitative inquiry was to explore the barriers that Central American migrant youth face in California education settings while using the power of participatory action research to harness the direct voices of this unique and rapidly growing population. The current study examined narratives from 12 former students (ages 17-23) who migrated from Central America and enrolled in U.S. public schools during their adolescence. Participants were recruited by former staff and their peers using social media. Qualitative inquiry about their educational experiences was conducted via semi-structured interviews with the support of peer researchers using a questionnaire focused on themes of students' educational history, country of origin, age of arrival, socioeconomic status, mental health, and school supports. Interviews were transcribed and coded thematically. Results showed that the developmental timing of migration, country of origin, family history, and reason for immigrating all had an impact on adjustment to school and mental health. Most notably, results indicated that the effects of mental health permeated all themes explored in this study suggesting that behavioral health care and social-emotional support services are an unmet need in this population. The research team has concluded that the diverse needs of this population require comprehensive efforts and supports in the school setting and have direct implications for social work in developing supports, policy, and best practices in direct service to support the complex needs of this population.

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Introduction

Lo más importante sería mi comunidad. Porque sin ellos yo no hubiera podido hacer nada. Si hubiera cerrado en mi mundo...sin compartir con ellos y sin hablar con ellos no hubiera podido lograr todo lo que he logrado... Me a ayudado mucho. Creo en mí. Me influenció mucho para yo hacer más que nunca pensé que iba poder (Suzy, Semi-Structured Interview, December 2018).¹

There is a myriad of challenges that newcomer immigrant youth face when matriculating into U.S. schools. Current research shows that immigrant students as a whole face a disproportionate amount of violence that affects learning, adjustment to new schools, and coping capacities which puts these students at increased risk of school failure (Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburn, 2009). Heightened racism, discrimination, feeling unsafe at school, and victimization increases the likelihood of immigrant students dropping out of school (Peguro, 2009; Peguro, Zavala, Shekarkhar, & Walker-Pickett, 2018; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Additionally, immigrant youth are at an increased risk for experiencing mental health problems such as PTSD and depression both during and after migration (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008; Eide & Hjern, 2013; Sirin & Rodgers-Sirin, 2015; Sourander, 1998).

While there is a wealth of research on immigrant youth as a whole, there are notable gaps in research addressing the unique and specific challenges that newcomer Central American youth currently face in schools. The Migration Policy Institute reports that as of 2015, California has

¹ In text quotes will be written verbatim in the language used by participants to preserve interview content, as some meaning is inevitably lost in the translation process. This is an intentional display of the research team's commitment to presenting participant voices in an unfiltered and uncensored format. English translations will be included in Appendix G for reference. [See Appendix G](#) Line 1 for this translation.

the highest population of Central American immigrants at 564,000 and is steadily increasing (Lesser & Batalova, 2017). This influx was preceded by a dramatic surge of unaccompanied minors, also referred to by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) as Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC). The number of UAC referrals made to ORR dramatically increased from 13,625 in 2012 to 57,496 referrals in 2014 (ORR Facts and Data, 2019). In 2016-2017, ORR reported that 42,497 Unaccompanied Alien Children were released to sponsors in United States (ORR State, 2018). 6,268 of these UACs were released to sponsors in California (ORR State, 2018). 95% of UAC arrivals were from Central America; 23% from Honduras, 45% from Guatemala, and 25% from El Salvador (ORR Facts and Data, 2019).

California consistently receives the highest concentration of unaccompanied youth who are required to enroll into California public schools upon settlement as mandated by state compulsory education laws. In the 2013-2014 school year the Los Angeles Unified School District, California's largest district, received an unexpected 24% increase in Salvadoran students and a 21% increase in Guatemalan students (Goździak, 2015). Furthermore, a review of literature from the United States and Europe suggests that the education and supports which youth receive during their first years after resettlement predict long-term adjustment and well-being (Eide & Hjern, 2013). The sharp increase in migrant youth from Central America in California schools and importance of immediate supports for long-term adjustment elicits the following research question: What are the unmet needs of newly arrived Central American immigrant youth within the California public education system?

The following research study gathered narratives from twelve Central American newcomer immigrant youth who entered a California high school upon arrival to the U.S. For purposes of this research project, newcomers will be defined as recently immigrated adolescents who have immigrated into the country no more than 3 years prior to their enrollment into a U.S. high school. Specifically, we explored the needs of students who immigrated from the Northern Triangle region of Central America which includes the national regions of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. The research team reviewed applicable literature in order to identify recurring themes to identify specific topics relevant to the target population. During data analysis, the research team explored how the experiences of these youth align with current literature as well as how this population deviates from broader literature. The overall objective of the current study was to harness the direct voices of this unique and rapidly growing population to promote the development of appropriate programs, supports, and institutional policies to decision makers in the California education system.

Literature Review

The following literature review examines current empirical data to help define and categorize established barriers to academic success among newcomer immigrant youth.

Age of Arrival and Its Impact on Academic Success

One of the keys to academic success and graduating high school is meeting basic requirements and accruing the required credits to graduate high school. As the years have progressed, high school requirements have become increasingly rigorous and states have increased graduation requirements (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010). As a response to these

state mandates, some districts have focused efforts on better preparing middle school students for the transition to high school. However, newly enrolled high school students who are new to the country are at an increased disadvantage due to not having the preparation to meet these rigorous requirements. Students who have been held back a grade or are overaged for their grade are at increased risk of dropping out of school and not meeting their high school requirements (Driscoll, 1999; McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, Bang, Pakes, O'Conner, & Rhodes, 2010). Newly arrived immigrant youth are particularly vulnerable provided they are coming with diverse educational backgrounds.

Migrant children who enter between the ages of 13-18 are likely to receive the least amount of schooling in comparison to earlier entrants (Chiswick & DebBurman, 2004; Stiefel et.al, 2016). According to data, immigrant youth arrive to the United States at varying stages of their development (Diaz-Perez & Ybarra, 2016; Fry 2005). Reports show that 42% of newcomer arrivals were under 8 years old, while the other 58% arrived in later childhood (Fry, 2005). ORR recently reported that in 2017, 17% of UACs who arrived were between the ages of 0-12, 13% were between the ages of 12-13, 37% of UACs were between the ages 15-16, and 32% of UAC arrivals were 17 years old (ORR Facts and Figures, 2019). While these figures certainly do not tell an entire narrative, it can be speculated that with this surge of recently arrived Central American children, there is a high number of students who enrolled into their first U.S school in their late adolescence. Age-upon arrival can influence the educational outcomes of newcomer immigrant youth and can provide insight for assessing the risk of low academic achievement among newcomer youth from Central America (Greenman & Hall, 2013).

Former research on the outcomes of immigrant youth have overseen important subgroups that make up this population and the varying educational outcomes that result from their age of entry (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Many of the research initiatives in the past have erred in comprehensively analyzing the educational outcomes of newcomer youth who migrate from diverse regions. Many research findings aggregate the educational outcomes of recently arrived newcomer youth with children of immigrants. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that recently arrived immigrant students are made up of diverse sub-groups with significant differences in ability, ethnicity, and immigration circumstances (Espinosa, 2013; García et al., 2009; Hammer et al., 2011).

Literature has uncovered that children from Central America and Mexico were found to be less likely than their native-born peers to enroll in school after the 8th grade (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Furthermore, of those students who did enroll, they were more likely to be held back and less likely to graduate (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). There are several reasons why this may be particularly true for newly arrived high school students from Central America. Cognitive development influences a child's ability to absorb a second or third language. Language development may be more difficult for older children to learn and grasp (Conger, 2009; Stevens, 1999, Stiefel, et al, 2016). Immigrant youth who arrived late in their academic careers must prevail over complex literacy gaps and challenges faced from interrupted schooling in their home countries (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). This may be particularly true for students from war ridden countries or countries that suffer from extreme poverty. The combination of these limitations places late arrival students at a disadvantage of time to fulfill graduation

requirements, develop English Language abilities, and catch up with basic curriculum standards. Research shows that English Language Learners (ELLs) who enrolled in school between the ages 12-15 face the most notable challenges and are expected to require as many as six to eight years to meet academic benchmarks when taught entirely in a second language (Faltis, 2011). Those that enroll between the ages of 15-17 have even less time to catch up with U.S education expectations.

Additional literature displays conflicting findings on the significance of age-at-arrival as it correlates with academic achievement outcomes. Diaz-Strong and Ybarra findings conclude that there is minimal significance for the age of entry when considering the influence of a student's immigration status (2016). In contrast, both Conger and Stevens found that learning a second language may be developmentally more difficult for older immigrant children (Conger, 2009; Stevens, 1999). Results in Diaz-Stong and Ybarra's study eluded that immigration status is a more influential obstacle for newcomer immigrants and their educational outcomes (2016).

Studies also reported over-aged students to be significantly more likely to appear among low achievers (Suarez-Orozco et. al, 2010). The age of entry can influence the ability for students to adapt who are overage for their grade level. Mobility in high school (particularly in later years) heightens feelings of academic and social disengagement and behavioral problems, ultimately increasing the likelihood of drop-out (Sugarman, 2017). Knowledge on the impacts of over-aged status among newcomers and academic achievement is limited. There are substantial gaps and conflicts in research results, as many reports neglect the subpopulation of migrant youth arriving from Central American countries. It is for this reason that it is necessary to

explore how age impacts high school completion and academic achievement for recently arrived Central American immigrant youth.

Mental Health

Immigrant youth are at an increased risk for developing mental illness, and experience more severe levels of psychopathology than the general population (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008; Eide & Hjern, 2013; Sirin & Rodgers-Sirin, 2015; Sourander, 1998). Academic achievement is one of the most rigorously studied consequences of mental illness, and a wealth of research demonstrates that youth with mental health problems perform less well in school and attain lower levels of education than youth without mental health problems (McLeod, Uemura, & Rohrman, 2012). As such, our study considered the mental health symptoms of newcomer students which may act as a barrier to academic achievement.

A complex web of factors is connected to the high rates of mental health problems in immigrant youth from Central America. These youth may face a number of traumatic stressors in their home country, during their migration and resettlement phase (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008; Sourander, 1998). In the case of refugee youth fleeing periods of political turmoil, youth may have already witnessed violence, been direct victims of violence, or forced to participate in violence themselves (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008). Central American exodus has been marked by political upheaval and harsh economic conditions for most of the 20th century (Hamilton & Chinchilla, 1991). Recent interviews with unaccompanied minors from the Northern Triangle region (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) reveal that children are fleeing “some of the world’s highest homicide rates, rampant extortion, communities controlled by youth gangs,

domestic violence, impunity for most crimes, as well as economic despair and lack of opportunity” (Eguizábal et al., 2015, p. 1).

The migration process itself can include additional traumatic stressors, such as loss of extended or immediate family networks (Pumariiega, Rothe, & Pumariiega, 2005), chronic malnourishment, long-term sleep deprivation, prolonged periods without bathing, fear connected to the illegal status of their migration, and interactions with police (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008). Evidence exist which indicates that having one or more parents present during migration may decrease the traumatic impact of events occurring during migration (Derulyn & Broekaert, 2008). This means that unaccompanied minors are especially vulnerable to the traumatic stressors which occur during migration. In fact, multiple studies of refugee children state that unaccompanied minors display higher rates of PTSD and depressive symptoms than children who migrated with a parent (Eide & Hjern, 2013). Older unaccompanied youth are also more socially isolated than youth who arrive at a younger age (Eide & Hjern, 2013). However, one intensive study found older migrant youth are also less likely to display externalizing symptoms, attention problems, and aggression (Sourander, 1998). This means that the mental health problems of newly arrived adolescents may be more likely to go undetected by school staff. Recent numbers show that the influx of unaccompanied minors to the United States is as high as it has ever been, evidenced by the influx of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle to the U.S. in 2014 (Eguizábal et al., 2015). As such, the mental health of this population in particular is of great relevance to all institutions who serve them.

During resettlement into their new country of residence, newcomer youth may face continued stressors such as bullying and discrimination (Sirin & Rodgers-Sirin, 2015; Stella, Huang, Schwalber, Overpeck, & Koga, 2003), the stress of poverty and living in an impoverished neighborhood (Pumariiega, Rothe, & Pumariiega, 2005), grief over lost support networks from the country of origin (Lustig et al., 2004), and the stress of adjusting to a new culture (James, 1997). Multiple studies have suggested that positive relationships may increase resilience (Fazel, Red, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012) and mediate academic engagement and achievement in migrant youth (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). A recent review of literature shows that the immediate care and supports which newly arrived youth receive upon resettlement are key predictors of long-term health and adjustment (Eide & Hjern, 2013). The current study examines the educational experiences of newly arrived Central American youth, assesses for gaps in school-based services including mental health services and can be used to inform trauma-informed educational practices to be utilized with this population.

Socio- Economic Status

Newcomer youth who are old enough feel increased pressure to work to help meet the financial needs of their family. This makes it increasingly difficult to attend school and keep up with school work in order to meet state graduation requirements (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010; Driscoll, 1999). Foundational research has established that dropout rates are higher in students from families with low socioeconomic status and non-English speaking families (Rumberger, 1987; Driscoll, 1999). Students with adult responsibilities are more likely to drop out compared to their non-employed counterparts (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). English

language skills are absolutely necessary for immigrants to earn a decent wage and get out of poverty, (Goździak, 2015). Teachers have identified that the burden of having a job in under schooled newcomers has a notable impact on English and subject matter learning (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Students who work are unable to focus on class content as a result of their physical exhaustion from working long hours. Additionally, the literature also indicates students with limited English-speaking abilities and students whose families receive public assistance have an increased chance of dropping out (Haveman, Wolfe, & Spaulding, 1991; Rumberger, 1987). These factors heavily impact students from Central America who are often trying to financially support themselves and their families.

Immigrant youth who arrive to the US during their adolescence often take on adult roles making it increasingly difficult to attend full time schooling (Martinez, 2009). These youth may face an added layer of financial pressure of having to repay immigration or smuggling fees and help financially support their family. This indirectly impacts school attendance and increases their risk of deportation due to working in the labor market illegally (Crowley et al., 2006; Goździak, 2015). Although both male and female adolescent immigrant youth experience this pressure, males experience higher levels of pressure to contribute to the family and chose work over school thus, slowing down their English language development and potential upward mobility (Goździak, 2015). Furthermore, traditional schools do not typically accommodate to student's work schedules. Therefore, youth are often forced to choose between school and work. These financial stressors compound existing challenges of attending school consistently among newcomer youth.

The literature is vast in terms of linking factors of poverty, children, and school success. However, specific literature in relation to high school graduation, poverty, and Central American youth is noticeably limited. Upon reviewing and analyzing this literature, researchers assert that poverty is a challenge that Central American youth likely face when attempting to meet their graduation requirements. This research aims to identify obstacles that Central American students face by including the theme of socioeconomic status in efforts to develop supports, provide recommendations, and build on existing literature to help address gaps in research.

Educational History

There are important intersections to note with regards to age-at-arrival and the educational history of Central American students and the potential impact this has on the academic trajectories of recent immigrant youth. Student's from Central America have been found to have significant gaps or limited education (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). These individuals are what educators refer to as Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE or SIFE). They often lack the basic literacy and math skills in their native language (Sugarman, 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). As a result, many schools are unprepared to provide the academic supports necessary to foster academic growth and success of many newcomer immigrant youth.

The vast majority of newcomer immigrant students are unable to count content classes taken in the native country, therefore most, if not all incoming Central American immigrant students are placed in the 9th grade. Teachers and administrators are beginning to recognize that the curriculum in traditional school settings do not provide adequate supports needed for many of

these students. Curriculum covering basic literacy and math content, are not typically integrated into secondary level schooling (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). This literature indicates an assumption made by school educators that all students possess basic student literacy and math skills when this may not always be the case. Placing newly arrived Central American youth in an American school setting needs to be done with care and must consider factors other than age (Goździak, 2015).

Students who are both SLIFE and English Learners face significant challenges that can instill feelings of defeat and can potentially lead to a student's drop out. A study conducted in 1993 determined that 20% of students identified as Limited English Proficient in high school (LEP) and 12% of LEPs in middle school had two or more years of missed or interrupted schooling (Fleishman & Hopstock, 1993). This is a common challenge for students stepping back into a classroom after often several years of missed instruction.

For newcomer immigrant students, "credit accumulation in the core subjects required for graduation is a major challenge" (Goździak, 2015, p. 14). Many traditional high school settings enroll newcomer immigrant students into English Language Development (ELD) classes which do not count toward graduation. According to Goździak, students who are placed in ELD classes instead of mainstream curriculum classes can spend years in what she refers to as a "linguistic ghetto" (Goździak, 2015). In some districts, newcomer pathways or sheltered instruction helps students meet the challenge of accumulating the credits needed to graduate by integrating language development into credit bearing content classes (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). While not all districts utilize such pathways, it is necessary to assess for the need in order to instill

equity among all student populations. Districts must be prepared to review these needs in more detail in order to help guide appropriate supports for these students in schools. Understandings students' educational histories can help guide schools to develop appropriate programming and curriculum support. Our research addresses gaps in research to explore students' potentially limited educational histories and how this has affected students' ability to integrate into school settings.

Methods

Research population

The current study required a minimum of ten participants from Central America who arrived and enrolled into a U.S high school between the ages of 14-18. Recruitment for this inquiry resulted in a total of twelve participants. Students were recruited from a pool of former students at San Francisco International High School (SFIHS), a public school designed for recent immigrants. Inclusion and Exclusion participant criteria is outlined in Table 1 in [Appendix F](#).

Research Subgroups. Participants recruitment aimed to achieve a study sample with diversity in regard to the following subgroups: Male and Female, Country of Origin (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador). Subgroups were selected strategically to represent a balanced variety of genders and countries of origin. This amplified multivocality within the study, which enhanced study credibility (Tracy, 2010). Minimum numbers for each subgroup are outlined in Table 2.A, [Appendix F](#) along with actual numbers for this study are outlined in Table 2.B, [Appendix F](#).

Participant recruitment

Former students of SFIHS were recruited through the use of social media. Research team member and former SFHIS educator, Laurie Millan (also known to the students as Ms. Millan) utilized her facebook page to contact and recruit individual students who met research participant criteria. Each student was contacted individually through facebook messenger. The Recruitment Message outlined in [Appendix D](#) described the purpose and intent for the study.

The research team utilized social media and a snowball recruitment strategy to identify, communicate, and recruit former students of SFIHS. The research team also used an *active recruitment strategy* approach that used social media to interact with “specific individuals with the aim of enrolling them in research, usually on the basis of knowledge of characteristics that would make them suitable candidates for particular trials” (Harvard Catalyst, 2016). Given Ms. Millan’s established relationship with her former students, there was existing rapport among the participants and lead interviewer.

Peer Interviewing: A Participatory Approach

Participatory research requires engagement from the primary population the research study intends to focus on. Participatory research is defined as “a range of methodological approaches and techniques, all with the objective of handing power from the researcher to research participants” (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995), this approach redistributes power to research participants so that participants have control over the process, actions, and conclusions and findings (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). In this inquiry, three research participants acted as peer researchers. Students who volunteered to collaborate in this capacity supported the development of data collection instruments and in-person data collection itself. In doing so, youth were

positioned as the experts on the challenges and obstacles that influence newcomer students and their ability to succeed in the U.S academic system.

Youth volunteers were consulted about study methods and treated as equals in the data collection process. Ultimately this shift in power dynamics intended to help balance existing power differentiations between participants and researchers and increased youth engagement and investment to the research project (Cahill, 2007). A participatory research approach has been shown to generate culturally appropriate research, enhance recruitment capacity, and generate professional capacity for participants (Jagosh et al., 2012). Furthermore, the opportunity to participate in a formal research project provided these young adults an opportunity to gain valuable experience and insight into the research process. It also provided participants a chance to explore their potential strengths and affirm strength in their voice, values, and perspectives. Finally, the research team noted an increased level of rapport among peer interviewers and participants which may have contributed participants feeling more comfortable and engaged in the interview process.

Training Peer Interviewers. In order to assure that students are well-versed on the purpose and framework of the research process, the research team provided peer interviewers with a training that reviewed critical topics to prepare them for the research process. This training helped peer interviewers understand what to expect from the research process and ensured that they executed the interviews and data analysis in accordance with research ethics, particularly, informed consent and participant confidentiality. See [Appendix H for Peer Researcher Training Topics](#).

Research Schedule and Study Context

Interviews were scheduled between the following dates: December 17th- December 28th, 2018. Interviews were conducted in person in the Mission District of San Francisco. Interviews were scheduled to take place in a small local bilingual bookstore & publishing office called *Luna's Press* owned by a local Salvadorian bilingual author. The interview location was in an established community space that was easily accessible to participants. The location was an important to ensure a controlled and safe environment for peer researchers to hold interviews with participants. Participants were provided the option to hold their sessions in either Spanish or English to contribute to participant comfort and depth of data obtained during the interview process. All participants opted to hold their interviews in Spanish.

The data collection process required two interviewers: a lead interviewer and a peer interviewer. Ms. Millan acted as the lead interviewer but took more of an observational role in the process so as to not interrupt and interject in the natural engagement of peer led interviews. Ms. Millan provided feedback and guidance for peer interviewers at the completion of every interview. Peer interviewers rotated interview sessions to help manage the recording devices and lend some support and comfort to their peers. Each interview was approximately 1 hour long.

Ethical Considerations

Provided the undocumented immigration status of some participants, confidentiality and consent was our most significant concern. Consent was explained at the beginning of the semi-structured interview and consisted of informing participants of their rights as a research participant over the age of 18 along with the purpose of the study and a brief summary of the

inquiry. Ms. Millan went through a written consent form (included in Appendix E) in detail with each participant in person to ensure participants were informed and to emphasize that participation in this inquiry was completely voluntary. Participants signed the consent form in agreement and understood their rights. A copy of the signed consent form was provided to each participant. Furthermore, audio recordings were only distributed among lead researchers for transcription purposes. All files were transmitted through the use of a USB. Finally, participants were assigned surnames to ensure anonymity.

Ethical considerations for peer interviewing. Prior to interviews, participants gave consent to have peer researchers conduct interviews. Participants were also provided the option to have the lead interviewer conduct the interview without the presence of their peers. The research team included an additional section in the written consent form labeled as ‘Peer Research Waiver’ where participants explicitly consented to having peer researchers help with their interview, coding, and transcription along with an opt out option where they choose to participate but not have peer researchers’ interview, transcribe, or code their interview. This waiver included a separate initial in order to make the consent or opt out explicit, ensuring that participants were aware and informed of the participation of peer researchers in this study.

Data collection techniques

Following recruitment and consent processes, the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 individuals who met the inclusion criteria. The research team utilized the semi-structured interview format to engage in a succinct and guided discussion on the rich and complex topic that is the educational experiences of Central American immigrant

youth. All questions in the interview instrument were created using insight gained during the literature review process, as well as the input of peer interviewers. The use of literature in the development of the interview instrument supports meaningful coherence of the data collected and subsequent analyses (Tracy, 2010). During the interview process, interviewers consciously elicited thick description of participants' experiences in the K-12 education system, as this will contribute to the rigor of our analysis (Tracy, 2010).

Prior to finalizing the research instrument, the research team consulted with a member of our target population to examine the quality of language, terminology, and general rigor of the instrument. A change report and final interview instrument are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

Data Analysis Approach

Interpretive Lens: Window to the World. There are individual and group biases and privileges of which investigators kept in mind through the data collection, coding, and data analysis in order to ensure reliability, rigor, and positional awareness. Hence, the research team engaged in an interpretive lens exercise to elicit awareness of researcher positionality before engaging with the research population. Members of the research team all had some kind of experience with immigration within their immediate family unit, all speak Spanish, and all identify as Latinx. This positioned researchers as potential allies to the research population. However, also acted as a limitation, as personal connection to the research population could potentially result in assumptions of cultural expertise and preconceived notions about immigration narratives. All members of the research team are also US citizens, are achieving graduate level education, and are cisgender females. Although the research team could not

change these privileges or the perspectives accompanied them, the research team addressed this potential power differential by being transparent in the purpose and intent of working with the population and centering the voice and expertise of participants throughout the research process. An image of notes collected during this exercise is attached in [Appendix B](#).

Analytical Scheme. The educational experiences of newly arrived Central American youth in the U.S. education system is a phenomenon not extensively explored in existing academic literature. The purpose of the data analysis in the current study was to describe this experience and develop preliminary ideas about the unmet needs of this population. Hence, this design was exploratory in nature, as it sought to describe a relatively unexplored phenomenon (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Because there is not a wealth of existing literature on this specific population, all interview instrument items were aligned with predetermined themes identified in a review of broader literature on the needs of immigrant youth.

Subthemes determined during the literature review process were: the impacts of mental health, socioeconomic status, educational history, country of origin, and age of arrival to the U.S. Key codes in the codebook are: mental health (MH), socioeconomic status (SES), educational history (ED HIST), country of origin (CO), age of arrival (AGE), school-based supports (SUP), and gaps in school-based supports (GSUP). Raters searched transcripts for mentions of if and how all of these factors affected participants' ability to succeed academically. Once this information was organized by code, the research team examined these responses to identify patterns within each code. After patterns were identified, the research team examined how these patterns compared or contrasted to broader literature on immigrant youth. The research team also

participated in weekly meetings during coding cycles to clarify discrepancies in coding to increase inter-rater reliability. The results of this analysis guided a discussion on further research implications as well as policy recommendations for decision makers in the education system. A complete codebook is included in [Appendix C](#).

Coding Cycles. Coding was performed by the three principal researchers who worked separately and sequentially over 4 months, beginning 3 weeks after the data was collected and transcribed. The interviews were assigned at random in order to distribute the number of interviews evenly amongst the researchers. While coding the first three interviews, the researchers met to compare findings and adjust their codebook. The researchers discussed themes and topics presented by multiple participants in order to develop additional codes to add to the codebook and refine code definitions to ensure intercoder reliability.

In the first coding cycle, a ‘holistic coding method’ was used in order to aid the researchers in grasping the basic themes and issues in the data and providing a whole picture of the data rather than a line by line analysis (Saldaña, 2009, p.118). As the data is in the form of interview transcripts, application of holistic coding is the analytical scheme was best suited for this project due to interview questions being lumped into themes as these questions have been synthesized from literature into topic areas (Saldana, 2009, p.118). Upon completion of the first coding cycle, the research team reconvened and reviewed their codes for all 12 interviews again in order to ensure team members were all using the same codes consistently and to adjust or maintain the codes for the second coding cycle.

For the second coding cycle, ‘axial coding’ was used as this application as this method was appropriate for interview transcripts and builds on the first cycle coding method of holistic coding. Axial coding aided the researchers in honing in on the categories and subcategories identified in the first cycle of coding while reducing the number of initial codes (Saldana, 2009, p. 159-160). The team then met upon completion of the second coding cycle in order to discuss sub themes that presented in most interviews. The research team then developed memos for each code with emergent subthemes in each code in order to aid in the analysis of this data.

Results

Results showed a complex web of factors which affected participants as they enrolled into and attended public school in California.

Participant Context Upon Enrollment

Participants reported common factors specific to their status as a newcomer youth from Central America which impacted their educational experiences upon arrival and presented unique challenges to academic success.

Values on Education: The educational history of Central American youth can lead to significant impacts on learning integration for this population. Results in this study suggest that cultural values around education in a youth's country of origin have a later impact on their attitudes towards integrating into the compulsory U.S. school system. As one student noted in her interview, “...si querías ibas y si no, no ibas. No llamaban a tus papas como acá” (Mario, Semi-Structured Interview, December 2018).² Much like this student, most students from Central

² See [Appendix G](#) for translation

America were not accustomed to going to school every day provided that it had not been a priority in their home country.

Limited Schooling: In addition to immigrant students' values around school attendance, interviewees discussed the limited form of education that they were provided in their home country. As stated by one student, "En Honduras, era como que lean este chapter y ya. Y luego el examen" (Yessenia, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).³ Eight of twelve students describe limitations around their education in their home country including poor student to teacher ratios and teachers who provided little individualized supports. Four out of twelve interviewees stated that they only had one assigned teacher to attend to 60 students for the entire school day. One interviewee from Guatemala states "...para la maestra era difícil cómo concentrarse en todos los alumnos porque solo teníamos una maestra para sesenta alumnos" (Lucy, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).⁴ Many narratives included disclosure of feeling little investment from the educational system in their native countries and receiving little to no individualized support.

Gaps in Education. The quality of education and life in Central America had a significant impact on students' academic trajectories. Franklin, who arrived at the age of 15 from Honduras, articulates that

el gobierno...no regalaban el año, los profesores no les pagaban. (No llegaban) en meses.

Los () amenazaban a los profesores...Entonces, era cómo algo ¿cultural? Y al nivel

³ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

⁴ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

gubernamental, que nos hacia todos nosotros, como-como estudiantes, caer en, en las drogas, ir a la calle porque no teníamos escuela. Era cómo, okay, estamos (caminando), estamos haciendo fila para la escuela, pero nunca había profesor, (pues) estaban protestando o no estaba el profesor (Franklin, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).⁵

These social challenges in their country of origin meant students were faced with managing large gaps in their education. Mario, who arrived at the age of 16 from Guatemala, shared “Yo no estaba estudiando más en el país. Había, hacia como por casi dos años. So, ya volver a la escuela obligado no es nada bonito” (Mario, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).⁶ For students like Mario, entering an all English class can be extremely daunting, particularly if he lacks literacy skills in his native language. As noted in the interviews, these students are not only being submerged in an academic level they may be unprepared for, they are experiencing an entire a shift in culture around education. Furthermore, the vast majority of participants cited English language acquisition as the most difficult aspect of their educational experiences.

Developmental Context. Many students had already stopped going to school in their country of origin and were viewed as independent capable adults by their family and their country.

Cuando me vine yo me vine pensando de que yo ya era grande, era independiente, y yo podía trabajar, y yo podía quedarme en mi misma. Entonces, ya cuando vine acá, no, me

⁵ [See Appendix G](#) for translation

⁶ [See Appendix G](#) for translation

dijeron, pues, no eres mayor de edad, eres todavía una menor de edad. O sea, de que nope. No puedes trabajar legalmente. Entonces alguien tiene que cuidar por ti. Me hizo sentir como que like, no, yo sé que ya estoy grande (Suzy, Semi- Structured Interview, December, 2018).⁷

Participants indicated that this cultural norm is often because free education ends at 6th grade in most Central American countries. Several participants also indicated that they were placed into lower grade levels despite their level of education in their own country making them overaged for their grade level. For many, this increased pressures to drop out of school and work once they were 18 years old or older.

The Impacts of Socioeconomic Status

Working to meet basic needs. A prevalent theme throughout interviews was the impact SES had on participant's education. Results of this study also indicate that socioeconomic status intersects with a variety of themes. Eleven of twelve participants agreed that SES had an impact on their education and twelve out of twelve participants worked at some point during their time in high school. With the exception of one, most participants worked during high school in order to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing: "...Tengo que ir a trabajar para que tengamos dinero o para que comamos...Es difícil porque tengo que pagar renta, venir a estudiar, ir a trabajar" (Ruben, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).⁸ Interviews also revealed an

⁷ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

⁸ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

impact of SES on mental health due to factors such as housing insecurity, food insecurity, financial stressors, and on familial pressures to work.

Many participants went to work at the end of the school day, some for 8 hours at a time: “Antes trabajaba sólo 6 horas...Trabajaba cinco días. Ahora trabajo de 5:00 PM a 1:00 AM, o 2:00 AM, todos los días” (Carlos, Semi- Structured Interview, December 2018).⁹ Multiple participants reported that working full time while going to school full time impacted their education in a variety of ways such as not getting enough sleep, feeling exhausted at school, and limited time for school attendance and workload. Numerous participants also indicated they did not immigrate to the U.S. to go to school but rather to work to help their family with financial needs. However, due to compulsory education laws, they were forced to go to school: “...cuando llegué acá una vez como, um, me agarró migración. Mis papás estuvieron forzados también, a la escuela porque si no, ellos iban- están en problemas con inmigración ya que la inmigración tenía toda esa información, su dirección su seguro social y todo eso” (Eva, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁰

The Costs of Immigrating. Having to work in order to pay for immigration debt and/or immigration attorneys is a financial burden unique to this population, “...Fue cuando tuve que empezar a trabajar, para poder ayudarle con la renta, para poder pagar los gastos de mi abogado...” (Eva, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹¹ Due to living in poverty,

⁹ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

¹⁰ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

¹¹ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

immigrant adolescents often feel pressure to help their families pay for the fees associated with immigrating to the US. Many participants felt this pressure explicitly from their family and began working. Some participants indicated that at times this pressure was a source of tension between themselves and their families or themselves and their school.

Mental Health and Chronic Stressors

All 12 participants reported that mental health was a factor which impacted their educational experiences upon arrival to the U.S. Results show that participants experienced multiple chronic stressors attached to their status as a new arrival from Central America, including:

Acculturative Stress. Participants expressed difficulty adjusting to a school environment where peers and staff did not speak their language. For many participants, this was the first time they had ever encountered people from cultures other than their own. Chronic stressors ranged from minute details such as disliking the school lunch to feeling excluded by peers due to their status as an English language learner. One female participant from El Salvador described her experiences adjusting to a new culture at the age of 16:

Desafíos como convivir con personas de diferentes razas, diferentes culturas, diferentes idiomas, ellos no hablan mi idioma y no sé, al principio no sabía cómo comunicarme con ellos, yo quería hablar, decirles algo, preguntarles algo, pero tenía el temor de que iba a

equivocarme y ellos que se burlaran o no sabía cómo era el comportamiento, si tenían diferentes culturas que mí (Daisy, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹²

Family Separation and Reunification. Participants who were separated from their family described feelings of grief and loss around the separation from family members left in their country of origin. Reunification with estranged family members proved to be a stressor of its own, as participants expressed struggles in adjusting to an entirely new family system. A female participant who arrived at age 12 from Guatemala shared about the impact of separating from her known family and reunifying with estranged family:

Tenía casi ocho años de no ver a mi mami. Y entonces, allá (solo había vivido) con mi familia, bueno con mis abuelos. Entonces, ya luego al venir aquí, me encontré <con> un hermanito nuevo, una casa nueva, personas nuevas, tíos nuevos, mamá. Porque yo con mi mamá, pues solo por fotos... Este afectaba mucho, porque, pues todo era nuevo. Y ya luego que, casi como al año, creo, de estar aquí, todos esos sentimientos, aún los tenía como muy guardados porque soy muy reservada. Entonces, um, con nadie hablaba de esos, de todo eso, no (Yesenia, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹³

Separation from all that was familiar in their home country and placement in an entirely new culture and, often, new family triggered feelings of loneliness and social isolation in many youth interviewed.

¹² See [Appendix G](#) for translation

¹³ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

Burnout. As established, the vast majority of participants stated that they worked while going to school. This additional responsibility resulted in sleep deprivation, trouble concentrating in class, and overall feelings of exhaustion. A male participant reflected on the effects that his workload had on his ability to function, stating:

Después del trabajo intentar hacer tareas no quieres nomás ni tocar el lapicero o lápiz, simplemente quieres dormir; estás super agotado, no tienes energía para nada, lo único que quieres es dormir, todo el tiempo en lo único que piensas es dormir, quiero dormir-dormir, pero sabes que no-no puedes dormir (Mario, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁴

Stigma. The participant above, who described feelings of extreme lethargy and fatigue, also discussed hesitation in accessing mental health services due to reluctance towards disclosing personal information to a professional. He described this as common in the community, stating, “Muchas veces los estudiantes no lo quieren tomar. En veces no quieren hablar con nadie. No se sienten bien compartiendo de su vida personal con otras personas y a nadie- juzgan a casi nadie. Muchas personas prefieren no hacerlo” (Mario, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁵ Overall, participants faced multiple chronic stressors which are known to have profound effects on mental health but had never accessed mental health services before and were unfamiliar with

¹⁴ [See Appendix G](#) for translation

¹⁵ [See Appendix G](#) for translation

concepts such as mandated reporting and confidentiality. This unfamiliarity with the behavioral health system appears to be a barrier to receiving mental health services.

Gaps in Support

Participants explored a number of areas in which they felt school-based support was lacking, the most salient of which were:

School Engagement. Many participants described generally feeling excluded or invisible in the classroom setting, often ignored or neglected by school staff. While the motives for such exclusion are unknown, some felt that this was due to personal bias and discrimination. One student described feeling like nothing more than a number to administrations, stating:

Para poder ponerme al corriente, y todo como que sentía que les importaba un poco (.) Al nivel administración, creo que no le importaba a nadie. Creo que solo éramos un estudiante más en la cuenta para ellos poder agarrar fondos cada año. Era como que, okay, (pues el estudiante que venís). Vamos a sacar attendance, y vamos a ver si () el estudiante que, que falta mucho y que tenemos que presionar tu familia pa que venga.

Algo así me sentía. (Franklin, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁶

Another student stated that she could not recall a time where she had seen a teacher engage with students who seemed to be struggling, stating:

Pero yo jamás vi a un maestro acercarse y decir, o, estas bien, o te ayudo en algo, no sé, tómate tu tiempo. Ve a pensar, habla algo, escribe algo. Nunca... Tengo que tener cómo la

¹⁶ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

confianza para poder contarle lo que me esta pasando. Y a veces los maestros, cómo que, no les importa si te ven mal. O, si tu estas cómo, triste, cómo que solo, ¿estás bien? Eso es lo único que te preguntan, pero no van, este, ¿te puedo ayudar? O, dime que, que puedo hacer yo para que tu salgas de donde estas. (Yessenia, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁷

Overall, participants conveyed a desire for their complex life circumstances to be better understood and received with more empathy from staff.

Accessibility. A point that multiple participants brought up was the importance of accessible service referrals. One participant described his experience with a referral to a local mental health provider as inaccessible due to sheer distance, which he felt was unjust:

Imagínate, como un estudiante va a caminar un montón de cuadras para poder ir a buscar ayuda. ¿Porque la ayuda no puede venir al estudiante? Pero si fuera un blanco, un niño blanco, con privilegios, creo que hasta a la casa me fueran a ver. Pero como era un inmigrante sin documentos, y sin nada, la única era, o, ‘¿no tienes medical completo? Tiene que ir hasta la oficina, donde te pueden dar servicios. Si te interesa y quieres cambiar (va allí), y si no, pues no nos importa’ (Franklin, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁸

¹⁷ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

¹⁸ See [Appendix G](#) for translation

Another student shared that he was unable to access tutoring services due to his work schedule, stating, “Tuve un tutor pero fue como grado <once> creo. Por lo general yo estaba preocupado, trabajo, escuela. Entonces cómo tutors casi me ofrecieron al inicio un tutor, pero no lo acepté porque no tenía tiempo” (Mario, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).¹⁹

Culturally Relevant Curriculum. Many participants disclosed feelings of exclusion or disenfranchisement during their educational experiences. One participant highlighted the potential of ethnic studies courses in empowering new arrivals from Central America:

Yo siento que si las secundarias de aquí de los Estados Unidos implementan este tipo de cursos sobre de los estudios étnicos creo que sí que sí crearía como un cambio en la conciencia de, en nosotros no, de los Latinos que hay leyes de que no nos está favoreciendo... Y siento que más estudiantes van a estar preparados a poder determinar por ellos mismos lo que les beneficiaría uno en este en este país. Y sentían capaces de poderse los las generaciones que puedan crear nuevos cambios (Eva, Semi- Structured interview, December, 2018).²⁰

Supportive Factors

Multiple students described positive experiences with the campus Wellness center (referred to as “Wellness”). Positive components of interactions in this space were communication in their

¹⁹ See [Appendix G for translation](#)

²⁰ See [Appendix G for translation](#)

native language and the supportive, non-punitive roles of the staff members. One student recalled:

Una vez yo fui a hablar con un maestro y le dije que me sentía mal, me refirió a Wellness y hablé con ella, comencé a llevarme con ella y ella comenzó a darme consejos, a decirme cómo comportarme, cómo sentirme y de hace tiempo ella me ayudó, me dio muchos consejos y me subió mi autoestima, me hizo sentir como si tal vez yo no sé cómo expresarme, pero algún día lo voy a hacer (Daisy, Semi-Structured Interview, December 2018).²¹

Another student described her luck in meeting a supportive teacher and highlighted the impact that just one supportive relationship at school can have, recalling:

Tuve la suerte de tener a una profesora que entiende de diversidad, que entiende de nuevos estudiantes que vienen con diferentes con diferentes pensamientos, no. Miss Liz, Miss Liz era, era la maestra perfecta para mí (Eva, Semi-Structured Interview, December 2018).²²

Overall, analysis of interview content illustrated participants faced a number of complex and interwoven needs due to a variety of factors which impacted their educational experiences in the U.S., the most notable of which appeared to be mental health and socioeconomic status.

Discussion

²¹ See [Appendix G for translation](#)

²² See [Appendix G for translation](#)

Results of this study yielded rich narrative around participants' educational experiences as newly arrived immigrant youth from Central America. One of the primary and most valuable results of this study was the information obtained about the unique cultural context which informed their matriculation into the U.S. public education system. Many students experienced lengthy gaps in their education before arrival, thus affecting their reading and writing abilities. Many students also described feeling that there was not a high value placed on education in their country of origin, as working to provide income as soon as one of age is seen as more important. For many of these youth, enrollment into a U.S. school meant a complete shift in culture. Members of this population may not see compulsory education as an opportunity but, rather, an obstacle to providing income for their family. This is not true of all of the participants, as some went on to pursue higher education. However, the demands to provide income for their family were real regardless of attitude towards education, and often competed with their duty to attend school.

When examining the unmet needs and of this population as it relates to education, we must understand Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Many students are living in poverty and in this study 11 out of 12 participants worked a job during their time in high school. This income source was not for frivolous spending, but helped them and their families meet their basic needs. Poverty is not unique to this population, but they and their families face disproportionate challenges to employment due to their immigration status. When a child's needs for food, shelter, and safety are not met their ability to meet their full potential for self-actualization through education is impacted (Maslow, 1943). If a student fears being deported back to a country where

their safety would be at risk, working to pay for attorney costs quickly takes priority over attending school. This tension poses an ethical dilemma for social workers, who may work for school systems which restrict and punish student absenteeism.

Results observed in this study also shed light on the unique developmental position of migrant youth from Central America who arrive in later adolescence. Central American adolescents are often viewed as autonomous, self-supporting members of society in their country of origin. Many have completed developmental tasks that their U.S. born peers likely will not complete for years, such as supporting oneself financially and starting a family. However, upon matriculation into the U.S. K-12 education system they are stripped of their adult status and treated as dependent children who must comply with compulsory education laws. Such reflections captured in interviews highlight that dismissing the autonomy and cultural norms which these youth bring into the education system not only marginalizes this population, but perpetuates the socioeconomic challenges that they face upon arrival.

While participants felt more developmentally advanced than their peers, relationships in a new country proved to be one of the most difficult areas of adjustment. Perhaps the most interesting finding with regard to mental health was the emergence of family reunification as a common source of stress among participants. The literature review showed that family separation is a well-established risk factor for adverse mental health outcomes. However, the effects of family reunification itself on mental health outcomes are a relatively unexplored area of research. The results of this study showed that, for those who reunified with family members upon arrival in the U.S., family reunification is a complex process which can greatly affect overall health and

wellbeing after migration. Such results show a possible need for a further examination of the impacts of attachment processes, such as rupture and repair, among immigrant youth and families. This is particularly applicable to regions from which many unaccompanied minors immigrate, such as Central America.

Overall, social relationships were at the forefront of mental health discussions in the current study. While some participants described feelings of depression, anxiety, or posttraumatic stress, these symptoms were often discussed within the context of feeling lonely, isolated, or disconnected from community. This was an unexpected finding, as current literature often discusses the mental health of migrant youth through a lens of trauma and resilience. However, the participants in this study talked more about relationships and attachments than any mental health symptoms themselves. This calls for further research which examines the implications of migration during adolescence on social-emotional development.

Limitations and Generalizability

The intention of this study was to make this inquiry specific to the experiences of Central American adolescents rather than focusing on generalizability, as is the nature of qualitative research. Our purposive sampling did not include information from teachers, school staff, or family members due to the focus of this study being the voice and narratives of youth themselves. Immigrant adolescents from other regions were not included in this study and the data are not representative of the experiences of all immigrant adolescents from Central America. Despite the benefit of sharing the voice and power with the participants of this study by having them be interviewed by their peers, on occasions, peer researchers framed the interviews in such

a way that reflected their own experiences and feelings about specific themes. This action by peer researchers may have impacted some of the participants' responses. However, the positionality of peer researchers over the primary researchers was crucial in using this participatory action research framework to elicit detailed and authentic responses during the interview process.

Implications for Social Work and Next Steps

The current study presents a rich description of the factors which affect adjustment for newly arrived youth from Central America as they matriculate into the U.S. education system. While many students interviewed described the public education system as a protective factor, it is important for school social work professionals to note that not all youth who enroll in a K-12 school upon arrival wish to pursue education. The participants interviewed in this study held a variety of opinions about education, and social work professionals have an ethical duty to respect the self-determination of each student to whom they provide supportive services.

With that said, there are a number of common factors that participants described as necessary supports needed by this population. Perhaps the most salient need cited among participants is a need for meaningful engagement from school and social service professionals. Meaningful engagement is most possible when youth are able to express themselves in their native language, and an adequate supply of professionals who speak languages such as Spanish and indigenous dialects are critical to serving newly arrived youth from Central America. As this population is so diverse, social workers must practice cultural humility and non-assumption when assessing for the needs of individual members of this population. The needs of this

population are complex, and may require linkage and coordination of multiple sources of support outside of the school setting. Social workers serving this population need to be innovative in developing new structural pathways to support and adapting existing systems to meet the needs of this population. This may require advocacy on behalf of youth in existing systems and the creation or expansion of programs specific to newcomer youth.

On a structural level, it appears that the participants in this study require a level of flexibility in their education that many public K-12 schools do not currently provide. Students who work during school stated that they would benefit from alternative schedules, flexible deadlines, and the ability to take less units at a time than the average student. These needs fall in juxtaposition to current educational policies and laws around mandatory school attendance. A critical next step in education policy is to build pathways for youth with unique needs which do not include pushing students out of traditional school environments.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that there are several unique factors that need to be considered in order to adequately respond to the influx of Central American youth in our schools. Many social workers, educators, and other career professionals are unaware of the extreme hardships these youth face and unprepared to help address these barriers. Social workers must be prepared to support reunifying families, develop and implement group therapy curriculum to help students process and normalize grief, loss, and the acculturation process, help youth strengthen relationships, build community, and provide a direct link to community legal aid and resources. Addressing the needs of this population is going to take a comprehensive approach.

Social workers will need to work collaboratively with educators, lawyers, and other professionals involved in students' lives in order to provide the holistic level of supports needed to address these complex challenges. Furthermore, social workers must be willing to advocate for the unmet needs of these students and push for change at the school, district, state, and federal level.

Designing an equitable and just education system means addressing the challenges and obstacles that impact students' ability to excel in the U.S. educational system. The high increase of migrant youth, particularly in states like California, have resulted in growing gaps and academic disparities among this population. Too often, immigrant youth are portrayed and perceived as one large homogeneous group of individuals. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Central American students are a subgroup of immigrant youth with a sleuth of challenges and diverse needs. For example, students who work during school stated that they would benefit from alternative schedules, flexible deadlines, and the ability to take less units at a time than the average student. These needs fall in juxtaposition to current educational policies and laws around mandatory school attendance. Currently, there are few policies designed to ensure that recent immigrant arrivals receive adequate supports. Policy implementation addressing the disparities in educational outcomes among newcomer youth must be developed to help address the unmet needs of this population.

These youth have demonstrated a high level of resilience in areas such as self-sufficiency, adaptation, and problem solving. It is clear that these students have vast potential that is not being harnessed within the rigid structure of the K-12 education as it stands today. A critical next step in education policy is to build pathways for youth whose life circumstances fall outside of

perceived norms and whose skills and talents push beyond the traditional classroom setting. It is only when these youth feel engaged, supported, and valued by the education system that they will be able to reach their full academic potential.

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Appendix A: Change Report

Prior to finalizing the research instrument, the research team consulted with a potential participant within the demographic group to ensure quality and rigor of the instrument. This pilot test revealed some concerns regarding participants interpretation of vaguely defined topics such as “educational success” or “educational experience”. The consultant suggested adding a selection of examples that the interviewer could refer to. For example, one original question asked participants to share how they think schooling in their home country has prepared them to start school in the U.S. This particular question brought up questions of what it means to be “prepared” and for what, exactly? Is the question referring to language integration, core content, cultural adaptations or all of the following? Therefore, the research team added a number of examples which the interviewer can use to help frame the question better for participants.

The pilot test additionally revealed a missing key identifier. The participant expressed a concern to distinguish whether participants came from a private or public school. They shared that the quality of schooling in their home countries often vary depending on whether they attended a public or private institution. Therefore, we will be adding that as an identifier in the background demographics section of our research study.

Perhaps the most valuable feedback we received from the pilot test was how to re-frame questions in their translations to effectively capture the root of our questions. We spent time carefully reviewing the Spanish translation of these questions to modify and adapt language to be culturally accessible to participants. The changes and final research instrument are outlined below.

Demographic Information:

Age

Gender

Country of origin

Date/ age of enrollment in a US school

What language did you speak in your household growing up?

*Did you attend a private or public school in your country of origin?

Pre-Pilot Questions

Theme: Educational History	<p>1. What was your experience like in school in your home country and do you feel that your experience prepared you for school in the U.S? If yes/no, why do you think this is so?</p> <p>1.1. What was your experience taking classes in the U.S. like for you?</p> <p>1.2. Were you attending school in your country; if no why and when did you stop going to school?</p>	<p>1. ¿Cómo era tu experiencia con educación en tu país de origen y piensas que te preparo empezar tus estudios en los Estados Unidos?</p> <p>1.1. Estabas asistiendo escuela en tus país de origen; si no, porque dejaste tus estudios y a que edad dejaste de estudiar?</p> <p>1.2. Cómo era tu experiencia tomando clase en los Estados Unidos?</p>
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<p>Theme: Socio- Economic Status</p>	<p>2. How does financial status impact your education and does it have an impact on your ability to focus in school?</p> <p>2.1. Did you worry about your family's economic situation when you were in school?</p> <p>2.2. Did you have to work while you were in school? How did this affect you as a student?</p>	<p>2. Cómo piensas que tu estatus financiero te impactó tu educación? Crees que la situación económica de tu familia influyó tu habilidad enfocarte en tus estudios?</p> <p>2.1. Habían tiempos cuando te encontraste preocupada/o sobre la situación económica en tu familia cuando estabas en clase?</p> <p>2.2. Trabajaste cuando estabas en escuela? Como te afectó a tus estudios?</p>
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<p>Theme: Mental Health</p>	<p>3. Does your emotional well being affect your ability to succeed at school?</p> <p>3.1. Do you find yourself distracted while in class because of an event that happened in the past? Can you tell me more about how that influenced your ability to focus?</p> <p>3.2. Did you ever find yourself having strong bad feelings/ thoughts in class (anger, sad, worried, scared, etc) that made it difficult to concentrate? Can you share details about this?</p> <p>3.3. Did you ever have problems controlling your emotions or actions and did that ever cause you to get in trouble? Can you share about how this may have affected your learning?</p>	<p>3. ¿Su bienestar emocional afecta su capacidad para tener éxito en la escuela?</p> <p>3.1. ¿Te encuentras distraído mientras estás en clase debido a un evento que sucedió en el pasado? ¿Puedes decirme más sobre cómo eso influyó en tu capacidad de concentración?</p> <p>3.2. ¿Alguna vez se encontró con fuertes malos sentimientos / pensamientos en clase (enojo, tristeza, preocupación, miedo, etc.) que le dificultaron la concentración? ¿Puedes compartir detalles sobre esto?</p> <p>3.3. ¿Alguna vez tuvo problemas para controlar sus emociones o acciones y alguna vez le causó problemas? ¿Puedes compartir cómo esto puede haber afectado tu aprendizaje?</p>
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Theme: Resilience	<p>4. What was the hardest thing about being in school?</p> <p>5. What were some of the most helpful supports you received in school?</p>	<p>4. ¿Qué fue lo más difícil de estar en la escuela?</p> <p>5. ¿Cuáles fueron algunos de los apoyos más útiles que recibiste en la escuela?</p>
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Post Pilot Questions

Demographic Info

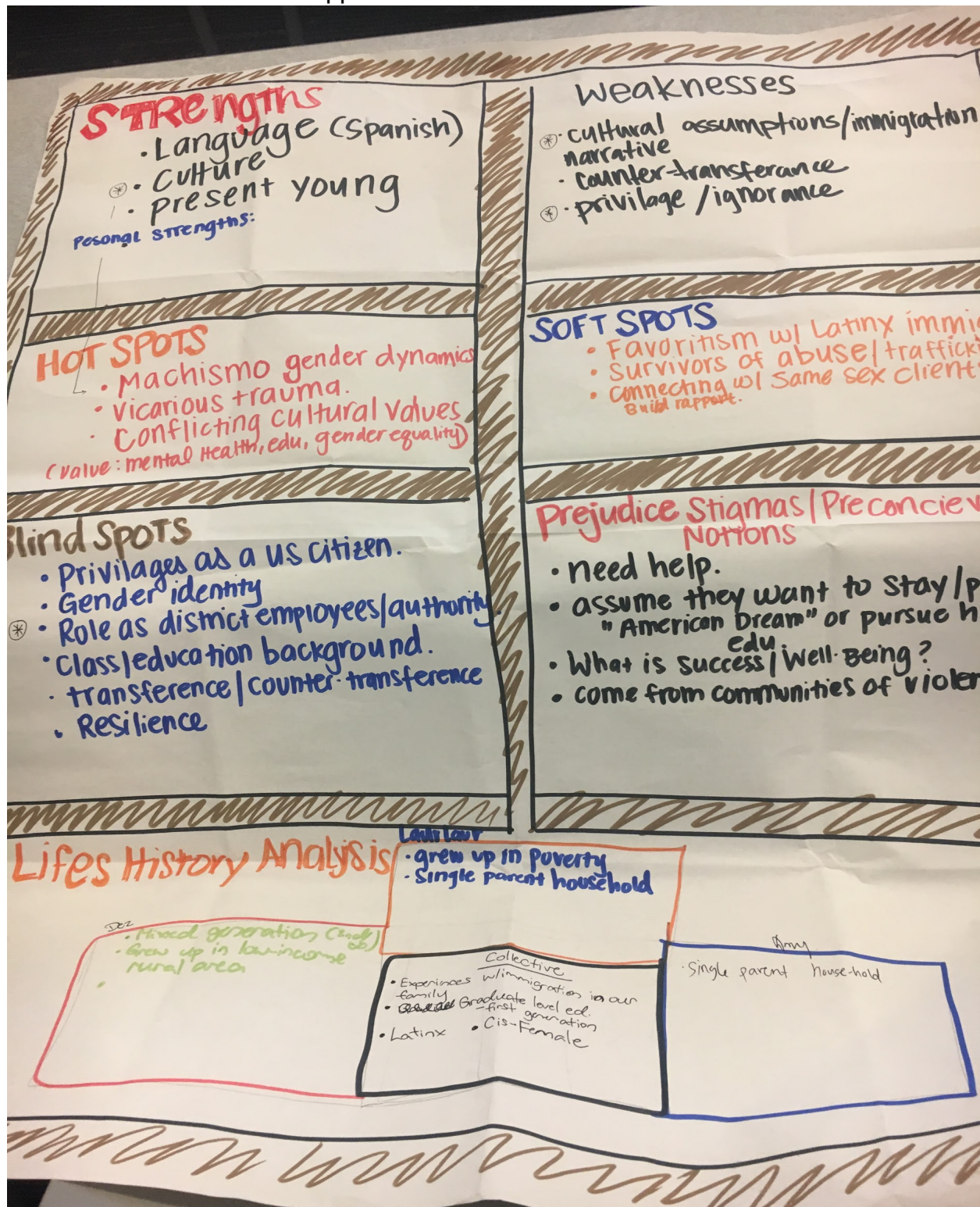
- Age/ Edad
- Gender/ Genero
- Country of origin/ Pais de origen
- Date/ age of enrollment in a US school/ Fecha/edad de inscripción a su escuela en Los E.E.U.U
- What language did you speak in your household growing up?/ Que idioma hablaron en su hogar?
- Que año salieron de su país
- En qué año llegaron en Los Estados Unidos?
- Did you go to a private or public school in your home country? En su su país durante su infancia o niñez asistió un escuela pública o privada
- How far did you have to travel to get to school?/ Que tan lejos tuviste que viajar para ir a su escuela?

Interview Questions

Educational History	<p>1) What was your experience like in school in your home country and do you feel that your experience prepared you for school in the U.S? If yes/no, why do you think this is so?</p> <p>1.1.) What was a typical day like for you?</p> <p>1.2.) What are some of the differences between your education in your home country and your classes in the United States.</p> <p>1.3) What was your experience taking classes in the U.S. like for you?</p> <p>1.4.) What supports did/ could have provided you to ease your transition into school.</p>	<p>1.) Cómo fue tu educación en tu país? Crees que la educación que se te dio en tu país te ayudo en tu transición educativa a los Estados Unidos? (El idioma, lecturas, adaptación cultural)</p> <p>1.1) Cuéntame cómo era la rutina en un día de escuela en tu país?</p> <p>1.2) Hay algunas similitudes/ diferencias entre la educación en los Estados Unidos y tu país?</p> <p>1.3) Dime cómo fue tu experiencia tomando clase en los Estados Unidos?</p> <p>1.4) Cuáles apoyos se te ofrecieron o que podrían haber sido ofrecido para ayudarte con tu transición educativa a los E.E.U.U? (Ex. Clases en Espanol, teniendo un tutor, grupos de tarea)</p>
Socio-Economic Status	<p>2) How did your financial status impact your education and did it have on impact on your ability to meet school requirements?</p> <p>2.2) What was that experience like for you?</p> <p>2.3) Did you have to work while you were in school? How did this affect you as a student?</p> <p>2.4.) What could the school have done to help you overcome economic barriers?</p>	<p>2.) Cómo crees que la situación económica de tu hogar afectó tu educación?</p> <p>2.2) Cuéntame de esa experiencia.</p> <p>2.3) Tuviste que trabajar mientras asistias a la escuela? Qué repercusiones tuvo en sus estudios?</p> <p>2.4) En qué manera pudo ayudar la escuela para asistirte con su situación económica? (Ex. Pagar por muni, asistencia con comida)</p>

Mental-Health	<p>3) Can you tell me about a time where had strong feelings, memories, or had trouble controlling your emotions?</p> <p>3.2) How has your emotional well being positively or negatively had an impact on your education?</p> <p>3.3.) What kind of supports could the school have offered you to help you with your feelings?</p>	<p>3.) Cuéntame sobre una vez que tuviste sentimientos fuertes, memorias, o dificultad controlando tus emociones y como afecto con tu habilidad de enfoque?</p> <p>3.2.) Dime como tu bien estar emocional afecto positivamente o negativamente tu educacion?</p> <p>3.3.) Qué apoyos la escuela pudo ofrecerte para controlar tus sentimientos y la transición emocional? (Ex.grupos, terapia, etc.)</p>
Summary/ Wrap-up	<p>4.) What was the hardest thing about being in school in the U.S.?</p> <p>5.) What were some of the most helpful supports you received while in school in the U.S?</p>	<p>4.) Que cosa fue lo más difícil en respeto a tus estudios en los Estados Unidos? (Ex. entender las clases, el idioma, etc.)</p> <p>5.) Cuáles fueron algunos de los recursos que te ayudaron manejar el sistema educativo en los Estados Unidos.</p>

Appendix B: Window on the World



Appendix C: Codebook

Code Name	Definition	How to Use	How Not to Use	Example - Data Set
ED HIST	The educational background of participants in their country of origin and its influence on academic achievement.	Anytime participants describe how their educational history <u>influenced</u> their ability to excel in U.S school settings	Basic descriptions about education in their home country; no attached meaning. No connections are made to experiences in the U.S.	“I was not studying in my country. I hadn’t been in school for almost two years. So going back to school was not at all pretty.”
AGE	A participants age at the time of enrollment	The following code is used identify self perceived barriers influenced by the individual's age at the time of enrollment and throughout their 9-12 educational career.	Discussing their current age- we are only examining impacts of age during their time in public K-12 schools..	“When I came, I came thinking that I was already grown, I was independent, I could work, and I could take care of myself. Then, when I came here they told me, you are not of legal age, you are still a minor. “

SES	The student's socio-economic status: income, work status, etc.	The following is code used to identify how a student's socioeconomic influenced their ability to engage and participate fully in their education.	Socioeconomic status in their country of origin.	"I have to go to work so that we have money or so we can eat ... It's difficult because I have to pay rent, come to school, go to work."
MH	Indicators of student mental health including: affect (emotion), cognitions (thought patterns), and coping strategies (behaviors in response to stress).	Social, emotional, or behavioral factors which affect participants' educational experiences.	Factors which do not affect ability to function (i.e., stress over upcoming tests that doesn't cause any dysfunction)	"And afterwards, almost like a year of being here, all those feelings- I still had them deep inside because I am very reserved. So, um, I didn't talk to anyone about all of that, no. "

CO	Country of Origin	Experiences that the interview participant identifies as specific to being an immigrant from their country of origin.	General descriptions of their country of origin without connection to educational processes or outcomes.	“In Honduras, it was like, read this chapter and that’s it. Then they would give you an exam and that’s all.”
SUP	Sources of social, emotional, educational, legal, or informational support.	If a participant identifies resources or networks that were helpful in their US education and transition to US education/peers within school settings.	Sources of support in their country of origin and/or before enrollment into a U.S. school.	“I was lucky to have a teacher who understands diversity, who understands new students who come with different thoughts. Miss Liz was the perfect teacher for me.”
GSUP	Identified gaps in supports.	When a participant describes supports which could have benefitted their educational journey which do not exist, or that the participant is unaware of.	Gaps in support in their country or origin.	“ And sometimes the teachers, like, they don’t care if they see you’re not doing well. Or, if you’re sad or alone.”

Appendix D: Recruitment Message (English/Spanish)

Hi Name of Former Student

This is Ms. Millan, I hope you are doing well! I am contacting you because I wanted to know if you would be interested collaborating and participating in a research project I am working on. The research project is focused on identifying challenges and obstacles that youth who immigrate from Central America experience in U.S Schools. You would be participating in an hour long interview that would be about your experience coming to school in the U.S. I am also asking other students from San Francisco International High School who arrived as teenagers to participate. Finally, I am looking for students who would be interested in helping me give the interviews and be more a part of the research process if that is something you would be interested in please let me know!

I will be in San Francisco from December 17th- December 27th. Please let me know if you are interested so we can set up a time to meet. It is ok if you cannot participate, send me a message I would love to hear how you are doing!

Hola Nombre del ex-estudiante.

Soy Ms. Millán ¡espero que estés bien! La razón por la que me comunico contigo es porque quería saber si estaría interesado en colaborar y participar en un proyecto de sobre la experiencia de estudiantes Centroamericanos que llegaron en su adolescencia. El proyecto de investigación se centra en identificar los desafíos y obstáculos que los jóvenes que emigran de Centroamérica encuentran en las escuelas de los Estados Unidos. Estarías participando en una entrevista sobre tu experiencia como estudiante asistiendo escuela en los EE. UU. Finalmente, busco participantes que estén interesados en ayudarme a dar las entrevistas y ser más parte del proceso de investigación, si eso es algo en lo que estarían interesados, ¡avísame!

Estaré en San Francisco del 17 de diciembre al 27 de diciembre. Por favor, avísame si está interesado para que podamos establecer un horario para reunirnos. ¡Envíame un mensaje que me encantaría saber cómo te va! Espero escuchar de ti.

Appendix E: Consent Form
University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: The Experiences of Central American Migrant Youth in California Schools

Principal Investigators: Amy Aguilar, MSW Candidate 2019; Desiree Lopez, MSW Candidate 2019, Laurie Millan, MSW Candidate 2019 and **Faculty sponsor:** Amy Ritterbusch, Ph. D from the **Luskin School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you arrived and enrolled into a CA high school between the ages of 14-18 and are from Central America. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study is being done because we want to be able to understand the challenges that youth arriving from Central America are facing in high schools. We want to ensure students are receiving the supports necessary to be successful in school.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Meet with the researcher in a discrete and local location
- Participate in a one-time, one hour interview
- You will be asked questions from a questionnaire by an researcher/ investigator
- We will ask you about your educational history, country of origin, language abilities, socioeconomic status, and your challenges as a newcomer while in high school.
- The interview will be recorded on a device
- The lead interviewer (Ms.Laurie Millan) will be present at every interview

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of about one hour for a one time interview.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

- We may ask you questions that may be uncomfortable or difficult to answer.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You may benefit from the study by having a voice in potential program and school recommendations we make to local school districts by sharing your experiences in the school system as a newcomer.

The results of the research may help us provide recommendations to local school districts on how they can better assist newcomer students in building supports such as resources and programs to increase school success.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?

Due to participation in this study being completely voluntary, there are no other options to not participating.

Will I be paid for participating?

- If you choose to participate in this study, you will be entered in a drawing to win a \$30 gift card. We may need to request a mailing address if you are selected.
- Participation in the drawing is **completely voluntary**. You can participate in this study without entering the drawing. Please initial below if you DO NOT wish to participate in the drawing but wish to participate in this study.

_____ (initial) I DO NOT wish to be included in the drawing but will still participate in the study.

- If you wish to participate in this drawing please add your phone number below and if you prefer a phone call or text. We will only contact you if you win the drawing.

_____ (initial) I would like to be included in the drawing. I understand that I will be providing my phone number and consent to being contacted by the researcher if I win the drawing.*

Phone number _____

Preferred method of contact if I win the drawing (circle one):

Text

Phone call

*If you win the drawing we will be contacting you via the phone number provided and you will be asked for your address in order for us to mail you your prize.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential and private. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by keeping any and all records associated with this study in locked files and/ or password protected computers and programs. Only the principal investigators will have access to these records and all recording devices will be accessible only to researchers. If you consent to the aid of peer researchers, they will have access to limited records only in the presence of the principal investigators. Recorded interviews will be destroyed once transcribed; we anticipate transcription being completed within 3 months of this interview. Any sort of recommendations or report we make public based on the results of this study will not include information that make it possible to identify you.

Peer Researcher Waiver

This study will include peer interviewers helping the principal investigators with interviews, transcription, and coding. Although we will de- identify your information, your narrative may be recognizable to peers.

Please initial if you consent to the following:

_____ (initial) I consent to the principal investigators using the help of peer interviewers to help with my interview, transcription, and coding.

If you would still like to participate in this study but DO NOT consent to the principal investigator using peer interviewers for your interview, transcription of your interview, or coding of your interview please initial below.

_____ (initial) I would like to participate in this study but DO NOT consent to the primary researcher using peer interviewers for my interview, transcription, or coding.*

* We will remove your interview and code book from our data to assure that peer interviewers do not review your information and we will assure that a peer interviewer is not present during your interview.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers or our faculty sponsor.

The research team:

Principal Investigator and Lead Interviewer: Laurie Millan

Phone: 510-565-6208

Email: millan.laurie@gmail.com

Principal Investigator: Amy Aguilar

phone: 818-636-5278

Email: amyla413@gmail.com

Principal Investigator: Desiree Lopez

Phone: 909-856-4967

Email: deerayy@ucla.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Amy Ritterbush

Email: aritterbusch@luskin.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

Name of
Participant

Signature of
Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

Name of Person Obtaining
Consent

Contact
Number

Signature of Person Obtaining
Consent

Date

Universidad de California, Los Ángeles

CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPAR EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN

Título del estudio: Las experiencias de los jóvenes migrantes centroamericanos en las escuelas de California

Investigadores principales: Amy Aguilar, MSW Candidate 2019; Desiree Lopez, MSW Candidate 2019, Laurie Millan, MSW Candidate 2019 y **patrocinadora por la facultad:** Amy Ritterbusch, Ph. D de **Luskin School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)** están realizando un estudio de investigación.

Usted ha sido seleccionado como candidato para participar en este estudio porque asistias o asistes un escuela secundaria en California, y tenias 14-18 años de edad a la hora de ingresar, y eres originario de Centroamérica. Su participación en este estudio de investigación es voluntaria.

¿Por qué se está haciendo este estudio?

Este estudio se está realizando porque queremos poder comprender las dificultades que enfrentan los jóvenes que llegan de Centroamérica en las escuelas secundarias. Queremos asegurarnos de que los estudiantes estén recibiendo los apoyos necesarios para tener éxito en la escuela.

¿Qué pasará si participo en este estudio de investigación?

Al ser seleccionado como voluntario para participar en este estudio, el entrevistador le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

- Reunirse en una ubicación local y discreta
- Participar en una entrevista de una hora
- Contestar preguntas sobre su historial educativo, país de origen, habilidades lingüísticas, estado socioeconómico y dificultades que atravesó como recién llegado mientras estaba en la escuela secundaria.
- La entrevista se grabará en un dispositivo.
- El entrevistador principal (Ms.Laurie Millán) estará presente en todas las entrevistas.

¿Cuánto tiempo estaré en el estudio de investigación?

La participación total es de aproximadamente una hora.

¿Hay algún riesgo que pueda esperar de este estudio?

- Es posible que le hagamos preguntas que pueden ser incómodas o difíciles de responder.

¿Hay algún beneficio si participo?

Usted puede beneficiarse de este estudio al saber que su voz y experiencias personales están siendo consideradas y puede llegar a ser parte del desarrollo de programas a los distritos escolares de como mejorar la calidad de servicios y apoyos ofrecidos a los estudiantes recién llegados.

Los resultados de la investigación pueden ayudarnos a proporcionar recomendaciones a los distritos locales sobre cómo pueden ayudar mejor a los estudiantes recién llegados a construir apoyos tales como recursos y programas para aumentar el éxito escolar.

¿Qué otras opciones tengo si elijo no participar?

Participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Los participantes pueden optar retirarse del estudio en cualquier punto.

¿Me pagarán por participar?

- Si participa en este estudio, se le ingresará en un sorteo para ganar una tarjeta de regalo de \$15. Si estás seleccionado, solicitaremos una dirección para enviar su tarjeta de regalo por correo.
- La participación en el sorteo es **completamente voluntaria**. Puedes participar en este estudio sin entrar en el sorteo. Marque su inicial a continuación si NO desea participar en el sorteo, pero desea participar en este estudio.

_____ (inicial) NO deseo ser incluido en el sorteo pero aún participaré en el estudio.

_____ (inicial) Me gustaría ser incluido en el sorteo. Entiendo que proporcionaré mi número de teléfono y doy mi consentimiento para que el investigador me contacte si gano el sorteo.*

Número de teléfono _____

Método de contacto preferido si gano el sorteo (circule uno):

Llamada de teléfono

Texto

* Si gana el sorteo, nos pondremos en contacto con usted a través del número de teléfono proporcionado y se le pedirá su dirección para que le enviemos su premio.

¿Se mantendrá confidencial la información sobre mí y mi participación?

Cualquier información que se obtenga en relación con este estudio y que pueda identificarlo permanecerá confidencial y privada. Tu información no será compartido sin tu permiso o en el caso que lo exija la ley. Se mantendrá la confidencialidad manteniendo todos y cada uno de los registros asociados con este estudio en archivos

bloqueados y/o computadoras y programas protegidos por contraseña. Solo los investigadores principales tendrán acceso a estos registros y todos los dispositivos de grabación serán accesibles solo para los investigadores. Si acepta la ayuda de la entrevista por parte de un compañero, ellos tendrán acceso a registros limitados solo en presencia de los investigadores principales. Las entrevistas grabadas serán destruidas una vez transcritas; Anticipamos que la transcripción se complete dentro de los 3 meses de esta entrevista. Cualquier tipo de recomendaciones o informes que hagamos públicos con base en los resultados de este estudio no incluirán información que permita identificarlo.

Entrevista hecho por un Compañero

Este estudio incluirá entrevistadores que le dará soporte a la investigadora principal de parte de entrevistas, transcripciones y codificación. Aunque tu información mantendrá protegida, su narrativa puede ser reconocible por parte de sus compañeros.

Escriba su inicial si acepta lo siguiente:

_____ (inicial) Consiento que los investigadores principales utilicen la ayuda de los entrevistadores para que me ayuden con la entrevista, la transcripción y la codificación.

Si aún desea participar en este estudio, pero NO consentir que el investigador principal utilice entrevistadores para su entrevista, la transcripción de su entrevista o la codificación de su entrevista, escriba sus iniciales debajo.

_____ (inicial) Me gustaría participar en este estudio, pero NO acepte que el investigador principal utilice entrevistadores para mi entrevista, transcripción o codificación. *

* Eliminaremos su entrevista y el libro de códigos de nuestros datos para asegurar que los entrevistadores no revise su información y nos aseguraremos de que un entrevistador no esté presente durante su entrevista.

¿Cuáles son mis derechos si participo en este estudio?

- Puede elegir si desea o no participar en este estudio, y puede retirar su consentimiento e interrumpir su participación en cualquier momento.
- Independientemente de la decisión que tome, no habrá ninguna sanción para usted ni pérdida de los beneficios a los que tenía derecho.
- Puede negarse a responder cualquier pregunta que no desee responder y aún permanecer en el estudio.

¿Con quién me puedo comunicar si tengo preguntas sobre este estudio?

Si tiene alguna pregunta, comentario o inquietud sobre la investigación, puede hablar con uno de los investigadores o nuestro patrocinador de la facultad.

El equipo de investigación:

Investigador principal y entrevistador principal: Laurie Millan

Teléfono: 510-565-6208 Correo electrónico: millan.laurie@gmail.com

Investigador principal: Amy Aguilar

Teléfono: 818-636-5278 Correo electrónico: amyla413@gmail.com

Investigador principal: Desiree Lopez

Teléfono: 909-856-4967 Correo electrónico: deerayy@ucla.edu

Patrocinador de la facultad: Dr. Amy Ritterbush

Correo electrónico: aritterbusch@luskin.ucla.edu

Oficina del Programa de Protección de Investigación Humana de la UCLA (OHRPP):

Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como sujeto de investigación, o si tiene inquietudes o sugerencias y desea hablar con alguien que no sea los investigadores, puede comunicarse con el OHRPP de UCLA por teléfono: (310) 206-2040; por correo electrónico: participants@research.ucla.edu o por correo: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

Se le entregará una copia de esta información para que la guarde en sus registros.

FIRMA DEL PARTICIPANTE DEL ESTUDIO

Nombre del
participante

Firma del
participante

Fecha
a

FIRMA DE LA PERSONA QUE OBTIENE EL CONSENTIMIENTO

Nombre de la persona que obtiene el
consentimiento

Número de
contacto

Firma de la persona que obtiene el
consentimiento

Fecha

Appendix F: Inclusion and Exclusion of Participant Criteria and Subgroups

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion participant criteria

Participant Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Country of Origin	❖ Participants who were born and migrated from one of the three countries within Central America including: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras	❖ Individuals who were born in the United States. ❖ Individuals whose family members migrated from Central America.
Age	❖ Participants who enrolled into a High School in the United States between the ages of 14-18.	❖ Individuals who enrolled into a U.S school prior to the age of 14. ❖ Students who were initially enrolled directly into a middle school, elementary school or any other level of education that is not high school
Gender	❖ Participants may identify from any fluid or binary gender. ❖ At least 1 male and 1 female from each of the 3 countries within Central America will be selected to participate.	❖ A single gender pool of participants (Ex. Pool of participants made up of all males).

Table 2.A: Research Subgroups: Minimum numbers for each subgroup

Subgroups	Males	Females	Minimum Total
Country of Origin: El Salvador	1	1	2
Country of Origin: Guatemala	1	1	2
Country of Origin: Honduras	1	1	2
Minimum Total	3	3	6

Table 2.B: Research Subgroups: Actual numbers for this study

Subgroups	Males	Females	Actual Total
Country of Origin: El Salvador	0	1	1
Country of Origin: Guatemala	2	3	5
Country of Origin: Honduras	4	2	6
Actual Total	6	6	12

Appendix G: Quote Translations

Footnote Number	Quote	English Translation
1	Lo más importante sería, sería mi mi comunidad. Porque sin ellos yo no hubiera podido hacer nada. Si hubiera cerrado en mi mundo...sin compartir con ellos y sin sin hablar con ellos, no hubiera podido lograr todo lo que he logrado... Me a ayudado mucho. Creo en mí. Me influenció mucho para yo hacer más que nunca pensé que iba poder.	The most important thing would be, would be my community. Because without them, I would not have been able to do anything. If I had closed my world ... without sharing with them, and without talking to them, I would not have been able to achieve all that I have achieved ... It has helped me a lot. I believe in myself. They influenced me a lot, to do more than I ever thought I would be able to.
2	...si querías ibas y si no, no ibas. No llamaban a tus papas como acá	...If you wanted to go you would go, If not, you wouldn't go. they wouldn't call your parents like they do over here.
3	En Honduras, era como que, lean este chapter y, ya. Y ya luego el examen, y eso es todo.	In Honduras, it was like, read this chapter and that's it. Then they would give you an exam and that's all.
4	...para la maestra era difícil cómo concentrarse en todos los alumnos porque solo teníamos una maestra para sesenta alumnos. Entonces a veces los muchachos no ponían, no hacían caso a la maestra.	...It was hard for the teacher to focus on all the students because we only had one teacher for 60 students. So sometimes students would not listen to the teacher.

5	<p>el gobierno, o (el golpe) de estado, no regalaban el año, hubieron tantas otras cosas, no regalaban el año, los profesores no les pagaban. (No llegaban) en meses. Los amenazaban a los profesores. No llegaban meses. Entonces, era cómo algo ¿cultural?. Y al nivel gubernamental, que nos hacia todos nosotros, como-como estudiantes, caer en, en las drogas, ir a la calle porque no teníamos escuela. Era cómo, okay, estamos (caminando), estamos haciendo fila para la escuela, pero nunca había profesor, (pues) estaban protestando o no estaba el profesor</p>	<p>The government, or (the coup) of State, did not provide enough support for the year, there were so many things, they did so many things, they didn't provide us a year of schooling, they didn't pay the teachers. Some teachers wouldn't show up for months. So, it was like something..cultural? And it was something that impacted us at a governmental level, which made us as students to turn drugs, and many of us turned to the streets since we didn't have school. It was like, okay, we are walking and lining up to go to school, but there was never anyone there to teach us, they were always protesting or they just wouldn't show up.</p>
6	<p>Yo no estaba estudiando más en el país. Había, hacia como por (0.3) casi dos años. So, ya volver a la escuela obligado no es nada bonito.</p>	<p>I was not studying in my country. I hadn't been in school for almost two years. So going back to school was not at all pretty.</p>
7	<p>Cuando me vine yo me vine pensando de que yo ya era grande, era independiente, y yo podía trabajar, y yo podía quedarme en mi misma. Entonces, ya cuando vine acá no me dijeron, pues, no eres mayor de edad, eres todavía una menor de edad. O sea, de que nope. No puedes trabajar legalmente. Entonces alguien tiene que cuidar por ti. Me hizo sentir como que like, no, yo sé que ya estoy grande.</p>	<p>When I came, I came thinking that I was already grown, I was independent, I could work, and I could take care of myself. Then, when I came here they told me, you are not of legal age, you are still a minor. You can't work legally. Someone has to take care of you. It made me feel like I like, no... I know I'm already grown</p>
8	<p>...Tengo que ir a trabajar para que tengamos dinero o para que comamos... Es difícil porque tengo que pagar renta, venir a estudiar, ir a trabajar.</p>	<p>... I have to go to work so that we have money or so we can eat ... It's difficult because I have to pay rent, come to school, go to work.</p>

9	Antes trabajaba sólo 6 horas...Trabajaba cinco días. Ahora trabajo de 5:00 PM a 1:00 AM, o 2:00 AM, todos los días.	I used to work only 6 hours ... I worked for five days. I now work from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM or 2:00 AM every day.
10	...cuando llegué acá una vez como, um, me agarró migración. Mis papás estuvieron forzados también a la escuela porque si no ellos iban, están en problemas con inmigración ya que la inmigración tenía todo esa información, su dirección su seguro social y todo eso.	... when I came here once, um, I was caught by immigration. My parents were too. If I don't go to school, they are in trouble with immigration since immigration had all that information, their address, their social security and all that.
11	Fue cuando tuve que empezar a trabajar, para poder ayudarle con la renta, para poder pagar los gastos de mi abogado...	It was when I had to start working, to be able to help with the rent, to be able to pay the expenses of my lawyer...
12	Desafíos como convivir con personas de diferentes razas, diferentes culturas, diferentes idiomas, ellos no hablan mi idioma y no sé, al principio no sabía cómo comunicarme con ellos, yo quería hablar, decirles algo, preguntarles algo, pero tenía el temor de que iba a equivocarme y ellos que se burlaran o no sabía cómo era el comportamiento, si tenían diferentes culturas que mí.	Challenges like living with people of different races, different cultures, different languages, they don't speak my language and, I don't know, at first I didn't know how to communicate with them, I wanted to talk, to say something, to ask something, but I was afraid that I was going to make mistakes and they made fun of me or I didn't know what the behavior was, like, if they had different cultures than me.

13	<p>Tenía casi ocho años de no ver a mi mami. Y entonces, allá (solo había vivido) con mi familia, bueno con mis abuelos. Entonces, ya luego al venir aquí, me encontré <con> un hermanito nuevo, una casa nueva, personas nuevas, tíos nuevos, mamá. Porque yo con mi mamá, pues solo por fotos... Este afectaba mucho, porque, pues todo era nuevo. Y ya luego que, casi como al año, creo, de estar aquí, todos esos sentimientos, aún los tenía como muy guardados porque soy muy reservada. Entonces, um, con nadie hablaba de esos, de todo eso, no.</p>	<p>It had been almost eight years of not seeing my mom. And then, over there (I had only lived) with my family, well with my grandparents. So, in coming here, I found myself with a new little brother, a new house, new people, new uncles, a mom. Because with my mom, I knew her through, well just photos. This affected me a lot, because, everything was new. And afterwards, almost like a year of being here, all those feelings- I still had them deep inside because I am very reserved. So, um, I didn't talk to anyone about all of that, no.</p>
14	<p>Después del trabajo intentar hacer tareas no quieres nomás ni tocar el lapicero o lápiz, simplemente quieres dormir; estás super agotado, no tienes energía para nada, lo único que quieres es dormir, todo el tiempo en lo único que piensas es dormir, quiero dormir-dormir, pero sabes que no-no puedes dormir.</p>	<p>After work, to try to do homework, you don't even want to touch a pen or pencil, all you want to do is sleep; your super exhausted, you don't have energy to do anything. All you want to do is sleep, all you can think about is sleep, wanting to sleep and sleep, but you know you can't sleep.</p>
15	<p>Muchas veces los estudiantes no lo quieren tomar. En veces no quieren hablar con nadie. No se sienten bien compartiendo de sus vida personal con otras personas y a nadie- juzgan, a casi nadie. Muchas personas prefieren no hacerlo</p>	<p>Many times students do not want to receive it. Sometimes they don't want to talk to anyone. They don't feel good sharing their personal lives with other people and anyone-they judge. Many people prefer not to do it</p>

16	<p>Para poder ponerme al corriente, y todo como que sentía que les importaba un poco (.) Al nivel administración, creo que no le importaba a nadie. Creo que solo éramos un estudiante más en la cuenta para ellos poder agarrar fondos cada año. Era como que, okay, (pues el estudiante que venís). Vamos a sacar attendance, y vamos a ver si () el estudiante que, que falta mucho y que tenemos que presionar tu familia pa que venga. Algo así me sentía.</p>	<p>It felt like they cared a little when they would catch me up on everything. At the administration level, I think that nobody cared. I think we were just one more student in the account for them to be able to grab funds every year. It was like, okay, (for the student that attends). We are going to take attendance and see the student that is missing a lot and we have to pressure your family to make you come. It felt like that.</p>
17	<p>Pero yo jamás vi a un maestro acercarse y decir, o, estas bien, o te ayudo en algo, no sé, tómate tu tiempo. Ve a pensar, habla algo, escribe algo. Nunca... Tengo que tener cómo la confianza para poder contarle lo que me esta pasando. Y a veces los maestros, cómo que, no les importa si te ven mal. O, si tu estas cómo, triste, cómo que solo, ¿estás bien? Eso es lo único que te preguntan, pero no van, este, ¿te puedo ayudar? O, dime que, que puedo hacer yo para que tu salgas de donde estas.</p>	<p>But I've never saw a teacher approach anyone and say, you are doing good, can I help you with something, take your time, go think about something, speak up, write something- never ... I have to have the courage to tell him what is happening to me. And sometimes the teachers, like, they don't care if they see you're not doing well. Or, if you're sad or alone. All they say is 'are you ok?' That's the only thing they ask you, but don't say 'is there anything I can help you with or is there anything I can to to help you to get out of this?'</p>
18	<p>Imagínate, como un estudiante va a caminar un montón de cuadras para poder ir a buscar ayuda. ¿Porque la ayuda no puede venir al estudiante? Pero si fuera un blanco, un niño blanco, con privilegios, creo que hasta a la casa me fueran a ver. Pero como era un inmigrante sin documentos, y sin nada, la única era, o, '¿no tienes medical completo? Tiene que ir hasta la oficina, donde te pueden dar servicios. Si te interesa y quieres cambiar (va allí), y si no, pues no nos importa'</p>	<p>Imagine, how is a student is going to walk a lot of blocks to get help. Why can't help come to the student? But if I were a white, a white student with privilege, I think they would even go see me at home. But since I was an undocumented immigrant, with nothing, all there was for me was 'you don't have full scope medical so you have to go to the office, where they can give you services. If you are interested and want to change (go there), and if not, then we don't care.'</p>

19	Tuve un tutor pero fue como grado <once> creo. Por lo general yo estaba preocupado, trabajo, escuela. Entonces cómo tutors casi me ofrecieron al inicio un tutor pero no lo acepté porque no tenía tiempo.	"I had a tutor but it was like in <11th > grade, I think. Usually I was worried, work and school. Initially, tutors were offered to me but I didn't accept the service because I didn't have time.
20	Yo siento que si las las secundarias de aquí de los Estados Unidos implementan este tipo de cursos sobre de los estudios étnicos creo que sí que sí crearía como un cambio en la conciencia de, en nosotros no, de los Latinos que hay leyes de que no nos está favoreciendo...Y siento que más estudiantes van a estar preparados a poder determinar por ellos mismos lo que les beneficiaría uno en este en este país. Y sentían capaces de poderse los las generaciones que puedan crear nuevos cambios.	I feel that if the high schools here in the United States implement this type of course on ethnic studies, I think it would create a change in our awareness in us Latinos- that there are laws that do not help us ... and I feel that more students are going to be prepared to be able to decide for themselves, what would benefit them in this country. And future generations will feel capable of making change.
21	Una vez yo fui a hablar con un maestro y le dije que me sentía mal, me refirió a Wellness y hablé con ella, comencé a llevarme con ella y ella comenzó a darme consejos, a decirme cómo comportarme, cómo sentirme y de hace tiempo ella me ayudó, me dio muchos consejos y me subió mi autoestima, me hizo sentir como si tal vez yo no sé cómo expresarme, pero algún día lo voy a hacer.	Once I went to talk to a teacher and I told her I felt bad, she referred me to Wellness and I talked to her, I started getting along with her and she started giving me counseling, telling me how to behave, how to feel and for a long time she helped me, she gave me a lot of counseling and it raised my self-esteem, it made me feel like maybe I don't know how to express myself, but someday I'll do it.
22	Tuve la suerte de tener a una profesora que, que entiende de diversidad que entiende de nuevos estudiantes que vienen con diferentes con diferentes pensamientos, no. Miss Liz, Miss Liz era, era la maestra perfecta para mí.	I was lucky to have a teacher who understands diversity, who understands new students who come with different thoughts. Miss Liz was the perfect teacher for me.

Appendix H: Peer Researcher Training Topics

	Topic	Description
1	Research purpose	Present the research goals and purpose for the research study in detail.
2	Identified Problem	Present themes and issues the research project sought to explore. Engage the youth in problem exploration through open dialogue.
3	Participatory Research Approach	Describe the motivations and structures of a Participatory Research study approach.
4	Participant Confidentiality and Consent	Review the importance of confidentiality and consent and how this will impact their role as peer researchers.
5	Reliability and Validity	Review basic components of reliability and validity and their implications for research quality and rigor.
6	Peer Interviewer Roles and Responsibilities	Review roles and ethical responsibilities of peer researchers.
7	Qualitative Interview Instrument	The training will cover the research instrument in detail. Youth will be invited to make suggested edits as they review the research instrument.
8	Practice Interviews	Youth will engage in short practice interviews. We will reconvene and explore how that experience was like from the perspective of the participant and the researcher.

Appendix I: Authorship Statement

Independent contributions:

Amy Aguilar- Coordinated weekly check ins and meetings, contributions throughout paper focused on SES and age of arrival under multiple sections in lit review, results, translation, and discussion. Participated in entire process of transcription, coding, analysis, and memo writing. Contributed to overall final read through of paper, formatting, and structuring.

Laurie Millan- Actively engage in check-in meetings, coordinated and recruited research participants, developed a youth based participatory training, lead research interviews, evaluated and reported on pilot results, coordinated and managed data collection, facilitated discussion with LAUSD staff regarding research methods and vision. Wrote and submitted team research grant proposals. Authored various sections of the research paper including: literature review sections for Educational History, Age at arrival, Participatory research methods, participant recruitment, Data Reliability and Rigor sections. Furthermore, I authored various sections of the results, methods, and discussion sections. Organized and assisted in proofreading for APA adherence, grammar, coherence, and cohesion of final research document.

Desiree Lopez- Actively participated in all weekly check ins and meetings, authored literature review of mental health and immigration, collaborated in finalizing codebook, within methods section- authored Data Collection Techniques section + Analytical Scheme. Participated in transcription and coding cycles. Performed qualitative analysis and authored results section content in the areas of Mental Health, Gaps in Support, and Supports. Contributed to all sections of methods, results and discussion sections. Organized and assisted in proofreading for APA adherence, grammar, coherence, and cohesion of final research document.

Collaborative work:

All the authors contributed to the content, formatting, structure, and collaboration of this project throughout every section of this paper. Collaboration of the whole research team was consistent throughout the paper and all members were included the finalization of the research instruments, methods and analysis, and finalization of the whole paper. Our group met on a weekly basis for the duration of this project both in person and via phone to support one another and hold each other accountable to assure we all met our deadlines while supporting one another.

Electronic Signatures :

Laurie Millan 5/17/19

Laurie Millan Date

Desiree Lopez 5/17/2019

Desiree Lopez Date

Amy Aguilar 5/ 17/2019

Amy Aguilar Date