International Master's Program in International Studies
National Chengchi University
國立政治大學國際研究英語碩士學位學程

Unaccompanied Child Migration: An analysis of Poverty and Violence in Nicaragua and Honduras.

沒人陪伴的兒童移民：由貧窮與安全檢視尼加拉瓜及宏都拉斯之案例

By

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July 2015

Dedication

To my mother: All that I have achieved in life I owe it to you.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude the Taiwanese Government for the scholarship, which enabled me to undertake this Masters program at National Chengchi University. I would also like to thank Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) for providing me with the foundation of my career and for their assistance and instruction in perusing my graduate journey. This scholarship would have not been possible to obtain without the support and guidance that I received from them.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my advisor Dr. Yeh-chung Lu, for his valuable guidance and support throughout my thesis, without his knowledge and patience this thesis would not have been completed. I honestly could not wish for a better or friendlier advisor. Additionally, I take this opportunity to express gratitude to all of the Department faculty members for their help and support, and all, who directly or indirectly assisted this thesis.

Finally, and most importantly, my mother. For her faith in me when I moved to a different city to attend Law School at age 16, and later moved to a different country to continue pursuing my goals. Thank you for allowing me to be as ambitious as I wanted. I am also truly grateful for the encouragement and assistance extended to me during the entire process of the elaboration of my thesis.

Abstract

This Master thesis studies the case of Children from Nicaragua and Honduras migrating unaccompanied to the U.S. Rather than simply describing the primary characteristics of the current migration trends between these countries and the US, it also assesses the historical and social context within which they have been initiated. This implied the incorporation of a historicized and multi scaled analytical perspective that has been adopted throughout the research. The study therefore focuses more on the expelling factors in both Nicaragua and Honduras and somehow – but in a lesser extent- explores the attracting factors of the U.S. It has also been important to analyze in some detail the policies the countries have adopted throughout the years that may in fact have contributing to migration in the past and may be affecting the current child migration dynamics that has now erupted in the region. After pointing out how some major factors such as poverty and violence has somewhat contributed to the current child migration crisis, the research emphasizes that family reunification remains the major driving factor of out migration towards the U.S. that needs to be addressed. Additionally, the research stresses that child migration from the northern triangle of Central America to the U.S. is occurring in a high volume, nevertheless, this dynamic should not be considered as a single issue affecting these three countries. Instead, the issue should be seen as part of a wider process of social change that involves and affect the region as a whole.

Keywords:

Migration, child migration, poverty, violence, Nicaragua, Honduras, US.

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Acronyms

C.A.	Central America
CBP	Customs and Borders Protection
DARE	Drug Abuse Resistance Education
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDR	Human Development Report
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LA	Los Angeles
MS-13	Mara Salvatrucha-13
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNODC	United Nations Office o Drugs and Crime
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	Unites States
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter 1 Introduction

In this globalized world, it is evident that international migration is a growing phenomenon, which is becoming more important and complex (Alonso, 2011). In 2013, 232 million people (3 percent of the world's population) were international migrants, of which North America ranked third among the host countries that held the largest numbers and gained the absolute largest amount of growth in the number of migrants (United Nations, 2013). The quantification of the actual number of international migrants is a complicated task, especially because it is difficult to obtain information of the number of migrants in an irregular situation (Ibid). In this sense, irregular migration has become a major concern for the international community (Kandel, 2014).

This research arises out of the fact that, irregular migration has once again caught the attention of the international community. This time, the spotlight belongs to unaccompanied migrant children from Central America who is entering the United States southern borders in an irregular fashion and by numbers that has surpassed the traditional migration flows (Kandel, 2014). In July 2014, the United States experienced a heavily increased influx of unaccompanied migrant children, where the vast majority of apprehended minors were from the northern triangle of Central America[1] (Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala) (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2014). The number of unaccompanied migrant children entering the United States is causing governments to call upon each other to address and solve this issue.

[1] Term commonly used when refer to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador together.

This research examines the problem of children who migrate without the companionship of an adult focusing specifically on children who are migrating to the United States. These children will be referred to as ‘unaccompanied migrant children'.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Unaccompanied child migration is nothing new; every year thousands of children undertake dangerous transnational journeys in search of different social and economic opportunities (Punch, 2007). In the case of child migration to the United States, this is also not a new matter; what is new here is the sudden rise in numbers of unaccompanied children that entered the country by June 2014. The phenomena as it pertains, involve a larger share of children from Central America instead of Mexico that is more habitual (Kandel, 2014). This sudden rise in the large number of unaccompanied minors crossing the United States’ borders has caused president Obama to declare the issue as a humanitarian crisis.

In the past years, apprehensions of unaccompanied children have increased significantly. A report published by the congressional research service shows how the trend in child migration to the United States has not only increased, but also the pattern shifted. Mexico used to be the highest sending country and, therefore, represented the highest number of children apprehended at the United States' borders. Now the pattern has switched, and Central America has become the region with the highest number of children apprehended at the borders and this number is highly concentrated in mainly 3 countries, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras (Kandel, 2014).

Table 1.1 Unaccompanied Children Apprehended from C.A. and Mexico

Country	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014
Mexico	16,114	13,724	11,768	13,974	17,240	15, 634
Honduras	968	1,017	974	2,997	6,747	18, 244
Guatemala	1,115	1,517	1,565	3,835	8,068	17, 056
El Salvador	1,221	1,910	1,394	3, 314	5,990	16,404
Nicaragua	18	35	14	43	57	178

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Available at http://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children

In fiscal year 2009, 19, 418 children were apprehended at the United States border out of which, 16,114 of apprehended children belong to Mexico, while 1,221 were from El Salvador, 1,115 from Guatemala and 968 from Honduras (U.S. CBP, 2014) By the end of the fiscal year 2014, 67,339 unaccompanied minors were apprehended at the United States border where only 15, 634 belonged to Mexico, 16,404 were from El Salvador, 17, 056 Guatemala and 18, 244 from Honduras; in this same year, the number of apprehended children reported from Nicaragua was 178 (Ibid).

This increasing number of unaccompanied children migrating to the United States makes it apparent that countries of origin seem to lack the adequate capacity to protect their children. This rise questions about the root causes or push factors of the increase in unaccompanied migrant children, and why Honduras represents the highest sending country in Central America, while other countries such as Nicaragua are not experiencing the same issue.

While comparing the numbers of children that were recently apprehended in the United States, it becomes evident that the problem itself is mainly concentrated in 3 countries of Central America with Honduras being the highest sending country of them all. On the other hand, other countries such as Nicaragua hold a very low amount of children apprehended at the border. This makes an interesting case, to study the different social and economic aspect aspects that may be causing this child migration surge.

After analyzing this given pattern of migration and the different theories of migration such as the neoclassical theory, new economics of migration theory, dual labor market theory and network theory. It seems clear that the solo analysis of economic factors as the root cause of this child migration issue is not enough although it has been repeatedly shown that economic factors are one of the main reasons why people migrate. In other words, it may be true that some of these children are leaving their homes in search for better economical opportunities, the economic status of these countries in terms of GDP per capita and high levels of poverty does not accurately reflect the number of children apprehended, especially when Nicaragua is the poorest country in the region.

Since the economic rationale itself is not enough to explain this migration crisis, other social factors must be taken into account. Based on the selection of cases, a very outstanding variable that marks the difference between them both, are they high and low levels of violence that exist between them, in that sense, it becomes necessary to include a country level analysis of violence in addition to the before mention economical factor.

After identifying two of the major factors that may be contributing to this unaccompanied child migration crisis, it is important to acknowledge that there is an undeniable poverty-migration and violence-migration linkage. To begin with, the literature explored in chapter 2 shows how poverty can serve as a determinant of migration in the

sense that it leads people who are in vulnerable situations, to opt for bettering their lives through migration. Keeping in mind that poverty is strongly related to unemployment and underemployment, it is found that people often choose to migrate in search of better employment opportunities. Additionally, in cases where people choose to migrate for family reunification, this can somehow also be linked to poverty. In this sense, the networks theory that explains how people migrate base on pre-established links, never eliminates the reasoning that the first set to migrate did so based on economic reasons.

In addition to this, since migration is significantly connected to wellbeing, it can be said that there is also a relationship between violence and migration, this simply because violence is strongly related to the well being of a person. Although this is a relatively under-researched area, there is enough evidence showing that there is an existing link between violence and migration, such as the case of children leaving their countries because they feel directly or indirectly threatened by certain forms of collective violence such as those perpetrated by gangs.

1.2. Research Question and 0bjectives

The study aims to explore the underlying factors that are causing children from Central America to engage in the dangerous experience of migrating towards the United States through irregular channels and without the companionship of an adult. At the end, it is envisaged that the study will have policy implications and it will contribute to the planning of intervention programs for children, especially risk children that are prone to engage in migration and, in particular, those in Honduras. In this sense regarding unaccompanied child migration to the United States, the main research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. Why are Nicaragua and Honduras experiencing different migratory trend when it comes to unaccompanied migrant children influx in the United States?

2. How has poverty and violence (as push factors) influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua to the United States.?

These research questions can be answered through the following specific objectives:

a. To analyze the historical migration pattern from Nicaragua and Honduras to The United States.

b. To assess the factors that motivate these children to migrate unaccompanied to the United States.

c. To explore the extent to which policies of the three countries in play has contributed to this issue.

Accomplishing the above-mentioned objectives will support the main argument of this study which is stated as "**the lack of economic opportunity plus a high level of violence increases the number of unaccompanied child migration to the United States**". At the same time, it will also help explain why Nicaragua and Honduras are experiencing different migratory trend when it comes to the number of unaccompanied children influx in the United States.

1.3. Justification of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the underlying causes of unaccompanied child migration to the United States and to understand why Nicaragua and Honduras are having a different experience in this issue. Therefore, this research is meant to contribute to

the overall understanding of how poverty and violence has influenced the child migration flow (as a push factor) to the United States. This will, therefore, help us understand why countries of origin such as Nicaragua and Honduras have had a different experience in child migration pattern of unaccompanied minors apprehended at the United States southern border.

A careful research through various sources on this phenomenon reveals there is a great amount of literature on migration, but most are focusing on the adults' point of view (Haan and Yaqub, 2008). In the cases of literature exploring analyzing independent child migration, they tend to focus on the child as victim of trafficking, or where economic reasons has been explained as the major driving factor (Bastia, 2005; Haan and Yaqub, 2008). There has also been significant amount of research sought to establish the policies or mechanisms that the United States should adopt in order to provide better care of these migrant children once they are apprehended at the border, especially in terms of ensuring their best interest and that there is no human rights violation in the process (Kandel, 2014). Additionally, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report about unaccompanied child migration provides a situational analysis of this recent crisis, for instance, highlighted violence and poverty as the major contributing factors to out-migration from Central America (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014). Nevertheless, little work has been carried out to study what other major factors might be the root cause of this migration crisis makes which Honduras the number 1 sending country compared to its neighbor Nicaragua that has one of the lowest numbers of unaccompanied children apprehended at the United States border in the past years.

In this study, the focus is to understand why children from Nicaragua and Honduras are not migrating in the same scale. Investigating the current socio-economic factors of these two countries along with the historical antecedents of migration to the United States

and an analysis of the possible United States policy implications will be the focus of this study. Children are key components of any given society, and guaranteeing their safety during migratory process or once they are apprehended at United States borders is very important. However, it is also important is to guarantee their safety at home so they don´t feel the urge to take on these dangerous journeys that jeopardize their well-being and their lives.

An important rationale for this study is acknowledging children as agencies, where they can be considered as social actors and active participants in the decision-making process of migration, rather than passive actors. A very convincing argument in this respect is that children need to be considered as agencies and be listened to by researchers in order to understand the issues that affect their lives (Qvortrup 1994). Studies related to children should be centered specifically on the child.

The insights to be gained from this study will be helpful to the government, policy makers and researchers interested in child migration and, in general, to authorities responsible for child development and the welfare of children.

1.4 Methodology

A qualitative research method will be used to carry out this study. This research method has been considered most appropriate because it is feasible in terms of providing a complete, in-depth explanation of the research topic; which by nature is more exploratory.

1.4.1. Research Design.

As previously stated, the purpose of this thesis is to create better understanding of the underlying causes of child migration from Central America to the United States and to determine the reason why the numbers of apprehended children from Honduras is so high compared to the number of apprehended children from Nicaragua. This entails a detailed study of wider and local context factors influencing such migratory trends. A case study approach is, therefore, used to answer the research questions that frame this work. This specific designed was chosen because the case study model is concerned with describing a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Hence, it is a highly appropriate method for investigating the dynamics involving unaccompanied child migration.

The selection of the cases was based on two factors. Firstly, and most important is the number of apprehended minors that has been reported by the United States Customs and Border Protection of the department of Homeland Security where Honduras showed the highest number of casualties, while its neighbor Nicaragua showed a significant lower amount and one of lowest in the region. The second reason that influenced the case selection was based on the fact that the two countries are coming from a background with similar historical socio-economical factors.

In addition to the selection of the cases that were analyzed, the destination country chosen for the study of unaccompanied child migration is the U.S. As chapter 3 explains, a major destination country for Nicaraguan unaccompanied minors is Costa Rica. Every year, children from Nicaragua migrate to Costa Rica in a circular fashion to work in coffee plantations to save money so they can return home and start the following school year (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015). In this sense, the reason why this study

focuses on children who are apprehended in the U.S. rather than children migrating to Costa Rica is primordially because unaccompanied child migration from Central America to the U.S. is occurring in numbers a lot higher than those to Costa Rica and increasing at concerning rates in the past years. Additionally, these children are migration to the U.S on a more permanent fashion unlike the circular migration that occurs in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, this study also acknowledges the fact that there is still a need to address all cases of unaccompanied child migration that are occurring in the region regardless of the magnitude of each case.

1.4.2. Data Collection

The primary and secondary data, which will support the research question, has been derived from three main sources. Firstly, from traditional sources of measurement of migration such as censuses and demographic surveys of the countries of origin, transit and destination. In addition, other non-demographic information sources including statistics. Secondly, by examining published works such as books, journals, and official statements. Lastly, by analyzing interviews conducted to government and non-governmental officials. As far as tertiary sources go, these include newspaper articles, publications by non-governmental organizations and online libraries. Example of the range of source that were used, include but are not limited to:

- Historiographical analysis of past and present migration trend from the two countries of interest to the United States and porously delimitated to publications and reports after 1990.
- Existing literature focusing on Honduras and Nicaragua's migratory process to the United States.

- Domestic and International laws that have affected the degree of flexibility and ability in which Nicaraguans and Hondurans were able to migrate to the United States and obtain legal status or be deported.

- Interviews conducted by the researcher with institutions that worked directly with children who has migrated to the United States either in the process of receiving, repatriation or reintegrating the children. The rationale behind this was to capture, as accurately as possible information about the children whom they were able to work with and had the opportunity to interview. The aim of the results of the interviews is to form a primary source of information and obtain figures against which we could measure other data source and, to arrive at a more balanced picture.

1.5. Delimitation and Limitation

The scope of the study has to be delimited because the resources of doing the research were limited. The time is the most important resource and determinant for the extent of the research. After reviewing a period from the late 1970s to determine the paths of migration, focusing later more specifically on the period between 1990 and 2014 to analyze the case of unaccompanied child migration, this research hold that economic reasons alone are not the main driver of the child migration crisis in the region. The conclusion will contribute to the current debate of whether violence is a major contributing factor to this crisis.

However, there are some limitations to this research. This study was conducted during a time when the researcher was not in the Central American nor North American region. This represented a constraint on gaining access to children from Nicaragua and

Honduras who has migrated unaccompanied to the United States in order to conduct proper interviews and gain insight on their personal assessment of the driving causes that led them to undertake their journeys. Further, a more ethnographic research is needed to capture a more holistic exploration of these children's migratory decisions. To complement this deficiency, interviews were conducted to key informants from Nicaragua and Honduras. The key informants selected have worked directly with unaccompanied children from each country and have gained first-hand insights to their case.

Another limitation encountered was the time constraint of the research and available data. As mentioned previously, it was ideal to focus on a time frame between 1990 and 2014 to analyze the case of unaccompanied child migration since this coincides with two of the major waves of migration in the region. However, there were not sufficient data of unaccompanied children from Nicaragua and Honduras migrating to the United States dating back to the early 1990s. In general, the limitation of the data collection can be listed as following:

1. Access to secondary data: The existence of a limitation in terms of accessibility to public information.

2. Interviews: The interviewees were two strategic institutions and organizations that worked directly with the migrant children from both countries that were analyzed. It would have been optimal to have access to the children themselves and conduct the interviews directly with the minors.

1.6. Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 covers the main arguments of this study.

Chapter 2 will form the literature review. It will first and go over the definition of the main terms been used. Secondly, it examines the main theoretical perspectives of migration that inform the study. Additionally it will review the role of the migrant child as a both a social actor and as a victim of human trafficking with the intention to draw attention to the child as a passive and active actor in the migration process. Additionally, this chapter will also link unaccompanied child migration to poverty and violence as part of the contributing factors that cause a child to decide to leave his or her home.

Chapter 3 will explore the specific case of Nicaragua taking into account current socio-economic factors of the country that can be directly linked to out migration and other historical factors related to migration trend to the United States.

Chapter 4 provides a historical account of the development of the migratory trend from Honduras to the United States and elucidates some of the factors that are contributing to the current surge of child migration in the country. Additionally, the involvement of the government and the role of the children will be taken into account to better understand the recent migratory flow that is presented in the country.

Chapter 5 will detail and discuss the findings of succinct country specific notes and statistics about current socioeconomic factors of these two countries in recent years along with the historical statistics on migration flows to the United States, naturalizations and deportations. The main task of this chapter is to relate the findings of the case studies to the theoretical perspective and research question of this study.

Chapter 6 concludes this study by summarizing the role and impact that violence and poverty have on unaccompanied child migration. This chapter will conclude by revisiting the role of governmental policies in the child migration crisis. By comparing these two countries, it was possible to conclude that the difference in policies adopted by these countries eventually lead to different outcomes in terms of migration and how a long-term policy failure is now showing consequences in different social aspects.

Chapter 2 Child Migration, Poverty and Violence

2.1. Key Concepts

2.1.1 International Migration

Migration can be defined as a cause and consequence of development that involves the movement of people which is unlikely to occur without the establishment of a labor force and often times includes with the return to their original residence (Forsyth, 2004).

It has been shown over and again that the majority of people who migrate do so within shorter distances, and even more so within the borders of their own country. This is why migration is commonly divided into two types, internal and international migration. Despite the difficulties to capture the real number of migrants due to the volume of irregular migration, this differentiation was made in order to capture the volume of people who moves within their own borders and those who do so beyond their national borders. In this sense, internal migration is commonly known as the movement of people within a State. On the other hand, international migration is the movement of people between countries. (Forsyth, 2004). Because of the nature of the thesis, the type of migration that is more of concern in international migration since it involves the movement of children from their home country to another country. To that respect, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines international migration as:

"*Movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country. An international frontier is therefore crossed"* (International Organization for Migration, 2004 p. 33).

2.1.2 Unaccompanied Migrant Child

Child or Minor can be defined as an individual who is below the age of eighteen years unless, provided that coming of age or adulthood can be attained at an earlier age depending on the law of a particular country (UN, 1989). Therefore, unaccompanied migrant child can be defined as a person below the age of majority who is in a country different than the one of their nationality and are not accompanied by an adult, parent or legal guardian, responsible for them (IOM, 2004).

For the purpose of this research, we can define an unaccompanied migrant child as a person under age 18, who are moving across borders without the companionship of a parent or legal guardian. Additionally, the term unaccompanied migrant children were chosen to be used in this research even though other terms has been used to refer to the same phenomenon by different experts. The most used terms are unaccompanied minors, unaccompanied alien children, separated children, and children involved in moving.

2.1.3 Violence

Violence has been explicitly identified as a significant issue in the case of unaccompanied child migration therefore, it becomes necessary to clarify this widely used term and provide definitions and concepts of violence within the interest of this research.

First off, violence is commonly referred to as a behavior that involves physical force on someone or something with the intention to hurt or damage them (de Haan, 2008). It has to be noted that this is different than harm produced to other by accident; in this case, violence is noted to be an intentional use of force with the sole purpose to cause damage.

According to de Haan (2008), violence is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be presented in many different contexts. Using a broad definition of violence is not sufficient for this research, especially since the kind of violence we are more concerned about is collective violence.

Tilley (2003) defines collective violence as an "episodic social interaction" that involves more than one participant who by force and physical strength to perpetrate harm to people or objects. To this, the world health organization includes inter-state political conflict (war), human rights abuse, terrorism, organized violent crime related to gangs to be all forms part of collective violence (World Health Organization, 2002). In addition to this variation of collective violence, they also provide a very clear and complete definition of the term. They define collective violence as:

"The instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group – whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity – against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives" (WHO, 2012 p.215).

As their number one suggestion on how to prevent collective violence, the WHO recommends the reduction of both absolute and relative poverty. This recommendation is debatable and will be discussed further on in this chapter.

2.1.4 Poverty

Another very contested concept has been the one of poverty. Academics and other experts continue to debate a formal definition of poverty since it has been one in constant expansion and change, to the extent that what was once considered poverty has grown into something broader and more complex.

To begin with a classic understanding of poverty, we will discuss it in pure economic terms. In this sense, a person is considered poor, when their income does not meet an established threshold and their economic position falls below the accepted income level (Ehrenpreis, 2006).

Moving away from the economic aspect of poverty, experts have indicated that it is not enough to refer to poverty only in economic terms therefore, it has often seen that poverty is now defined in either relative or absolute terms (Ehrenpreis, 2006). Absolute poverty can be easier linked to the economic side of poverty because it measures poverty by the amount of money required to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter (Forsyth, 2004). However, this term has fallen shortly when it comes to recognizing other issues of human conditions, which led to the creation of the concept of relative poverty. With this last term, a person is considered poor if they belongs to a 'bottom income group' (lowest 10 percent) this definition, however, has also been contested by others who claim that it fails to distinguish in this way the concepts of poverty and inequality (UNDP, 1997; Ehrenpreis, 2006). The 1997 HDR recognizes three relevant aspects of relative poverty. First, there is an income perspective that is set at a specific poverty line. Second, includes the need to access to basic social services necessary to prevent individuals from falling into poverty; and lastly the lack of some basic capability to function as a measurement of poverty (UNDP, 1997).

To conclude with the definition of poverty, it is important to mention that poverty in developed countries is not the same as poverty in developing countries. In this sense, the term absolute poverty which was previously discussed, is most commonly linked to developing countries; whereas relative poverty which includes aspects of inequality and

social exclusion and different sets of needs is more linked to developed countries (Forsyth, 2004). Because the focus on this thesis is related to developing countries, there will be a high emphasis on the economic aspect of poverty or absolute poverty. Nevertheless, it is also imperative to study some aspects of relative poverty to gain a better perspective on different social issues that may be causing this child migration crisis.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives of Migration

In order to understand the determinants and patterns of unaccompanied child migration, we have to first explore the theoretical perspectives of the reasons why people decide to migrate. First off, there is no overall unified theory of migration; instead, there are various explanations of why migration occurs basing on economic, social, political and cultural factors (Portes, 1997). According to migration theories, the most common reason why people decide to migrate are purely economic reasons, among the theories that explain the initiation of international migration basing on a purely economic model we can find the neoclassical theory, new economics of migration and dual labor market theory (Massey et al, 1993; Castles and Miller, 2009).

The economic theory, which is also known as a neoclassical theory, is considered the oldest theory of international migration (Massey et al, 1993). This theory emphasizes the individual's decision to migrate based on a rational comparison of the relative costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving. In other words, it is caused by the supply and demand of labor and the differential wages characterized by geographical differences where people from lower wage income countries decide to move to countries with a higher wage income (Todaro, 1969; Borjas, 1989). These benefits are generally but not strictly related to higher income; other benefits such as access to better education, health, and political freedom can also be considered as motives to migrate under this theory (Castles and Miller,

2009). One of the main arguments of exponents of this theory is that, since the difference in wages is the main cause of international migration, the way to control this migration flow is to end wage differences which will consequently end the flow of labor. In other words, international migration movement will not occur if there is no expected income increase (Massey et al, 1993).

Another migration theory that is based on a purely economic model is the dual labor market theory. It explains that migration is caused by structural demand within advanced economies for both highly or lower skilled manual workers to carry out production tasks and to staff service enterprises (Castles and Miller, 2009). This theory emphasizes greatly on the role of employers and government in attracting the labors to move to their country (Ibid).

On the other hand, the new economics of labor migration approach emphasize the role of social groups, for instance families, households or communities, in explaining migrations with purpose to diversify income sources and to provide resources for investment in existing country (Castles and Miller, 2009). In this sense, according to the systems and network theory, migration arises from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries, these linkages are necessary because they play a crucial role in facilitating migration flows in terms of access to better information, lower risks and higher expected incentives (Massey et al, 1993; Portes, 2004; Sales, 2007). This theory never eliminates the reasoning that the first set to migrate did so based on economic reasons.

These theories of migration reveal that there are several aspects of analyzing and understanding the root of migration, however; migration is often linked to economic reasons. In this globalized and changing world, it is shown that new reasons are beginning to promote migration. In this sense De Haas (2010) argues that argues that it seems easy and reasonable to assume that most people migrate hoping to find better conditions or

opportunities elsewhere, such as job, higher wages, safety or freedom of expression but this assumption does not really facilitate the understanding behind the complexity and drivers of real life migration.

2.3. Incorporating Children in Migration Studies

Traditionally, the study of migration has been focused on male experience; however, migration patterns and the actors engaged are constantly changing. According to the UN, in 2013 the number of female migrants was almost the same percentage of that of male migrants since they accounted for 48 percent of the total share of international migrants of that year (United Nations, 2013). In this sense, there has been a surge of literature that has been focusing on the role of female in the migration process; focusing on them either as decision makers in the household or the roles they play directly in migration (Pedraza 1991, Sales, 2007).

A woman has gained their share of recognition in the study of migration, however; we have to admit that children, who are also often characterized as vulnerable groups, are involved in migration now more than ever. When studying the case of migrant children, many scholars have explored this problem focusing on the risk that children face while taking on such dangerous journeys since they are subject to abuse, gang recruitment, death caused by the dangerous journey including those committed by gangs, coyotes, and police (Kanics, et. al 2010).

2.3.1. The Migrant Child as Victim of Trafficking

Children who migrate alone to seek employment or to escape violence face a range of risks besides the journey itself, which is by nature dangerous even for adults. During this dangerous journey, these children are exposed to violence, abuse, theft, and trafficking. According to Haan and Yaqub (2008) children migrating independently are often assumed to be trafficked or abducted.

Although child trafficking is being analyzed in the context of child migration, it must be noted that trafficking is not the same as people smuggling or migration whether regular or irregular (International Labor Organization, 2009). In the most part, the literature on child trafficking focuses mainly on issues of the vulnerability of children to trafficking and mainly try to answers of where, when and why these children become vulnerable (O'Connell and Farrow, 2007). The results that follow these types of study demonstrate that the same factors that make children actively choose to migrate unaccompanied are the ones to trigger their vulnerability to trafficking, in this sense, studies have shown that most children make use of their agency and decide to migrate whereas only a small number were forcibly moved from their countries (Ibid).

In the case of children who cannot migrate through regular channels because an adult does not accompany them or because they lack the necessary economic and legal resources to do so, irregular channels becomes the only option (ILO, UNICEF, UN.GIFT, 2009). Irregular Channels of migration is a major recruitment attraction for traffickers and since children lack the proper documentation, they steer clear of local authorities to avoid detention; as a result, these children have no support system during their journey and are

therefore at high risk of exploitation and becoming victims of trafficking (O'Connell and Farrow, 2007).

According to ILO statistics, adults are more affected by trafficking than children, however, trafficking of children is on the increase compared to 2005. An estimated 1.2 million children are affected globally every year (ILO, 2012). Forced labor exploitation and Forced sexual exploitation were the two major reasons of trafficking in general where girls represented a greater share of victims compared to boys (Ibid). In the case of child trafficking which also involves the 'recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child' for the purpose of exploitation; it defers from the case of adults in that a child is consider trafficked even if this does not involve means such as abduction, fraud, violence, deception or any other form of coercion (United Nations, 2000). This makes it difficult to separate the idea of smuggling with that of trafficking when it comes to the case of unaccompanied children, even though the existing literature has been trying to draw the line between these phenomena.

It is known that child trafficking has been studied from a variety of perspectives, and after clarifying that it must not be confused with smuggling and irregular migration, we still cannot ignore that it his highly linked to migration. In this sense, Gozdziak and Collet (2005) recognizes that migration flows and child sex tourism in the 80s are some of the reasons why the topic regained interest in the international arena. In the specific case of Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the ILO, this region is not close to being the highest in terms of child trafficking for forced labor however, child trafficking still occurs in the region and child labor is not the only reason behind it. After characterizing North America, especially the United States of one of the major destination countries in the region,

Mexico is commonly characterized as the source, transit, and also destination country for trafficked victims, including children mainly for sexual and labor exploitation with an estimate of 16,000 children exploited annually (Gozdziak and Collet, 2005).

2.3.2. The Migrant Child as Social Actor

Now that we have reviewed the child's role as passive victims in the migration process, it becomes necessary to tell the other side of the story and try to understand these children as the agencies that they are. In order to understand why children decide to leave in the first place, (when we say decide to leave, we are referring indeed to the child's personal assessment of his or her situation and making their own choice to migrate) we have to understand that they too are social actors and agencies that make their own decisions.

When thinking of a child's choice in a migratory process, it is hard to conceive the idea of children making such decisions; this is because they are perceived as victims and are often underestimated as agents or as social actors (Hashim, 2006; Chavez and Menjivar, 2010). However, children have shown that they are active social agents, and they are active participants in the migration decision process. Therefore, children can be seen as agencies who can often become separate individuals from their parents and therefore can make decision that consequently changes their community and own lives (Jimenez Alvarez, 2004; Chavez and Menjivar, 2010). This is a big challenge that has to do with the vulnerability and fragility in these children's environment. When the phenomenon of migration is viewed solely from an adult's point of view, it is easy to fail to see children as actors who have certain capabilities to make changes in their lives and it is easier to see them as victims. However, the reality in most countries in the Central American region is that children are

exposed to a fragile of vulnerable environment with absent parents, economic hardships and a daily life surrounded by violence. These scenarios make it easy for these children to become separate individuals form their parents or caretakers and therefor make decisions that directly affects and changes their lives, such as search for employment, incorporating themselves in youth gangs, or making decisions to migrate based on a variety of socio-economic reasons.

In this sense, Orgocka (2012) argues that the challenge to understand children's role as agents is because of Western ideals that often categorizes children as dependent and vulnerable. These ideals make us fail to visualize children as actors who can create solutions and opportunities to their own challenges in order to better their lives (Orgocka, 2012). When interpreting child migration, adults are often stigmatized since they are the principal caregivers of children and the phenomenon of children's migration is often considered as parents' failure to safeguard children (Kanics, et. al 2010). However, in a situation of a marginalized family, sometimes parents or caretakers cannot suppress the child's desire to flee (Ibid). As Young (2004) has pointed out, the view that children are social actors suggests that they can no longer be considered simply as part of the family, and that their migration may be separate from that of parents. Recognizing children as agents in making a decision to migrate does not mean that they are not victims. Authors such as Orgocka (2012) suggest that in situations of vulnerability, children can make use of their agency as a form of solution to this situation.

The reasons behind adult's decision to migrate vary and children's decisions to migrate are similar to those of adults (Kanics, et. al 2010). When analyzing the reasons behind children's decision to migrate, some authors argue that these are purely economical

or to search for employment; which should not be surprising, especially considering the fact that most of these children already constituted labor force in their home countries, therefore the search of employment is not new to them (Chavez and Menjivar, 2010, Meza, 2012). According to ILO (2013), 168 million children among age group 5 and 17 were part of the economic active population in 2012, so search for job opportunities is very likely one of the reasons why these children are migrating.

When digging into the causes of unaccompanied migration, it can be argued that the case of many children leaving without their parents or without an adult consent is because they come from households with precarious situations (Jiménez Álvarez, 2004). However, when countries with same income level begin to demonstrate different child migration trends it is necessary to start considering other factors that are possibly contributing to it. Furthermore, Rios (2014) argues that the reason behind these migration decisions is not always found in the typical explanation of economic factors. Instead, we have to explore other reasons, which have also proven to be very influential when driving people to migrate; some of these issues are crimes, drug, and gang-related violence (Ibid). This argument provided by Rios is very important when analyzing cases of unaccompanied child migration in Nicaragua and Honduras and it is easy to agree that economic reasons alone cannot be the only explanation of these recent migration flows towards the U.S., especially when the country with less child migration is also the one with more multidimensional levels of poverty. In this sense, it becomes necessary to look into other not so typical explanations of migrations in order to understand the occurrence of this migration crisis. The ones suggested by the author are issues of drug and gang related violence. This assessment of the author summarizes the reality of the region and an accurate description of the current issues affecting the daily lives of Central Americans. Therefore, in addition to acknowledging

children as agencies, it is important to explore economic and other social factors that are directly affecting their lives and consequently leading them towards making a decision to migrate.

2.4. Poverty and Violence as Determinants of Child Migration

The most salient family of migration theories are based on purely economic reasons where poverty, development or lack of development, wage, unemployment rate, educational characteristics, and human capital are the main focus when referring to economic factors (Peterson, 1986; Bastia, 2005; Punch, 2007). In several Central American countries where irregular child migration has been increasing in the past years, poverty and each of these mentioned economic factors has been indicated in various researches as being the major drivers of Central American child migrants (Caritas, 2003).

Even though better economic opportunities are mentioned as the immediate cause of unaccompanied child migration, there is a strong reason to believe that purely economic reasons are not enough to explain the current surge of child migration to the United States (Caritas, 2013). Some factors identified as push elements of migration have to do with social economic disparities, but other social and political factors including conflicts are also mentioned among the possible out-migration factors (Kanics, et. al 2010; Caritas 2013). Unfortunately, national policies tend to focus more on repressive responses to migration rather than responding to the previously mentioned factors (Meza, 2012).

Migration and violence produced by gangs are strongly linked, but some studies that shows a correlation between migration and gang related violence mostly refers to the emergence of street gangs in Central America as a phenomenon that occurred with

migration network flows (Gutierrez Rivera, 2013; Bruneau 2014). As it was mentioned earlier, gang inflated violence is one of the main risks that unaccompanied migrant children face while they are on the move (Kanics, et. al 2010). However, fear from gang inflated violence plays a key role as an influent factor, which is driving the children from Central America to the United States. (Caritas, 2003; Rios, 2014).

Research conducted by Dalrymple (2006) presented the case of many children arriving to the United States seeking asylum and expressing fear of gang members who have threatened them, here he links the variable violence and child migration to show that the former can influence the later. His research illustrated the difficulty these children face when presenting a case in migration court. In some cases, the United States has failed to grant them asylum and these children are sometimes recruited in gangs or even murdered once they arrive back to their home countries (Dalrymple, 2006). This study also illustrates that children who are not fleeing political, racial or religious persecution, but instead are fleeing street or gang violence present harder cases when seeking for asylum and are more likely to be denied (Ibid).

The study of the effect of violence in migration outflows from Central America to the United States is a phenomenon that have been well addressed, however, it has been limited to the context of political violence, mainly military coups and civil war (Peterson, 1986). Addressing migration in these terms is very new and there is still a lot of research to be done. In a recent study of Mexico, Rios (2014) provided evidence supporting the argument that migration can be understood in terms of violence. These results provided empirical evidence that analyzing variables related to violence has improved the understanding of migration.

2.5. Violence and Poverty: The Undeniable Linkage.

A significant fraction of the World's population is somehow affected by violence and poverty; the latter is strongly believed to be the cause of violence. When approaching the analysis of the link between violence and a particular aspect of the economy that is poverty the literature seems to be divided. Some argue that high levels of poverty and inequality leads to violence while others disagree by saying that violence is the actual cause of poverty (Atwood, 2003; Crutchfield and Wadswort, 2003). In both cases, violence and poverty seem to have some sort of relationship.

The belief among academics that widely accept this theory is that those who live in impoverished situations are more likely to find themselves engaged in violent acts being the main reason the situation in which they find themselves (Crutchfield and Wadswort, 2003). Nevertheless, debates of this theory are also divided. In this sense, academics hold different positions when it comes to the factors that cause poverty to affect violence. The conditions that are more often discussed are cultural conditions, dependency and others linked to living conditions such as neighborhoods, poor housing (ibid).

Economic factors have long been used to try to understand and explain the occurrence of violence. In this sense, unemployment has been a key role in explaining the criminal activities and delinquency and violent crimes. Different studies show the existence of a strong correlation between the lack of economic well-being and violence arguing so the crime and violence are caused by poverty and inequality (Atwood, 2003). In a 1997 study of neighborhoods and violent crime, the authors examine several social factors including the race to understand their impact on violence. The result of the study was able to show a relation between their variables and, therefore, prove that certain factors such as exploitation and dependency along with deprivation of inappropriate resources stimulates violence. In

this sense, the higher the levels of resource deprivation, the greater the correlation to levels of violence the concentrated disadvantage (Sampson, Raudenbush, Earls 1997). However, since certain elements such as race were included in the study, this can certainly be a factor, which can cause alienation, and segregation, which, therefore, includes levels of violence. Nevertheless, this factor does not completely void the value of the study, it simply informs that along with poverty or economic dependency, other social factors also contribute to causing conflict and violence in a neighborhood or even more a city or country.

Among others that support the theory of poverty as a cause of violence, a leading argument is that people in less developed countries with higher levels of poverty and income equality have consequently presented more criminal activities and therefor violence. However, for this to happen, there has to be an element of social discrimination. (Hooghe, Vanhoutte, Hardyns, & Bircan, 2011)

On the other hand, poverty as a consequence of violence has been another position adopted by specialist and academics. When it comes to addressing the causes of poverty, some have pointed out violence as a contributing factor. A study conducted by Goodhand (2001) argues that conflict can in fact cause poverty. In this sense, he points out the macro effects of conflicts stating that it has a direct and indirect cost to society. The author adds that violent conflict increase higher dependency ratio and organized violence ends up shaping the economy.

Another study by Muggah (2012) seeking to address the linkages between urbanization, poverty and violence, the term ‘vicious cycle' was used to describe the relationship between violence and poverty. However, they tend to incline towards the theory that violence is the cause of poverty when they state that violent crimes such as homicide

and robberies have directly affected the community and causes indirect impacts such as displacement, restricts mobility and constrains access to education and jobs.

In both cases, there seems to be a missing link. If we take the first assumption, that poverty causes violence, then why is it that Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the region has one of the least violent? On the other hand, if we accept the second theory that violence is one of the causes of poverty, this also does not fit the scenario of Central America. If this would be the case, Honduras, would be significantly poorer than Nicaragua since the levels of violence of the former is significantly higher than those of Nicaragua.

The answer to this can probably be found in a simple intent that was made to define criminal violence. In the encyclopedia of international development, violent crime was acknowledged to strongly connected to poverty, inequality and unemployment. To this, it was added that certain forms of crime were associated to the 'lack of government structure or the existence of an oppressive government structure' (Forsyth, 2004 p.124). This lack of an oppressive government is the factor that explains why Nicaragua, the second poorest in the region can still manage to be one of the safest, topic that will be further addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Case Study of Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, despite national and international development efforts, the country poverty levels remain a high ranking second poorest country in the Latin American Region just above Haiti (IOM, 2014**)**. It is identified that high youth unemployment rates and lack of decent job opportunities are the main reasons for Nicaraguan migration in the last decades (Ibid).

The purpose of this chapter is to first revise the history of migration from Nicaragua dating back to more than 30 years, moving predominantly to the United States and Costa Rica in order to capture the patterns of migration created by the first waves of mass migrants. This historic trend is necessary in order to decipher the predominant reasons why Nicaraguans decide to leave the country and later, a more specific analysis as to why children are making their decision to migrate.

The migration history will be followed by an analysis of violence and poverty in the country alongside a governmental response to mitigate the levels of violence in Nicaragua, keeping it as one of the safest countries in Latin America braking so the myth that high levels of poverty causes higher levels of violence and vice versa.

3.1. History of Nicaragua's First Waves of Migration

Taking into account a general migration profile, Nicaragua is mainly known for being a country of origin of the migrant population or a sending country. In this sense,

Nicaraguan migrants represent 10 percent of the national population (Briones, 2013)[2]. As the sending country that it is, two migratory currents prevail, these are: South-North migration being the United States the most frequent destination country, and, South-South migration with Costa Rica as the major destination country. In a lesser extent, Nicaragua is identified as a transit country given its position in the middle of Central America, and lastly as a destination country for migrants (Ibid).

In order to understand the current case of child migration more profoundly, it is essential to acknowledge the historical patterns or migration trends of the country; this is, because people (adults and children) make migration decisions based on pre-established patterns and narratives (Castles and Miller, 2009). Therefore, once a trend has been previously established, it is easier to understand why these children choose a specific country as their destination.

In the case of Nicaragua, the migration patterns, as well as those of other Central American countries are diverse (IOM, 2001). These migration patterns are the product of a combination of factors such as political, economical and environmental. All these factors can be grouped under three predominant and notorious waves of Nicaraguan migration, however, internal armed conflicts or political-related violence seems to have been one of the most relevant driving factors of Nicaraguans to the United States (Briones, 2013).

According to Orozco (2008), Nicaraguan migration to the United States can be dated back to the 1900s. However, the mass migration of Nicaraguans and their most felt presence took place during the past 36 years. This mass migration occurred in several different

[2] To consider other dimensions of migration hardly captured by censuses (irregularity; temporary migration and cross-border), it is estimated that the population abroad could represent 800,000 Nicaraguans.

waves, with the first most notorious wave of migration occurring in the late 70s and 80s, with Costa Rica and the United States being the main destination country (IOM, 2014).

First wave (1979-1989): Civil War, Sandinista Revolution, and counter-revolution.

The 1970s created a platform of elemental importance for the creation of the current migration course in Nicaragua since it was originated during a critical transformation period and consequently brought along regional implications. However, the regional implications it carried along with it, was non-the-less due to the involvement and geopolitical influence of the United States in the Central American Region (IOM, 2001).

The Sandinista Liberation war that was originated in the mid-1970s ended 42 years of Somoza dictatorship. This period of armed conflicts in Nicaragua left a balance of 30,865 deaths, and approximately 31,019 people were injured (Kinloch Tijerino, 2006). The revolutionary victory raised great hopes in the majority of Nicaraguan peace, freedom, work, social welfare and justice (ibid). However, this decade of Sandinista revolution and the "Contra" war that followed brought the first large waves of Nicaraguan migrants who fled mostly to the United States and Costa Rica (Orozco, 2008; Briones, 2013).

During this period of conflict, it is estimated that more than 10,000 Nicaraguans received refugee status in the United States[3]. This first wave of migrants that entered the United States in this decade was mostly upper-class people, members of the National Guard and Somoza's supporters (Orozco, 2008).

[3] In addition to immigrants, many Nicaraguans were granted asylum during these years of conflict in the country. Interestingly, other countries in the region like Guatemala and El Salvador were also experiencing internal armed conflicts during the 80s, nevertheless Nicaraguans received a prioritized treatment and these other Nationals were not granted asylum in the same magnitude. The reason behind this is because the Reagan administration was providing military and political support to the contra to mitigate the revolution efforts.

Table 3.1 Nicaraguan Born Population Living in United States		
Prior to 1980	1980-1989	1990-1999
36,987	100,575	50,358

Source: Immigrants in the United States, 2010: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population Available at http://cis.org/2012-profile-of-americas-foreign-born-population#birth

Second Wave (1990- 1997): Economic consequences

During the post-war decade, the phenomenon of emigration of the 90s onwards, went from being an escape from armed conflict in form of a forced migration sending out asylum seekers, and became a migration due to economic factors.

The extreme measures of structural adjustments created high levels unemployment and deepening of poverty in the country. In other words, this second significant wave of migration that occurred in the 1990s can easily be explained as consequence the so-called 'transition period' where structural adjustment measures led to privatization of basic services and the adoption of a social economic model that consequently created great inequality and marginalized groups of small farmers and rural families (Orozco, 2008).

In the early 1990s, the government initiated a privatization effort to transfer more than 100 of Nicaragua's 350 state-owned companies to private ownership. The process included the outright sale, devolution, or liquidation of assets. The government holding company established to privatize state-owned assets initially identified forty companies to be sold within six months and an additional fifty to be returned to their previous owners or liquidated later (Briones, 2013).

Third wave (1998): Hurricane Mitch

The Hurricane Mitch of 1998 is the last important migration wave that occurred in Nicaragua (Orozco, 2008). In 1998, Hurricane category five Saffir-Simpson, caused 2,863 deaths and the total damage caused were in the amount of 988 million U.S. dollars, which represented 45 percent of gross domestic product in the country (ELAC, 1999; Perez, 2010). This devastating natural disaster left thousands homeless and brought along with it serious economic consequences that drove a lot of migrants to the neighboring country of Costa Rica (Orozco, 2008; Briones, 2013).

These last two waves of migration increased the numbers of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. By the end of the 90s, the percentage of Nicaraguans who migrated to Costa Rica reached 59 percent of Nicaraguans living in a foreign country followed by the United States with 29 percent. This decade started what remains until now the main destination of Nicaraguan migrants (Briones, 2013).

Table 3.2 Nicaraguan Born Population Living in Costa Rica

1973	1984	2000
11,871	45,918	266,461

Source: INEC. Censos Nacionales de Población, 1950 - 2011.

3.2. Violence as a Contributing Factor to Migration

Violence has been part of Central America for much of its history especially in the case of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala when it comes to political violence. However, other countries in the region such as Honduras, have also received a lot of attention for violence emerged from an array of disciplines other than political violence.

When analyzing the type of violence that has been a relevant contributing factor causing the out-migration of Nicaraguans, especially the case of unaccompanied children, the first most important aspect is to analyze the type of violence that has been present in the country throughout the past decades. In this sense, the political violence of the late 1970s to late 1980s caused the most significant violence-related wave of migration out of Nicaragua towards various destinations, predominantly towards the United States.

As mentioned earlier, there have been several different waves of migration in Nicaragua, each of which occurred for diverse reasons such as violence, economic factors and natural disaster (Orozco, 2008; Briones, 2010). If we look back at the waves of migration in Nicaragua, it is noticeable that during the 1970s and 1980s, which were the years of civil confrontation, the number of Nicaraguans fleeing the country was not as high as those numbers of decades later, where the major causes were predominantly economic hardship and natural disaster (see tables 3.1 and 3.2).

Since the end of the 1980s, the life of Nicaraguans has not been disrupted by these types of political violence or any other type of collective violence, to the extent of causing large-scale migration. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to look into other types of collective

violence that can be a contributing factor to out-migration from the country; in this case, gang related violence.

Moving on, if we observe Nicaragua's homicide rate between 2000 and 2012 per 100,000 populations, it shows that this has been constantly increasing. Despite this constant increase, which has been in small counts and percentages per year, it remains one of the lowest in the region, and the actual percentages of homicides that can be related to gangs are significantly low.

Table 3.3 Homicides in Nicaragua (2000-20012)

Year	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Rate	13.4	13.1	12.8	13.0	14.0	13.5	12.5	11.3
Count	729	722	714	736	802	785	738	675
Gang relate	-	-	-	4.2%	4.4%	-	-	-

Source: UNODC. Available at: http://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html

Despite these results in the constant increase of murders, it is found that Nicaraguans feel safe in their country. According to the 2013 Regional Human Development Report, Nicaragua reported higher citizen security compared to its neighboring country. The report reflected that Nicaragua was the third highest country who's citizens had the perception that the police protects them from crime and not so of police participation in criminal activities. Additionally, it was the second country with the highest number of citizens who has confidence in the criminal justice system. These results are very important in times when Latin America faces a crisis in terms of confidence in both police forces and the justice systems **(**UNDP, 2013**)**.

3.2.1. The Reduced Presence of Gangs in Nicaragua

Several Central American nations are living in a spread of violence fueled by drug trafficking and by corruption (UNDP, 2013). This area has become very attractive since it serves as a route mainly of drug trafficking that is destined to North America and Europe. These type of illicit activities has heightened levels of violence and corruption weakening so the criminal justice systems in these countries. Likewise, the International Narcotics Control Board counted about 900 Central American gangs or maras, which have approximately 70,000 members, are responsible for 15 percent of murders in the northern triangle and their main source of income is business related to drug trafficking (Junta Internacional de Fiscalización de Estupefacientes , 2013). Most of the transnational drug trafficking organizations that operate in the region use local gangs for security reasons and for moving their product (Ibid).

These gangs that are now very successful in Central America and throughout the entire Latin America were originated in Los Angeles and later in the 1990s spread throughout the rest of the region becoming transnational criminal organizations (Ribando Seelke, 2014). This overwhelming growth of gang-related activities have been terrorizing Central America where the crime rates soared being led by murder as the number one gang-related violent activities (JIFE, 2013) and seems to be growing stronger instead of being demolished.

Despite the strong presence of gangs in Nicaragua, the county has been able to keep itself free from a large number of gang presence and gang related activities. Some of the

reasons can be attributed to police efforts, however, the main reasons why Nicaragua has less gang presence has more to do with the way gangs were originated in Central America to begin with.

Three aspects characterize the lower presence of transnational gangs in Nicaragua and most of these can be attributed to United States policies from decades past. The first and second aspect has to do with the first large wave of migrants that fled to the United States, from the legal status they obtained and where they settled once they arrive. The third aspect hast to do with the United States 1990s immigration act reforms.

To assess the first characteristic, we have to once again go back to 1979 and the victory of the Sandinistas. With this victory, occurred what was to be the very first left revolution in Central America, which also coincided with the beginning of the presidential term of Ronald Reagan (Kinloch Tijerino, 2006). This leftist revolution represented everything Reagan and his conservative government was aiming against and, therefore, considered this revolution an issue of national security. Reagan perceived that communist Cuba and Nicaragua were a threat to their hegemony in the region, especially after the Nicaraguan revolution created a domino effect and guerrillas started forming in El Salvador and Guatemala (Ibid).

The Reagan administration was long felt to be drifting from the democratization process Carter had started. Since the objective of the Sandinista revolution was the elimination of an authoritarian government, and such was also the objective of the later upheavals in El Salvador and Guatemala, the Reagan Administration decided to change its geopolitical strategies which went from supporting dictators and authoritarian governments,

to promoting democracy (Hagopian & Mainwaring, 2005). Nevertheless, this democracy they were promoting was a questionable one since the aim was to transform the authoritarian regimes in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador into 'Polyarchies' which meant that certain elements of democracy such as suffrage were present, however, the vote ballads were controlled and only certain people were able to vote (Ibid). Additionally, the United States started supporting the military forces in these countries to fight the guerillas and begun their counter-revolution strategies against Nicaragua. This implied enforcement of United States military base in Honduras and Costa Rica (the two bordering countries of Nicaragua), they planned and executed several attack on the country but were soon to be restrained from internal and international opposition (Ibid).

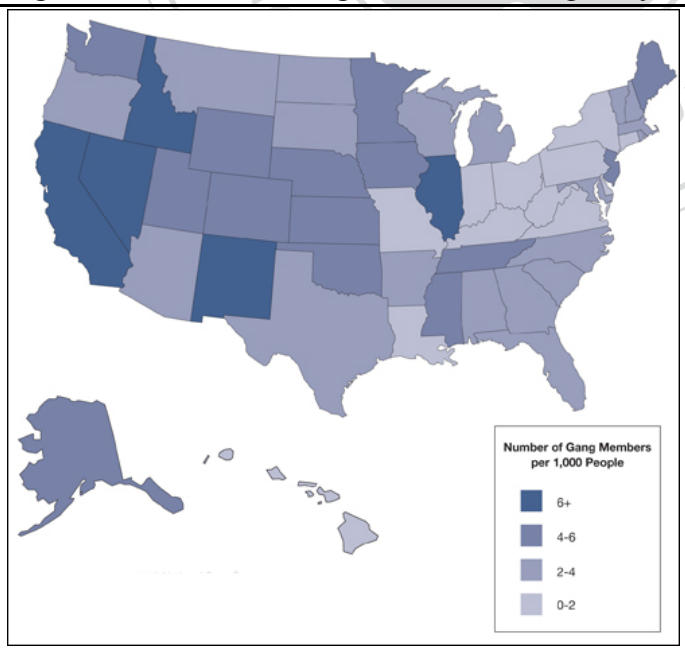
During this time, the United States was showing support to the Governments of Hondurans, Guatemala and El Salvador, and, on the other hand, they condemned the socialist government of Nicaragua. This position adopted by the United States a was a key element of Nicaraguan fleeing the country during this decade. Although many Central Americans applied for asylum, it is worth noting that this status were granted mainly and almost exclusively to Nicaraguans while others, such as Hondurans, were constantly denied refugee status and, therefore, linger in the most part undocumented (Orozco, 2008).

The second element that can explain the reason why there are fewer gangs in Nicaragua is mainly attributed to the different places Nicaraguans settled once they arrived at the United States. California, particularly Los Angeles was the destination of thousands of Central Americans fleeing the armed conflict and civil war that took place during late 1970s and 1980s (Rocha & Rodgers, 2008). According to the U.S. Census, an estimate of 70 percent of all Central Americans in the United States arrived after 1980 (Gibson & Emily,

2015). However, while most people from other countries in Central America settled in California, the grand majority of Nicaraguans settled in Miami and other parts of Florida. The total Nicaraguan population that settled in Miami was 47 percent compared to 12 percent that settled in L.A. (Ibid.).

Gangs operate in cities and states of all sizes throughout the United States and are accountable for much of the violence and crime (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2011). As of 2011, the United States reported an estimate of 33,000 gangs with approximately 1.4 million active gang members. California, the state where most Central Americans settled after their arrival is 1 of the 5 states with the largest number of gangs and gang members (Ibid) (see map 1). The number of gang members as of 2011 was of 6 or more per 1,000 inhabitants, compared to Florida with 2 to 4 gang members per 1,000 inhabitants. Being that grand majority Nicaraguans settled in Florida, compared to others that settled in California, Nicaraguans had less contact with gangs from the very beginning (Ibid).

Figure 3.1 Estimated Gang Presence Per Capita by U.S. State



Source: FBI. Available at: http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment/image/ngic-ndic_usgangpresence06_11map.jpg/view

United States deportation policies can be recognized as the third important aspect of gang presence in Nicaragua. In November of 1990, president Bush signed the 'Immigration Act of 1990' which was to become the 'sweeping' immigration law over the past six decades. The 1990 act chapter V titled Criminal Aliens and Deportation Procedures was to become one of the most troubling procedures of the 1990 Act (Leiden & Neal, 1990). The provision was designed to expedite the removal (deportation) of convicted non-citizens[4] under the term 'aggravated felony' a term that is also redefined by the same act. Additionally the act restricts protection for convicted aliens which means, there will no longer be a procedural safeguard to prevent the deportation of a convicted lien as soon as their release from incarceration. In many ways, the act limited the due process for these aliens. The alterations that were made in terms of the due process protection for aliens and all the procedural changes of deportations were to be a matter of concern.

This act of the 1990s allowed the deportation of approximately 46,000 convicts back to Central America between 1998 and 2005. Among these deportees were those young immigrants in California and other states that had joined street gangs (USAID, 2006). Addition to the criminal deportees, it is important to acknowledge that there also many non-criminal deportees who were also gang members. In this sense, the United States authorities admitted that during an Operation Community Shield, some gang members arrested were prosecuted criminally and later removed from the United States through immigration proceedings. However, the majority, (approximately 70 percent) of gang members detained were only given administrative immigration charges since they cannot be directly linked and processed with any crime (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforement, 2003). These

[4] Gang members with no legal status could be removed immediately, and those with legal permanent residence status convicted with 'aggravated felony' were considered deportable once released from their sentence.

deportees arrived in Central America with their gang related knowledge and rapidly gangs grew and spread across the region (USAID, 2OO6).

The combination of these three elements helps explain why Nicaragua has less presence of transnational gangs. First off, they were able to obtain legal status in the United States easier than the other countries in Central America, and once they arrived at the destination country, they were settled in areas far less dangerous and with less gang presence. Lastly, once the 1990 act came in play, because of their legal status in the United States, they were often not eligible for deportation or at least able to plead their cases.

3.2.2. Governmental Response to Gang-Related Violence

As gangs continue to irresistible grow stronger in Central America, and Violence has increased as Mexican drug traffickers spread their operations to the region in recent years, gang activities have failed to move forward beyond Honduras; Nicaragua's northern neighbor. Nicaraguan authorities that have succeeded at keeping its territory free from these deadly gangs have frustrated the desired expansion of gang expansion towards the south.

The reason why Nicaragua originally has fewer gangs than its neighboring country is clear. However, since the fight on the drug war in Mexico, cartels have been looking for new territories in its southern neighbors and gang activities have grew stronger in Central America **(**Ribando Seelke, 2014). In this sense, if we can attribute part of central American child migration crisis to gang-related violence, it becomes indispensable to analyze what is behind this phenomenon, which makes Nicaragua a gang barrier and has avoided the widespread of gangs in its territory.

Nicaragua's levels of human development and institutional fragility are similar to those of northern Central America; additionally it also has a past of armed conflict like several of its neighbors. However, part of the success it has achieved by keeping gangs out of the country can be attributed to the social and institutional changes generated in Nicaragua after the 1979 revolution (Cajina, 2013). The left-wing rebels who overthrew a United States-backed dictator in 1979 went on to build a more efficient and less corrupt security forces separate from the army. This revolution created various institutions different than the ones that continued to exist in neighboring countries and along with it; they tried to strengthen the participation of its citizens, which consequently created a lot of solidarity of its inhabitants (Ibid).

Additional to what the country has done right in the past, they continue to with a commitment aimed at creating opportunities for young people as the best prevention to curb the development of gangs, who spread terror in several Central America. Instead of adopting the 'Iron Fist' policies seen in the other countries where the problems were addressed via tough crackdowns, and thousands of youths were imprisoned as gang members, often under weak evidence of gang association (Zinecker, 2012). Nicaragua opted on social programs that help get youths out of gangs and focused more on their reintegration into society rather than suppression. In this country, the police are taking an aggregate approach, combining patrols and investigations to help at-risk children and youth (Policía Nacional de Nicaragua, 2011).

Nicaragua has been in the most part free of gang related violence due to its less repressive tactics (Zinecker, 2012; Cajina 2013). In order to keep things the way they have

been, a lot of work, intelligence, and mobilization have been put in play; how have they done this? According to reports that appeared in local newspapers, the police has played a key role and largely focused on strategic geographical areas to achieve their goals.

Since recent years, Somoto (a small town in Nicaragua that shares borders with Honduras) have been experiencing the influx of Salvadoran and Honduran gang members. However, their attempt to penetrate into the country and carry out their recruitment has constantly been frustrated by the Nicaraguan police who have documented contacts between gangs in their country and Salvadoran factions of MS-13 (Aragon, 2013). Beside the work of the police to determine the territories that present a risk for the increase and influx of gangs in the country, a second very important task that that Nicaraguan security officials are doing is to identify and helping at-risk youths. The preventive policies of the Nicaraguan police and their focus of identifying and helping at-risk youths, had led to the creation of the Juvenile Affairs Division (Dajuv) for it's Spanish acronym (Policía Nacional de Nicaragua, 2011). This part of the Nicaragua National Police operates provide information, education, and socialization through the DARE program that promotes the no access to drugs and youth violence. As the for the youth who are already involved in gangs, they offer a 5 steps program: Trice, diagnosis, attention, armistice, and demobilization (Ibid). In the country, the police have been able to identify 48 active gangs and 800 gang members, but non-that are related with the transnational gangs that are present in the neighboring countries (El Nuevo Diario, 2010).

Additionally, a factor that makes the Nicaraguan police different from that of its neighbors is the existence of a Commissariat for Women and Children that does not exist in the neighboring countries. It works as a specialized care model with highly trained police in

matters of violence against women and childhood. In this sense, despite the fact that Nicaragua is safer than its neighbors, it still does not mean that there is no youth violence at all. However, since the police adopted a preventive and proactive, they have created a strong youth policy based on an understanding differentiated from local youth groups: group high social risk youth and youth gangs.

3.3. Assessment of Poverty and Migration

Nicaragua was one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere in 1992, with a GDP-per-capita estimated at approximately US$425, almost half of what it had been in 1981 **(**Merril, 1993**)**. If we were to analyze the economic situation and levels of poverty in times where there were the mass migration in the country we are sure to find that the levels of poverty are high. Despite the lifting of the economic sanction, the United States enforced in 1982, and the reestablishment of United States aid, the Nicaraguan economy was not able to adapt to these improvements. Since 1990, GDP in Nicaragua kept declining while no growth was shown in 1991 (ibid).

A 2001 government study calculated that by 1998, based on the consumption index, 2.3 million people or 47.9 per cent of Nicaragua's population were poor, of which 830,000 or 17.3 per cent were extremely poor (Government of Nicaragua, 2001). When measured by the income distribution method it was found that, overall poverty was 60.0 percent and extreme poverty was 33.5 percent (ibid).

Currently, Nicaragua is still the poorest country in Central America and the second poorest in Latin America. The human development index of the country has increased

approximately 30 per cent in 2001 compared to 1990. Nevertheless, recent estimates show that approximately 70 per cent of Nicaraguans live in extreme poverty (less than US$1.25 per day), and unemployment hovers around 60-65 per cent ranking 129th of 187 countries in the 2011 Human Development Report (USAID, 2006; UNDP, 2011). To be certain, poverty forces many Nicaraguans to migrate and look for better jobs. An estimated 850,000 to a million Nicaraguans have left for the United States, Guatemala, or Costa Rica. Most of these migrants are young: 42 per cent are 15-24, and nearly 40 per cent are 25-44 (USAID, 2006).

When it comes to analyzing poverty, it is clear that the conditions of the poor are different in scope and nature, however, there are some common aspects that can be linked with poverty in Nicaragua. These aspects of poverty can be divided into economic dimensions and social dimensions.

3.3.1. The Economic Dimensions of Poverty Affecting Nicaragua

a) High unemployment and underemployment rates, including women and young people between age 15 and 24. In recent years, the levels of unemployment in Nicaragua has decreased, nevertheless it is still significantly high. Research shows that the unemployment rate is usually higher among poor households, particularly among poor females of which one out of two are underemployed. Although employment rates have increased in the past years, available data suggests that being employed is not sufficient to avoid poverty (Government of Nicaragua, 2001).

b) In this sense, underemployment becomes a factor to be addressed in the country. Taking into count that many people who are employed may still

possible life below poverty line, it is necessary to analyze the most common indicators of poverty measurements which is the proportion of people whom income is less than $1.25 a day (United Nations, 2014). In this sense, in 2005 11.9 per cent of Nicaraguans were living below poverty lines, compared to 18.3 percent in 1993 and out of the 57 percent of employed people in 2005, 9.5 per cent were still living under $1.25 day.

c) Many Nicaraguans face uncertain food security; the poor face even more insecurity. Inability to purchase food can be described as the main cause of the lack of food security. The two above factors (high levels of unemployment and low income) are the main causes of the limited ability to purchase food (World Food Programme, 2013). Among other reasons, we can find that in 2011 the cost of a basic food basket doubled in a matter of for years and continue to increase, while inflation in the country also continues to increase (Ibid).

d) Additionally, the overall economic growth plays a key role in the reduction of poverty and, therefore, the analysis of poverty itself. In this sense, the country's economic growth is important because otherwise other gains remain fragile and somewhat impossible to obtain (such as creation of more jobs, better education and healthcare system) and by having this growth strategically allocated towards poverty issues ensure all resources required to eradicate poverty. In this sense, GDP per capita in Nicaragua has shown a constant increase since 1993, yet the slow increase has not been enough to provide Nicaragua with the appropriate resources needed to fight poverty, making it so the poorest in Central America and highly dependent on foreign aid.

Table 3.4 Economic Dimensions of poverty in Nicaragua

Poverty Indicators	1993	1995	1998	2000	2005	2009
GDP per capita	394.7	888.6	938.8	1,001.3	1,159.0	1,459.2
Percentage of population living below 1.25 per day	18.3	12.5	-	-	11.9	-
Employment rate (Both sexes)	-	-	43.9	46.7	57.7	-
Percentage of employed people living under $1.25 day	14.3	-	9.8	-	9.5	-

Source: The World Bank, World development indicators. Available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx?isshared=true#
United Nations Statistics Division, available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx

3.3.2. Human and Social Dimensions of Poverty in Nicaragua

a) Low educational achievement. Available data shows a strong correlation between poverty and low school enrollment rates. Between 1993 and 2005, the overall enrollment rate increased from 73.3 per cent to 93.9 per cent and the ratio of boys and girls enrolled are almost 1 to 1. However, despite this positive trend, other national study have shown that 500,000 rural poor and indigenous young people aged 3 to 17 are not in school **(**Ministry of Education, 2008**)**. Additionally, the poor and extremely poor population, average 3.1 and 2.3 years of education when the necessary years to acquire literacy is four; reason why approximately 40 percent of the extremely poor are illiterate (Government of Nicaragua, 2001).

b) Low access to public and health services. The available data also show unequal access to basic infrastructure services between urban and rural areas. However, in overall terms, about 35 percent of the population lacked improved water and this same result was given for those lacking improve sanitation system. The percentage of the population with improved water facility goes hand by hand with

those with improve sanitation showing same results. Additionally, the percentage of the population living in slums has decreased significantly compared to 1993; nevertheless, 45.5 per cent (almost half) of the population was still living in slums as of 2005. Furthermore, because the lack of access to good roads and infrastructure, the extremely poor must travel three times the distance and time to gain access to healthcare facilities. In terms of sickness, it is shown that poor children report twice as much illness frequency than non-poor children (Government of Nicaragua, 2001). Data available for 2009 shows that the under-5 mortality rate has had constant decrease with 27.1 percent compared to 58.3 in 1993, nevertheless there is still a lot of efforts put in place to reduce this number.

c) Percentage of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption has also shown a decrease between 1993 and 2009 in terms of overall population. Nevertheless, once again studies show a strong link between poverty and malnutrition. In this sense, Over 30 percent of poor children and almost 40 percent of extremely poor children were malnourished, compared to 12 percent of non-poor children in 1998 (Government of Nicaragua, 2001)

d) Gender equality plays an important role in the analysis of poverty. This is because it is widely believe and discussed that empowering woman will strengthen several areas of eradicating poverty for example access to better jobs, reduction of child mortality, among others; especially since a high number of poor households are those where a woman are in charge **(**OIM, UNICEF, & OIT, 2013**)**. Here it can be seen that gender equality is directly linked with poverty. Promoting gender equality helps empower woman and therefore elimination of an unequal marginalized society where women are offered equal opportunities as men; this will also lead to the reduction of poverty.

There is a relation between gender equality and poverty, but also a poverty-migration link. Therefore, it cannot be overlook that there can be a link between gender equality and child migration. In this sense, when we consider child labor as a basic survival strategies of the poor. Single mothers who lack opportunities, often have few alternatives and end up exposing their children knowingly or not to child labor (Haspels N., & Suriyasarn B; 2003). Labor migration has been found to be one of the most common reasons for people to migrate, including children **(**IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015**)**. If women are empowered, not only will they have better opportunities to support their families, they will also be to take actions against child labor and unaccompanied child migration.

On the other hand, when analyzing the link between child migration and gender equality, a study in Nicaragua helps illustrate this relationship. A survey data of 31 households of unaccompanied minors in Nicaragua showed that in 25 or 80.6 percent of households where a child has migrated, a woman was the head of these households (Organizacion Internatcional para las Migraciones; Save the Children; Red Nicaraguense de la Sociedad Civil para las Migraciones, 2012). These results show a tendency of children being more likely to migrate when a woman is the head of the household, which also coincides with the fact that households led by woman are more likely to be poorer than those led by men.

In the case of Nicaragua, if we measure gender equality with the percentage of seats held by women in National Parliament, woman are clearly under-represented, holding between 20 and 18 percent of seats in recent years.

Table 3.5 Human and Social Dimensions of Poverty in Nicaragua

Poverty Indicators	1993	1995	1998	2000	2005	2009
Net enrolment ratio in primary education (both sexes)	73.7	73.3	-	82.7	93.9	-
Proportion of pupils who reach the last grade of primary	37.3	38.4	-	51.8	50.2	-
Percentage of population with improved water facility	45	46	47	48	50	52
Percentage of population with improved sanitation facility	45	46	47	48	50	52
Under 5 mortality rate	58.3	52.7	44.9	40.3	31.7	27.1
Percentage of urban population living in slums	-	74.5	-	60	45.5	-
Percentage of seats held by women in National Parliament	-	-	10.8	9.7	20.7	18.5

Source: United Nations Statistics Division, available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx

3.4. Child Migration In Nicaragua

As it has been previously established, Nicaragua is characterized as being a sending country when it comes to international migration. This is no exception in the case of unaccompanied child migration. The migration pattern of Nicaragua has bee characterized as bipolar when comparing it to the rest of the central American region, this is because it is the only country who does not have the U.S as the principal destination country, instead, Costa Rica becomes the number one destination country. The majority of these children migrating to Costa Rica are between ages 10-14 (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015). In this sense, children under age 10 who migrate, usually do so for family reunification and accompanied by an adult. Whereas children age 10-14 mainly presented

characteristics of a labor migration and did so unaccompanied. This is a different migration pattern than the on towards the United States, which is not a circular migration; it is more permanent and involves higher risks (Ibid).

3.4.1. Profile of Nicaragua Unaccompanied Minors

The first Characteristic of unaccompanied minors in Nicaragua is that they tend to migrate to Costa Rica instead of the United States. This is because of the historical migration patterns that have been established. Nicaragua child migration is not going to be found in large numbers in Mexico and the United States; this is because they stay within the Central American Region (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015).

A second characteristic is the low levels of education of these children. A focal group study conducted in 2010 where 61 unaccompanied minors from 7 different municipalities of Nicaragua were interviewed found that not all children were enrolled in school; in fact, 51 children are enrolled in school. Among those who were not enrolled in school, boys hold the largest share being the primary reasons inaccessibility to complete primary education in their communities that are located in the rural area, and early incorporation to labor force, which brings us to the third characteristic.

Poverty and early incorporation in the labor market, as the third characteristic, is one of the major reasons for Nicaraguan children to migrate. The labor factor, when combined with migration, becomes an important issue to address in the cane of unaccompanied child migration in Nicaragua. The patterns of child migration with Costa Rica as the number one destination were found to be mostly temporary and seasonal with the objective of working

in coffee plantations to save money and be able to purchase their school utensils and prepare themselves for the upcoming school year. (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015).

In this sense, a study focusing on migration patterns in Central America and Mexico found that the majority of unaccompanied minors from Central American countries had already been incorporated in the labor forces of the country before they decided to migrate (OIM, UNICEF, & OIT, 2013). In the most part, these children constituted labor force at a very young age, even younger than the legal employment age (Ibid). Nicaragua is no exception to this matter, a survey conducted by the ministry of labor in 2005 found that 239,220 children constituted labor in he country where 86,614 were under the legal employment age which is 14, and most of these children are working in the agriculture sector (Ministerio del Trabajo, 2005).

Table 3.6 Child Labor by Branch of Economic Activity 2005

Sector	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-13	Ages 14-17	Total
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	10,895	42,213	82,272	135,380
Commerce, Hotel and restaurants	4,989	14,833	31,870	51,692
Industrial Manufacturing	1,663	6,117	15,977	23,757
Communal, social and personal services	978	2,746	13,687	17,411
Construction	146	212	4,294	4,652
Transport, storage and communication	-	424	2,799	3,223

Finance, insurance and real estate	292	212	1, 209	1,713
Mining	247	541	180	986
Electricity, Gas and Water	-	106	318	424
Total	19, 210	67, 404	152, 606	239, 220

Source: 2005 Child labor Survey. Available at: http://www.mitrab.gob.ni/documentos/informes-estadisticos/infantil.pdf/view

The third characteristics of Nicaraguan unaccompanied child migration are households where a woman is usually the head of the family. When asking the question of who the children were living with before they migrated, the answer could not be generalized, however, the general rule is that they are in care of a woman, in a minority of cases it was found that these children were living with their father (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015). In the case that the child has a mother who migrated, it is commonly seen that the primary caretaker is anther female such as a grandmother, aunt and sometimes even an older female sibling who is not necessarily an adult (Ibid). A survey data of 31 households in Nicaragua showed that in 25 or 80.6 percent of households, a woman was the head of these households and in 48 percent of the cases the children were living with their grandmother (Organizacion Internatcional para las Migraciones; Save the Children; Red Nicaraguense de la Sociedad Civil para las Migraciones, 2012).

Chapter 4 Case Study of Honduras

The Honduran migratory behavior has been changing since the early 1970s and 1980s where it went from being a receiving hub for its neighboring countries in conflict (Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras) to becoming more of a sending country. The most recent estimates recorder 677,950 Hondurans living abroad where the United States remains the main destination **(**Fonseca Flores, 2012).

In this chapter, we will analyze the different events the country has witnessed in the past decades, which may have influenced the changes in the migration behavior. For this, many factors will be taken into consideration, such as taking the high levels of persistent poverty results of structural adjustment programs since the 1990s, the effects caused by Hurricane Mitch, the high rates of violence caused by the proliferation of transnational criminal organizations and gangs.

4.1. History of Hondura's First Waves of Migration

The migration patterns of Honduras present different particularities with respect to other countries of the region especially in the case of mass migration. When it come to the mass migration towards the United States can easily be classified under three major waves dating as early as the 1940s and 1950s.

First wave (Before 1970): Banana Republic[5]

The origin of Honduras migration patterns was conditioned by the connections linked to banana trade and the opportunities it represented; The relationship of the banana economy with ports on the east coast of the United States started a labor migration between these two countries. This eventually made Honduras the number one emigrating country in the region during the 1960s (UNDP, 2006; Fonseca Flores, 2013). This first Honduran diaspora in United States settled in New Orleans and later New York since the former was the port of entry for bananas central to the United States market, and the headquarters of banana companies operating in Honduras (UNDP, 2006). The primary reason of the first Honduran diaspora was to supplement the economy by subsistence goods from abroad. With the strikes in the banana companies, migration intensified, only this time the major reason was employment. By the 1970s, migration of Hondurans to the United states had become part of the culture, especially among Garifunas (Ibid).

Second Wave (1980-1990): Economic Crisis

In the 1970s and 1980s, while its neighboring countries North and South were suffering from internal armed conflicts Honduras became a country of immigration when large numbers of people from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua start fleeing armed conflicts in search of refuge (OIM & Others 2011; Fonseca, Flores, 2012).

[5] In political Science, the term Banana Republic refers to a country that is politically unstable and has its economy highly dependent on one export and dominated by foreign interests. The term was originally used in a 1902 fiction book by William Sydney Porter inspired by Honduras who's economy since the 1870s was highly dependent on banana plantations.

However, Honduras, like all countries in Central America, went through a process of changes in the economic structure after the crisis of the 1980s. Consequences of the crisis of the 80s and of structural adjustment programs established under the policies of the Washington Consensus promoted the deregulation, liberalization and privatization economies, generating a structural transformation of economies within which migration would be an integral part (OIM & Others, 2011). In the particular case of Honduras the economic crisis easily associated directly to two different internal and external factors; the rigidity of the productive apparatus, focused primarily on exports of products (bananas and coffee) and insufficient domestic savings. These two conditions the financial situation became particularly difficult in the late 1980s (Carranza & Chang, 2002). After the 1980s, the crisis was not over, it only intensified in the next decade. During this period the region experienced the final collapse of the traditional agricultural exports model and, the emergence of a new economic model which meant restructurings labor markets (Segovia, 2004).

Third Wave (1998): Hurricane Mitch

Despite the economic hardship of the early 1990s, by 1998, Honduras had favorable economic developments (Carranza & Chang, 2002). Unfortunately, this was interrupted in October 1998 by Hurricane Mitch, a disaster unprecedented in history of the Region and, considered, at that time, as the worst disaster in Latin America in the last two hundred years (UNDP, 2006).

The direct effects of hurricane Mitch in Honduras resulted in approximately 7000 dead, 11,000 missing, some two million homeless, 35,000 destroyed homes and 50,000

homes partially affected (UNDP, 2006). Additionally, levels of unemployment increase and so did the transfer of workers from formal to informal employment which lead to the increase of poverty, especially in the rural areas (Carranza & Chang, 2002). Additionally The estimates at the end of September showed GDP growth of 5.1 percent, which was hampered by the damage caused by the hurricane, to the extent that GDP fell 2.7 percent (Ibid).

Hurricane Mitch marked the starting point of the rapid increase of migration in the country. Available data show that United States is the country which mostly demonstrates the general emigration dynamics of the Honduras' diaspora. It is believed the foreign policy of the United States and the links established from of these relationships stimulate the migration propensity (Carranza & Chang, 2002). During the 1990s, the biggest emigration of Hondurans was to United States where it was found that 108,923 Hondurans resided in this Country. When it Comes to Mexico and Central America, Nicaragua was the country with the highest number of Honduran-born population, which is particularly interesting since the 1990s were a period of high migration from Nicaragua due to economic factors (CELADE, 2000)

Table 4.1 Honduran Born Population Residing in Foreign Countries (1970-1990)

Country of Residence	1970s	1980s	1990s
United States	36,987	72,627	154,181
El Salvador	14, 290	-	8,666
Nicaragua	6, 919	-	9, 473
Guatemala	6, 231	5,326	4,634

Source: CELADE Census for MILA project. Available at: http://www.cepal.org/celade/proyectos/migracion/imila00e.html
Immigrants in the United States, 2010: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population Available at http://cis.org/2012-profile-of-americas-foreign-born-population#birth

4.2. Violence and Migration in Honduras

Historically, when it comes to the first waves of migration from Honduras to the United States, there is no indication that these first migrants did so based on security reasons; in fact all three waves of migration shows that Hondurans originally migrated to the United States in search of employment and because of economic hardship in the country. Nevertheless, the first linkages of violence and migration in Honduras occur in a different scenario, deportations.

During the 1980s waves of migration to the United States, most Central Americans settled in Los Angeles. Many Salvadorans, including young guerilla members who fled the country to escape the conflict, found themselves living in a different war zone on the streets of L.A, this one controlled by Mexican street gangs who did not welcome them (Franco, 2008). To protect themselves, the Salvadorans created their own gang called Mara Salvatrucha[6] known today as MS-13 (Ibid). Most of these new gang members had military training and close contact battle experience, they had lived a type of violence that gang members in the U.S. had never seen, this soon made them the most dangerous and deadliest street gang in the U.S. With the large number of deportations in the 1990s, these gangs rapidly spread and expanded their operations in Central America (Ibid).

Criminal deportations may have heightened the presence of gang in Central American countries, but the real problem that allowed them to grow fast was that the receiving countries of the deportees were not being given complete criminal history of

[6] Salvatrucha was a term used to honor Salvadoran peasants trained as guerillas

people deported on criminal grounds and gang affiliations would not be provided unless it was the main reason of deportation. This issue persisted until January 2014 when officials finally signed an agreement to share complete criminal information on criminal deportees (Ribando Seelke, 2014).

In Honduras, the major security issues related to high levels of violence are a consequence of these transnational gangs that operate in the country (Ribando Seelke, 2014). The Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street gang (M-18) who originated in Los Angeles and later expanded to Central America are the major threat to citizen security in Honduras (Ibid). There is no consensus on the number of gang members that currently operate in the region; in fact, the estimates vary widely. The United Nations office on Drugs and crime estimated that as of 2012 there were more than 50,000 gang members in Northern triangle out of which 12,000 belonged to Honduras. Other estimates given by the U.S. State Department official in 2012 said that there may be 85,000 MS-13 and 18th Street gang members in the northern triangle with 36,000 members in Honduras; nevertheless, both numbers represent more than the total number of inmates currently incarcerated (UNODC, 2012; U.S Department of State, 2013).

Currently, Honduras is considered the most violent country in the world outside of war zone and has been categorized as the murder capital of the world because of its alarming homicide rates that continues to increase even before the coup d'état that took place in 2009 and weakened its institutions even more. It is shown that the male homicide rate in the country is higher than female. In this sense, men in the 30-44 age group are the highest number of homicide followed by 15-29 age group. Even though there are a high percentage of victims age 15-29 (1 in every 360 males), murder risk for males aged 30-44 is higher (1 in every 280 males) **(**UNODC, 2013**)**.

Table 4.2 Homicides in Honduras (2005-20012)

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rate	46.6	44.3	50.0	60.8	70.7	81.1	91.4	90.4
Count	3,212	3,118	3,588	4,455	5,280	6,236	7,104	7,172
Gang related	-	-	21.1	36.9%	33.8%	34.8	-	-

Source: UNODC. Available at: http://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html

4.2.1. The Role of Children in Gang Related Violence

"All children in this Central American country kill, die or move because of the bloody gangs" (Escante, 2014). This was a news headline that appeared on May 10th 2014 referring to Honduran children wich accurately summarize the role of these children in gang-related violence.

The shortcomings in the structure of opportunities offered by the State, family, and community, creates the elements of social exclusion, inequality, poverty and violations of rights. The manifestations of these structural conditions to which most children in the region are exposed make them seek other opportunities which leads to high numbers of school dropouts, child labor and even the risk of becoming homeless. In these situations and under these conditions these children become easy prey to be influenced by gang leaders and particularly vulnerable to joining gangs in search to feel identified to something (Forselledo, 2006).

Recruitment of children in gangs predominantly occurs in the neighborhoods in which they live. After the iron fist policies begun to be implemented in 2003 and police repression and sentences got tougher for the gangs, these begun a new recruit campaign. According to Mencía (2006) the gang recruitment strategy changed and since 2005 they begun to recruit members as young as 10 years mainly in schools. Their growing interest in young prospects is because, beside the fact that children are easily manipulated, the existing legislation excludes them from legal prosecution, therefore, they use these children to commit most of their illegal crimes such as drug trafficking and theft, but mostly for their most cruel crimes such as homicide and dismembering people (Mencía, 2006; UNICEF, 2012; Elsalvador.com, 2014).

In a 2006 study of two major cities in Honduras it was found that 23 and 45 percent of children in these cities were part of a gang which represented 743 in total numbers in the two main cities (Mencía, 2006). According to a Salvadoran news report, in 2010 the Honduran police had categorized 5,000 young people as gang members of which one-third were under age 15 (Esalvador.com, 2014). The number of children participating in gangs is hard to estimate since most studies only provide the total numbers of gang member. In the case of those who tend to classify gang members by age, they usually do so by estimating the total amount of young people that are currently in gangs, this is usually age 25 and below, in this sense, according to UNICEF, in 2012 there were 4,728 young gang members in Honduras (UNICEF, 2012).

When integrated with gangs, chances of these children leaving are very low. Once individuals become a member, they cannot abandon the gang; one of the main gang symbol or salute represents the three ways in which a gang member leaves his gang: prison, hospital

or death (Forselledo, 2006). With the efforts and creation of more institutions to help children and young people leave gangs, the violence changed sides; these young offenders became victims. Between, 2001-2003 the rates of children being harmed or killed by gang members increased significantly and continue to increase up to now with dozens of children being reported victims of homicide every month (Mencía, 2006; La Prensa, 2014).

The first week of May 2014 witnessed the murders of 17 children in Honduras. One of the victims was a 7-year-old who had been tortured then shot to death; the 13-year-old brother of this child was found dead one day earlier. Police who investigate the murders have strong reasons to believe that the children have been murdered because they refused to join the street gangs (La Prensa, 2014; BBC, 2014). Other victims of these gangs are children in youth centers who are trying to leave the gangs. In 2014, a local newspaper published the news of gang members who entered a rehabilitation center for children, disarmed the guards and killed five children of the opposite gang with a grenade (Escante, 2014).

The violence against children by gang members are also antagonizing children who migrate to the United States and are later repatriated. In January 2015, a child who was being deported from United States was shot to death as soon as he got off the bus by a gang member who was waiting for him. This boy is part of a large list of children between ages 13-17 who are attacked, killed or disappeared after being repatriated from Mexico or the United States (ACNUR, 2015). Besides the murders, the threats of gangs are also affecting kids and forcing the to drop out of school. In 2013, the Ministry of Education estimated that in San Pedro Sula wich is the most dangerous city in the entire region, 4500 children

dropped ou of school and they claim that nearly half did so because of the harassment of gangs (BBC, 2014).

4.2.2. Governmental Response to Violence: Iron Fist

After the levels of violence became overwhelming in Central America, the governments of the Northern Triangle especially Honduras and El Salvador responded to youth gangs with harsh measures adopting a zero tolerance strategy based on suppression; this strategy is known as Iron Fist and Super Iron Fist; many criticized the outcome as undermining the rule of law (UNODC, 2012). The repressive policy implied weak standards of evidence and severe terms of imprisonment; raids were enforced and more detentions were possible as tattoos became enough evidence of linking an individual to a gang (Ibid).

The iron fist policy in Honduras emerged in 2003 as a cry from the population and media demanding a governmental response to the increase of gang-related crimes in the country. Consequently, the penal code was reformed and a clause that allowed 12-year imprisonment for being a member of a gang was added **(**Ribando Seelke, 2014**)**. In addition to this, police forces were no longer the only ones allowed to arrests, the military was now also allowed some of this action. The majority of gang members who were arrested were later released in 2005 due to lack of evidence (Ibid).

Because of the iron fist policies, which contributed to the massive imprisonment of gang members, incarcerated members started to organize their main operations from jails, communicating with the leaders through mobile phones (UNODC). Additionally, many

gang members changed their modus operandi and are starting to drop the gang signals, changing their dress code and even removing their tattoos (Ribando Seelke, 2014).

The effectiveness of these policies that were implemented in 2003 were questionable, especially since it had no impact on the reduction of homicide, as shown in table 4.2 homicides rates kept increasing regardless. In fact, the policy received negative attention and a lot of criticism. Nevertheless, despite the criticism to the iron fist policy, the government of Honduras still opted to apply an even harder law enforcement discourse. Since the creation of the iron fist in 2003 the policies brought on the military in the equation of combating street gangs, however, in August of 2013 they created the 'military Police' which implied that the police command staff was replaced by military officers (La Prensa, 2013**)**. The United Nations has since condemned the very first efforts that were made to militarize the police. They expressed that both the police and military were involved in numerous human rights abuses during the times of conflict, therefore the correct actions should be trying to harmonize the existing distress that the public feels towards these institutions through civilianization such as the neighborhood policing of Nicaragua, and not militarization (UNODC, 2012).

4.3. Analysis of Poverty in Honduras.

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America and considered a lower middle-income country that suffers from persistent challenges of unequal distribution of income. With a population of approximately 8 million, almost 64.5 percent of their populations are living in poverty, which is primordially a rural problem where these estimates rise to 63 and 50 percent (IFAD, 2011).

Furthermore, the country's economy is highly dependent of trade with the United States, especially banana, plantains, coffee, beans and rice (Ibid). Another significant contribution to the Honduran economy is remittances, which has shown a lot of grown in the past years and represented between 15.7 and 16.9 percent of GDP (World Bank).

The high inequality in Honduras is partly the consequence of the unequal distribution of land and the large amount of power the economic elite has in the country. This elite that is also comprised very powerful trading partners are constantly manipulating the country's politics to have their interests protected; these kinds of acts resulted in the 2009 military coup where the democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya was removed from power (Meza, 2011). The levels of political instability and monopoly in the country affect various aspects of social and economic wellbeing of its citizens such as lack of access to land and basic services, a vulnerable environment and low agricultural productivity (Ibid). These are among the reasons why Honduras ranks 129 out of 187 countries on the United Nations Development Program's 2014 Human Development Index, which is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living for countries worldwide.

4.3.1. Economic Dimensions of Poverty in Honduras

a) Overall economic growth. Honduras' economy is highly dependent on United States trade and remittances. Despite the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, we can see in table 4.3 that the country has experienced positive economic growth in recent years. In 2010, the economy registered modest economic growth with a GDP per-capita of 2,078 and 2.6-

4.0 percent from 2010 to 2014 (IFAD, 2011). Nevertheless, this progress achieved in the economic growth of the country has not resulted to be sufficient in terms of improving living conditions of the high population currently living in poverty especially since levels f inequality increase significantly after the 2009 coup (Johnston & Lefebvre, 2013).

b) High unemployment. In the past years, employment rate in Honduras has shown a slow but stable increase; as of 2009, the employment rate was 59.3 percent, which implies that a high level of unemployment remains in the country. By 2011, the unemployment levels were significantly higher than 2009, which can be labeled as one of the many consequences of the coup, these high levels of unemployment were even worse in the rural areas and the younger age groups especially those between 19-29 (Ibid).

c) Underemployment. Johnston & Lefebvre (2003) provides a definition of what is considered underemployment for the government of Honduras, explaining that visible underemployment refers to workers who are not working full-time, but desire to do so, whereas in invisible underemployment refers to workers who earn less than the minimum wage established by law. As shown in table 4.3, the percentage of employed people living under $1.25 day in Honduras showed a decrease of 7 percent between 1995 and 2009, however, visible and invisible unemployment increased after the coup even though the minimum wage was increased during President Zelaya's term (Ibid).

d) Inequality. High inequality prevails in Honduras, as a country who is highly dependent on agriculture and the export of these products; the roots of this unequal structure can be attributed to the distribution of land. The majority of the land in Honduras are in hands of an elite minority, in this sense, Multinational

companies who represent the 1.7 percent of the biggest producers are in control of more than 39 percent of the land that is worked (Brockett, 1992; PRSP, 2001). Conditions of inequality deepened more in Honduras after the coup where only the wealthiest 10 percent of the country controlled over 100 percent of all real income gains (Johnston & Lefebvre, 2013).

Table 4.3 Economic Dimensions of Poverty in Honduras

Poverty Indicators	1993	1995	1998	2000	2005	2009
GDP per capita	655	699	-	1,140	1,402	1,953
Percentage of population living below 1.25 per day	23.5	27.3	25.5	-	26.4	17.9
Employment rate (Both sexes)	-	47.9	51.7	-	55.3	59.3
Percentage of employed people living under $1.25 day	19.0	22.1	21.1	-	21.6	15.1

Source: The World Bank, World development indicators. Available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx?isshared=true#
United Nations Statistics Division, available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx

4.3.2. Human and Social Dimensions of Poverty in Honduras

a) Low educational achievement. The number of children who drop out of school in Honduras is considerably high; the reason behind this can be the attributed to the high number of families struggling with economic hardship. In Honduras, approximately 40 and 20 percent of children ages 6-7 respectively, are not in school, with even lower enrollments rates observed in rural areas. The average net enrollment rates in the rural area for ages 6 -7 are 79 and 89 percent, respectively

(Urquiola & Calderón, 2004). In recent years, compared to 1993 the net enrollment rate along with the number of enrolled children who finish the last year of primary education has been in a constant increase. However, as shown in table 4.4, in 2009 there was a 2 percent increase in the number of primary dropouts, which can possibly be a consequence of the coup that occurred the same year.

b) Low access to public and health services. Despite a total of the population is evenly distributed between the rural and urban areas, the former shows more tendencies of not having access to basic public and health services. In overall terms, unlike Nicaragua, the percentage of the population lacking improved water are not the same as those lacking sanitation. In this sense, although there has been an increase in the amount of people with access to these services, the percentage with improved water facility is significantly higher than those with improve sanitation as shown in table 4.4. Additionally, there is limited data on the percentage of population living in slums nevertheless, the data for 2005 shows that Honduras has a smaller amount of people living in slums compared to Nicaragua. Furthermore, the overall welfare of children when calculated with under 5 mortality, it shows that the country continues to decrease the number of deaths. In this sense, compared to 1993, Honduras managed to half the number of causalities by 2009.

c) Gender equality. When gender equality is measured by the percentage of seats held by women in National Parliament, Honduras has more female participation than Nicaragua. However, there are other important aspects of gender equality that needs to be addressed in the country such as, labor market and the existing inequality of land distribution. In this sense, 9 percent of the smallholder farmers are women who are head of their households and make 30 percent less than

households headed by men. Rural women, especially indigenous groups are among the poorest in the country (IFAD, 2011).

Table 4.4 Human and Social Dimensions of Poverty in Honduras

Poverty Indicators	1993	1995	1998	2000	2005	2009
Net enrollment ratio in primary education (both sexes)	89.3	-	-	88.4	91.9	96.5
Proportion of pupils who reach the last grade of primary	43.3	48.8	-	-	81.0	79.8
Percentage of population with improved water facility	75	77	79	81	85	88
Percentage of population with improved sanitation facility	53	56	60	63	71	78
Under 5 mortality rate	51.6	47.7	41.7	38.2	30.7	25.9
Percentage of urban population living in slums	-	-	-	-	34.9	-
Percentage of seats held by women in National Parliament				9.4	5.5	23.4

Source: United Nations Statistics Division, available at: http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx

4.4. Profile of Honduran Unaccompanied Minors

Three aspects can generally characterize Honduras' child migration. The first is that it has the United States as number one destination country. Secondly, the young population is the most affected by migration as the 42.86 percent of persons in relation to the total number of people repatriated returnees in the first four months of 2015 are ages 18-30 and 16.74 percent are ages 13-17 (Gobierno de la Republica de Honduras, 2015). Thirdly, out child migration from Honduras is largely concentrated in three areas. Making comparison

between 2010 and the first four months of 2015, the incidence of migration is maintained in the municipalities of San Pedro Sula, El Progreso, Juticalpa, and Catacamas; increasing by 2015 the incidence of migrants in the Central District Municipality (Ibid). If we calculate the children that were returned to Honduras by gender, the children age 7- 12 represented an equal amount of boys and girls. However, as the age group goes up it was shown that boys hold a larger share than girls. In this respect, for children age 13-17, 25.69 percent corresponded to girls and 74.31 percent to boys (Ibid).

As shown on table 4.5, when comparing the first months of 2014 and 2015 it is evident that despite the cry of a humanitarian crisis in June 2014, the numbers of unaccompanied minors repatriated to Honduras from Mexico and the U.S. do not seem to be significantly decreasing compared to the previous year.

Table 4.5 Repatriated Children in Honduras by Year and Month of Return

Month	2014	2015
January	374	397
February	464	519
March	849	654
April	765	725
May	589	346[7]

Source: DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015

The total numbers of repatriated children that were registered in the year 2014 were 3,041 and as of May 15, 2015, 2, 641 children has already been repatriated from Mexico and the U.S. These numbers represent both accompanied and unaccompanied minors, in this sense, children ages 0-6 represent 25.86 percent of the number of children repatriated and

[7] Calculations as of May 15, 2015

are generally accompanied by an adult. On the other hand, boys and girls between age 13 and 18 are the highest number of unaccompanied minors leaving Honduras. Children ages 13-17 represent 70.36 percent of the number of children repatriated as of may 15, 2015 while ages 7-12 represent 13. 78 percent (DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015).

According to UNICEF (2012), in a population of 8 million people, almost 50 percent of the population are young people below 20 out of which 2, 233,967 children between ages 5 and 17 live in the rural area and 14 percent of these already constitute labor force. This is consistent with some of the main reasons why these children are migrating to the United States. In a survey conducted to the repatriated minors in Honduras, when asked about the reason for migration, it was found that the majority decided to emigrate for economic reasons, with the highest incidence; the second reason is for search of employment or family reunification (Gobierno de la Republica de Honduras, 2015). Another study conducted by the DINAF showed a slight variation in these in results. In this case, it was found that the highest number of children expressed that economic reasons are what led them to decide to migrate, the second highest number expressed family reunification reasons, and third highest reason was violence or lack of security (DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015).

A survey conducted in 2012 by the International Labor Organization found that in Honduras, the child labor market consists of 367,405 boys and girls who were currently work or actively seeking employment. Out of this total, 5 to 9-year-olds were the 2.0 percent of the amount of children working in economic activities; group aged 10 to 14 years were 16.4 percent, and 15 to 17 years of age it were 40.5 percent (Hernández Cruz, 2004).

In this sense, it is shown that as age increases, the rates of working children increase since the percentage of children age 15 to 17 is twice as high of children aged 5 to 9 years. This pattern coincides with the number and age group of unaccompanied minors; where ages 13 to 17 are generally higher than those 7 to 12. If we consider labor migration as one of the major factors why Honduran children migrate, this explains that the greater the age of the minors in the labor market, the greater the probabilities of their labor migration.

The fact that children of Honduras constitute labor force at home makes it evident that search for employment is not a questionable reason. In this sense, according to DINAF, there lots of children who claim that their decision to migrate towards the United States is search for employment opportunities; in some cases, they are already trained in certain activities, such as artisans and mechanics. On the other hand, in the country, they do not have a figure of a caregiver who may have intervened in their decision to migrate and tried to avoid it. The reason behind this is that a majority of these children come from a generation of teenage parents who are generally in their early or mid-thirties and barely double the age of their children. These children therefore do not have the opportunities which implied assisting to a basic primary and secondary school and are in the most part low educated or without any education at all (DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015).

Chapter 5 Summary and Discussion

This thesis investigates the impact of poverty and violence on unaccompanied child migration in Honduras and Nicaragua to understand the extent to which these two factors have contributed to the migration trend of the region and most importantly the current child migration crisis. In the first four chapters of this thesis, we learned that migration is a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon comprised by several aspects, with specific contextual factors that can change and influence migration dynamics in a given country. From the sending countries, we can find aspects of poverty, economic hardship, a search of employment, family reunification, political violence, and violent gang-related crimes as contributors to migration. From the receiving country, policies that contributed to several of the issues causing current migration flows, and other policies that affects migratory flows and make an irregular migration the only possible option. As for the transit countries, these lack adequate policies to protect children in transit, exposing them to more dangers and vulnerabilities besides the journey itself.

Unaccompanied child migration in the region, with previous establish networks of generations migrating to the United States, economic hardship that has been haunting the region for decades, political instability and other social factors that has caused a wave of violence in Central America are challenges that directly and indirectly affect the daily lives of children. A study of the historical behavior of migration patterns enables us to gain insights into some of the factors that may be causing these large-scale migration and possible responses as to why there are a fewer children from Nicaragua apprehended in the United States compared to Honduras. Additionally, it was necessary to study other factors that these children may be exposed to such as poverty and violence that also has been considered as major push factors of the current child migration crisis.

The analysis of poverty included overall wealth of the countries which plays a key role in the reduction of poverty since because the country's economic is crucial in order to obtain other gains such as creation of more jobs, better education, and healthcare system, which otherwise remain fragile and somewhat impossible to obtain. This growth strategically allocated towards poverty issues ensures all resources required to eradicate poverty. Other factors affecting children directly such as child labor were also included in this study in order to get an insight of the scope of children who already constitute labor force, therefore, can easily be added to the labor migration of the country. For the analysis of violence, the focus was on two specific types of collective violence such as political violence and gang-related violence. The approach to these two elements allows us to analyze the sequencing of several events, and, therefore, to study the short-term as well as the long-term effects of migration in the lives of these unaccompanied minors.

The first chapter of the thesis provided an overview of the issue that is being studied by addressing the problem and covering the main arguments of this thesis. The second chapter subsequently gives a summary of research carried out by different scholars examining the main theoretical perspectives of migration that can relate to this case. In this sense, these studies portray three aspects to consider when trying to understand the construction of the current crisis of unaccompanied child migration which are, poverty, labour migration and migratory networks which are confirmed by the results of this thesis. Additionally it covers the different roles of the migrant child both as a social actor who can actively make use of the agency to make decisión to better their livelihoods and the migrant child as a victim of human trafficking, with the intention to draw attention to the child as a passive and active actor in the migration process. Additionally, it was necessary to address

the linkage between poverty and violence since one of the countries subject of our analysis represents an outlier in these poverty-violence theory which can help explain the reason why fewer children from Nicaragua are migrating to the United States.

Using the results from the consulted literature, the subsequent chapters three and four provided facts and data which are necessary to addresses the research questions that will be detailed in the following subsections:

1. How has poverty and violence (as push factors) influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua to the United States.?

2. Why are Nicaragua and Honduras experiencing different migratory trend when it comes to unaccompanied migrant children influx in the United States? Based on the outcome of the analysis of the before mentioned chapters, the following subsections analyze whether this construction can justify the research statement which is "the lack of economic opportunity plus a high level of violence increases the number of unaccompanied child migration to the United States".

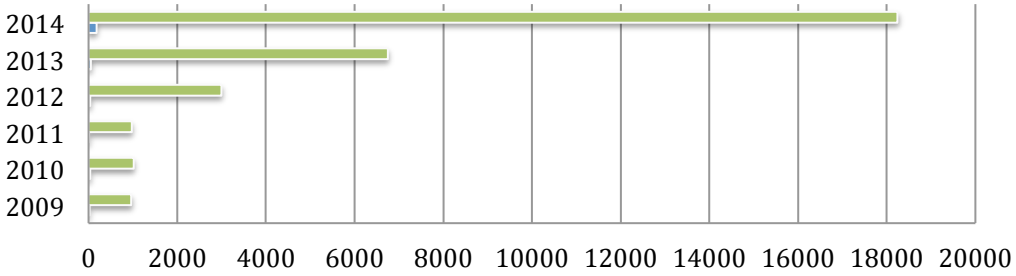
5.1. Impact of Poverty and Violence on Child Migration

How has poverty and violence (as push factors) influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua to the United States?

In the past years, the number of children crossing the US borders without the companionship of a parent or an adult has been increasing. However, in the last three years the apprehension of these children has reached alarming numbers. The comparison shown in the table below reflects the number of unaccompanied children apprehended at the US

southern border from the fiscal year 2009 to 2014.

Figure 5.1 Nicaraguan and Honduran Minors Apprehended in the US (2009-2014)



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Honduras	968	1,017	974	2997	6747	18244
Nicaragua	18	35	14	43	57	177

Source: US custom and border protection

The thread of unaccompanied child migration observed in the above chart shows that the number of apprehended minors from both countries has been increasing in the past years however, the number of Honduran children that were apprehended throughout these years, has always been significantly higher than those from Nicaragua. In this sense, it was necessary for this thesis to analyze the socio-economic factors that are most relevant and highly characterizes the region.

5.1.1 Impact of Poverty

In overall terms, Nicaragua is considered a poorer country than Honduras. Knowing that economic factors are not enough to measure poverty, a careful review of the 2013 Human Development Report shows that both countries rank very low in HDI. Needed to mention, Honduras ranks 129 which is higher in HDI overall value than Nicaragua who

ranked 132, and analyzing some of it's multidimensional levels of poverty also shows a better outcome for Honduras. Tables 3.5 and 4.4 shows that Honduras has a higher number of children enrolled in the school who actually reach the last grade of primary. In addition, their percentage of the population with access to improved water and sanitation, almost doubles that of Nicaragua's. In overall terms of the social dimension of poverty, Nicaragua shows much more concerning results than Honduras.

On the other hand, a great number of children specified search of employment as one of the major factors driving them from their homes. Results based on 2005 estimates as shown in tables 3.4 and 4.3, Honduras has a higher percentage of people living under $1.25 a day (26 percent compared to 11 percent) and a higher percentage of unemployed people living under $1.25 a day (21 percent compared to 9.5 percent). The high percentage of people living under $1.25 a day plus high underemployment rates, can easily reflect a need for children to help fill the economic gap of their families and look for employment. Once these children find themselves in these situations, labor migration becomes a possible solution, and therefore, it cannot be ruled out that these children are migrating based on economic factors and poverty.

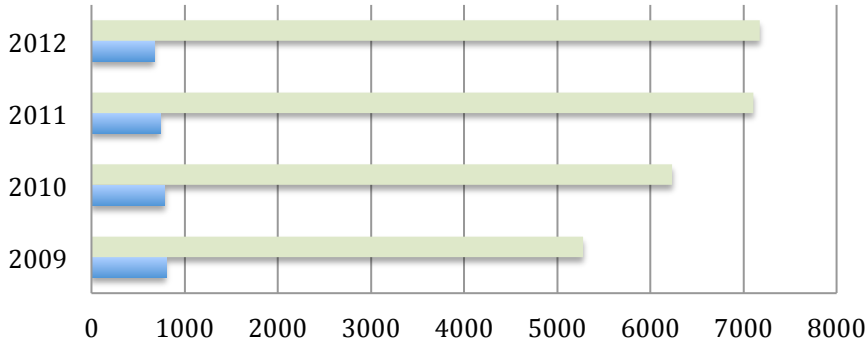
Although it is evident that both countries have high levels of poverty that has been proven by the existing literature to be one of the major causes of migration, the findings observed in chapter 3 and 4, does not demonstrate a large significant difference in poverty levels. The results of the analysis of economic dimensions of poverty are not enough to explain the reason why there is a larger amount of unaccompanied minors from Honduras and not its southern Neighbor. Finally, even though most of the indicators show that the difference in poverty levels between these two countries are not that high, Nicaragua is still

the country with most multidimensional poverty in the region. However, unlike its neighbors Honduras, it lacks high crime and violence.

5.1.2 Impact of Violence

Honduras is by far Central America's most violent country and widely considered the most violent in the world. In 2013, their homicide rate was eight times that of Nicaragua: 90.4 murders per 100,000 people compared to 11.3 per 100,000.

Figure 5.2 Nicaragua and Honduras Homicide Count (2009-2012)



	2009	2010	2011	2012
Honduras Murder Rate	5,280	6,236	7,104	7,172
Nicaragua Murder Rate	802	785	738	675

Source: UNODC. Available at: http://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html

Between the year 2000 to 2007, murder rates in Honduras were high compared to other countries in the region nevertheless, it was kept stable at a rate of 50 deaths per 100,000 populations. This somewhat stable murder rate began increasing at an alarming rate in 2008 where it increased to 60 deaths per 100,000 populations, and since then it kept increasing at the same speed. This yearly increase of murder rates in Honduras shown in the

above chart increased to 91.4 by 2011 and has not decreased since.

If we compare the increase of violence calculated with the murder rate in Honduras, it reflects a similar pattern with the increase of unaccompanied child migration. In this sense, before 2009 child migration was already an issue in the region, with a yearly increase in the number of unaccompanied children migrating towards the US. However, as observed in figure 5.1, the numbers of unaccompanied minors increased at a sudden and alarming pace until after 2009, coinciding with the large increase of murder rate from 50 to 90 per 1,000 populations, and coinciding with the gang violence against children, which was observed in chapter 4. In this sense, it becomes evident that the increase of unaccompanied minors is undeniable related to issues of safety and violence in their home countries, which can be reflected by the time in which both numbers increased.

In this case, it is safe to say that poverty, in form of high unemployment and underemployment rates; which at the same time leads to a large number of the population living below poverty lines, children dropping out of school and becoming labor force, along with the spiraling increase in levels of extreme violence suffered because of the inadequate management of gangs, have influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua to the United States.

5.2. Experiences of Honduras and Nicaragua

Why are Nicaragua and Honduras experiencing different migratory trend when it comes to unaccompanied migrant children influx in the United States?

When asked about the reasons for the decision to leave the country, children from Honduras name three major causes as being their drivers: Family reunification, search of employment, and violence (Gobierno de la Republica de Honduras, 2015). The answer to the second research question of this thesis lies in each one of these three factors mentioned by these children.

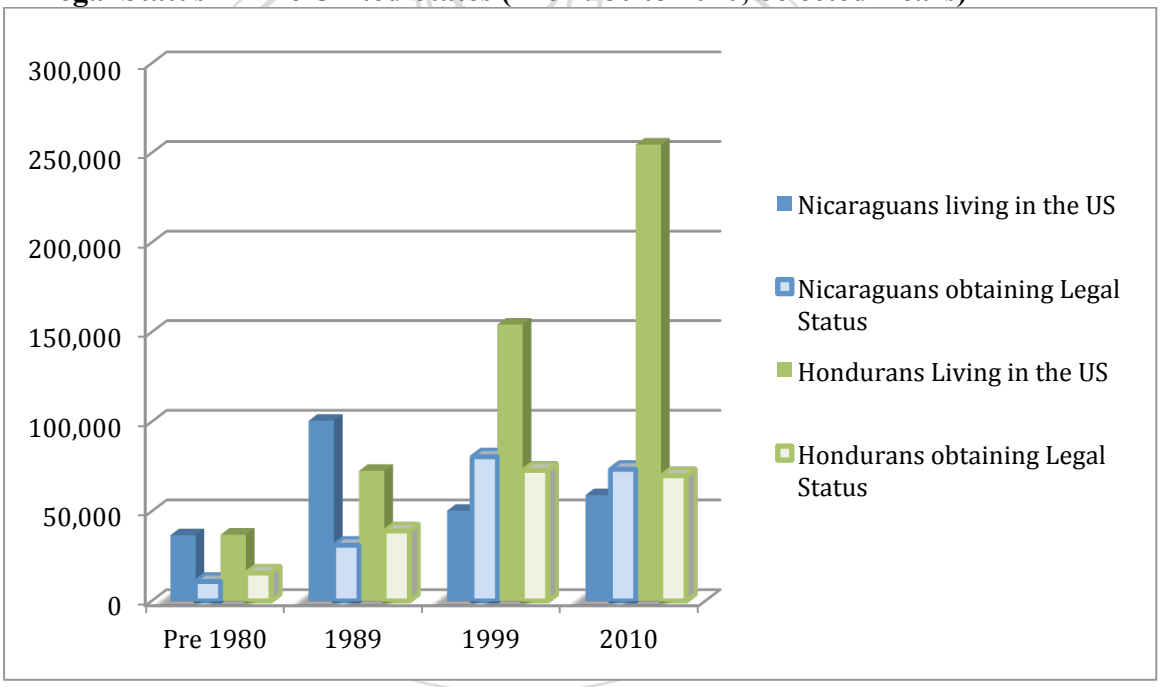
5.2.1 Family Reunification

Though it is important to know the amount of immigrants from Nicaragua in the US it is also crucial to know how many of these were permitted to stay legally in the country and how many were there illegally. As chapter 3 explained, periods between the late 1970s and 1980s during the revolution and contra war period, is when the migration from Nicaragua to The United States occurred in larger scales. After this period, most Nicaraguans migrated to Costa Rica in search of employment and better economic opportunities, a trend that remains today. On the other hand, the US has been the major destination country for Honduran migrants, with the largest scale of migration occurring after the late 1980s when the economic conditions of the country were going through a critical period.

In order to understand the child migration trend and the connection it has with the United States, it is important to know the outcome of the migration patterns covered in chapter 3 and 4 shown in figure 5.1. which represents the number of Nicaraguan and Honduras living in the united States including those who actually obtained a legal permanent resident status that same year. In this sense, during the years of conflict in Nicaragua, the number of Nicaraguans in the US is equal or greater than those of Honduras.

In years after the conflict where economic crisis became the major reason for Central American to migrate, the number of Hondurans is three times higher than Nicaraguans. During the past decades, the number of Hondurans obtaining legal status to reside in the US is less than Nicaragua. With a large number of Honduras residing in the United States and only a small percentage equivalent to approximately one third being able to reside legally in the country, this leaves a large number of Hondurans residing illegally in the US, creating an obstacle for them to be able to reunite with their families.

Figure 5.3 Nicaraguan and Honduran Born Population Living and Obtaining Legal Status in The United States (Pre-1980 to 2010, Selected Years)



Source: 2010 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. Immigrants in the United States, 2010: A Profile of America's Foreign-Born Population Available at http://cis.org/2012-profile-of-americas-foreign-born-population#birth
Note: Numbers here are from selected years, due to the availability of data collection.

This large population of illegal Honduran migrants in the US combined with the a desire of family reunification, is precondition for large-scale irregular migration including those of unaccompanied children who in various occasion claim to be traveling towards the

US to reunite with their families. The fact that Honduras has a larger population of illegal migrants in the US compared to Nicaragua can, therefore, be seen as a reason why these countries are not showing equal results in the numbers of children migrating unaccompanied. With a higher percentage of Nicaraguans having permission to reside in the US legally, these children have more opportunities to travel through regular channels and accompanied by an adult, given the legal status of their families.

5.2.2 Labor Migration

A large number of unaccompanied minors claim to have made their decisions based on the desire to look for better employment opportunities. In this sense, Honduras and Nicaragua equally show high numbers of children who already constitute labor force in both countries even before the legally permitted age of 14. So how does this explain the fact that there are fewer Nicaraguan children going to the US? The network theory of migration reviewed in chapter 2 can accurately explain this phenomenon. According to the systems and network theory, migration arises from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries. These pre-established linkages are necessary because they play a crucial role in facilitating migration flows in terms of access to better information, lower risks and higher expected incentives. In this cense, Nicaragua and Honduras have their network linkages established in different countries; while Honduras has pre-established networks in the U.S., Nicaragua has it with Costa Rica.

The second waves of Nicaraguan migrants that moved to Costa Rica in the 90s to search for better employment and run away from poverty established the existence of migration networks between the two countries. After this wave of migration, Costa Rica

became the number one destination for Nicaraguans. Despite the fact that Costa Rica is also a developing country, the wages and overall wealth of Costa Rica are greater than that of Nicaragua. In this sense, while Honduran children migrate to the US in search of employment, Nicaraguan Children migrate to Costa Rica to work.

This pattern of labor migration can justify to a certain extent the reason why there are not more Nicaraguan children migrating to the United States. Nevertheless it not enough to justify why Nicaragua and Honduras are having such a significant difference in the numbers of unaccompanied minors; this is because, despite the pre-established network in Costa Rica and children's need of employment, the number of Nicaraguan children migrating unaccompanied to Costa Rica is still not in alarming numbers of those Honduran Children entering the US. Therefore, if there were no pattern of migration to Costa Rica, and these children decided to migrate to the US instead, Honduras would still have a higher number of minors at the US borders. On the other hand, the child migration patterns from Nicaragua to Costa Rica are in the most part a circular migration. These children migrate for a specific period to work in the agricultural sector, and then return home once the school year begins. This is a very different migration pattern than the one that occurs towards the US which is more permanent and involves higher risks (IOM, personal communication, April 29, 1015). This makes it evident that even though Honduran children are searching for employment, the reason behind their migration decision is larger than their sole desire to work.

5.2.3 Violence: The Risks at Home Makes the Journey Worthwhile

Violence is a third factor that explains our second research question. Different reports assess the personal motivations behind the unaccompanied child migration patterns, and they link it mainly to search of employment, family reunification and-and to a lesser extent violence. In a survey conducted to the repatriated minors, when asked about the reason for migration, it was found that the majority decided to migrate for economic reasons, with the highest incidence, the second reason was for search of employment or family reunification reasons (Gobierno de la Republica de Honduras, 2015). Another study conducted by DINAF Honduras found that the third highest reason expressed by the children was violence or lack of security (DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015).

If there is a clear and undeniable relation between the increase child labor or the number of Hondurans living in the US with the unaccompanied child migration based on family reunification and search of employment. So why insist on another factor as a major contributor to unaccompanied child migration?

Firstly, because family reunification is to some extent enough to realize why more children are migrating towards the US, nevertheless, it cannot explain why Honduras is the highest sending country in Central America. In this sense, Honduras is not the Central American country with largest number of migrants in the US; both El Salvador and Guatemala have a larger population of documented and undocumented migrants in the US. Therefore, if family reunification would be the sole purpose of this current migration crisis, Honduras would be the third largest sending country instead of the first. The difference here is that Honduras have higher levels of violence than these other countries.

Second, labor as a major driver of child migration is also not enough to explain why there are more migrant children leaving towards the US. In this sense, reviewing surveys conducted to Honduran children to assess the reason for their migration, it was found that the participants were only asked for the main factor that motivated them to migrate which excluded the possibility of the child having more than one reason to migrate. In this sense, many respondents may have migrated based on a combination of 2, 3 or more factors, which means that even though they may be driven by better work opportunities or family reunification, the presence of high levels of violence in the sending country may increase they desire to leave. At the same time, this creates the possibility that if factor violence did not exist, for some of these children migration would have been an option given the high risk and dangers of the journey, therefore violence at home makes the journey worthwhile.

Lastly, another reason to state that violence is another important factor largely contributing to this child migration crisis is based on what happened to Honduran children once they are repatriated. During the first phase of the repatriation process, there is an identification process of the child where authorities in the US gather information from the child to contact family members in Honduras who will be waiting for them once they are repatriated. This information is then forwarded to DINAF in Honduras who conducts an investigation to verify the information of the child and other safety aspects. According to DINAF, there are frequent cases where children claim that they do not want to return to the place where they were living and relentlessly refuse to provide any information of the place they previously lived and the person in charge of them before they left the country (DINAF, personal communication, May 27, 1015). In these cases, DINAF conducts investigations related to violence, child abuse, trafficking, and threats. Children who refuse to provide

information are sent to a home where they are included in a process of reintegration and capacitating where some later decide to provide information of the family members. Others proactively ask to be placed in an alternative home since they have no intentions to go back to their previous homes. A phenomenon that was noticed among these children is that the majority does not denounce safety issues as the reason they migrated (Ibid). The reason behind this behavior is because they are afraid of what may happen to them if they denounce this violence especially since the type of violence they are exposed generates repercussions directly to them or their families and they afraid of becoming victims of the same issue that drove them away.

In short, The findings of the study points out that the search for better economic opportunities, alongside the need to reunite with families, are some of the main drivers of unaccompanied child migration in the region. However, when it comes to understanding the reason behind the sudden increase of unaccompanied child migration towards the US, to the point where it becomes a humanitarian crisis, these two factors are not enough to assess the issue. In this sense, a relation was found between the increase in the levels of collective violence in the country (first related to the 2009 coup which caused a lot of institutional weakness and instability in the country); with an increase of unaccompanied child migration migrants to the United States; therefore, violence becomes an important element to be addressed. Additionally, when trying to understand the reason why there are more children from Honduras migrating to the US compared to Nicaragua the answer lies in a combination of all three factors, Family reunification and labor migration based on two different pre-established networks and the existence of high levels of violence present in one country but absent in the other.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This research arises from the current surge in unaccompanied migrant children from Central America who are entering the United States southern borders in an irregular fashion and by numbers that have surpassed the traditional migration flows. In the past years, apprehensions of unaccompanied children have increased significantly and the phenomena as it pertains, involve a larger share of children from Central America instead of Mexico with Honduras being the highest sending country of them all while other countries such as Nicaragua hold a very low amount of children apprehended at the border.

This increasing number of unaccompanied children migrating to the United generated a need for qualitative research to answer questions regarding the root causes or push factors of the increase in unaccompanied migrant children, and why Honduras represents the highest sending country in Central America, while other countries such as Nicaragua are not experiencing the same issue. At the same time, it became necessary to analyze the different social and economic aspect aspects that may be causing this child migration surge.

The overview and analysis of the multidimensional measurements of poverty positioned Honduras in a better situation vis-a-vis Nicaragua, this outcome provides evidence showing that the reason behind these unique migration patterns cannot be found only in traditional economic explanations of migration dynamics. Children from Honduras are not crossing the US borders solely to get better jobs or run away from economic hardship. Furthermore, based on the selection of cases, a very outstanding variable that marks the difference between them both, are they high and low levels of violence that exist

between them, therefore, it becomes necessary to include a country level analysis of violence in addition to the economic variable.

After responding the first research question, [8] through an analysis of multidimensional levels of poverty, and an analysis of violence. It was found that although Nicaragua has higher levels of multidimensional poverty compared to Honduras, both countries showed high levels of child labor alongside high levels of unemployment and underemployment. In addition, it was also found that one of the main reasons children decided to migrate from these countries was the search of employment. Therefore, it can be said that poverty influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua in the form of early labor incorporation and high unemployment rates.

On the other hand, the analysis of violence concluded that despite the strive for economic stability in Honduras, there has been an increase of gang related violence in this country which is causing a lot of fear. When violence was measured with murder rates per 100,000 populations, there was a direct correlation between the increase of violence with the increase of unaccompanied child migration. In this sense, it was found that before 2009 the while the levels of violence remained stable in Honduras, the number of unaccompanied minors was also significantly low compared to Mexico, which at the time had the highest number of unaccompanied minors. As of 2013 when murder rates increased to an alarming 90.4 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, the rates of unaccompanied migrant children from Honduras had tripled, becoming the number one sending country in the region. At the same time, the increase in child migration coincided with the implementation of Iron Fist and Super Iron Fist policies in Honduras, where gang members begun recruiting children in

[8] How has poverty and violence (as push factors) influenced the child migration flow from Honduras and Nicaragua to the United States?

gangs to commit violent crimes, and later begun victimizing the children that refused to join gangs or decided to leave the gangs. This fear factor caused by high levels of violence is one of the key components that are missing in Nicaragua. Therefore, it can be concluded that the failure to guarantee the fundamental conditions of security contributes to the increase of unregulated child migration.

These results along with the analysis the different patterns of migration were enough to identify the reasons why Nicaragua and Honduras are having different experience when it comes to the amount of unaccompanied children migrating to the U.S. In this sense, Nicaragua does not have the high levels of gang-related violence that are present in Honduras which are responsible for a great number of children migrating towards the United States. Secondly, when it comes to factor poverty, even though children from both countries are deciding to leave in search for better economic opportunities, children from Nicaragua migrate principally to Costa Rica in a more circular fashion, whereas Honduran children move towards the U.S.

The completion of the research objectives mentioned in Chapter 1 and the answers to the above mentioned research questions, have supported the main argument of this study which is "the lack of economic opportunity plus a high level of violence increases the number of unaccompanied child migration to the United States". Although it has been shown in traditional migration theories and literature reviewed in chapter 2 that economic factors are one of the main reasons why people migrate, economic rationale itself is not enough to explain this migration crisis. In this sense, when other variables such as violence are added to the analysis, it marks the difference between the dynamics of both countries and the ways in which child migration increases. This study has therefore primarily served the purpose of contributing to the overall understanding of how poverty and violence have influenced the child migration flow (as a push factor) to the United States. At the same time,

it has help us understand why countries of origin such as Nicaragua and Honduras have had a different experience in child migration pattern of unaccompanied minors apprehended at the United States southern border.

6.2. Policy Recommendations

This unaccompanied child migration crisis is a big challenge that has to do with the vulnerability and fragility in these children's environment. There is a multi-causal context in the region where there is a necessity to articulate certain mechanisms to improve living standards but also accompanied by efforts to reduce levels of violence.

In the case of unaccompanied child migration in Central America, this crisis should not be addressed as an isolated issue, or as a problem between two or three countries. Instead, the situation needs to be addressed as a regional problem involving sending, transit and destination countries; including those countries that are not sending a large scale of unaccompanied minors to the U.S but nevertheless, child migration still exists at a lower scale and with other destination countries.

In this sense, this child migration crisis is only being addressed between the northern triangle and the U.S. If state leaders only address and try to suffocate the issues that meets the eye, they will fail to see other possible outcomes such as these children opting to flee to other countries (south-south migration), ending so not the humanitarian crisis, but instead shifting its curse and destination country.

This problem cannot be solved through simplistic thinking and it is not about creating walls and reinforcing border patrol. If the real interest in play is protecting the well-being of these children and not only keeping them out of U.S. borders, then this crisis should be seen by policymakers as a regional problem to propose regional solutions.

Furthermore, Nicaragua may not have the same magnitude of children leaving the country as those of the northern triangle, nevertheless, there is still a circular labor child migration that makes it imperative for creation of policies to protect these children. The same way that child migration of the northern triangle was overlooked until it received a humanitarian pressure from Mexico and the US, other countries in the region need to acknowledge the need to address the situation and implement policies to promptly avoid similar outcomes. In the end, prevention and early intervention are the best solutions. For this, there needs to be better efforts when it comes to collecting and sharing data on unaccompanied child migration in order to engage in a better regional monitoring and evaluating the impact of these policies.

Additionally, besides addressing the issue as a regional problem, each country needs to adjust their migration policies towards their own reality. Central American countries firstly need to acknowledge whether they are a sending, transit or a receiving country in terms of migration, especially those of unaccompanied children. This way, they will create policies that more accurately address the issues of child migration, and, therefore, more protection and safeguarding of the rights and overall wellbeing of the child can be ensured. Secondly, to create such policies, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the fact that children are also social actors who make use of their agency. To begin with, in addition to the adoption of policies that better fits the migration reality of the country, migration policies also have to eliminate the adult way of analyzing these issues that led to the failure of anticipating this child migration crisis and the inability to see that children can also make decisions to migrate. The majority of laws and migration policies incorporate clauses, which are intentionally aiming to protect the child but can also harm their interest. These type of

clauses need to be revised to ensure new alternatives and other solutions to complement them.

Furthermore, there is a collective and shared responsibility towards looking out for these children. This creates a need to implement policies that directly points out the roles the entire community plays in terms of protection and safeguarding the wellbeing of children at a national, community and neighborhood level. In this sense, there has to be a well-established detection process where at-risk children are identified. For this, there should be training programs directed towards teachers, health care workers, and other social actors in the neighborhood and community level, for increasing awareness on the problematic and to help in the detection of at risk children. In addition, there also needs to be an implementation of a follow-up process where the situations that characterized children as being at risk will be directly addressed. The solution to this should not be to only try and persuade the children, but also to provide other alternatives to migration and better options that make them want to stay at home.

Lastly, to minimize the scale of unaccompanied child migration, state leaders must keep in mind that the current migration crisis of unaccompanied children did not start with migration. Therefore, in addition to policies that directly address the child migration issues, there is a need to address deeper issues behind this crisis and develop stronger policies to enforce security and specifically strengthen the areas that are affecting children in the region. There is a strong need to better address destabilizing factors in sending countries such as Honduras where there is a lot of corruption and weak democratic institutions. The existing corruption in the police services and the judicial system creates a lot of distrust from the population and contributes towards the increase of violence. In addition, countries

such as Honduras need to acknowledge the fact that policies such as the Iron Fist have failed to achieve their objective of reducing levels of violence, which instead ended up intensifying them. Therefore, instead of adopting even harsher policies, Honduras should opt for more comprehensive policies which encourages more trust in the police and an active, responsible citizen participation, such as those implemented in Nicaragua.

6.3. The 2014 US Immigration Reform and the Need for Further Research

The challenge of unaccompanied child migration is a great one and does not rely in whether or not the children are migrating; the problem is the manner in which they are doing so. Unfortunately, migration policies are not one that facilitates family reunification; this, however, does not stop children from migrating, which is why they find themselves migrating through irregular channels and being exposed to numerous dangers.

In November 2014, president Obama announced an immigration reform, which will allow people who have been in the US for more than 5 years to stay in the country temporarily without fear of deportation. This reform applies for those who register, pass a criminal background check, and are willing to pay their fair amount of taxes. This new development creates a necessity to investigate the impact these policy changes will have on the case of child migration, especially since the results of this thesis showed that some of these children are migrating for reasons of family reunification. In addition to the new events and change of US migration policies, more empirical data is needed to continue to construct deliberate policy recommendations.

Future research can also benefit from a multidimensional approach unaccompanied

child migration. However, behind every child, there is a family and there is yet much research to be done about the families of these unaccompanied children, who were supposed to be looking after the child to ensure their wellbeing. A more exhaustive study of the family nucleus of the migrant child, who represents their support system, can also help understand issues behind their decision to migrate and help implement policies of the early detection of at-risk children.

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