A Lost Generation in Central America: A Public Health Perspective

An Honors Thesis in Public Health

By
Clara Keane

Thesis Advisor:

Dr. Jonathan Reader, Sociology Dept. and Public Health Dept.

Defense Committee:

Dr. Caitlin Killian, Sociology Dept.
Dr. Raul Rosales, Spanish Dept.
Dr. Alan Rosan, Chemistry Dept.

Abstract: A seemingly unprecedented number of unaccompanied minors from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador was apprehended at the southern border of the United States during fiscal year 2014, spurring a media boom and reopening the dialogue of rebalancing immigration control and human rights. The U.S. simultaneously struggled to process these minors and to implement policies that would prevent subsequent influxes. Although current U.S. immigration policy is concerned first and foremost with the security of the nation, the young and vulnerable population that is arriving has changed the face and definition of refugees and highlighted their human rights. A public health perspective demands an interdisciplinary approach that analyzes root causes of any problem, notes failed approaches, and recommends preventative programming and policies that promote health. This comprehensive yet integrated analysis draws from the fields of sociology, economics, anthropology, and political science to deeply understand this influx and its etiologies. This thesis advocates a paradigm shift from immigration, which controls who may enter and what happens to individuals that do, to public health, which promotes policies focused on prevention. The provision of life choices for Central American youth will also solve, or at least reduce, the magnitude of the immigration problem while simultaneously saving the human potential of a generation. Structural systems that contribute to the vulnerability of these children are explored at the state-level, and the historic economic exploitation and international interventions of U.S. foreign policy in the Northern Triangle are criticized. I argue that U.S. foreign policy in the region should be reassessed to abandon policies created during the Cold War in favor of policies that reflect the country's twenty-first century, democratic ideals. Recommendations will be made for policy makers to prioritize the stabilization of the region through nation-building (i.e. strengthening schools, the police and health care facilities and an enlightened trade policy).

Table of Contents

Introduction: The “Surge" 1
Overview of thesis 7

Chapter 1: The Public Health Perspective 11
1.1 Defining a Public Health approach 11
1.2 Are the children contagious? 13
1.3 Structural vulnerability: minors’ experience at home, in Mexico, and in the United States 17
1.4 Violence as a preventable health problem 23

Chapter 2: Sociological Theory 25
2.1 Drawing on other disciplines: a multilevel analysis 25
2.2 Push-pull factors 28
2.3 Labeling theory 32
2.4 Defining a refugee versus an immigrant: domestic and international law 35
2.5 The legal system for processing minors: a marginal space 39

Chapter 3: Failures of the Nation-States 49
3.1 Necessary components of a viable nation-state 49
3.2 Neodependence and revolutions 52
3.3 Central America Free Trade Agreement: Continuing the legacy of neodependence? 61

Chapter 4: United States Follows Historic Patterns in Central America Policy Making 65
4.1 Short-term national immigration policy has long-term international security consequences 65
4.2 Debunking the myth of an immigration crisis 67
4.3 United States- backed policies in Mexico exacerbate minors’ health problems: Plan Frontera Sur 67

Chapter 5: A Shift in Paradigms: Solutions Moving Forward 73
5.1 A Colombian case study: development, security, peace (DESEPAZ) 75
5.2 A current case study: International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) 77
5.3 Plan for the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: round two of the Alliance for Progress 79
5.4 The 2016 budget: conditional aid 86

Conclusions 88
Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research 91

Bibliography 96

Tables and Figures:

Table 1: Unaccompanied Alien Children Encountered by Fiscal Year 3
Table 2: School Enrollment Rates (2008) 20
Table 3: Presidential Memorandum FY 2015 Refugee Admissions 38
Table 4: Real GDP Growth (%) 64

Figure 1: Ritzer's Integrative Theory of Social Analysis 27
Figure 2: Children's Reasons for Leaving Home 29
Figure 3: Homicide Rates in the Northern Triangle and Mexico 31
Figure 4: Unaccompanied Alien Children: A Processing Flow Chart 44
Figure 5: Juvenile Immigration Case Outcomes 47
(October 1, 2013 – August 31, 2015)
Figure 6: Outcomes of Resolved Juvenile Immigration Cases
(October 1, 2013-August 31, 2015) 67
Figure 7: Young People who Neither Study nor Work 81
Figure 8: Malnutrition by Weight and Height 81

Abbreviations and Acronyms:

CAFTA - Central America Free Trade Agreement
CBP - Customs and Border Protection
CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention
CICIG - International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala
CRR- Congressional Research Service
CSIS - Center for Strategic and International Studies
DESEPAZ - Desarrollo, Seguridad, Paz
DHS - Department of Homeland Security
DOJ - Department of Justice
EOIR - Executive Office for Immigration Review
HHS - Department of Health and Human Services
ICE - Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INM - Instituto Nacional de Migracion (national migration institute of Mexico)
MPI - Migration Policy Institute
ORR - Office of Refugee Resettlement
SIJ - Special Immigrant Visa
TVPRA - Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008
UAC - Unaccompanied Alien Children
UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCIS - U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
WHO - World Health Organization
WOLA - Washington Office on Latin America

Introduction: The “Surge”

Thousands of unaccompanied minors are being apprehended at the southern border, testing the strength of security and humanity of the United States. Maria,[1] a fifteen-year-old girl caught by U.S. Border Patrol in 2013 is one of thousands of minors who made up the border “surge”[2] of 2013 and 2014. She tells her story to an NBC reporter and recounts how she and one of her sisters made the journey to “el norte.” They were caught in Mexico and sent back to Honduras on their first attempt. When they left home a second time, Maria reports walking through deserts, being captured by kidnappers and held in a trailer before eventually being picked up by the U.S. Border Patrol in Texas. When asked if she regretted taking the traumatic journey, she said, “You have to risk yourself… There’s no future in Honduras.” She elaborated, “There’s a lot of crime, a lot of narcotraffickers. They kidnap people. Adults and children, old people, to get money. People who have nothing. It doesn’t matter to them. The police do nothing” (Seville and Rappleye 2014). Harrowing stories such as Maria’s were commonly reported by news sources and humanitarian advocacy organizations alike during and following the surge.

Maria is just one of the 140,000 unaccompanied Central American children that arrived at the border between fiscal year (FY) 2009 and 2016 (or one of 242,000 when including minors from Mexico). In 2014 roughly 52,000 children from Central America

[1] The pseudonym used in the interview.
[2] This thesis will define the “surge” as the influx of Central American unaccompanied minors who overwhelmed the immigration system, peaking in the summer of 2014.

were apprehended at the U.S. border. This number is up from only 3,300 in FY 2009 (See **Table 1**). This seemingly unprecedented influx of unaccompanied minors was deemed an "humanitarian crisis" and overwhelmed states and municipalities. Although immigration has always been a topic of political debate, the obvious vulnerability and desperation of these children caused U.S. and international human rights organizations to advocate for their protection. The unresolved tension between the contradictory interests of U.S. policy makers to both protect a vulnerable population and to maintain border security has resulted in a patchwork of policies that ultimately fail to address the needs of these children. U.S. government agencies are struggling to process the children who have already arrived and are actively making policies to deter a repeat of the surge in the coming years. Depending on how one defines success, these policies are debatable. When using the endpoint of reducing the number of minors arriving at the border, policies have the success of reducing those numbers temporarily. When using the wellbeing of the minors as an endpoint, it becomes clear that U.S. policy has failed to protect these children.

Table 1: Unaccompanied Alien Children Encountered by Fiscal Year

Numbers below reflect Fiscal Years 2009-2015, FY 2016 (October 1, 2015 - January 31, 2016)

Country	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
El Salvador	1,221	1,910	1,394	3,314	5,990	16,404	9,389	5,766
Guatemala	1,115	1,517	1,565	3,835	8,068	17,057	13,589	7,520
Honduras	968	1,017	974	2,997	6,747	18,244	5,409	3,152
Mexico	16,114	13,724	11,768	13,974	17,240	15,634	11,012	3,726

(U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2016)

Although Central American minors infiltrated the border during FY 2014, the numbers went down dramatically by 2015 and continued to drop in 2016. The minors similarly disappeared from the news in the same time period.[3] The sudden surge of minors at the border and in the media followed by their just-as-prompt disappearance invites several questions that inspired me to write this thesis. I first wondered what caused the sudden decline in apprehensions. After my initial research led me to policies implemented in Mexico[4] to deport children before they are able to reach the United States and apply for asylum, I was struck by the marginalization of these children and the structural political forces that have direct consequences on their safety and wellbeing.

[3] A Google search "Central American unaccompanied minors" of news articles in the time period 10/01/13-09/30/14 (or FY 2014) yielded 1,474 article results whereas the same Google search yielded only 122 news articles when constrained to FY 2015.
[4] These will be explored in chapter four.

Based on this realization, I decided to use the overall health of the youth of Central America as my unit of analysis to guide my research of the political and economic forces that led to the surge in 2014 and to critique the policies that were created in response. Although this topic may at first seem to be an immigration problem, the cycle of poverty and violence in which these children are caught constitutes a change in paradigm from viewing the surge as an immigration problem to an international public health crisis. The mutually causal relationship between poverty and illness further invites a public health analysis of the structural forces in society that brought about the surge.

In this thesis I use a public health lens to systematically analyze and critique the contributing economic and political factors related to the surge. To guide this interdisciplinary analysis, I will draw on a variety of data sources including reports from health, government, human rights agencies, and international organizations; newspaper articles, blogs, and press releases; statistics; academic journals and ethnographies; and sociological and economic theory. This thesis advocates a paradigmatic shift in U.S. policy makers' view of the surge. At present, they see it exclusively as a threat to national security, blinding them to the vital health and welfare issues that these young immigrants confront. I will argue that by adopting an international public health paradigm, these policy makers can more effectively resolve these issues while dealing with any security problems that may arise.

This thesis will offer an integrated, multi-level analysis of the experience of these minors and explore how the events and government policies that led to this crisis, as well as those implemented in response to it, both directly and indirectly impacted the health of

these children. This surge will be contextualized in terms of the historical, economic, and political interactions of the U.S., Mexico, and the Northern Triangle[5]. Although this topic has been documented by journalists, anthropologists, and human rights activists, the causal linkages between macro factors and micro factors have yet to be systematically analyzed. This thesis, by drawing on both sociological theory and a public health perspective, seeks to offer a preliminary systematic model which will focus at once on the larger social, political, and economic forces -- that have limited the life chances and, by extension, shaped the life choices of a generation of youth from the Northern Triangle (Cockerham 2010:117) -- and specific government policies and programs that undermine the holistic wellbeing of these children. Such a comprehensive yet integrated model affords health policy makers the opportunity to rescue the lost generation from a cycle of poverty and illness.

There are some important limitations to my research that should be acknowledged. First, inherent in investigating a current event is the challenge of new data and sources becoming available during the course of my research as well as a lack of information in other areas. Some policies discussed in this thesis have yet to be fully implemented or studied. Secondly, the comprehensive scope of this investigation touches on a wide variety of important topics relating to the surge but forgoes an in-depth analysis of any given area. This thesis provides a framework in which to understand the surge more comprehensively as well as a starting point for researchers and policy makers

[5] A region of Central America that includes Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

to create policies addressing the root causes of this international public health crisis which this thesis will delineate.

This immigration influx of minors is a symptom of the endemic violence and instability of the region that has been largely the result of U.S. government policy during the Cold War and the continued economic exploitation of the region. In order to break the cycle of poverty in the Northern Triangle, the United States must first end the legacy of economic exploitation of the region in favor of policies that align with the nation's professed democratic ideals; such policies must foster the sharing of wealth through nation-building (i.e. investing in human capital and strengthening judicial systems) and spreading legitimate democracies. This thesis argues that, in addition to the immediate interest in restabilizing the region in order to prevent a continued flow of children arriving at the border, the U.S. has a moral obligation to be the prime mover in improving the lives of a stateless, vulnerable population in order to assure the health and sefety of the next generation, who will be tasked with rebuilding the region's economies and legitimatizing their states. Solutions created within the public health paradigm -- by funneling resources into violence prevention, investing in human capital and strengthening the judicial system -- may provide young people with the life choices that may ultimately also solve the immigration problem.

Overview of thesis:

In the first chapter, I discuss my decision to take on this topic from a public health lens, and what this means for my unit of analysis – the overall health of Central American youth. I establish how this thesis, consistent with the field of modern public health, uses a broad definition of health as the complete biopsychosocial wellbeing and not simply the absence of disease. I contextualize my analysis of the health of Central American youth by examining the structural social and economic determinants that affect their wellbeing in their native Central American countries, Mexico, and the United States. The structural vulnerability of this population perpetuates the current cycle of poverty that manifests itself in violence and human dispersion. The chapter ends by advocating a public health view of violence as a preventable health problem that may be addressed by investing in human capital and by strengthening judicial systems in order to save a generation of human potential in Central America.

In chapter two, I introduce how sociological, economic, and political theory can be applied to make sense of the surge. I explore the various social and economic forces that comprise the push and pull factors that spurred the migration of this group. Labeling theory insightfully demonstrates the significance of how and by whom a problem is defined; the label it is assigned determines how that problem will be addressed by policy makers and by program implementers, which, in turn, directly affects the treatment of the defined group (Light and Keller 1985). Policy makers and human rights advocates have generally defined the surge in one of two ways: a security threat or a humanitarian crisis.

The tension between these contradictory labels has resulted in ambiguous definitions for these children, which has led to fragmented policies that "process" these children but do not offer any long-term solutions. The failure to define this group has resulted in increased hardship for this already vulnerable group; the minors usually do not qualify as refugees and may, therefore, not receive asylum or any type of long-term relief. Instead, they become enmeshed in a network of government agencies involved in processing minors through custody and the legal system – ending either in repatriation or in "informal relief," meaning the child is not removed from the country but is also not offered legal status. The children, therefore, have no right to an attorney nor to any healthcare coverage. Despite the fact that international law has labeled this group as a population that qualifies for asylum, the U.S. government has kept the minors undefined and marginalized and has not met their basic needs. This state of uncertainty and stress, in addition to the lack of healthcare to address the severe psychological needs of these children, further exacerbate the poor health of this population.

Chapter three moves from a micro-level analysis of the policies that shape the bureaucratic processing of these minors to an examination of the macro- level causal factors of the historical and current interactions between nation-states. Supported by sociological and political theorists' definition of what constitutes a viable, modern nation-state, I establish that the endemic violence and economic instability that characterize the region make the three countries of the Northern Triangle illegitimate, unviable states. Consistent with the public health approach to problem solving -- investigating the etiology of the problem and identifying and abandoning strategies that were unsuccessful

in the past -- my analysis traces the instability of the region to U.S. Central American policy which, during the Cold War, supported authoritarian dictatorships and exploited the region economically. In order to save the human potential of these youth, the Northern Triangle's legacy of neodependency with the United States must first be broken. However, -- as exemplified in a brief analysis of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) – despite claiming to support emerging democracies through the free-market, the United States has continued to enact policies that undermine the region's economic growth. In this chapter I argue that the U.S. should adjust its policies towards Central America to reflect current U.S. ideologies of supporting emerging democracies and nation-building through strengthening educational infrastructures, police and health care facilities and through creating an enlightened trade policy. By stabilizing the region and restoring life-choices for its youth, the United States may peripherally solve the immigration security problem and prevent events like the surge in the future.

In chapter four, I explore how short-sighted national immigration policies implemented by the U.S. have long-term international consequences. I use an example of how U.S. immigration policy to deport gang members to Central America with no consideration for the long-term effects these criminals have in nations with underdeveloped judicial systems. These deportations likely contributed to increased crime, one of the primary the push factors of the youth that comprised the surge. I then discuss Plan Frontera Sur, a U.S.- backed Mexican security initiative created with the short-term goal of reducing the number of apprehensions at the U.S. border. However, little consideration was given to the humanitarian tradeoff this policy entailed. There was

additionally no foresight into the potential for sophisticated human-trafficking networks adapting to the new security measures. In this chapter, I also contextualize the surge within the current, conservative viewpoint of immigration; despite the stark fact that the number of people crossing the southern border is lower than it has been in four decades, the U.S. is still investing enormous resources to increase border security.

Chapter five investigates programming that may be implemented within the public health paradigm. I begin with a case-study of how DESEPAZ, a comprehensive initiative to reduce violence in Cali, Colombia, produced positive results and may be used as a model for similar programming in the Northern Triangle. Similar to how DESEPAZ in Colombia may serve as a model to prevent violence, the United Nations-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) may serve as a model to fight corruption. This program, which has shown positive results in fighting corruption in Guatemala, has significant potential to serve as a model for similar programming in El Salvador and Honduras. Both corruption and violence are tied to economic instability. The chapter ends in a critique and analysis of the potential of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle produced by the three countries and the United States with the goal of re-stabilizing the region. Although the Plan offers promising goals, including investment in human capital to strengthen the region, it has been met with much criticism by civil society groups who claim that the proposed measures focus heavily on land-privatization and who predict similar economic outcomes as those seen in CAFTA. Thus, instead of solving the problems, the Prosperity Plan runs the risk of continuing the legacy of neodependency in the region and experiencing the same failure as the Alliance for

Progress did in the 1960s. In my conclusions, I make recommendations for future researchers and suggest starting points from which to build programming towards comprehensive solutions to this crisis.

It is my hope that this systematic analysis of the surge through a public health lens will demonstrate that this influx of minors was a symptom of the endemic poverty and violence which have etiologies in economic exploitation and political intervention by the U.S. In order to break the cycle of poverty and illness in which this lost generation is caught, viewpoints on the immigration crisis of the surge must center on a set of public health concerns rather than on threats to security. U.S. policy makers must demonstrate through actions their claimed commitment to investing in civil society in the Northern Triangle.

Chapter 1: The Public Health Perspective

1.1 Defining a Public Health approach

Public health does not focus on the individual; instead, it focuses on diseases and conditions affecting the health of groups and aims to provide the maximum benefit to the largest number of people possible. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (WHO 2005). The public health approach to any problem must, by definition, be interdisciplinary, science-based and prevention-oriented. Although public

health developed as a methodology (i.e. epidemiology), the field draws on theoretical frameworks from many disciplines -- including criminology, economics, education, medicine, sociology, and psychology -- in order to achieve its goals. This comprehensive approach to problems has allowed the field of public health to be innovative in its responses to the prevalence and incidence of a wide range of diseases, illnesses, injuries, and traumatic events around the world.

The arrival of unaccompanied minors at the southern U.S. border is a complicated issue. Children cannot be treated and processed as adults because they are unable to make decisions for themselves, and can, therefore, not be held accountable for their actions in the same way as adults. Additionally, children's migrating alone over such great distance implies desperation more severe than the common immigrant seeking better economic prospects. Furthermore, minors affect the economy differently than adult workers do[6] and are also perceived differently by the public. Children, if permitted to stay, consume tax money in their utilization of the public school systems and foster care, if they do not have family in the U.S. The legal grounds for accommodating these children is largely nonexistent; minors are instead subjected to a series of legal proceedings that, in the best-case scenario, lead to granting children temporary permission to remain in the U.S. All policies implemented to date have been insufficient and short-sighted. Because of the complex nature of this problem, which is clearly a symptom of a web of contributing

[6] It is well established in economics that immigrants, in general, have a positive effect on the economy. For more depth in this area, see generally: (Chiswick 2000) and (Portes and Rumbaut 1990b). However, these immigrants are generally adults that contribute to the labor market immediately. Children, on the other hand, require some initial investments yet offer much higher potential to contribute to the economy.

factors, the comprehensive interdisciplinary approach of public health is useful to first make sense of the situation and then to identify how best to prevent the root causes through programs that promote health.

1.2 Are the children contagious?

People unfamiliar with the scope of the field of public health often reduce the discipline to just one of its subtopics – the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases. Some have even used public health, in this reductionist form, to advocate labeling the minors as carriers of disease. This assertion is in no way founded on facts but rather on stereotypes of people from developing nations being unclean -- spreading infectious disease and risking the health of U.S. citizens. In this way, the label "disease carrier" can support the perception that the surge poses a security threat to America. The risk of infectious disease, whether real or not, may cause disproportionate fear and apathy in the public.[7]

Individuals who oppose the acceptance of immigrants frame them as dangerous for the health and wellbeing of the community. However, in the case of this surge, a

[7] Another example of the disproportionate fear of an infectious disease: a poll by Harvard researchers found that 4 in 5 Americans thought a person was likely to get Ebola if an individual with Ebola coughed or sneezed on them or if they touched an object that had been in contact with an Ebola patient's body fluids. This prevalence of misinformation circulated despite the CDC's constant reporting in various types of media that Ebola transmission requires direct contact (such as when an Ebola patient's sweat gets into another person's body through a cut or the eyes, nose or mouth). Fear of disease, whether well-founded or otherwise, can itself be a public health problem (Levy 2016).

public health concern in terms of infectious disease is not backed by facts reported by public health organizations. In fact, health organizations were prompted to release reports for the purpose of debunking such myths. During the surge's peak, some media sources negatively represented the minors and insisting on a politically-neutral concern for the public health of the receiving community. Such articles used compelling language such as "Whatever the partisan arguments about how this crisis erupted, the most urgent question right now is how to prevent a public health crisis"(Siegel 2014). Articles announced fear of dengue fever, chicken pox, H1N1 and other infectious diseases that could, allegedly, harm the American public. However, to reiterate, these concerns have not been supported by any health agency.

Public health organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged the crisis as a public health problem but not the type that is of any danger to the U.S. public. In a report regarding the health risks of unaccompanied minors, the CDC states that "unaccompanied children arriving from Central America pose little risk of spreading infectious diseases to the general public"(CDC 2014b). Instead, the majority of health issues being reported from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at the border stations are associated with the difficult journey or the crowded, unsanitary environmental conditions the children endured before they arrived. The physical illnesses associated with this population include scabies, lice, rashes, respiratory infections, and diarrhea (CDC 2014a). It is important to clarify that the population at risk in this public health crisis is the minors, not the receiving communities.

Infectious diseases are not a serious concern largely because Central America has a very high vaccination rate. Providing vaccinations is a simple low-cost public health measure that is achieved throughout Latin America. According to a UNICEF report, the rate of vaccination in the United States is only 92 percent, whereas the rates in Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras are between 93 and 99 percent. Even with these high rates of vaccinations, children without vaccination documentation are vaccinated according to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) catch-up immunization schedule as part of initial screening when they are first apprehended, further eliminating any risk the minors might bring to the community. Vaccines administered in the U.S. that the children are likely not to have received previously include chickenpox, influenza, and pneumococcal vaccines (CDC 2014a). Because tuberculosis (TB) is more prevalent in the Northern Triangle (about 25-60 cases of TB per 100,000 people) than in the U.S., some cases of TB have been detected during initial screening. Those children, however were quarantined until they were deemed noninfectious. Cases of TB were extremely rare given that over than 90 percent of Central Americans are vaccinated against TB, according to the WHO (Catholic Charities 2014).

Although minors may experience the above physical health problems, the most prevalent health problems they endure in the U.S. are concerns of mental health, specifically post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This group of minors experiences similar health problems that have been studied in other child refugee groups. In their book, *Refugee Children in the UK,* Jougin et al. state the obvious: "The reasons why

people become asylum seekers and refugees are also experiences that cause high levels of psychological distress and increase risk for psychiatric disorder" (Hodes 2004:65). This thesis adopts an expanded view of public health, and explores how macro factors affect the health of individuals. Instead of focusing on public health programs at the community level that may address symptoms of the problems affecting this group of minors, this thesis investigates the health effects of wider economic and political problems and makes suggestions to stabilize the region economically and judicially.

Discussing public health only in terms of infectious disease is to focus on one aspect of public health and to ignore how it has changed and adapted as researchers have expanded our understanding of the social determinants of health. In an article published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, Niyi Awofeso divides the history of public health into six eras. The first two eras of public health occurred in the 1800s, before our understanding of microbiology and are, therefore, nonscientific explanations of the origins of disease. In the mid-nineteenth century, when Germ Theory was discovered, public health focused on infectious disease and contagion control. The fourth era of public health started in the 1940s and focused on preventive medicine for particular groups as the research of epidemiologists had begun to reveal that certain groups were at higher risks than others for various degenerative diseases. The fifth era of the 1970s and 1980s focused on primary care, and equity in health status. The Ottawa Charter of 1986 marks the beginning of "health promotion," the sixth and current era of public health(Awofeso 2004). This era seeks to address "intractable problems of poverty, global

inequality, emerging diseases, and persistent conflicts—issues that require more radical public health frameworks than those of traditional public health" (Awofeso 2004:708). Awofeso's six eras draw from Susser and Susser's research on the changing paradigms of public health in which they characterized the new and current paradigm as one that must "recognize broad dynamic patterns and, not least, disease in its social context" (Susser and Susser 1996:672). When public health is reduced to the prevention of vector-based infections, it is denied decades of evolution into the innovative, interdisciplinary field it is today. This thesis investigates two social forces– the economic and the political– that affect the health of the children.

This thesis uses the "new public health" paradigm and adopts the goals of the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*, established in 1986 by the *First International Conference on Health Promotion* in Ottawa, Canada. The Charter states that:

> "Health promotion goes beyond health care. It puts health on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the health consequences of their decisions and to accept their responsibilities for health. Health promotion policy combines diverse but complementary approaches including legislation, fiscal measures, taxation and organizational change. It is coordinated action that leads to health, income and social policies that foster greater equity"(WHO 1986:4).

Because the U.S. government and its policy makers failed to take into account the health of the future generation when making policies in Central America, the current poor health of a vulnerable generation is largely the responsibility of the U.S. to address.

1.3 Structural vulnerability: the minors' experience at home, in Mexico, and in the United States

In order to understand the health problems of the minors, we must first fully grasp the health risks inherent in their structurally vulnerable situations. Structural vulnerability theory argues that inequality results from systemic political and economic marginalization that contributes to oppression through gender, ethnic, and class-based discrimination (Holmes 2013, Quesada, Hart and Bourgois 2011). Structural vulnerability inhibits life choices and “requires an analysis of the forces that constrain decision-making, frame choices, and limit life options” (Quesada, Hart and Bourgois 2011). The cycle of poverty and violence in which these young people find themselves perpetuates their vulnerable state. Throughout his ethnography at the Mexican border, medical anthropologist Seth Holmes asserts how “it is critically important for anthropologists of health to re-frame suffering, death, and risk to incorporate analyses of social, political, and economic structures” (Holmes 2013:160). This re-framing of child refugees’ health risks within social, economic, and political structures is crucial in protecting this vulnerable population.

The concept of poverty as a determinant of health, although relatively new, is well established (Epstein et al. 2009, Eshetu and Woldesenbet 2011). Addressing the problem has been the mission statement in many health and human rights organizations (Marmot et al. 2008). For example, the Commission of Social Determinants of Health, a division of The World Health Organization, released its final report in 2008 entitled “Closing the Gap in a Generation” in which the Commission explains how “the conditions in which

people live and die are, in turn, shaped by political, social, and economic forces" (Comission on the Social Determinants of Health 2008). Consistent with this thesis's expanded view of public health that includes economic and political factors rather than only traditional concepts of health, the Commission states that:

> "Action on the social determinants of health must involve the whole of government, civil society and local communities, business, global fora, and international agencies. Policies and programmes must embrace all the key sectors of society not just the health sector" (Comission on the Social Determinants of Health 2008:9).

The minors of the surge are members of several already structurally vulnerable groups. Not only are they children, automatically the most vulnerable of any population but, as discussed earlier, they also suffer from undiagnosed mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of harrowing experiences at home and during their journeys. Although the details change, children's state of vulnerability remains constant throughout their travels from home, through Mexico, and in the United States, if they make it so far. Poverty and their immigrant status make these minors all the more vulnerable.

Children growing up in Central America can often be subject to maltreatment in many aspects of their lives, including domestic abuse, fear of leaving their homes, fear of gang threat and recruitment, and malnutrition, among a variety of other health risks (UN Refugee Agency 2014). Much of the violence experienced by the youth in the region fits into the framework of the WHO's report on violence and health which states that

"prolonged exposure to armed conflicts may also contribute to a general culture of terror that increases the incidence of youth violence" (WHO 2002:25). This culture of terror and violence largely caused by decades of militarized governments and economic struggle is a key reason children cite for leaving home (see **Figure 2** in chapter 2). Understanding the factors that increase the risk of young people being the victims or perpetrators of violence is essential for developing effective policies and programs to prevent violence.

Many children growing up in the Northern Triangle are denied any prospects for their wellbeing in the short term or in the foreseeable future. The cards are stacked against them in many areas of society including in family life, the education system (See **Table 2**) and their economic prospects are few. It is largely for these reasons, often accompanied by a specific threat, that many children chose to leave their homes and risk the journey to "el norte" despite its known risks of kidnapping, extortion, sexual abuse and limb loss (Vogt 2013).

Table 2: School Enrollment Rates (2008)

	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary
	Net (%)	Gross (%)	Net (%)	Gross (%)	Gross (%)
El Salvador	94	115	55	64	25
Guatemala	95	114	40	57	18*
Honduras	97	116	n/a	65	17†
Mexico	98	114	72	90	27

Notes: n/a indicates data that are not available. Student enrollment beyond grade-level age group accounts for the difference between the net and gross enrollment rates. (Terrazas, Papademetriou and Rosenblum 2011:11)

Children report spending one to two months traveling through Mexico towards the U.S. border. Depending on whether they hire a smuggler, they will either travel on top of freight trains – colloquially called "the Beast,"[8] by bus or on foot. Children who ride the Beast often witness traumas such as people losing limbs or their lives. A report entitled "The Lost Boys and Girls of Central America" produced by the Womens' Refugee Commission offers interviews of 151 detained children. Children who traveled both with and without smugglers reported the constant threat of being killed, kidnapped and abused by criminal organizations. Those who were captured report only being released when their family members paid high fees. Children who traveled with smugglers often suffered additional abuses including beating, rape, lack of food and water, and being locked up for extended periods of time. Even in light of these experiences, when asked if they would risk these experiences again, the majority was

[8] The Beast, or La Bestia is the freight train that has carried minors through Mexico towards the United States for decades. Health risks atop the train include "risks of travelers losing their lives or limbs from falling off the train when exhausted, or being pushed off by the gangs who prey on those aboard" (Anonymous 2014). For an in-depth understanding of the dangers of riding *The Beast* see, Salvadoran Journalist Oscar Martinez's book *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail* in which he writes about riding the trains and interviewing migrants along the way (Martinez 2013). For a more current discussion on migrants riding the trains since Mexico enacted *Plan Frontera Sur* (see chapter 3) refer to an informative article entitled "Taming the Beast; Migration via Mexico" by the *Economist* that explains how U.S.-backed Mexican policy resulted in the number of migrants atop trains decreasing from hundreds to dozens on each journey. Yet, rather than protecting migrants from the risks of train travel, the new policy causes them to "rely more heavily on people-smugglers, leaving them even more vulnerable to extortion by corrupt officials and to abuse, kidnapping and murder by criminal gangs who promise safe passage at a price" (Anonymous 2014).

willing to risk the dangers of the journey in hopes of a brighter future. As one child put it, "if you stay you will die, if you leave, you might...either way it's better to try" (Jones and Podkul 2012:2). For the children who are able to reach the U.S., the health risks are not over. The minors are further marginalized by an immigration system unequipped to provide for the needs of children.

Children are processed in a complicated system and have no rights to a lawyer.[9] Backlogs in cases leave children in limbo-- in fear of being deported. Even in the best-case scenario, children are granted only a short-term permission to stay in the country, making planning a future near impossible. Although minors are often "reunited" with their families, they may have never met these family members before, adding stress to these encounters. These fears are exacerbated by the PTSD symptoms common among minors as a result of traumas experienced at home and during their journeys. The added stress of not speaking the language and the fear of being deported leave children in poor mental health and in need of services (Poon 2014, Valdez, Valdez and Sabo 2015).

Unfortunately, U.S. policy is not designed to address the needs of children. This is evident, for example, in the Guidelines for Mental Health Screening During the Domestic Medical Examination for Newly Arrived Refugees produced by the U.S. HHS and the CDC. The report states that: "Clients over the age of 16 should be screened for symptoms of major depression and PTSD, the most common disorders seen in refugees. Although

[9] The organizations involved in processing minors and their legal rights in U.S. law will be explored in more depth in section 2.5.

symptoms of depression and PTSD do occur in children, this cutoff age is suggested because the process of interviewing children, especially those who cannot read a translated questionnaire, can be very time-consuming and requires skills not generally available in the screening environment" (HSS and CDC 2015:5). Our system for managing the needs of children is clearly broken. In effect, guidelines are acknowledging real and complicated needs of children but choosing to ignore them.[10] Similar failures to address the needs of children as separate from adults can be seen in the mechanisms in which the legal system processes minors, a topic that will be explored in section 2.5.

The children of the Northern Triangle are an extremely vulnerable population with many confounding health risks, all of which leave the region in danger of losing a generation. Children are the human capital of their countries and investing in their futures is the only way improvements can be made. These young people will be the leaders of the future. According to a report by the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, "Social and economic policies have a determining impact on whether a child can grow and develop to its full potential and live a flourishing life, or whether its life will be blighted"(Comission on the Social Determinants of Health 2008:65).

1.4 Violence as a preventable health problem

[10] It is important to note that although this guideline serves as an example of the U.S.'s broken system in processing children, in the case unaccompanied minors from Central America, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) does provide "a trained staff member to conduct an assessment that covers biographic, family, legal/migration, medical, substance abuse, and mental health history" of each child (ORR 2015a).

The World Health Organization's (WHO) *World Report on Violence and Health* lays out strategies on how to prevent violence in order to improve world health. The report emphasizes how the public health approach must represent collective action and cooperation among groups from such sectors as health, education, social services, justice and policy in order to solve problems related to health (WHO 2002:4). Violence has been isolated by various organizations as the number one factor for unaccompanied minors' emigration.

As Nelson Mandela asserts in the forward of the WHO's first report "We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear. In order to ensure this, we must be tireless in our efforts not only to attain peace, justice and prosperity for countries, but also for communities and members of the same family. We must address the roots of violence"(WHO 2002:1). In addition to our moral obligation, violence prevention also has other incentives as "violence involving young people adds greatly to the costs of health and welfare services, reduces productivity, decreases the value of property, disrupts a range of essential services and generally undermines the fabric of society" (WHO 2002:25). The lost generation in Central America will have serious consequences for the economy and future prospects of the region if interventions are not carried out to improve health.

As public health strategies take a more holistic view of the problems, the WHO's recommendations to prevent youth violence take a multi-level approach and include prevention strategies for each of three youth developmental stages – infancy (ages 0-3),

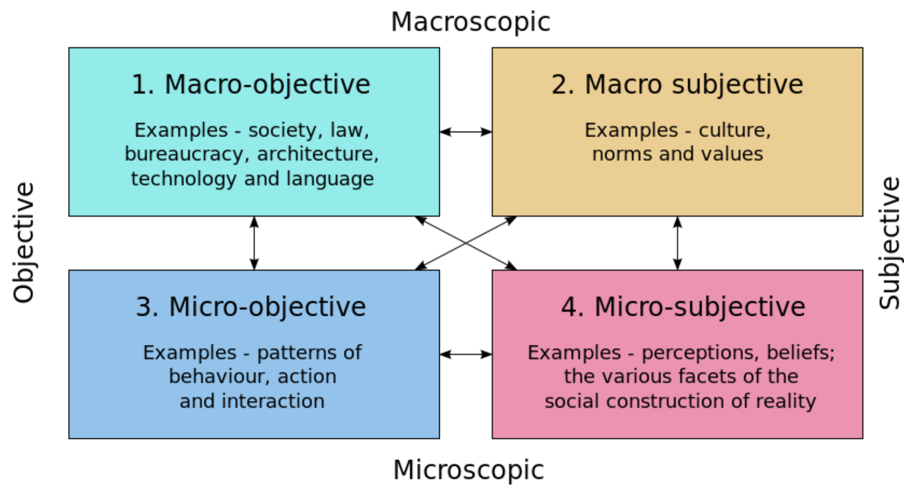
early childhood (ages 3-5), middle childhood (ages 6-11), and from each level of society from individual, to relational, to communal, and to societal. Recommendations for the individual level include such strategies as family planning, improved access to pre and post-natal care, social development programs, preschool enrichment programs, and programs providing information about drug abuse. At the relationship (family/peers) level, strategies include training in parenting, mentoring programs, and home-school partnership programs to promote parental involvement. At the community level, the report suggests monitoring lead levels and removing toxins from homes, increasing availability of preschool enrichment programs, creating safe routes for children to get to and from school, improving school settings (e.g. teacher practices, school policies, and security), providing after-school programs to extend adult supervision, and adding extracurricular activities. At a societal level, strategic recommendations center on reducing poverty and income inequality, public information campaigns, and reforming education systems (WHO 2002:41). Although some of these recommendations are more viable than others, it is clear that resources must be invested into integrated areas of children's lives in order to have a positive impact.

Chapter 2: Sociological Theory

2.1 Drawing on other disciplines: a multilevel analysis

Public health as a discipline does not have its own theory but rather draws on theories from other disciplines from which to interpret the world. A multi-level analysis of the surge is undertaken to understand the web of influences that caused this migration pattern. People naturally approach concepts from multiple levels, moving from micro to macro and transitioning from objective to subjective. Sociological theories that focus on levels of society make explicit the ways we naturally categorize social issues in the world. The four levels of social analysis in George Ritzer's model are meant to be used heuristically to understand the social world better despite introducing some artificial distinctions. Ritzer acknowledges that "the social world is not really divided into levels. In fact, social reality is best viewed as an enormous variety of social phenomena that are involved in continuing interaction and change" (Ritzer and Goodman 2008:A-12). However, Rizer's four levels of social analysis is one example of any number of such schemas that sociologists use as models for examining the complexities of the world. These four levels of analysis (see **Figure 1**) provide an integrated approach to social analysis through the intersections of two continua: the microscopic to macroscopic (e.g. individual thought and action → world systems) and the objective to subjective (e.g. bureaucratic structures → social construction of reality) (Ritzer and Goodman 2008:A-13).

Figure 1: Ritzer's Integrative Theory of Social Analysis



(Ritzer and Goodman 2008:357)

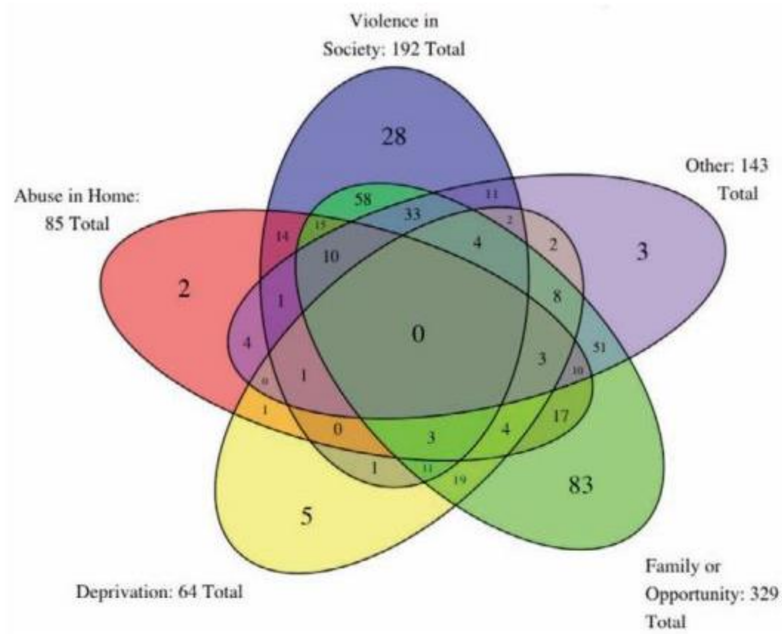
This thesis explores the situation of the unaccompanied minors from all four levels of analysis. An example of macro-objective concepts are national immigration laws and foreign policies. Examples of macro-subjective concepts include systemic violence and public perception of immigration and immigrants. Examples of micro-objective concepts that will be explored are immigration trends and how unaccompanied minors are interacting with the various organizations tasked with their processing. The fourth level of analysis - micro subjective - focuses on the social construction of reality. I argue that how policy makers use labels to construct their reality of the "surge" – whether it be a security or a humanitarian crisis – determines how policy is created and consequently, shapes significant aspects of the minors' health. This thesis concerns most heavily the manner in which the micro-subjective factors (i.e. policy makers'

construction of reality) construe the macro-objective factors (i.e. policies) which have direct effects on the health and developmental potential of Central American youth.

2.2 Push-pull factors

Crucial to understanding any immigrant group is having a full comprehension of their push factors, those driving them from their homeland, as well as their pull factors, those attracting them to the new territory. In order to contextualize the surge, we must understand the combination of push and pull factors that contribute to the flow of minors. A 2015 *Government Accountability Office* (GAO) report found that experts in the region almost universally attributed unaccompanied minors' outflows to a combination of crime and violence, economic concerns, poor educational systems, and the desire for family reunification (GAO 2015:4). The immigration group's primary push and pull factors are to flee violence and family reunification, respectively. In a report entitled "Children on the Run" by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office, 404 children from the Northern Triangle and Mexico were interviewed. **Figure 2** shows the push factors the children reported.

Figure 2: Children's Reasons for Leaving Home



UN Refugee Agency (2014:7)

As I will discuss further in chapter three**,** the legacy of violence in Central America can be traced back to the civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s, which were largely supported and funded by the United States and resulted in a heavily armed population. Violence was exacerbated by the proliferation of transnational criminal organizations. Additionally, regional drug cartels[11] have been pushed into Central America as a result of

[11] The role of drug cartels likely has a significant effect on the health of young people. However, investigating U.S. policy regarding the War on Drugs is beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to recognize that young people who are trapped in a cycle of poverty, often turn to criminal organizations such as gangs for economic opportunity and personal security. This topic will be addressed in Chapter Three in the discussion of nation-state viability. For more information regarding drug trafficking within the context of other contributing factors to violence in the Northern Triangle, see a report by the Wilson Center: (Eguizábal et al. 2015).

the partially successful efforts to close down trafficking routes in Mexico and the Caribbean (Orozco and Yansura 2014). Other current events such as a coup in Honduras in 2009 that completely destroyed the country's political sector, have exacerbated push factors, leaving only corruption and weak mechanisms for fighting crime (InSight Crime 2015). In 2012, El Salvador had a gang truce between its two largest gangs – MS-13 and Barrio 18 – which resulted in a temporary drop in homicide, but eventually an even stronger gang infrastructure developed (Dudley 2013).

Due to the factors mentioned above and to other contributors, in 2013, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala were ranked as having the first, fourth, and fifth highest homicide rates in the world, respectively[12] (UN Office of Drugs and Crime 2013). Women and children are particularly vulnerable to violence as gangs frequently recruit children to serve as foot child soldiers in their turf wars, and decades of civil wars and criminal instability have left women and children subject to widespread domestic violence (Rikkers and Umana 2012).

[12] See **Figure 3** for homicide rate trends in the years leading up to the surge. Rates in El Salvador, which has the highest rates of gang violence, spiked beginning in 2013.

<u>Figure 3: Homicide Rates in the Northern Triangle and Mexico</u>

(Startfor 2016)

Although the push factors are often stronger than the pull factors in unaccompanied minors, pull factors are also strong forces for immigration. The strongest pull factor for Central Americans is family reunification. Illegal immigration from Central America is not a new concept. In fact, of the Salvadoran population worldwide, approximately one in five already lives in the United States. This statistic is smaller for the populations of Guatemala and Honduras, but it is still high at one in fifteen people living in the U.S.(Zong and Batalova 2015b). Economic factors can be cited both as push and pull factors. The lack of economic prospects push children to immigrate in hopes of making money in the U.S. to send home (UN Refugee Agency 2014). Economic factors contributing to the surge will be explored in more depth in chapter three.

An additional pull factor that may have contributed to the surge is misinformation reported by smugglers regarding U.S. law. Although freight trains are frequently used to transport migrants to the U.S., children are more often guided by hired smugglers. People in the Northern Triangle do not necessarily perceive smugglers negatively. Rather, they are viewed as providing a necessary service, not simply exploiting travelers. Thus, they are connected to immigrant networks and are trusted members of the community. One possible contributing factor to the surge is a rumor spread largely by smugglers that child and family immigrants were being granted *permisos* or a legal right to remain in the U.S. (Cave and Robles 2014). This idea is reminiscent of a U.S. program called Operation Peter Pan that granted *permisos* to Cuban children moving to the U.S. during the Cold War (Allen 2011).

It is clear that the push of violence and economic struggle are eliminating the life choices of these young people. They are risking certain danger in hopes of surviving. Whether the minors' health needs are addressed through humanitarian intervention or whether they will continue to be marginalized will depend largely on how this child immigrant group is labeled by policy makers.

2.3 Labeling theory

Labeling theory and its derivative, framing analysis have been used by researchers in many fields, especially psychology and sociology (Goffman 1974). In chapter one I discussed how the minors were framed by some media sources as presenting a health risk for the U.S. public. Based on the lack of science to substantiate this claim, it may be

argued that the label of “contagious child” was meant to evoke a sense of fear in the public, which may promote negative reactions to the minors entering the community. The label that the U.S. government agencies have used for the minors is unaccompanied alien children (UAC). Referring to the children as such defines the minors as “alien” and unwanted outsiders. This label fosters negative perceptions in the public and may cause the minors to internalize this marginalized identity. These examples show how powerful labels can be in influencing both public perception and personal identity of the labeled group.

Immigrants have often been defined as outsiders that represent a threat to security, the job market, and cultural identity. Deviance is defined as any behavior that falls outside of a particular group’s social norm. Deviance serves a double purpose of both clarifying norms and contributing to social order (Light and Keller 1985:208). Labeling immigrants as “illegals” and impostors clarifies the social norm of identity maintenance, which has been a major theme and concern among those struggling to maintain cultural hegemony despite the “browning of America” that has occurred through the forces of both legal and illegal immigration. [13] Labeling vulnerable people as illegal allows the

---

[13] Despite many economic studies that show how immigration, even by those with limited education, is good for the economy (see footnote on the Bracero Plan in section 4.1), the fear of losing cultural identity always been present in U.S. politics. This worry is surfacing as a primary concern as the U.S. approaches a turning point where the majority of U.S. residents soon will no longer be white. This well-researched concept is effectively summarized in a *New York Times* article entitled “A Little Reality on Immigration.” The author explains the current situation as “the clash of two trends: the graying of the G.O.P. and the browning of America. The Republican primary base is more and more made up of older people, who have significantly more negative views about immigration. Second, by 2044, America will be a majority-minority country” (Brooks 2016).

“deviant” individuals —defined as differing from the “norm” -- to be marginalized and excluded from mainstream life; thus, social order, as the society defines it, may be maintained.

It is well established in psychology that humans assign preconfigured symbols and shortcuts known as schemas to familiar concepts. People develop their schemas based on both their personal experience as well as the collective perceptions of their culture. Schemas and definitions (i.e. labels) when assigned to a subject, result in a tangible sequence of events. W.I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas are well known for their axiom of social actors defining a situation as exemplified in the quotation: “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Ritzer and Goodman 2008:235). When a Central American is labeled “dangerous” and a threat to the nation, he is immediately dehumanized; therefore, his human rights are revoked, and he is treated as an impostor. The immigrant may then internalize this negative label and make it part of his identity. It is imperative that we change the label of the surge of Central American unaccompanied minors from only a security threat, to a set of global, public health concerns.

Changing labels at a societal level is a challenging but achievable goal. Regarding the common debate of whether individuals have any input in how they define and consequently react to the world, the Thomases, while acknowledging that most of our definitions of situations were provided for us by society – especially family and community -- offer the possibility of spontaneous individual definition of society (Ritzer and Goodman 2008:235). In their book *The Social Construction of Reality,* Berger and

Luckmann support the idea that an individual's concept of reality can be altered when confronted with an "obstacle." The authors compare and contrast the perceptions of the sociologist, who makes every effort to be open to the nuances of realities and how they are contextualized in society, to the "man on the street" who does not question his own perceptions unless they are met with a distinct obstacle. As the authors put it:

> "The man on the street does not ordinarily trouble himself about what is 'real' to him and what he knows unless it comes into conflict with some other problem. He takes his 'reality' and 'knowledge' for granted. The sociologist cannot do this, if only because of a systematic awareness of the fact that men on the street take different 'realities' for granted as between one society and another" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:2).

By demonstrating the vulnerability of the youth of the Northern Triangle, this thesis hopes to present an "obstacle" to U.S. policy makers' constructed reality of the surge from a national immigration event requiring policing to an international health crisis requiring preventative measures to protect the health of a future generation.

2.4 Defining a refugee versus an immigrant: domestic and international law

Consistent with labeling theory assumptions, immigrants are treated very differently based on which labels are assigned to them by the state. Being classified as a migrant or a refugee can mean life or death for some people fleeing very difficult situations. As Portes and Rumbaut summarize, "depending on the relationship between the United States and the country of origin and the international context of the time, a particular flow of people may be classified as a political exodus or as an illegal group of

economically motivated immigrants" (Portes and Rumbaut 1990a:23). Inherent in immigration problems is the tension between security and regulations and the humanitarian needs of an immigrant group. U.S. policy often leans in one direction or another based on political and economic interest. Labels are then assigned accordingly.

Despite the fact that the U.S. is an immigrant nation that owes much of its economic success to the contributions of various immigrant groups, its approach to immigration has generally been to restrict it in response to fears of political and cultural change that might ensue when large numbers of immigrants enter. This apprehension of accepting immigrants is evident throughout U.S. history. One example of the phenomenon was the passage of the National Origins Act of 1924, which greatly restricted who could immigrate into the U.S. according to national origins quotas. This act reflected the U.S.'s political views of the time by blatantly excluding immigrants from Asia and restricting immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (Meissner 2010). The countless people displaced in World War II brought about a change in ideology and U.S. policy assumed some compassion for persons fleeing persecution. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 showed the U.S.'s acknowledgement of the distinction between refugee and immigrant as well as the need for international protection of the former.

The Refugee Act of 1980 was signed into law by President Carter with the aim of expanding political asylum beyond escapees from only Communist-ruled nations. Thus, the U.S. accepted the definition of refugee -- as established by international law -- as one who is unable to return to his or her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of

persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group (Meissner 2010). This definition had been incorporated into international law by the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. One outcome of the U.S. Refugee Act was the establishment of the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program, which is tasked with providing effective resettlement of refugees and with assisting them in achieving economic self-sufficiency. Although the Refugee Act of 1980 claimed to be consistent with international law, in practice the U.S. continued to grant refugee status only to those who aligned with its political interests, while barring those who did not. This trend was evident during the Reagan administration when the U.S. granted asylum to large numbers of escapees from Communism, especially in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, while making it difficult for people fleeing non-Communist regimes, such as Guatemala and El Salvador (Portes and Rumbaut 1990a:23).

According to data from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, between the years of 1981 and 1987, 91.3 percent of legal admissions under the category of refugees and asylum seekers were escapees from Communist states. Although the origins of people favored for political asylum may have changed, the U.S.'s unwillingness to offer unbiased political asylum has remained constant.

Each year, the President and Congress set the annual refugee admissions ceiling and regional allocations. For fiscal year (FY) 2015 the ceiling was set at 70,000 (See **Table 3**). The Near East/South Asia regions received 47 percent (33,000) of the total regional allocations in response to refugee crises in Iraq and Myanmar. There were only

4,000 slots allocated for all of Latin America and the Caribbean (Zong and Batalova 2015a).

Table 3: Presidential Memorandum FY 2015 Refugee Admissions

Region	Admissions
Africa	17,000
East Asia	13,000
Europe and Central Asia	1,000
Latin America and Caribbean	4,000
Near East and South Asia	33,000
Unallocated Reserve	2,000

(Office of the Press Secretary 2014)

According to U.S. policy, Central American unaccompanied minors fall into an ambiguous space between immigrant and refugee. President Obama has called this surge of unaccompanied minors a "humanitarian crisis," but these children are not considered refugees because they do not fit the strict criteria of fleeing based on race, religion or political affiliation (Wiltz 2015). Under international law, however, the minors are classified as refugees requiring protection. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in its March 2010 "Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Victims of Organized Gangs," stated that young people,

> "in particular those who live in communities with a pervasive and powerful gang presence but who seek to resist gangs, may constitute a particular social group for the purposes of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The guidelines reinforce that powerful gangs, like the *maras* in Central America, directly control society and *de facto* exercise power in the areas where they operate. Due to the amount of influence gangs have over agents of the State, like police, opposition to criminal acts may be analogous with opposition to State authorities, making refusal to join a gang an imputed political opinion" (UNHCR 2010a:4).

In a separate report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) determined in a 2013 study that 58% of the 404 unaccompanied minors interviewed met international protection needs. The report criticizes how "there are significant gaps in the existing protection mechanisms currently in place for these displaced children" (UN Refugee Agency 2014:49). In yet another report, the agency specifically targets the U.S. and Mexico's neglect to support immigrants who are clearly refugees. Gang-related crimes are defined to include "different forms of physical and sexual violence such as homicide, assault, rape, robbery, theft, arson and associated threats." Clearly, these are real reasons to seek asylum. The report continues to specify its audience directly: "During recent years, an increasing number of [refugee claims related to gang violence] have been made especially in Canada, Mexico, and the United States of America, notably by young people from Central America who fear persecution at the hands of violent gangs in their countries of origin"(UNHCR 2010b). The agency reaffirms that, "in child asylum claims, the agent of persecution is frequently a non-State actor. This may include militarized groups, criminal gangs, parents and other caregivers, community and religious leaders. In such situations, the assessment of the well foundedness of the fear has to include considerations as to whether or not the State is unable or unwilling to protect the victim" (UN Refugee Agency 2014). A case can easily be made for the state of origin's inability to protect its people, which will be discussed in chapter three.

2.5 United States legal system for processing minors: a marginal space

Instead of implementing holistic policies and programming with the wellbeing of the child as the ultimate goal, U.S. policy has thrown children into a bureaucratic network that ultimately provides no long-term solution. Even if a child is granted short-term "informal relief" and reunited with family, she is not granted any type of formal immigration status. Thus, she is not entitled to healthcare or any services other than education. The children are left in limbo; they inhabit a marginalized space as they are processed through a complicated legal network without the right to an attorney for guidance. NGOs and local organizations have addressed the needs of some of the children but have not been able to meet the demand.

Between FY 2011 and FY 2014, the average number of arriving unaccompanied minors increased from 6,560 to an estimated 68,000[14](ORR 2015b). This number far surpassed the capacity of the U.S. immigration system to process minors. The processing of minors must strike a balance between the protection of a vulnerable group and the maintenance of border security. Policy makers worry that if policies are too generous, there would be a never-ending flow of people entering the United States, which cannot be a refuge to all people who arrive at the border. However, this dilemma does not excuse the neglect of this vulnerable population nor does it justify the mistreatment of children.

The need for separate systems to process children is well established; yet, the U.S. has failed to manage these minors in a way that takes into account their vulnerable health status as children. Although the concept of juvenile rights is fairly new, it is increasingly

[14] This number includes unaccompanied minors from Mexico.

a high priority among human rights organizations. In 1989, the UN General Assembly held the Convention on the Human Rights of the Child (UNHRC). This was the first international treaty to integrate all human rights in reference to children as separate from adults and allowing them to participate in family, cultural and social aspects of life. The Convention emphasizes the right to survival, development, and protection against abuse, neglect and exploitation. It also addresses issues with education, health care, juvenile justice and the rights of children with disabilities. Although the U.S. signed the Convention in 1995, the country has yet to ratify it.[15] The U.S. endorses humanitarian ideals, yet often acts according to its own political interest first and foremost.

This pattern is consistent with how the U.S. has processed minors; policies are written with some minimal consideration to the humanitarian crisis, but are ultimately enforced to ensure security. A UNICEF summary of the Convention summarizes Article 24 (which falls within the category of health and health services): “Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this" (OHCHR 1989:5). In addition to the U.S.’s failure to protect the health of the minors in the Northern Triangle, the U.S.

[15] By signing a treaty, a country endorses its principles. Ratification means committing to be legally bound by it. In the U.S., the president must send treaties to the Senate, where they require approval by a two-thirds majority, the same standard required to amend the Constitution (Economist 2013).

is doing very little to protect their health in the U.S. after minors are reunited with their families.[16]

An array of federal agencies spread across different federal departments, touch the lives of unaccompanied children in varying ways. **Figure 4** presents a flowchart from a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report web of agencies involved in the apprehension and processing of minors. This system for responding to unaccompanied minors has been in constant flux for over a decade, and the operational infrastructure has never completely caught up with the changes that have been mandated. Even before the surge in the summer of 2014, which overwhelmed existing resources and capacity, the system has been subject to repeated shifts in policy and procedure whose full consequences are not well anticipated (Roth and Breanne 2015:13).

Upon apprehension, CPB agents take children to short-term holding facilities with poor conditions. Under the terms of the Flores Settlement Agreement,[17] children from

---

[16] Unauthorized immigrant mothers may qualify for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance for Women and Children (WIC) program which provides some support for pregnant women and mothers of children up to five years old (USDA 2015), but their unauthorized legal status makes minors and their mothers ineligible for all other federal benefit programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Child Care and Development Fund (Pierce 2015:12).

[17] Children from "contiguous countries" (i.e., Mexico and Canada) and non-contiguous countries (all others) are processed differently. Mexican and Canadian children are screened by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for trafficking and may then be immediately repatriated. In the case of all other children, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) completes preliminary trafficking screening and places them into a long process of formal immigration court removal proceedings. These seemingly arbitrary distinctions show another flaw in the system: a neglect of the human rights concerns of children coming from Mexico.

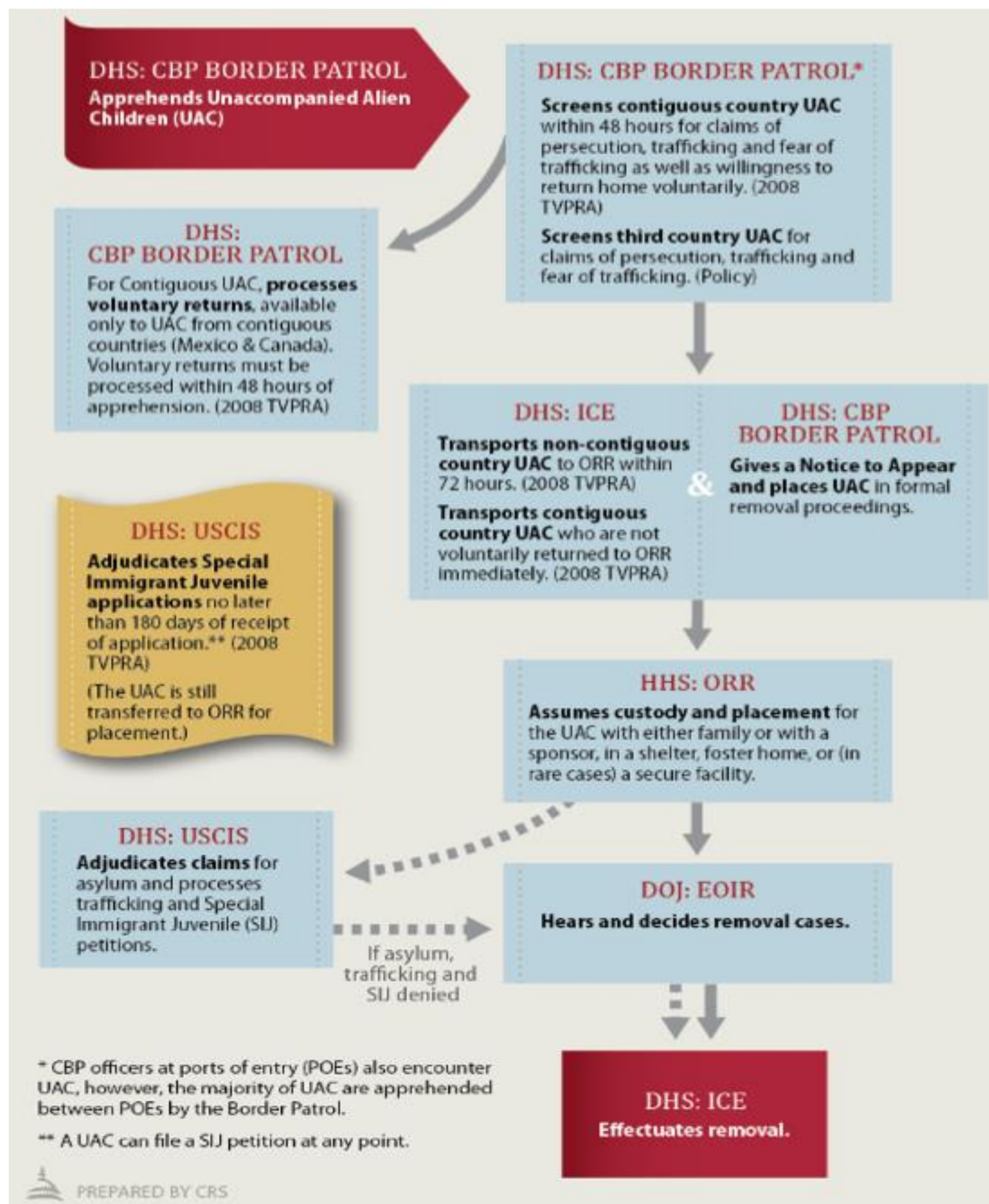
noncontiguous countries must be transferred to the custody of ORR as quickly as possible, and within no more than 72 hours.[18] These regulations are in compliance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPR). According to this act, each child must "be promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child."[19] To this effect, children are generally placed with family members or sometimes other sponsors while they await their trials.

---

[18] However, during the summer of 2014 when the number of refugee children from Central America was at an all-time high, ORR did not have the bed space to place children. As a result, some children remained in over-crowded CBP stations for weeks at a time. To "accommodate" the needs of the children, CBP opened three large warehouse-style processing centers at Lackland Air Force Base (TX), Naval Base Ventura County (CA), and Fort Sill (OK) (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service 2015:13).

[19] See 8 U.S.C. § 1232(b)(2).

Figure 4: Unaccompanied Alien Children: A Processing Flow Chart



[20]

[20] Acronyms used: CBP—Customs and Border Protection
DHS—Department of Homeland Security
DOJ—Department of Justice

(Seghetti 2015a).

After minors are released to their sponsors, which are often family members, due to their unauthorized status, they are rarely eligible for any services other than public education. ORR offers some post-release services, but these are limited to very few immigrants. For services such as health care or legal representation, unaccompanied children must rely on community or state programs. The result is a patchwork of services that fails to address many of the needs of this vulnerable population (Pierce 2015:2).

Legislators have made some efforts to protect children within the legal system. For example, Under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress transferred the care and custody of UACs to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) "in order to transition towards a child welfare-based-model of care, away from the adult detention model" (Seghetti 2015b). Upon apprehension, DHS refers unaccompanied minors to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is then responsible for the children's wellbeing. According to federal laws, the ORR must place children in the "least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child" (ORR 2015b). During children's short stay in the custody of

---

EOIR—Executive Office for Immigration Review
HHS—Department of Health and Human Services
ICE—Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ORR—Office of Refugee Resettlement
SIJ—Special Immigrant Visa
TVPRA 2008—Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008
UAC—Unaccompanied Alien Children
USCIS—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

ORR, children supposedly receive classroom education, mental and medical health services, case management, and family reunification services sponsors. But once children are placed with sponsors (often family members) the services often end. Although the ORR funds follow-up services for at-risk children after their release and considers post-release services to be an integral component of the UAC's integration into the community, in practice, only 5-10% of youth released from shelters receive post-release follow-up services (Roth and Breanne 2015:50).

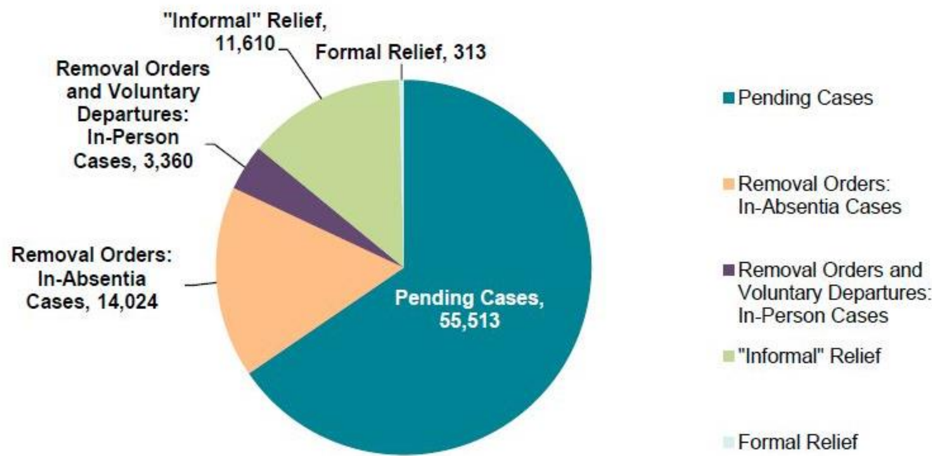
The court system that processes children is just as overcrowded and broken as the custody system. To date, there remains no guarantee of government-appointed legal counsel for minors in immigration proceeding. Therefore, many children face immigration court and removal proceedings alone.[21] Since the surge "the representation rate of children in immigration court has dropped precipitously, from 71% in 2012 to as low as 14-15% in some months of 2014. As data on case outcomes indicates, legal representation vastly increases the chances that a child will appear in immigration court: Over the last decade, only 6.1% of children with counsel received in absentia (in the child's absence) removal orders, compared with 64.2% of unrepresented children"(TRAC 2014).

Most UAC cases (61 percent) initiated since October 1, 2013 had not been resolved as of August 31, 2015. In fact, more than 40 percent of UAC cases initiated in

[21] The DOJ and ORR have dedicated some funding for legal representation and nonprofit organizations and the pro bono legal community have contributed to providing representation for minors; yet, the system still lacks the capacity to meet the need.

FY 2013 were still pending as of August 31, 2015 – between 1.5 and 2.5 years after the cases were initiated (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Juvenile Immigration Case Outcomes (October 1, 2013 – August 31, 2015)



(TRAC 2015) [22]

In absentia make up the overwhelming majority of UAC removal orders (87%). Thus, only thirteen percent of removal orders are issued to minors who appear for court. Unfortunately, even UAC cases that do not result in removal orders rarely have a clear resolution. Formal relief[23] is granted to only three percent of UACs. 97 percent of minors

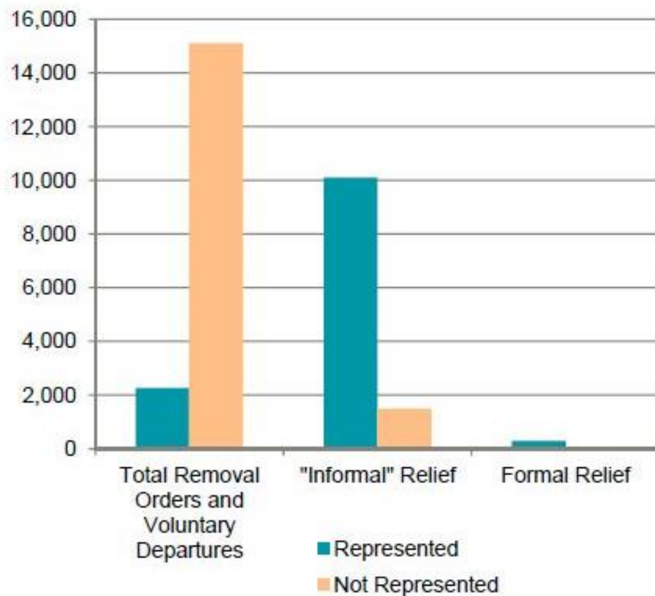
---

[22] "Formal" relief refers to relief that comes with a grant of immigration status (such as asylum or Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (see footnote below). "Informal" refers to cases that have been administratively closed or terminated. This means the child no longer has an active removal case but has not been granted immigration status (Pierce 2015).

[23] There are four types of formal relief for which minors may qualify. One, Asylum - Asylum is a form of international protection granted to refugees who are present in the United States. In order to qualify for asylum, a person must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution based on one of five grounds: race, religion, nationality,

are left to live in an unauthorized status. Access to an attorney is the most important factor impacting UAC case outcomes. As illustrated in **Figure 6**, representation significantly improves a child's chances of receiving relief (Pierce 2015:7).

Figure 6: Outcomes of Resolved Juvenile Immigration Cases (October 1, 2013-August 31, 2015)



(Pierce 2015:7)

---

political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Two, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) -- SIJS is a humanitarian form of relief available to noncitizen minors who were abused, neglected, or abandoned by one or both parents. To be eligible for SIJS, a child must be under 21, unmarried, and the subject of certain dependency orders issued by a juvenile court. Three, U visas: A U visa is available to victims of certain crimes. To be eligible, the person must have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse and have cooperated with law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of the crime. Four, T visas -- a T visa is available to individuals who have been victims of a severe form of trafficking. To be eligible, the person must demonstrate that he or she would suffer extreme hardship involving unusual or severe harm if removed from the United States (Pierce 2015:7).

Chapter 3: The Failures of the Nation-States

In this chapter, I demonstrate how U.S. intervention spurred by political and economic interests in the region has contributed to the area's current instability. I investigate how the militarization of the governments has roots in a revised version of the Monroe Doctrine designed to prevent the emergence of Communism in Latin America. I also examine the legacy of neodependence of the Northern Triangle on the U.S. Although the U.S. has recognized that its interventionist strategies used during the Cold War impeded the creation of viable nation-states, it has done little to support the young, fragile democracies that now govern the region. The U.S. has a moral obligation, which aligns with its views on democracy in the twenty-first century to support these regions economically.

3.1 Necessary components of a viable nation-state

The dilemma of classifying Central American immigrants as refugees has been predicated on the fact that they are fleeing violence that is not based specifically on race,[24] religion or political affiliation but rather systemic community violence. Although the violence is not necessarily by the states hand, the state has failed to provide order and safety, its primary obligations to its citizens. The German sociologist Max Weber is well

---

[24] Although a case could be made here based on targeted violence to Guatemalans of Mayan decent.

known for defining the principal feature of the modern state as the “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Orum 2001:43). In the cases of the nation-states that make up the Northern Triangle, each has failed entirely; physical force is being implemented by criminal organizations and community members on a daily basis.

According to the political theorist Anthony Orum, “nation-building, even among the older nation states, often occurs as the result of considerable political conflict”(Orum 2001). For example, in England, a civil war occurred in the seventeenth century and ultimately produced a fundamental change in the distribution of political power. As a result, Parliament replaced the king as the sovereign body.[25] In the case of the United States, its move toward nationhood was marked by the successful challenge to colonial rule (Orum 2001:251). In the course of this chapter, we will see that the U.S.’s interventions to avoid revolutions—and thereby the redistribution of power and wealth -- in the Northern Triangle greatly delayed the establishment of democratic states in the region.

Weber was the first theorist to draw attention to the creation of a viable nation-state. According to him, the creation of a modern nation-state depends on the establishment of legitimacy of rule and of the rulers. Legitimacy is exhibited when both the ruler and the ruled accept the bond of authority that connects the two. This axiom

---

[25] The English Civil War was a series of armed conflicts in the period 1642 – 1651 between Parliamentarians and Royalists in the Kingdom of England over, principally, the manner of its government. For more in depth information on the conflict, see (Moore 1966).

underlines most modern political theories. Theorists such as Jurgen Habermas elaborate further that the bond must be expressed in a dialogue between the governed and the governors in order to reach a consensus. Political sociologists and political scientists agree on the definition of legitimacy; however, they acknowledge that such legitimacy is extremely difficult to establish through the consent of the governed (i.e. election). Therefore, they recognize that establishing a viable nation-state in the short run requires the rule of force, which may be achieved by some form or authoritarian government. Such governments solve one problem of civil society: they reduce the threat that violence poses to stability.

Sociologist Anthony Orum summarizes the contemporary understanding of success or failure of a nation: “A successful outcome of nation-building is a nation-state in which policy making has become consolidated and routine, there is regular means of replenishing political leadership, the interests of the citizens regularly receive recognition from political leaders, and there exists a complex and active machinery of the state. Failure, thus, means the absence of at least one of these conditions” (Orum 2001:237).

The nations of the Northern Triangle have failed to achieve the qualities of a modern nation-state. In fact, they have failed in each of the qualities listed by Orum, save for perhaps routine policy making – though the states lack the ability to enforce those policies. One explanation that Orum suggests for why some societies have the qualities of the modern nation-state while others do not is economic interdependence among advanced and developing nation-states.

Andre Gunder Frank applied dependency theory specifically to the development of Latin America. Frank asserts that Latin American countries that display underdevelopment and "atrophied politics" owe their failures to the dominant nation-states. He supports his claim by pointing out that when economic ties between dominant and subordinate-states weaken, as they did during the Depression of the 1930s, then subordinate countries are considerably more successful in "cultivating indigenous forms of economic production" (Frank 1967). Harry Magdoff illustrates this economic imperialism in an analysis of the flow of direct investments from the U.S. (in billions) and subtracted the income on the capital transferred from other countries back to the U.S. He found a net of +$2.6 from Europe, +$0.9 from Canada, -$3.8 from Latin America, and -$9.1 from all other areas (Magdoff 1969). These findings serve as one example of how the U.S. has historically exploited Latin America and other developing regions by receiving substantially more capital than what was invested. This pattern did not hold true for Europe and Canada, where the U.S. was losing a small amount (Orum 2001:277).

3.2 Neodependence and revolutions

The U.S. contributed substantially both economically and politically throughout history to the foundation of the current instability in the Northern Triangle. In landmark his book *Inevitable Revolutions: the United States in Central America,* diplomatic historian Walter LaFeber expands on dependency theory to analyze the effects of two centuries of U.S. foreign policy in Central America. He coins the theory of

"neodependency," which he defines as "a way of looking at Latin American development, not in isolation, but as part of an international system in which the leading powers (and since 1945, the U.S. in particular) have used their economic strength to make Latin American development dependent on–and subordinate to–the interests of those leading powers" (LaFeber 1983:17). LaFeber argues that the U.S.'s fear of the spread of Communism during the Cold War, along with the economic gains from exploiting the region, resulted in further destabilization of the nations. LaFeber goes into great detail regarding U.S. involvement in all of Central America. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on a case study of a CIA intervention that resulted in the exile of a Guatemalan president.

In 1951, Jacob Arbenz Guzman became president in an open, democratic election in which he won 65% of the vote. Although the U.S. was not initially alarmed, he soon implemented policies that upset the U.S. both politically and economically. He legalized the Communist party (Guatemalan Labor party) and made policies for land reform, which threatened property holdings of the United Fruit Company, a highly profitable American corporation. [26] At the time, two percent of the population owned 72 percent of the farmland (LaFeber 1983:115).[27] United Fruit owned 550,000 acres, of which 85% was

---

[26] The United Fruit Company was an American corporation founded in 1899 that imported tropical fruit (primarily bananas) grown in Central and South America to the U.S. and Europe. The company had monopoly in Central American countries including Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. These regions largely were producers of bananas as mono-crops and became known as "banana republics." United Fruit has become a symbol of exploitative neocolonialism (LaFeber 1983).

[27] The effects of this land inequality in an agricultural-based society was substantial. In 1950, per capita income in rural areas was $89.15 a year, and malnutrition was rampant

not cultivated (Bucheli and Reed 2001). Arbenz's government was beginning to undermine the neodependence that had been in place since the 19th century, the effect of which can be demonstrated in Guatemala's agricultural trade with the United States. 85% of Guatemala's exports, almost exclusively bananas and coffee, went to the U.S., and 85% of Guatemala's imports came from the U.S. Clearly, Guatemala was economically dependent on the U.S. (LaFeber 1983).

In 1952, Arbenz implemented the Agrarian Reform, which expropriated uncultivated portions of large plantations. The U.S.'s response to this expropriation of property by Arbenz was for President Eisenhower to order the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to plan a counterrevolution, allegedly to stop the spread of Communism in the Americas. The CIA spent more than 7 million dollars to train hundreds of Guatemalans on a United Fruit plantation in Honduras. The CIA chose Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, a conservative Guatemalan landowner who had unsuccessfully led a coup against the Arbenz government in late 1950. In June of 1954, the troops of Carlos Castillo crossed the Honduran-Guatemalan border and began their attack and ousted the Arbenz government (LaFeber 1983:25). Although hundreds of people were killed during the counterrevolution, many more were killed afterwards; leaders of urban and peasant unions became special targets. Castillo's militants overturned the Arbenz's agricultural reform and labor legislation and welcomed foreign investors. The result was a highly militarized government that worked closely with the U.S. government and did not

---

as banana and coffee plantations took over areas that once grew staple food sources such as beans and corn (Bucheli and Reed 2001).

question its economic exploitation. Essentially, status quo was returned for the short-term. However, the U.S.'s support of an extreme rightwing regime further polarized the nation, and by 1957 another revolution ensued.

Some argue that the U.S.'s role in impeding the social-democratic reforms of the 1940s and 1950s contributed significantly to the following decades violence -- including revolutions, counterrevolutions, the long civil war, ethnic cleansing and extreme human rights violations -- that fill most of the last fifty years of Guatemalan history. [28] Although this was just one example of U.S. intervention during the Cold War that set the frameworks for militarized societies, there are many examples that are unique to each country.[29]

According to LaFeber, the following assumptions are the basic principles that guided U.S foreign policy in Latin America for most of the 20th century. First, the U.S. supported Central American governments whose policies were beneficial to American

---

[28] More than 200,000 people were killed over the course of the civil war that began in 1960 and ended with peace accords in 1996. About 83 percent of those killed were Mayan, according to a 1999 report written by the U.N.-backed Commission for Historical Clarification titled "Guatemala: Memory of Silence." The report also concluded that the vast majority (93 percent) of human rights violations perpetrated during the conflict were carried out by state forces and military groups (CHC 1999). For more information on the history of revolutions in Guatemala see the following timeline: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215811.stm (BBC News 2012).

[29] This theme holds true for other countries in Central America as well. Most notable was the CIA plan approved by the Reagan administration to destabilize and overthrow the Nicaraguan government through a range of both direct and indirect pressures. Although this is likely the primary example that comes to mind regarding the U.S.'s destabilization of Central America, it is beyond the scope of this thesis as it falls outside of the Northern Triangle. LaFeber's book is a good source of information on U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.

business interests. Central American governments were to stop leftist political movements concerned with income redistribution and land reform. Second, during the Cold War, Central American governments were to be uncompromisingly opposed to Communism in all its forms. Third, consistent with the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. was unalterably opposed to any effort by foreign powers to pursue ongoing economic and/or political interests in any Latin American country. To insure adherence to these principles, U.S. Presidents and Congress favored authoritarian regimes.[30] Moreover, the Reagan administration sent military advisors to help train the military and the police in the countries of the Northern Triangle on how to use force, including terror against Communist-inspired and other left-wing political movements.

The U.S. intervened on many occasions during the Cold War with the stated purpose of stopping the spread of Communism in the Americas. The world's leading revolutionary nation in the eighteenth century became the protector of the status quo in the twentieth century. U.S. foreign policy dedicated itself to maintaining short-term stability, which meant avoiding revolutions in Latin America at all costs. What it did not take into account, however, was that in Central America revolutions are the functional

---

[30] With the overarching goal of preventing the spread of Communism, it was established that a nation did not have to be a democratic state to have positive relations with the U.S. There was a distinction between "totalitarian" governments, which sought to control every part of society -- including the economy, and "authoritarian" governments, which sought to preserve traditional societies while maintaining open, capitalist economies. There could be "good authoritarians" exemplified by Somoza and Shah in Iran but there could be no "good totalitarian" as exemplified by Hitler and Stalin. This assumption promoted a de-emphasis on human rights. Thus, "A government's degree of anticommunism and its warmth towards foreign investments became the measuring stick of whether to help or hinder a government" (LaFeber 1983:278).

equivalent of elections in North America. Revolutions were the method of transferring power and bringing about change (LaFeber 1983:15). The U.S.'s stability approach in practice excused Central American oligarchs from answering to their citizens; they could rely on U.S. support instead.

Central America has been viewed as a security threat to the United States for decades. Washington, D.C. is closer to El Salvador than it is to San Francisco, and Central America is among the regions in the world with the most political and economic turmoil. The following is an overview of the economic context of the Northern Triangle as well as a brief description of U.S. strategic interests in the area.

Guatemala has a population of 15.47 million (2013), an area of 42,000 square miles (comparable in size to Kentucky), and a per capita income of 7,130 PPP dollars (2013).[31] The Guatemalan economy is dependent on coffee, banana, and cotton exports. 9.9 percent of the country's GDP comes from personal remittances (The World Bank 2015). The strategic interest of Guatemala has been generally established in the case study above. The homicide rate in Guatemala was 31 per 100,000 in 2014, down from 40 per 100,000 in the previous year (Gagne 2015).

Honduras has a population of 8.098 million, an area of 43,000 square miles (comparable in size to Louisiana), and a per capita income of 4,270 PPP. The Honduran

[31] Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) estimates the amount of adjustment needed on the exchange rate between countries in order for the exchange to be equivalent to each currency's purchasing power. For comparison, the U.S. has a per capita income of 53.750 PPP (2013).

economy depends on coffee and banana exports. 17.4 percent of the country's GDP comes from personal remittances (The World Bank 2015). Honduras is the original "banana republic," meaning it is dependent on one or two crops and foreign capital. Because Honduras shares borders with Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, it has traditionally served as a base for revolutionaries and counter revolutionaries. The U.S. used Honduras as a staging ground on various occasions, including to overthrow the Guatemalan government in 1954 and to "destabilize" the Nicaraguan government in the early eighties. The country has been ruled mostly by military officers trained and equipped by the United Stated. Honduras's dire level of poverty can be attributed to a combination of foreign exploitation, rampant internal corruption, and a sterile, mountain terrain that is not agriculturally productive. In 2014, Honduras had a homicide rate of 66 per 100,000 people, among the highest homicide rates in the world.

El Salvador has a population of 6.34 million, an area of 8,236 square miles (size of Massachusetts), and a per capita income of 7,490 PPP. The Salvadoran economy depends on coffee and U.S. aid. 16.4 percent of the Salvadoran GDP comes from personal remittances (The World Bank 2015). The sharp contrast between those with great wealth and those living in extreme poverty has characterized Salvadoran society for more than a century and has roots in its colonial past. When El Salvador became an independent republic in the early nineteenth century, this pattern did not change. Wealthy landowners, members of only a very few families, organized the national government to secure their positions and continued to dominate Salvadoran national life. One reason for El Salvador's extreme poverty is that at least half of the population depends on

agriculture for a living, but fewer than two percent—the oligarchs or "fourteen families"[32]—control almost all of the fertile land as well as 60% of the total land. After a coup in 1979, the army, which had been trained and supplied by the U.S., took some of the Fourteen Families' power, but the power was only slightly diminished. Throughout history, many Salvadorans have had to emigrate in order to survive. During 1980 and 1981, the military and right-winged death squads killed approximately 30,000 civilians to shut down a revolution. Such a bloodbath is not unusual in El Salvador; fifty years earlier, the military killed a similar number of peasants for similar reasons (LaFeber 1983:10).

El Salvador is characterized by extreme income inequality. The most devastating war in its history was the Salvadoran Civil War between the military-led government and a coalition of five left-winged guerilla groups and spanned twelve years from 1980 to 1992 and claimed 75,000 lives. The U.S. supported the Salvadoran oligarchy throughout the war, spending as much as $6 billion of direct military assistance and training for the Salvadoran armed forces. El Salvador was the second-highest recipient of U.S. aid behind Israel during that period (Conway 2014). Currently, El Salvador has one of the highest homicide rates in the world. In 2014, the homicide was 68.6 per 100,000.[33]

---

[32] Common wisdom has it that El Salvador is run by 14 families. In 1998, 700,000 families (or 3.5 million of the country's 5 million people) lived on $1 a day or less, while 518 families earned $10,000 a month or more. For more information on this topic including a descriptions of the families and how this income inequality contributed to the Civil War see Maria Dolores Albiac's book *The Richest of the Rich in El Salvador* (Albiac 1988).

[33] According to the El Salvador's forensic unit Medicina Legal, El Salvador's 3,942 murders in 2014 represented a 57 percent increase from the previous year. Experts credit

U.S. intervention and military support prevented the Northern Triangle from undergoing the conflict and revolution necessary to move towards redistribution of wealth and the creation of a viable, democratic state. In his presidential address to the American Sociology Association which discussed the requisites for the institutionalization of democracy throughout the world, Seymour Martin Lipset asserts that “to attain legitimacy what new democracies need above all is efficacy, particularly in the economic arena, but also in the polity” (Lipset 1994). Lipset reviews the salutary relationship between a market economy and democracy, a relationship whose analysis has a long history in political theory. Such an economy produces a middle class that can stand up against the state and provide the resources for independent groups. As sociologist Barrington Moore famously puts it, “No bourgeois, no democracy” (Moore 1966:418). Lipset notes the additional challenges in establishing a viable democracy in the case of countries in Cental America:

> “some new Latin American democracies may have acquired a kind of negative legitimacy –an inoculation against authoritarianism because of the vivaciousness of the previous dictatorial regimes. Newly independent countries that are post-revolutionary, post-coup, or post-authoritarian regimes are inherently low in legitimacy” (Lipset 1994:8).

---

the end of a truce between the gangs Barrio 18 and MS13 with a large amount of this violence increase (Gagne 2015). This truce was mentioned in chapter two; however, it is worth reiterating how the dramatic increase in violence in El Salvador coincides with the timeline of the surge. This further supports the claim that the minors had no life choices. They emigrated to survive.

The new "democracies" of El Salvador and Guatemala of the 1990s[34] are fledgling democracies. Lipset points out that the proclamation of elections does not ensure their legitimacy. He offers a path for democracies to achieve legitimacy: through the attainment of efficacy – primarily in the economic arena. According to Lipset, "if [young democracies] can take the road to economic development, it is likely that they can keep their political house in order" (Lipset 1994:17).

The U.S. government has, in theory, adopted the ideals that Lipset outlines. In her statement at the U.N. Security Council Session on Peace and Security in the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton explained the U.S. view of emerging democracies:

> "the United States rejects the false choice between democracy and stability. But the fact of new, emerging democracies here in the 21st century should be a cause for great satisfaction and hope. But these emerging democracies need champions, not fair-weather friends. But making good on the promise of these transitions will take many hands working on many fronts. And of course, there are political and economic dimensions to the work that must be done, Today I'd like to focus on the security concerns, because that has to be the starting line on the road to true democracy"(Clinton 2012).

Although the Secretary's statement may have been directed towards Middle Eastern democracies, the statement on foreign democracies is applicable to the emerging democracies in the Northern Triangle as well.

[34] Honduras, on the other hand, has yet to establish a democracy as it has experienced a coup as recently as 2009. President Juan Orlando Hernandez came to power under highly suspicious circumstances, with widespread calls of electoral fraud and political repression against the opposition LIBRE party candidates (Gies 2015).

3.3 Central America Free Trade Agreement – Continuing the legacy of neodependence?

While the international ideals of the U.S. during the Cold War were to support authoritarian governments as long as they opposed Communist governments, current ideals align with supporting democracies around the world and promoting human rights.[35] However, U.S. policy in Central America has not embodied these new, twenty-first century ideals. This disagreement between stated intentions and real consequences is exemplified in the Signing of Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Despite signing a free trade agreement with the declared intention of strengthening the economies in Latin America, the results of the agreement continue to favor the U.S. economically and fail to help Central America, thus strengthening the cycle of neodependence. The following is a telling quotation from former Representative Tom Davis of Virginia when he spoke on the House floor in favor of CAFTA on July 27, 2005. He said:

"…we need to understand that CAFTA is more than just a trade pact. It's a signal

---

[35] See "Statement of Principles: Democracy, Democratic Governance, and Transparent Institutions in the American Interest" issued by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)—a bipartisan think-tank, which has extensive influence in policy in Washington, D.C. The statement asserts that, "Investments in democracy and governance through the U.S. government's foreign assistance budget play a critical role in America's security, shared global prosperity, and moral imperative, and they boast a long history of bipartisan support. Today's 'Three Ds' of U.S. international engagement should acknowledge this critical role and become 'Four Ds': defense, diplomacy, development, and democracy. Our foreign assistance budget should reflect these priorities. We, the undersigned, recognize the vitality of American investments in democracy and governance—to national security, to foreign relations, and to the global economy—and we seek to sustain and protect our investments in the democracy and governance sector"(CSIS).

> of U.S. commitment to democracy and prosperity for our neighbors. And it's the best immigration, anti-gang, and anti-drug policy at our disposal…Want to fight the ever-more-violent MS-13 gang activity originating in El Salvador but prospering in Northern Virginia? Pass CAFTA …Want to begin to ebb the growing flow of illegal immigrants from Central America? Pass CAFTA"(Davis 2005).

One day later, the House passed CAFTA, at midnight and by a single vote. Despite the compelling promises of the above speech, the results of CAFTA, in practice, worsened the already dire situation of the region.

A 2014 Congressional Briefing entitled "The Economic Underpinnings Of Migration in The Americas" by Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur examines the factors that have contributed to the surge and states that "CAFTA-DR has lowered living standards and labor protection in the region, cost jobs, harmed rural communities, and promoted privatization and deregulation of fundamental public services in signatory states"(Kaptur 2014).

One of the briefing's panelists, Ben Beachy, an analyst for Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, reported on the situation. The real results of the deal have not only failed to help the economies but also may have contributed further to the economic instability of the region. The average annual GDP growth rates in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have all been lower than the overall growth rate in Latin American developing countries in CAFTA's first 9 years. In fact, the average annual growth rates of El Salvador and Honduras have fallen since the deal took effect, while the growth rate of Guatemala went from being above the regional average before CAFTA to falling below it after the agreement was enacted (see **Table 4**).

Table 4: Real GDP Growth (%)

	1992-2001*	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Costa Rica	5.1	2.9	6.4	4.3	5.9	8.8	7.9	2.7	-1.3	4.2	4.0
Dom. Rep.	6.2	5.8	-0.3	1.3	9.3	10.7	8.5	5.3	3.5	7.8	4.5
El Salvador	4.4	2.3	2.3	1.9	3.6	3.9	3.8	1.3	-3.1	1.4	2.0
Guatemala	3.6	3.9	2.5	3.2	3.1	5.4	6.3	3.3	0.6	2.8	2.9
Honduras	3.2	3.8	4.6	6.2	6.1	6.7	6.2	4.1	-2.1	2.8	3.5
Nicaragua	3.9	0.8	2.5	5.3	4.3	4.2	3.7	2.8	-1.5	4.5	4.0
LAC*	3.0	0.3	2.1	6.0	4.7	5.6	5.8	4.3	-1.8	6.1	4.5
United States	3.5	1.8	2.5	3.6	3.1	2.7	1.9	0.3	-3.5	3.0	1.5

Source: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook data base*, September 2011.

* Average annual growth.

LAC = Latin American and Caribbean.

(Hornbeck 2012:7)

Under CAFTA, family farmers have suffered the most. Agricultural imports from the United States in those three CAFTA countries have risen 78 percent since the deal went into effect. While these exports represent a small fraction of the revenue of U.S. agrobusiness, they represent a big threat to the Central American family farmers who do not have the subsidies, technology, and land to compete with the influx of grain. Despite promises to the contrary, most small-scale farmers in those countries have not seen a boost in exports of their products to the United States. For example, Honduras went from being a net agricultural exporter to the United States in the six straight years before CAFTA to being a net agricultural importer from the United States in the six straight years after the deal took effect (Beachy 2014).

Many NGOs and international organizations are calling for the abolition or reassessment of CAFTA in order to align investments with the stated intentions of the trade agreement. For example, the Stop CAFTA Coalition[36] issued a report of the negative effects on the region. The conclusion of the report states that:

> "The trends highlighted in this report clearly depict a region in economic distress. Economic opportunity for the majority of people has decreased and the effects on women, farmers, the indigenous, and the environment have been tremendous. Furthermore, intellectual property rights, including patents and copyright laws, are causing the commercialization of public goods; this will affect both the health care industry and those who earn their income through the informal sector"(Sanción et al. 2009).

Although the U.S.'s stance on foreign policy may be to support young democracies such as those found in Central America, U.S. policies, both internationally and domestically, have not supported these twenty-first century ideals. As discussed in the previous section, CAFTA has failed to support the young democracies of the region in achieving legitimacy through economic prosperity. Instead, the trade agreement continued the legacy of neodependency in the region. CAFTA was implemented with short-sighted benefits to the U.S. and carried no long-term benefits to the region. CAFTA represents a failed opportunity for the U.S. to contribute to the long-term prosperity of the region.

Chapter 4: US follows historic patterns in Central America policy making

[36] The Coalition includes contributors from organizations including: Salvadoran Humanitarian Aid, Research and Education Foundation, the Nicaragua Network, f Witness for Peace Nicaragua, Asociación Servicios de Promoción Laboral (ASEPROLA) -- a Costa Rican labor association, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), The Pastoral Commission on Peace and Ecology, Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA.

4.1 United States' short-term national immigration policy has long-term international security consequences: gang deportations to Central America

National immigration policy has historically been oriented towards short-term solutions to domestic problems with little foresight into how these policies might ultimately affect other regions negatively and then recirculate back to the U.S. The following is an example of how national policy implemented as a short-term solution in reaction to an immigration problem contributed to future problems; namely, a U.S. policy of exporting gang members from Los Angeles to Central America contributed to the violence in the Northern Triangle that largely triggered the surge of minors entering the U.S.

Although the street gang members in question may have been of Central American nationalities, the gangs were formed in the United States, making the criminal problem a U.S. problem, some would argue. Regardless, the U.S. implemented a policy to deport Los Angeles gang members to Central America, a region characterized by poor criminal justice systems. The origins of the two gangs can be traced back to the 1990s when Central Americans in Los Angeles, struggling to adapt to hostile neighborhoods, formed street gangs, the most common of which are the Mara Salvatrucha—better known as MS-13— and the 18th Street gang. The Los Angeles Police Department worked with immigration authorities to deport undocumented gang members, eventually deporting tens of thousands of criminals to Central America. Once the gangs were installed in Central America, repressive policing policies known as the "Mano Dura" unintentionally

worsened the problem. Mass incarceration of young children from street cliques alongside hardened criminals turned prison into a “finishing school” for gang members (Bishop 2016). Between fiscal years 2010 and 2012, almost 100,000 convicts were repatriated to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras — exceeding the total number of criminal deportations in the previous six years combined. Immigrant-rights activists say the spike in criminal deportations likely played a key role in spreading gang violence in these three Central American countries — the situation many children cite as a reason for coming to the United States (Chardy 2014a, Chardy 2014b). This policy is one of many U.S. policies implemented to solve a short-term problem without recognizing how those actions would play out in the future.[37]

4.2 Debunking the myth of an immigration crisis

Despite what recent media and current policy might lead the public to believe, the U.S. is not experiencing a crisis at the border; in fact, apprehensions at the southern

[37] For example, the bilateral “Bracero” temporary worker program in which 4.6 million temporary visas were issued to Mexican workers between 1942 and 1964. This policy was implemented with a short-term goal of fulfilling a labor demand. Little foresight is needed to imagine that issuing a large amount of temporary work visas would contribute to workers remaining in the U.S. illegally and family members entering the U.S. illegally. According to a Congressional Research Services report, the Bracero program ”helped spark the transformation by fostering a new generation of migration-oriented Mexican workers, U.S. employers, and
transnational labor recruiters. In its aftermath, a variety of national and global forces combined to hold down wages and to expand low-skilled employment opportunities in the United States, factors which created increased migration pulls” (Rosenblum et al. 2012).

border are nearing an all-time low. The position the U.S. holds on immigration is often found in the balance of economic interests and identity maintenance. As previously mentioned in chapter two, the fears associated with the "browning of America" have contributed partially to the current conservative stance toward immigration. Another possible reason for the current conservatism is the desire to keep U.S. jobs for U.S. workers. However, economists have largely determined this theory to be a myth; the majority of economic analyses suggest that immigrants, even low-skilled ones, have a positive effect on the economy and a largely negligible effect on the American workforce. [38]

Although the number of Central American children and family members apprehended at the border has increased in recent years, it is important to note that overall apprehensions have decreased significantly. Looking at border apprehensions as a whole, the U.S. is not experiencing a border crisis, in fact, the opposite may be true. In fiscal year 2015, the Border Patrol apprehended 331,313 people at the U.S.-Mexico border, marking it the second fewest of any year since 1972, and the number of Mexican citizens apprehended (186,017) is the lowest since 1970. In 2000, the Border Patrol, with less than half as many agents as in 2015, apprehend over 1.6 million Mexicans (WOLA 2016). The number of family units and unaccompanied minors from the Northern

---

[38] For an insightful overview of several economic studies of low-skilled immigrant workers on the economy see: New York Times article entitled" Immigration and American Jobs." In summary, "over the long term, most less-skilled American workers likely benefit. Immigrant workers, in fact, may help their American peers resist the forces of globalization and technological progress that have been walloping the American middle class" (Porter 2012).

Triangle has, however, increased. The Border Patrol apprehended 8,412 family-unit members and 5,783 unaccompanied children from the Northern Triangle in December 2015, the highest numbers for any December. The continuously increasing levels of youth and family migration—during a month in which migration is typically low—reveals the severity of the problems from which they are fleeing. It also suggests that they will continue to migrate as long as root causes remain unaddressed (WOLA 2016). The U.S.'s aggressive response to the influx reflects the current conservative stance on immigration, especially from Central America. The change in demographics poses new problems for an immigration system that has no mechanism to process children, as discussed in section 2.5.

4.3 United States- backed policies in Mexico exacerbate minors' health problems

The policy of gang deportations discussed in section 4.1 serves as one example of a previously implemented, short-sighted, U.S. immigration policy that has contributed to the surge. Now, in response to the surge, the U.S. has responded with various aggressive policies that will have substantial consequences for Central American youth for years to come. Some of those consequences are already playing out, while others will very likely arise in the future.[39]

[39] One example as discussed in Chapter 3 is the "informal relief" granted to a large number of minors. The open-ended nature of this relief will necessitate future interventions.

In June of 2014 in response to the surge, President Obama held a meeting with President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico, in order to collaborate on an immigration security plan that would prevent a similar crisis in the future. Shortly after their meeting on July seventh of 2014, President Peña Nieto announced *Plan Frontera Sur* with the stated objectives of bringing order to migration in Mexico's southern region while protecting the human rights of immigrants who enter and travel through the country. However, little has been done thus far in regards to the latter. In support of Mexico's heightened immigration enforcement, the U.S. donated millions of dollars towards equipment and training (Swanson et al. 2015).

The program's implementation has coincided with a dramatic increase in deportations in Mexico, which has had negative effects on the health and safety of children (Boggs 2015). The difference in deportations of children between 2013 and 2014 represents a 117 percent increase from 8,350 to 18,169 (Secretaria de gobernación). Since the plan's initiation, checkpoints have increased dramatically. Immigration agents from *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (INM) and police now routinely stop trains and buses, making it nearly impossible for migrants without hired smugglers to travel in any way other than by foot. The plan also calls for Mexican train companies to take steps to deter migrants. Chiapas-Mayab, the company that operates the southernmost rail segment, has announced a 6 billion peso ($460 million USD) initiative in conjunction with the federal government to increase the train speed. The stated goals include increasing freight transportation efficiency and preventing migrants from riding on top of trains. In Apizaco, Tlaxcala, a small city about 80 miles from Mexico City, companies

have installed short concrete poles next to the tracks to deter migrants from running alongside and hopping the trains. These initiatives have caused more harm to migrants who are getting injured at even higher rates than they previously were traveling on the already dangerous trains.

Since the trains have become less accessible, migrants and shelter workers describe even worse conditions. Luís López-Lago Ortiz, a shelter worker of *Scouts de Extremadura*, a Spanish NGO said, “We thought we could not see anything worse than the train, but there is something worse: walking on the road.” Since the implementation of the program, even Grupo Beta, a unit of INM that provides health and information services to migrants, has been reported calling immigration services (Sorrentino 2015).

U.S. funding for security efforts that support the heightened deportations of Central Americans through Mexico’s *Plan Frontera Sur* have been provided by allocating part of the *Merida Initiative* funding. The *Merida Initiative* is an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that was implemented in 2008. Since that time, Congress has appropriated $2.3 billion towards the mission. The agreement focuses on four pillars: (1) disrupt capacity of organized crime to operate, (2) institutionalize capacity to sustain rule of law, (3) create a 21st century border structure, and (4) build strong and resilient communities (U.S. Embasy). The third pillar has become by far the largest. In addition to the Merida Initiative, in 2011 the U.S. Defense Department launched a “Mexico-Guatemala-Belize Border Region Program,” providing as much as $50 million annually for “patrol boats, night vision equipment, communications equipment, maritime sensors, and associated training” taken from the Pentagon’s counter-drug budget (Isacson and

Meyer 2014). Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for International Affairs Alan Bersin explains how "The Guatemalan border with Chiapas is now our southern border"(Taylor 2012).[40]

By pushing the border to Mexico and increasing apprehensions there, the U.S. is essentially revoking the rights of Central Americans, including unaccompanied minors, to seek asylum anywhere. A report by the Migration Policy Institute warns that the "United States should not support efforts to apprehend and return immigrants in transit without ensuring that they have a genuine opportunity to seek humanitarian relief" (Rosenblum 2015:21). However, urging early apprehension during transit through Mexico is accomplishing just that. In 2014, according to a report from *AnimalPolitico*, the *Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance* (COMAR) saw a 67% increase in refugee requests — to more than 2,000 applications — compared to the previous year. However, they found that COMAR has just 15 officers tasked with interviewing refugee applicants and only three offices throughout the country (Woody 2015). According to data from a report on President Obama's 2014 initiative by the *Migration Policy Institute* (MPI), for every 100 minors apprehended in 2014, Mexico deported 77 of them, compared to three out of 100 for the United States (Cowen 2015).

In addition to crime against Central Americans on the part of criminal groups and Mexican locals, crime is frequently committed by Mexican authorities. According to

[40] Following the exact origins and quantity of money the U.S. funnels through Mexico for border protection versus humanitarian support is difficult to achieve due to ambiguity of exact use of budget allocation within plans. Precise economic analysis is beyond the scope of this paper.

TeleSur, Mexico's national immigration institute, kidnapping of migrants in Mexico has increased by 800% between 2012 and 2014 (Woody 2015). Furthermore, a 2013 report by the Documentation Network of Migrant Defense Organizations analyzed 931 testimonies of migrants gathered by seven shelters in Mexico and found that 52 percent of the migrants reported being robbed and another 33 percent reported being extorted, primarily by criminal groups. However, 18 percent of those abuses were reported to have been committed by Mexican Authorities (35% Federal Police and 31% municipal police officers) (Lopez et al. 2013).

Chapter 5: A Shift in Paradigm: Solutions Moving Forward

Throughout this thesis, the structural vulnerability of a generation of Central Americans has been explored. The complex nature of the problem means that there are no simple solutions. What is clear, however, is that the solutions may exist only through economic and political reform on a large scale. This type of reform will require a shift in the framing of immigration events from only a national security threat to an international public health threat. The tension between humanitarian and security concerns inherent in immigration policy is complex; yet we cannot let its complexity stop us from moving towards progress. Our goal must be to bring economic stability to the Northern Triangle in order to provide the life choices that will afford life chances to Central American youth. It is through making the region more attractive to its people that the immigration problem may also be solved. I acknowledge that the economic stability that will insure

the overall health of Central American youth is a long-term, somewhat idealistic goal; however, it is a goal towards which every step of progress will be worthwhile. My goal is similar to the goal (to close the health gap in one generation) expressed by the WHO's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health because my goal is also "an aspiration not a prediction" (Comission on the Social Determinants of Health 2008:9). Although these children may not achieve full biopsychosocial health as the WHO defines it, I am optimistic that systematic steps taken towards economic and political stability will bring them closer to achieving this health goal. My stance on progress is summarized by the Commission's further elaboration of its aspirations: "We are optimistic: the knowledge exists to make a huge difference to people's life chances and hence to provide marked improvements in health equity. We are realistic: action must start now" (Comission on the Social Determinants of Health 2008:9). Action must start now. In order to break the cycle of poverty and violence in which the youths of the Northern Triangle have found themselves, the U.S. must be willing to break the cycle of neodependency – that is, the continued economic and political exploitation of the region. The U.S. must take responsibility and agency; it must abandon the foreign policy of the Cold War in favor of policies that are in line with its twenty-first-century, democratic ideals. The U.S. should be the prime mover but work hand in hand with international organizations to address and eliminate the crisis of political and economic instability in the region that has jeopardized the future of a generation.

We are at a crucial turning point where the goals that are announced in regard to U.S. policies supported by the FY 2016 foreign aid budget are promising, yet the

resources are at risk of failing the region again and falling into the same patterns of land deprivation. Although the U.S. has also set aside some funding for investing in human capital in the region, to date there is no concrete programming to assure that those plans be carried out in a significant way. A case study of a successful public health initiative that reduced violence in Cali, Colombia serves as an example of how idealistic goals when pursued by comprehensive methods can have measurable results in reducing violence, even in regions as unstable as the Northern Triangle. I then describe a UN-backed international justice system that had successful results in fighting corruption in Guatemala and which may serve as a model for the other two countries of the Northern Triangle to restore order to these states. The remainder of the chapter explores current economic policies that the U.S. is in the early stages of implementing in the Northern Triangle. The U.S. is at a crucial turning point; it may either continue the legacy of neodependency or begin to approve policies that will foster the redistribution of wealth by investing in civil society. The U.S. has approved a substantial budget to address the root causes of the surge; yet, its implementation may either continue the cycle of economic and exploitation or begin the process towards reform. How the U.S. chooses to participate and invest in the Plan of Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, in addition to whether the U.S. decides to renegotiate CAFTA, will be key factors in determining the economic future of the region.

5.1 A Colombian case study: development, security, peace (DESEPAZ)

The following is a case study of a successful, public health initiative was able to reduce violence in an unstable region by investing in human capital and in the judicial system. In 1992, Rodrigo Guerrero, the mayor of Cali, Colombia helped the city set up a comprehensive program aimed at reducing the high levels of crime. Between 1983 and 1991, rates of homicide in Cali had risen from 23 to 85 per 100,000 population respectively. The program that ensued was called Desarrollo, Seguridad, Paz (DESEPAZ), which translates to development, security, peace.

Epidemiological studies were conducted in the initial stages of the city's program, in order to identify the principal risk factors for violence and shape the priorities for action. Special budgets were approved to strengthen the police, the judicial system and the local human rights office. DESEPAZ undertook education on civil rights matters for both the police and the public at large, including television advertising at peak viewing times emphasizing the importance of tolerance for others and self-control. Various cultural and educational projects were organized for schools and families in collaboration with local nongovernmental organizations, to promote discussions on violence and to help resolve interpersonal conflicts. There were restrictions on the sale of alcohol, and the carrying of handguns was banned on weekends and special occasions.

In the course of the program, special projects were set up to provide economic opportunities and safe recreational facilities for young people. The mayor and his administrative team discussed their proposals to tackle crime with local people, and the city administration ensured the continuing participation of the community. One reason for this program's success was that the involvement of the local population was highlighted.

Over the course of the program's operation, the homicide rate in Cali declined from an all-time high of 124 per 100000 to 86 per 100000 between 1994 and 1997, a reduction of 30%. In absolute numbers, there were approximately 600 fewer homicides between 1994 and 1997 compared with the previous 3-year period, which allowed the law enforcement authorities to devote scarce resources to combating more organized forms of crime. Furthermore, public opinion in Cali shifted strongly from a passive attitude towards dealing with violence to a demand for more prevention activities (WHO 2002:4).

Although the idea of addressing violence in the Northern Triangle may be daunting, programs such as DESEPAZ offer an optimistic example of programming that engaged all aspects of society in order to achieve violence prevention and health maintenance.

5.2 A current case study: International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)

One key factor to preventing violence is a strong justice system. Because of the extremely corrupt nature of the Guatemalan government and the ever-increasing crime rates of the nation, the Guatemalan government requested a United Nations-backed program with goals to "support and strengthen State institutions as well as assist with the criminal investigation and prosecution of illegal security forces and clandestine security organizations." The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) was established in 2007. Although CICIG is not a comprehensive plan directed at all

aspects of society as DESEPAZ was, it does provide a useful illustration of world states coming together to rebuild an unstable, corrupt nation-state such as Guatemala.

In contrast to other mechanisms of international cooperation for strengthening the rule of law, the CICIG is an independent investigative entity that operates under Guatemalan law and works alongside the Guatemalan justice system to fight corruption. Working hand-in-hand with the country's judiciary and security institutions, CICIG is building these institutions to function independently in the future (WOLA 2015).

A 2015 report produced by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) presents the achievements and findings of the first eight years of CICIG. The program "has passed and implemented important legislative reforms; provided fundamental tools for the investigation and prosecution of organized crime that the country had previously lacked; and removed public officials who had been colluding with criminal and corrupt organizations. Through emblematic cases, the Commission has demonstrated that with the necessary political and technical support, the Guatemalan justice system can investigate complex cases and bring to justice actors once considered untouchable." Major accomplishments include: "the arrest of former President Alfonso Portillo, the conviction of two of his biggest collaborators, and other convictions related to extra-judicial killings carried out by high-level officials of President Oscar Berger's administration, progress in eliminating a network of corruption within prison systems, and exposing tax fraud that implicated high-level officials" (WOLA 2015:28).

CICIG is a true representation of international coordination and receives economic support from various countries including Canada, Denmark, Spain, Finland,

Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union (Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala 2012-2013:4). Budgets are reported to range approximately $13 to $15 million per year. The U.S. has contributed approximately $21 million from 2007 to 2013. This is an example of U.S. investment in institution building in collaboration with international human rights agencies that is compatible with the objectives of the public health paradigm and should be expanded.

Because of CICIG's success, it has been suggested that it serve as a model for similar programs to strengthen the rule of law in other UN member countries. The program's level of integration with the local justice system and its focus on promoting the prosecution of criminal cases while offering tools to strengthen the capacities of institutions make it an innovative model. In the Central American context, governability problems, deficiencies in security and justice systems, and high rates of violence in Honduras and El Salvador, exemplify why it may be helpful to establish similar mechanisms in these two countries (WOLA 2015:29).

5.3 The Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: round two of the Alliance for Progress

In September 2014, at the height of the surge, the countries of the Northern Triangle produced a regional plan to address the region's economic deprivation and insecurity, the primary drivers of child migration. The Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle (PAPNT) was introduced at the Inter-American

Development Bank (IDB) conference on "Investing in Central America: Unlocking Opportunities for Growth" (McKibben 2015). Although the plan presents promising objectives, critics are skeptical that they are achievable. This Plan presents similar goals of social reform and unity in the region and is backed only by limited financial support. This Plan echoes the ideals of President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress in 1961, which was deemed a failed initiative by 1969 (JFK Presidential Library and Museum 2005).

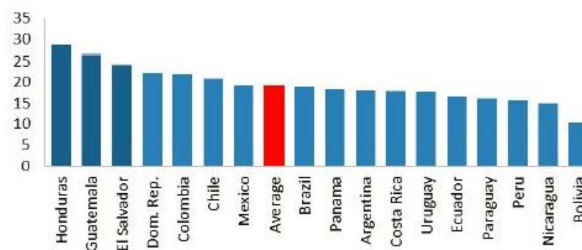
The current Plan is divided into four pillars: (1) stimulate the productive sector to create economic opportunities; (2) strengthen human capital; (3) improve public safety and strengthen the judicial system; and (4) strengthen institutions and federal financial management to increase people's trust in the State (El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:2). The Plan discusses the risk of losing human capital in the region, but critics point out that it does not offer concrete action plans to confront these problem. The Plan expresses concern that,

> "in recent years the countries of the Northern Triangle - El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras – have confronted a constant and growing flow of emigration, in which nearly 9% of the population has decided to leave, resulting in a major loss in our human capital…This phenomenon came into sharper focus in 2014 because of a significant rise in the flow of minors who arrived in the United States without residency permits and unaccompanied by an adult. As of August 31 of this year (2014) 250,303 children from our three countries were detained at the US border – more than 15 times the figure for 2009. This migration crisis has shed light on an elaborate scheme of human trafficking and violation of human rights of our migrant population"(El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:1).

The region acknowledges the reasons for the loss of human capital to be rooted in long-term social and economic problems that resulted in the current "lack of well-paying jobs, the absence of educational and employment opportunities for young people, high

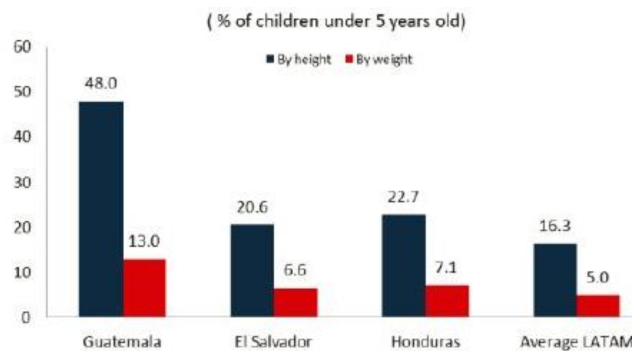
rates of malnutrition, extreme poverty, inequality and rising crime" which have forced families and young people to look elsewhere for a brighter future (El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:2). Figures 7 and 8 compare the poor nutrition and lack of education and employment opportunities for the youth of the Northern Triangle with average rates among Latin American countries.

Figure 7: Young people who neither study nor work



(El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:6)

Figure 8: Malnutrition by weight and height



(El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:6)

Through the three strategic goals previously mentioned, the consensus of the countries was to make "the Northern Triangle a worthy and prosperous home for our citizens (El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:2). However, due to the state of instability, the Northern Triangle is clearly not equipped to achieve these goals on its own. The region's leaders acknowledge this fact and state that "achieving the development goals proposed here is an arduous task…it is clear that the resources needed to meet the development challenges featured in the Plan surpass the financial capabilities of our countries and our ability to take on more debt. Therefore, the participation of other allied countries, multilateral organizations and development partners in the region will be essential" (El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras 2014:21).

As a measure to address the surge of unaccompanied minors, the U.S. has agreed to support the Plan and has invested a significant portion of regional aid. In a *New York Times* article outlining the U.S. contribution to the Plan, Vice President Joe Biden said, "The cost of investing now in a secure and prosperous Central America is modest compared with the costs of letting violence and prosperity fester" (Biden Jr. 2015). Although the mission statements of the Plan and the U.S.'s support of the initiative may be in line with addressing the urgency of the economic and social justice problems of the region, critics and many civil society groups have voiced alarm over the proposed aid package's focus on private and foreign investment. Rather than presenting a

new approach to problems in the region, the Plan is at risk of becoming yet another policy that will continue the cycle of neodependency in the region.

In an open letter to President Barack Obama and regional leaders on April 10, 2015, 80 organizations criticized the Plan's emphasis on large-scale development projects designed without community participation and predicted that it will exacerbate, not ease, poverty and violence in the region. The groups also criticized other U.S. policies including the militarization of the war on drugs, which has given rise to systematic human rights abuses; the militarized policing of regional borders, which violates the rights of refugees fleeing violence during transit; and the harsh treatment of immigrants from Central America in the United States. In their letter, the organizations assert that "While we welcome the commitments from the governments of countries known as the Northern Triangle to jointly address this regional crisis, we fear the Alliance for Prosperity will only exacerbate the very conditions of poverty and violence they claim to address" (Consensus of Undersigned Civil Society Goups 2015). The Prosperity Plan may prove to be yet another example of U.S. foreign policy promising democracy and stability that may never be delivered.

Oscar Chacón, the Executive Director of Alianza Americas, an influential coalition of U.S.- based Latin American immigrant organizations, further highlights the need to implement social programs. In an interview with the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Mr. Chacón pointed out three key areas of transformation -- education, health, and tax laws -- that the Alliance for Prosperity Plan barely addresses. He stated that "the

Alliance for Prosperity Plan is an initial step going in the right direction, but definitely insufficient and it needs to be expanded" (Garcia 2016).

The idealistic goals of the Plan of Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle are reminiscent of President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress (1961 -1969). The Alliance for Progress was an economic initiative that grew out of fear of increased Soviet and Cuban influence in Latin America. John F. Kennedy's and other Washington policymakers saw the Alliance as a means of spreading capitalist economic growth. The goals included funding social reforms to help the poorest Latin Americans, promoting democracy, and strengthening ties between the United States and its neighbors. The U.S. called upon the Latin American governments to provide $80 billion in investment funds for their economies and pledged $20 billion in U.S. assistance (grants and loans), making the Alliance the largest U.S. aid program up until that point (JFK Presidential Library and Museum 2005). Despite this seemingly significant financial commitment, the funding was insufficient for an entire hemisphere. The $20 billion averaged out to only $10 per Latin American (Smith 1996:152).

Despite this financial commitment to social reform, the Alliance did not achieve most of its lofty goals and was considered a failed initiative by the early 1970s.[41] Reports found that only about two percent of economic growth in Latin America directly

---

[41] Although the larger goals of spreading social-reform through capitalism were unsuccessful, some measurable goals were achieved including the construction of housing, schools, airports, hospitals, clinics and water-purification projects. But because these benefits were considered minimal. In 1973, the Organization of American States disbanded the permanent committee established to implement the Alliance (JFK Presidential Library and Museum 2005).

benefited the poor, and there was a general deterioration of United States-Latin American relations by the end of the 1960s[42] (U.S. Dep. of State; Office of the Historian).

Despite the potential for social reform the Alliance offered, as LaFeber puts it, "the Alliance focused at least as much on antirevolutionary as it did on developmental activity" (LaFeber 1983:151). Although the Alliance for Progress represented the first attempt to deviate from neodependency in the region, it was ultimately unsuccessful. By the late 1960's "the Alliance's remnants consisted of its most dangerous parts: an emphasis on private investment and worsened already glaring economic imbalance in Central America; a dependence on military – trained and supplied by the United States – to maintain order in restless societies; and promises made repeatedly by Kennedy, Johnson, and other U.S. officials that raised hopes and aspirations" (LaFeber 1983:162).

An important part of the public health paradigm is to investigate programs that were unsuccessful in the past and to avoid their repetition. The Alliance for Progress failed for three primary reasons: (1) Latin American nations were not willing to implement the needed reforms; (2) presidents following Kennedy were not as supportive of the Alliance; (3) the funding was insufficient (U.S. Dep. of State; Office of the Historian).

In their support of the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, policy makers should take precautions against reaching the same failures of the Alliance for Progress by assuring a sustained effort with adequate participation and support at the

---

[42] Escalating tensions between the US and Cuba, particularly the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, undermined much of the credibility of Kennedy's claim that the US was acting without self-interest in Latin America.

local population level. Additionally, in order to avoid the pitfalls outlined by the civil society groups, a coalition of NGOs, civil society groups, health agencies, and international organizations should be consulted in order assure that the funding is allocated to innovative, public health programs focused on investing in human capital and strengthening the judicial systems while avoiding land privatization.

5.4 The 2016 budget: conditional aid

The U.S. FY 2016 budget for Central American aid offers some promise because it includes allocations targeting the economic and judicial problems in the region; however, the lack of concrete measures to achieve these goals presents risks similar to those outlined in the discussion of the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle. Of the one billion dollars requested by the Obama Administration in February 2015 for the 2016 aid budget for Central America, 750 million dollars were approved after several rounds of negotiations. This represents a 45% increase from the 2014 budget of $341.5 million. According to the White House Fact Sheet, in the FY 2016, the U.S. split the $750 million budget for the Northern Triangle into the following categories: (1) development assistance, $299 million; (2) narcotics control,[43]upwards of $220 million; (3) support for economic prosperity programs, $184 million; (4) military financing, $26 million; (5) global health and military training programs, $4 million (Office of the Press Secretary 2016).

[43] Towards the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI).

This distribution of U.S. aid is unlikely to be sufficient, and it is still unclear exactly what type of programming the aid is intended for. For example, the $184 set aside in support of economic prosperity plans covers a range of programs including ”economic support funds for CARSI and regional prosperity, economic opportunity, and governance programs” (Office of the Press Secretary 2016). This amount must be further divided between the three nations, further limiting the impact the funding may have on the region.

One danger U.S. lawmakers note in allocating funds to support the Prosperity Plan lies in delivering money to stateless governments that may not use it for the programming it was intended. In order to account for this problem, the U.S. has maintained the right to withhold half of the budget if Congress does not approve of a progress report anticipated in September of 2016.[44] These conditions established for the distribution of the second half of the budget are extensive, and it is unlikely that the countries will be able to reach them given the current instability in the region. The U.S. should claim more responsibility in restabilizing the region. Further research should be conducted regarding a more systematic way to determine how best to allocate these resources in order to promote the greatest impact possible.

[44] The countries will need to show sufficient efforts in the following areas: inform its citizens of the dangers of the journey to the southwest border of the United States; combat human smuggling and trafficking; improve border security; facilitate the safe return, repatriation, and reintegration of undocumented migrants; combat corruption and strengthen public institutions; improve civilian jurisdiction and counter activities of criminal organizations; protect human rights; support programs to promote equitable growth; implement effective civil society consultations; and increase government revenues (Garcia 2016, Office of the Press Secretary 2016).

Conclusions

The objective of this thesis has been to systematically analyze the surge in the vulnerable population of Central American unaccompanied minors who arrived at the U.S. southern border in the summer of 2014 from a public health perspective. I have used an expansive definition of public health – accounting for biological, psychological, and social wellbeing – to guide my investigation of the determinants of health for this population. In order to protect the health of young Central Americans, the cycle of poverty, violence and illness must be broken in the Northern Triangle.

In the current climate, the U.S. government's inability and unwillingness to manage the products of its own system and to reconcile the contradiction between its professed ideals (i.e nation-building and supporting emerging democracies) and its century-old Latin American policy patterns (i.e. Cold War policies and exploitative trade agreements) is evident in the country's failure to protect these displaced minors. The U.S. should claim some responsibility for this crisis and reform current policies regarding the surge that are still following international policy models used during the Cold War in favor of policies that match contemporary, democratic ideals. I am arguing for the adoption of a public health approach that would reallocate resources to prevent the continuation of the cycle of violence and economic turmoil that currently characterizes the Northern Triangle and puts an entire generation at risk.

This thesis has drawn on a wide range of data sources and used several conceptual frameworks from a variety of disciplines –focusing heavily on history, sociology and

economics—with the intention of demonstrating the need for an interdisciplinary perspective that fosters a comprehensive understanding of the health issues of young Central Americans. It is only through a multi-level analysis of the micro factors and macro factors that have contributed to the current crisis that we can hope to build comprehensive solutions that will prevent the loss of a generation of human potential in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

The labels assigned to the youth that comprised the surge must be switched from a single immigration security event against the United States to a set of public health concerns of vulnerable children. The ambiguous label between immigrant and refugee that has been assigned to the minors limits their life-changes and revokes their human rights as children to healthcare and to legal representation. These should be clarified to align with the U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Solutions within a public health paradigm will focus on building states with enduring democratic institutions. The establishment of healthy democracies by restoring economic stability and political order will reduce violence and poverty and ultimately preserve and increase the life choices of this marginalized generation of Central American youth. Making the Northern Triangle a more attractive place to live will also help to solve the U.S. immigration crisis.

Recent events have supported my claims that the security approach to the surge which entails strengthening border security and deporting immigrants in Mexico before they reach the U.S., provides only short-term solutions, if any, to this immigration crisis.

Although the number of child apprehensions at the U.S. border did decrease at the end of 2014, another surge occurred in the end of 2015. In the last three months of 2015, the number of unaccompanied children more than doubled to 17,370, compared with just under 7,987 in the last three months of 2014 (CBP 2016).[45] Clearly, the surge of 2014 was a symptom of a much larger problem that was never addressed. The patchwork of policies implemented in reaction to the surge of 2014 – including enhanced border security, advertising campaigns in Central America warning people against travelling to the US,[46] and the multimillion-dollar Southern Border Program (Plan Frontera Sur) to apprehend migrants in Mexico – were implemented in lieu of comprehensive immigration reforms focused on the protection of a vulnerable population. According to Adam Isacson, a security analyst at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), "the steady monthly increase, despite Mexico's continued efforts, makes me think this pattern is probably permanent, and that the sophisticated smuggling networks operating with the help of corrupt officials have adjusted to the Southern Border Plan" (Lakhani 2016).

---

[45] December made it the fifth highest month for child detentions on record, in spite of the fact that undocumented crossings are usually low in December because of the holidays and cold weather.

[46] The Dangers Awareness Campaign was one-million-dollar international media campaign launched by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In a press release revealing the campaign -- that included hundreds of billboards and some 6,500 public service announcements for radio and television stations in the target countries – the CBP emphasized, "It is critical that they are aware of the facts behind U.S. immigration policies before risking their lives. There are no 'permisos'" (CBP 2014).

In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the policies and other factors that led to the surge, I had to sacrifice the depth of topic I explored. This trade-off of scope was simultaneously an important limitation to my research and one of its strengths. I have drawn on a number of frameworks, concepts and empirical evidence relating to Central America to analyze the context of the health and human potential of the population of Central American youth that comprised the border surge of 2014. In sum, I have situated this analysis in a new paradigm of public health. In order to break the cycle of poverty and illness, the cycle of neodependence must first be broken. The U.S. must reconcile the contradiction between its professed democratic ideals and a century-old Central American foreign policy. Trade agreements must foster the distribution of wealth, not further damage the economies of the region. I have presented a comprehensive yet integrated analysis of many important factors that contribute to the health of these minors, and future researchers may use this model to create innovative solutions to address the root causes of this immigration event and to raise additional research questions and policy issues.

Recommendations and suggestions for future research

Long term goals are to address the state-level problems of economic and political disorder. In order to approach this international economic problem, I advocate a revision of CAFTA so that it may achieve in practice what it has promised on paper. In order to reach this goal, I suggest that policy makers consult locals on the ground as well as a

third-party coalition of humanitarian and health NGOs in the planning of policies so that patterns of economic exploitation may be broken. The climate of corruption extant in these states means that much of foreign aid is not used for the purpose intended by donors. In terms of strengthening the judicial system.

The U.S. should work with the countries of the Northern Triangle and with international agencies to set up concrete mechanisms with which to implement the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle. The goal should be systematic policies that address the issues in a comprehensive yet integrated approach, focusing on nation building (i.e. strengthening schools, the police and health care facilities and an enlightened trade policy).

The current state of marginality in which young Central Americans are caught necessitates short-term changes as well. Post-release services offered to some children by the ORR should be extended to all minors who are released from ORR custody. These services should be amended to guarantee access to an attorney and to sufficient healthcare (including adequate mental-health services). Healthy reintegration should be made a priority both for children released from ORR custody in the U.S. and for children who are sent back to Central America. A system must be put into place that will guarantee safety if a child is repatriated. Furthermore, U.S. agreements with Mexico should also include reintegration conditions. In addition to supporting safe reintegration in Central America, more should be done to promote integration into the U.S. communities in which the minors are now living.

Further researchers should investigate the effect that the ongoing war on drugs has had in contributing to the violence in the Northern Triangle. [47] As this has been a largely unsuccessful war, researchers should take an expanded public health view on the problem and come up with innovative solutions to discontinue the current approach in favor of a more effective method. Further research should also conduct an analysis of the outcomes of CAFTA and suggest improvements to the agreement that will strengthen the young democracies of the Northern Triangle. Researchers should also further investigate the court systems that process minors' cases and suggest expansions to the currently limited visa options in order to reduce the number cases ending in the ambiguity of informal relief.

[47] The following two informative books may serve as starting points for further research in these areas: *Dictators Drugs and Revolution: Cold War Campaigning in Latin America 1965 - 1989* by Sewall Menzel and *Bad Neighbor Policy: Washington's Futile War on Drugs in Latin America* by Galen Carpenter (Carpenter 2003, Menzel 2006).

Bibliography

Albiac, María Dolores. 1988. *Los MáS Ricos De El Salvador*. San Salvador.

Allen, Greg 2011, "Children of Cuba Remember Their Flight to America." http://www.npr.org/2011/11/19/142534943/pedro-pan-childrens-life-altering-flight-from-cuba.

Anonymous. 2014. "Taming the Beast; Migration Via Mexico." *The Economist*, 2014 Sep 20, pp. 33.

Awofeso, Niyi. 2004. "What's New About the "New Public Health"?". *American Journal of Public Health* 94(5):705-09.

BBC News. 2012. "Timeline: Guatemala." http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215811.stm.

Beachy, Ben. 2014. "Cafta and the Forced Migration Crisis." in *As prepared for delivery for the House briefing "Economic Underpinnings of Migration in the Americas," hosted by Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur*.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality; a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Biden Jr., Joseoh R. . 2015. "Joe Biden: A Plan for Central America." Retrieved: January http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/30/opinion/joe-biden-a-plan-for-central-america.html?_r=0.

Bishop, Marlon. 2016. "Central American Gangs, Made in La." Retrieved: Jan 22, 2016 http://latinousa.org/2016/01/22/central-american-gangs-made-in-la/.

Boggs, Clay. 2015. "Mexico's Southern Border Plan: More Deportations and Widespread Human Rights Violations." Retrieved: March 19, 2015 http://www.wola.org/commentary/update_on_mexico_s_southern_border_plan_new_routes_more_deportations_and_widespread_human.

Brooks, David. 2016. "A Little Reality on Immigration." http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/19/opinion/a-little-reality-on-immigration.html.

Bucheli, Marcelo and William Reed. 2001, "Biographies: Jacob Arbenz (1913-1971)", United Fruit Historical Society. http://www.unitedfruit.org/arbenz.htm.

Carpenter, Galen. 2003. *Bad Neighbor Policy: Washington's Futile War on Drugs in Latin America*. New York: Hoover Institute.

Catholic Charities. 2014, "Immigration Myths". http://www.catholiccharities-md.org/immigrants/immigration-myths.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/.

Cave, Damien and Frances Robles. 2014, "A Smuggled Girl's Odyssey of False Promises and Fear". http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/06/world/americas/a-smuggled-girls-odyssey-guatemala-migration-abduction.html?_r=2.

CBP. 2014. "Cbp Commissioner Discusses Dangers of Crossing U.S. Border, Awareness Campaign." U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

CBP. 2016. *United States Border Patrol Southwest Family Unit Subject and Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions Fiscal Year 2016*Congress, http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2016#.

CDC. 2014a. "Unaccompanied Children: Health Information for Public Health Partners." Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC. 2014b. "Making Room: Public Health Response to Unaccompanied Children Crossing the U.S. Border." Center for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cdc.gov/scienceambassador/documents/hs-making-room-unaccompanied-minors-2014.pdf.

Chardy, Alfonso 2014a. "Deportation of Criminals Blamed for Exodus from Central America." http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1978299.html.

Chardy, Alfonso 2014b. "New Report Unveils Harrowing Stories from Central American Children Now Living in South Florida." http://www.covb.org/vertical/sites/%7B898790A2-F88A-48AE-A9B3-666AAE67AD40%7D/uploads/2014_Immigration_Migrant_Issues_Policies.pdf.

CHC. 1999. "Guatemala: Memory of Silence." Commission for Historical Clarification, conclusions and recommendations. http://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/migrate/uploads/mos_en.pdf.

Chiswick, Barry R. 2000. "Are Immigrants Favorably Self-Selected? An Economic Analysis." Pp. 61-77 in *Migration Theory*, edited by C. B. Brettell and F. H. James. New York, NY: Routledge.

Clinton, Hillary Rodham. 2012. "Statement by Secretary Clinton on Support for Emerging Democracies." New York, NY: humanrights.gov

Cockerham, William C. 2010. *Medical Sociology* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Comission on the Social Determinants of Health. 2008. "Closing the Gap in a Generation." WHO.

Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala. 2012-2013. "Sixth Report of Activities of the International Cicig." http://www.cicig.org/uploads/documents/2013/COM-045-20130822-DOC01-EN.pdf.

Consensus of Undersigned Civil Society Goups. 2015. *Final Letter to Presidents at Summit of the Americas*Congress, http://cispes.org/sites/default/files/wp-uploads/2015/04/Final-Letter-to-Presidents-at-Summit-of-the-Americas.pdf.

Conway, Madeline. 2014. "A Precarious Victory in El Salvador." http://fpif.org/precarious-victory-el-salvador/.

Cowen, Richard. 2015. "Obama Moves on Central American Migrant Children Questioned." Retrieved: September 3, 2015

http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-children-idUSKCN0R32GD20150903.

CSIS. "Statement of Principles: Democracy, Democratic Governance, and Transparent Institutions in the American Interest" *Center for Strategic and International Studies* Washington, D.C. http://csis.org/programs/project-prosperity-and-development/bipartisan-statement-funding-democracy-and-accountable-g.

Davis, Tom. 2005. *Dominican Republic - Central America - United Stated Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act. (Extensions of Remarks - July 29, 2005)*Congress, 151 (106) https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2005/7/29/extensions-of-remarks-section/article/E1660-3.

Dudley, Steven. 2013, "El Salvador's Gang Truce: Positives and Negatives": InSight Crime. http://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/el-salvadors-gang-truce-positives-and-negatives.

Economist. 2013. "Why Won't America Ratify the Un Convention on Children's Rights?". *The Econimist Explains.* (http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/10/economist-explains-2).

Eguizábal, Cristina , Matthew C. Ingram, Karise M. Curtis, Aaron Korthuis, Eric L. Olson and Nicholas Phillips. 2015. "Crime and Violence in Central America's Northern Triangle: How U.S. Policy Responses Are Helping, Hurting, and Can Be Improved

El Salvador, Gualtemala and Honduras. 2014. *Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: A Road Map*Congress.

Epstein, D., D. Jimenez-Rubio, P. C. Smith and M. Suhrcke. 2009. "Social Determinants of Health: An Economic Perspective." *Health Econ* 18(5):495-502. doi: 10.1002/hec.1490.

Eshetu, E. B. and S. A. Woldesenbet. 2011. "Are There Particular Social Determinants of Health for the World's Poorest Countries?". *African Health Sciences* 11(1):108-15.

Frank, Andre G. . 1967. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America : Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Gagne, David. 2015. "Insight Crime 2014 Homicide Round-Up." http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/insight-crime-2014-homicide-round-up.

GAO. 2015. "Information on Migration of Unaccompanied Children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras." Government Accountability Office. http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/668749.pdf.

Garcia, Mercedes. 2016. "Alliance for Prosperity Plan in the Northern Triangle: Not a Likely Final Solution for the Central American Migration Crisis." Alliance for Prosperity Plan in the Northern Triangle: Not A Likely Final Solution for the Central American Migration Crisis.

Gies, Heather. 2015. "Honduran Democracy Still in Crisis 6 Years after Coup." http://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/Honduran-Democracy-Still-in-Crisis-6-Years-After-Coup-20150520-0052.html.

Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis : An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hodes, Matthew. 2004. "Refugee Children in the Uk." Pp. 128-43 in *Mental Health Services for Minority Ethnic Children and Adolescents*, edited by C. Joughin and M. Malek: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Holmes, S. M. 2013. ""Is It Worth Risking Your Life?" Ethnography, Risk and Death on the U.S.-Mexico Border." *Soc Sci Med* 99:153-61. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.05.029.

Hornbeck, J.F. 2012. "The Dominican Republic-Central America United States Free Trade Agreement (Caftadr): Developments in Trade and Investment ": Congressional Research Service https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42468.pdf.

HSS and CDC. 2015. "Guidelines for Mental Health Screening During the Domestic Medical Examination for Newly Arrived Refugees." U.S. Department of Health and Human Service

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

InSight Crime. 2015, "Honduras: Executive Summary". http://www.insightcrime.org/honduras-organized-crime-news/honduras.

Isacson, Adam and Maureen Meyer. 2014. "Mexico's Other Border: Security, Migration, and the Humanitarian Crisis at the Line with Central America." WOLA. http://www.wola.org/files/mxgt/report/.

JFK Presidential Library and Museum. 2005. *Alliance for Progress (Alianza Para El Progreso),*Congress,   http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Alliance-for-Progress.aspx?p=2.

Jones, Jessica and Jennifer Podkul. 2012. "Forced from Home: The Lost Boys and Girls of Central America." Women's Refugee Commission,. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/component/zdocs/document?id=844-forced-from-home-the-lost-boys-and-girls-of-central-america.

Kaptur, Marcy. 2014. "Economic Underpinnings of Migration in the Americas." http://www.kaptur.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3280&Itemid=116.

LaFeber, Walter 1983. *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*. London: Norton

Lakhani, Nina. 2016. "Surge in Central American Migrants at Us Border Threatens Repeat of 2014 Crisis." http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/13/central-american-migration-family-children-detention-at-us-border.

Levy, Doug. 2016. "When Fear Becomes an Unintended Public Health Problem." http://www.npr.org/sections/health-

shots/2016/02/19/467123373/when-fear-becomes-an-unintended-public-health-problem.

Light, Donald Jr. and Suzanne Keller. 1985. "Deviance and Social Control " Pp. 201-30 in *Sociology*. New York, NY: Knopf, Alfred A.

Lipset, Seymour M. 1994. "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address." *American Sociological Review* 59(1):1-22.

Lopez, Claudia A. C., Rita M. R. Benitez, Georgina R. Martinez and 2013. "Narrativas De La Transmigración Centroamericana En Su Paso Por México." Red de Documentación de las Organizaciones Defensoras de Migrante. http://www.flacsi.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Trilog%C3%ADa3.-Resumen-ejecutivo.pdf.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. 2015. "At the Crossroads for Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Policy, Practices, and Protection." Baltimore: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LIRS_RoundtableReport_WEB.pdf.

Magdoff, Harry. 1969. *The Age of Imperialism; the Economics of U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York, NY: Monthly Review.

Marmot, M., S. Friel, R. Bell, T. A. Houweling and S. Taylor. 2008. "Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health." *Lancet* 372(9650):1661-9. doi: 10.1016/s0140-6736(08)61690-6.

Martinez, Oscar. 2013. *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*. Translated by D. M. Ugaz. London: Verso.

McKibben, Cameron. 2015. "Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle: A Step in the Right Direction for Guatemala?". http://www.coha.org/plan-of-the-alliance-for-prosperity-in-the-northern-triangle-a-step-in-the-right-direction-for-guatemala/.

Meissner, Doris. 2010, "Thirty Years of the Refugee Act of 1980": U.S. Embassy http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2010/09/20100921144657aidan0.8100397.html#axzz40HE32WCK.

Menzel, Sewall. 2006. *Dictators Drugs and Revolution: Cold War Campaigning in Latin America 1965 - 1989*. Bloomingdale, Indiana: Authorhouse.

Moore, Barrington Jr. 1966. *Thw Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Office of the Press Secretary. 2014, "Presidential Memorandum -- Fy 2015 Refugee Admissions" *Briefing Room*: The Whitehouse. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/30/presidential-memorandum-fy-2015-refugee-admissions.

Office of the Press Secretary. 2016. "Fact Sheet: The United States and Central America: Honoring Our Commitments."

OHCHR. 1989. "Convention on the Rights of the Child." UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx.

Orozco, Manuel and Julia Yansura. 2014. "Understanding Central American Immigration." Inter-American Dialogue. http://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/FinalDraft_ChildMigrants_81314.pdf.

ORR. 2015a. *Children Entering the United States Unaccompanied: Section 3 Services*Congress, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/children-entering-the-united-states-unaccompanied-section-3#3.4.

ORR. 2015b. "Fact Sheet: U.S. Department of Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Unaccompanied Children's Program

Office of Refugee Resettlement http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/ucs.

Orum, Anthony M. 2001. "On States and Societies." Pp. 38-64 in *Introduction to Political Sociology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prenice-Hall.

Pierce, Sarah. M. P. Institute. 2015. "Unaccompanied Child Migrants in U.S. Communities, Immigration Court, and Schools ". http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/unaccompanied-child-migrants-us-communities-immigration-court-and-schools.

Poon, Linda 2014. "The Immigrant Kids Have Health Issues — but Not the Ones You'd Think." in *NPR*.

Porter, Eduardo. 2012. "Immigration and American Jobs." The New York Times. *Economix.* (http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/immigration-and-american-jobs/).

Portes, Alejandro and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 1990a. "A Foreign World: Immigration, Mental Health, and Acculturation " in *Immigrant America: A Portrait* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Portes, Alejandro and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 1990b. "Immigrants in the American Economy." Pp. 58-85 in *Immigrant America: A Portrait* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Quesada, J., L. K. Hart and P. Bourgois. 2011. "Structural Vulnerability and Health: Latino Migrant Laborers in the United States." *Med Anthropol* 30(4):339-62. doi: 10.1080/01459740.2011.576725.

Rikkers, Jeanne and Isabel A Umana. 2012. "Nine Strategies to Prevent Youth Violence in Central America."18. http://www.interpeace.org/resource/nine-strategies-to-prevent-youth-violence-in-central-america/.

Ritzer, George and Douglas J. Goodman. 2008. *Modern Sociological Theory*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Rosenblum, Marc R. 2015. "Unaccompanied Child Migration to the United States: The Tension between Protection and Prevention." Transatlantic Council on Migration, A Project of the Migration Policy Institute. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/unaccompanied-child-migration-united-states-tension-between-protection-and-prevention.

Rosenblum, Mark R., William A. Kandel, Clare Seelke and Ruth Wasem. 2012. "Mexican Migration to the United States: Policy and Trends ": Congressional Research Service. https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42560.pdf.
Roth, Benjamin and Grace L. Breanne. 2015. "Post-Release, Study Summary and Policy Recommendation." *At the Crossroads for Unaccompanied Migrant Children: Policy, Practice, and Protection.* Baltimore: Luthran Immigration and Refugee Service http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LIRS_RoundtableReport_WEB.pdf.
Sanción, Cesar A., Sara Skinner, Kathy Hoyt, Rachel Anderson, James Polk, Omar Salazar and Krista Hanson. 2009. "Dr-Cafta: Effects and Alternatives the Stop Cafta Coalition's Third Annual Monitoring Report." Stop CAFTA Coalition http://www.ghrc-usa.org/Publications/CAFTA_impacts_year_three.pdf.
Secretaria de gobernación. "Boletín Mensual De Estadísticas Migratorias 2013" México: Secretaría de gobernaciónm Subsecretaría de población; Migración y asuntos religiosos; Unidad de política migratoria; Instituto nacional de migración http://www.wola.org/files/2013_inm_stats.pdf.
Seghetti, Lisa. 2015a. "Unaccompanied Alien Children: An Overview." edited by U. A. C. A. Overview: Congressional Research Service.
Seghetti, William A. Kandel and Lisa. 2015b. "Unaccompanied Alien Children: An Overview." Congressional Research Service. http://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R43599.pdf.
Seville, Lisa R. and Hannan Rappleye. 2014. "Border Children Tell Their Stories: Why We Came to the US." http://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/border-children-tell-their-stories-why-we-came-us-n129646.
Siegel, Marc 2014, "A Public Health Crisis at the Border": The Slate. http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2014/07/children_crossing_border_illegally_a_possible_public_health_crisis_from.html.
Smith, Peter H. . 1996. *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Latin American Relations*: Oxford University Press.
Sorrentino, Joseph. 2015. "How the U.S. 'Solved' the Central American Migrant Crisis." in *In These Times*.
Startfor. 2016. "Criminal Violence in El Salvador Keeps Climbing." *Stratfor Report*. Retrieved: February 9 https://www.stratfor.com/image/criminal-violence-el-salvador-keeps-climbing.
Susser, M. and E. Susser. 1996. "Choosing a Future for Epidemiology: I. Eras and Paradigms." *American Journal of Public Health* 86(5):668-73.
Swanson, Kate, Rebecca Torres, Amy Thompson, Sarah Blue and Óscar Hernández. 2015. "A Year after Obama Declared a "Humanitarian Situation" at the Border, Child Migration Continues." North American Committee on Latin America (NACLA), . https://nacla.org/news/2015/08/27/year-after-obama-

declared-%E2%80%9Chumanitarian-situation%E2%80%9D-border-child-migration-continues.
Taylor, Steve 2012. "Our Southern Border Is Now with Guatemala." Latina Lista. http://latinalista.com/2012/09/historic-partnership-agreements-signed.
Terrazas, Aaron, Demetrios G. Papademetriou and Marc R. Rosenblum. 2011. "Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends in Mexico and Central America and Their Implications for Regional Migration." Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
The World Bank. 2015, "Personal Remittances, Received (% of Gdp)". http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS.
TRAC. 2014. "Representation for Unaccompanied Children in Immigratoin Court ": Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse: Immigration.
TRAC. 2015. "Juveniles -- Immigration Court Departure Proceedings."
U.S. Customs and Border Protection. 2016.
U.S. Dep. of State; Office of the Historian. "Alliance for Progress and Peace Corps, 1961–1969": Office of the Historian. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/alliance-for-progress.
U.S. Embasy. "The Merida Initiative - an Overview." U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Mexico. http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/ataglance/merida-initiative.html.
UN Office of Drugs and Crime. 2013. "Unodc Homicide Statistics 2013."
UN Refugee Agency. 2014. "Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection." Washington, DC: UNHCR. http://www.unhcrwashington.org/children/reports.
UNHCR. 2010a. "Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Victims of Organized Gangs."
UNHCR. 2010b. "Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Victims of Organized Gangs." Geneva, Switzerland United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Division of International Protection http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4bb21fa02.pdf.
USDA. 2015, "Women, Infants, and Children (Wic)": United States Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service. http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/women-infants-and-children-wic.
Valdez, E. S., L. A. Valdez and S. Sabo. 2015. "Structural Vulnerability among Migrating Women and Children Fleeing Central America and Mexico: The Public Health Impact of "Humanitarian Parole"." *Front Public Health* 3:163. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2015.00163.
Vogt, Wendy A. 2013. "Crossing Mexico: Structural Violence and the Commodification of Undocumented Central American Migrants." *American Ethnologist* 40(4):764-80. doi: 10.1111/amet.12053.
WHO. 1986. "The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion." *First International Conference on Health Promotion.* World Health Organization.

http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/index1.html.
WHO. 2002. "The World Report on Violence and Health." Geneva, Switzerland: The World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/introduction.pdf?ua=1.
WHO. 2005, "Re-Defining 'Health'": World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html.
Wiltz, Teresa. 2015. "Unaccompanied Children from Central America, One Year Later." Huffpost Latino Voices. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/unaccompanied-children-from-central-america-one-year-later_us_55db88b4e4b04ae497041d10.
WOLA. 2015. "Wola Report on the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (Cicig)." Washington Office on Latin America http://www.wola.org/publications/WOLA_report_international_commission_against_impunity_guatemala.
WOLA. 2016. "Migration Is Driven by Violence and Insecurity; Deportations Are Inhumane and Put Returnees at Risk." http://www.wola.org/commentary/five_facts_about_migration_from_central_america_s_northern_triangle.
Woody, Christopher 2015. "Mexico Is Facing a Deadly Central American Migrants Crisis." Retrieved: Jun. 21, 2015 http://www.businessinsider.com/mexico-is-facing-a-cental-americans-migrant-crisis-2015-6.
Zong, Jie and Jeanne Batalova. 2015a, "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States": Migration Policy Institute http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states/#Annual Flows.
Zong, Jie and Jeanne Batalova. 2015b. "Central American Immigrants in the United States." Retrieved: Sept 2.