Centro de Estudios y Programas Interamericanos

CEPI

DOCUMENTO DE TRABAJO

No. 21

Children in Transit: Results of Interviews with Central American Unaccompanied Minors Encountered in Mexico

Anita Khashu

Abril 2010

Children in Transit: Results of Interviews with Central American Unaccompanied Minors Encountered in Mexico

Executive Summary

While unaccompanied minors are not one of the largest groups of migrants traveling through the Americas, they are amongst the most vulnerable of migrants. As a result of their particular vulnerabilities, they become victims of some of the most serious security problems in the region, such as human trafficking, corruption of public officials in particular police, gang violence, and other more generalized forms of violence and crime. Given that the issue of the migration of unaccompanied minor immigrants has received a lot of attention both in the United States and Mexico, and that the population of unaccompanied minors being served by the detention and removal system in the United States is very similar to those minors being detained and served in Mexico, it is important that knowledge of the children, their experiences migrating, and best practices on the treatment of unaccompanied minors should be shared amongst concerned professionals and researchers on both sides of the border.

Despite the great need, there is very little research about this migration flow, particularly about Central American unaccompanied minors´ experiences in Mexico. More research is needed to aid state and non-government actors in both the United States and Mexico in developing improved procedures for apprehension, detention, adjudication of immigration claims, and repatriation. For this reason, we launched a study of unaccompanied minors experiences migrating from Central American to and through Mexico on their way to the United States. This working paper summarizes findings from a series of interviews conducted with 77 detained and non-detained unaccompanied minors encountered in Mexico. The hope is that increased knowledge of this migration flow will assist policy makers in the region improve policies for the care,

detention, and repatriation of unaccompanied minors, as well as develop effective preventative practices.

Some of the major findings from our interviews with unaccompanied children encountered in Mexico are listed below.

- The majority of unaccompanied children encountered in the study had strong social networks in the United States, with 83% reporting having family or close friends in the United States.
- Only 17% had parents presiding in the U.S., despite the perception that increases in this migration flow are due to the desire for reunification with parents separated from their children through migration.
- Adolescent migrants differ than adults in the ways in which they make decisions and evaluate risk. More research is needed to better understand the psychological factors influencing unaccompanied adolescents choice to migrate and their experiences during the process.
- While poverty and perceived lack of employment opportunities are strong motivators of adolescent migration, hope or ambition for a better future is often the driving factor.
- According to the children's accounts, they seem to be making the decision to migrate largely on their own with very little consultation with family members, although a smaller segment of the population did report consulting their parents.
- Many of the children had heard accounts of the risks and dangers of the journey north; however, many did not have detailed knowledge of how to make the journey and often embarked on the trip with very little preparation and funds.
- Very few children in our sample had hired a smuggler. Given that the majority of our sample was detained, this suggests that Mexican federal immigration

enforcement efforts may not be as effective at apprehending migrants traveling with smugglers.

- During this study, we encountered very few Salvadoran unaccompanied minors. Moreover, the number of Salvadoran minors (both accompanied and unaccompanied) apprehended by Mexican authorities is considerably lower than the proportion of Salvadoran unaccompanied children being apprehended and detained in the United States, which suggests that they may have more sophisticated migration methods and routes that allow them to more effectively evade Mexican authorities.
- There was great variation in demographic and social profiles between children belonging to the two principal nationalities represented in our sample—Guatemalan and Honduran. For instance, we encountered a very small percentage of Honduran girls, whereas Guatemalan girls almost equaled their male counterparts. Most likely as a result of this difference in the gender breakdown, the average age of the Guatemalan interviewees was fifteen, whereas the average age of Honduran children interviewed was seventeen (girls overall had an average age of 15). Honduran children were also less likely than the Guatemalans to have been studying immediately prior to migration and Hondurans were more likely to have financed the journey through savings. Hondurans were also more likely to report arguments or physical confrontations in their household and more were likely to say there were public safety problems in their community.
- Recidivism was low amongst the population interviewed, which might be due to an initial, unrealistic evaluation of the difficulties of the journey and a shattering of these false impressions through personal experience.

- While most children interviewed reported that they were migrating for economic reasons, it is likely that other factors influenced their perception of their opportunities in both their community of origin and their destination country--factors that may have influenced their decision to migrate. For instance, it is likely not a coincidence that the vast majority of children interviewed had family members in the United States, as it probably impacted their assessment of the probability of successful integration.
- Very few children had family members residing in Mexico, which may have implications for immigration and detention policy.
- Most of the children interviewed stated that they would return to their family home if repatriated. Of the few that feared returning to their community, most were worried about parental anger at having migrated without informing the parents beforehand, distress at the loss of funds, and embarrassment at having failed. A small percentage of children stated that they would not return to their home, and more research is needed to better understand what happens to this subset of repatriated children.
- Very few children under twelve were encountered during the study. Of the four children under twelve interviewed, only one was in route to the United States and had been abandoned by his smuggler. The other three children were brought to the attention of immigration officials essentially through child protection vehicles (the children were either victims of domestic violence or had been abandoned).

Background

Every year, thousands and thousands of children are separated from their parents or primary caregivers and embark on transnational migration alone throughout the

globe. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees categorizes these migrants as unaccompanied children: persons under 18 who have been separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or by custom, is responsible to do so (UNHCR 1997, 5). Historically, the majority of unaccompanied children migrated to developed countries through resettlement programs (Bhabha and Schmidt 2006). In the last few decades, however, this has changed, as thousands of unaccompanied children migrate alone outside of resettlement programs due to various reasons including war, famine, poverty, domestic abuse, or for family reunification. Accurate estimates of the number of unaccompanied children migrating do not exist; however, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has collected data from 28 countries on asylum seekers. In 2003, they found that 12,800 unaccompanied children sought asylum in these 28 countries (four percent of all asylum seekers in the data collected), which does not include important destination countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, France, and Italy. Thus, it is likely that the number of unaccompanied children seeking asylum worldwide is much higher, and the overall number of unaccompanied child migrants yet even greater (UNHCR 2004).

Every year, tens of thousands of unaccompanied children arrive in the United States—the majority of who are from Latin America—and are apprehended by U.S. immigration authorities (Thompson 2008, 7; Haddal 2007, 5). Most of these children arrive at U.S. points of entry or are apprehended along the U.S. Mexico border. In 2006, U.S. authorities apprehended 101,952 immigrant minors (it is not clear how many of them were unaccompanied), most of who were Mexican nationals and were voluntarily repatriated as per bi-national agreements between the United States and Mexico (Haddal 2007, 2). Approximately 7,000 to 8,000 of the unaccompanied minors that are apprehended by U.S. authorities every year (typically those not eligible for voluntary

repatriation) are placed into immigration removal proceedings and detention with the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)—the U.S. federal agency responsible for the care and custody of unaccompanied children, while their immigration removal proceeding is pending (Haddal 2007, 2). The vast majority of the children detained by ORR, approximately 90 percent, are nationals of one of three countries: Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). As the map below shows, most of these children are apprehended near the U.S.-Mexico border; and, thus, it is likely that most have just arrived after crossing through Mexico.

Figure 1
Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions in Fiscal Year 2007
Based on DHS Field Office Referral

Map Retrieved from ACF Website, on 6/2/08. It includes children referred to ORR DUCS by DHS field offices: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/FY2007UAC_ApprehensionsMap.doc

While thousands of Central American unaccompanied minors are apprehended in the United States and many others are living undetected within the U.S. borders, many children who embark on the gruelling journey from their homes in Central America never make it to the United States, having been apprehended in Mexico by law enforcement and immigration authorities. According to statistics maintained by the Mexican National Institute of Migration (INM for is initials in Spanish), in 2008 they repatriated 5,204 unaccompanied children, who, not surprisingly, were nationals of the

same three Central American nations represented in the population of children detained by the ORR.

Some children are brought to the United States by smugglers who have charged large sums for their transport or traffickers who intend to exploit them. At times, smugglers hold migrants hostage in an effort to extort additional money from their families; if these attempts fail, the smugglers may abandon the child migrants, even if they are very young. Unaccompanied children with the least economic resources—those who cannot afford the ever escalating smuggler's fees—make the perilous journey over land placing themselves in danger of exploitation, robbery, sexual assault, hunger, physical injury (particular as a result of riding on top of trains), and other criminal victimization (Johnson 2008, 1; Belen, Posada del Migrante 2009, 9). According to a report of the National Human Rights Commission in Mexico (CNDH for its initials in Spanish), in a six-month period of time, they registered 9,758 kidnappings of migrants traveling through Mexico; and in 5,723 of these cases, smugglers were the perpetrators of the kidnapping (CNDH 2009, 12, 16). Thirty percent of the migrants interviewed for the CNDH study reported the presence of minors amongst the victims of the kidnappings (CNDH 2009, 18). While all migrants put themselves at risk when migrating north from Central America to the United States, unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, forced labor, and exploitation and abuse (Bhabha and Crock, 20).

We embarked on a study of Central American unaccompanied children's experience in Mexico because, as described above, the population of unaccompanied minors detained in the United States (for more than a brief period before voluntarily repatriating as in the case of Mexican migrants) is very similar to the population of unaccompanied child migrants detained in Mexico. Moreover, while unaccompanied

minors are not one of the largest groups of migrants traveling through the Americas, they are quite possibly the most vulnerable group of migrants in the Americas, and indeed throughout the globe. Increasing knowledge of the population of Central American unaccompanied minors in Mexico hopefully will foster more bi-national sharing of research and best practices, thus leading to the development of more effective and informed proposals for reform of the treatment of this population by U.S. and Mexican authorities.

Research Design

The observations and conclusions described in this paper are based on data collected from September 2007 to June 2008. The research plan for the study included four components: legal research, a literature and periodical review, interviews with stakeholders and migration experts, and structured interviews with unaccompanied minors. The legal research component incorporated a review and analysis of both Mexican and international legal frameworks governing the treatment of unaccompanied minors. For the second component of the project, we conducted a review of legal and social science literature on Central American migration in Mexico, and in particular on the topic of unaccompanied minors. We also conducted a review of three important newspapers in the country—*La Jornada, La Reforma, and El Universal*—between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2009, searching for articles about Central American migration, human rights of migrants, unaccompanied minors, and Mexican law and policy on detention, deportation, and migration. During this stage of the project, we also reviewed administrative statistics on detention and removal/repatriation and interviewed representatives of governmental agencies, non-government organizations, academia, and international organizations involved in the migration field. In total, we interviewed 25 stakeholders.

While we employed a multi-pronged approach to the research, the objective of this paper is to present the findings from the fourth and final component of the study, structured interviews with 77 unaccompanied minors.[1] To conduct these interviews, we used an interview instrument that included questions on demographics of the population, their home and family life, their employment prior to migration, their education, motivations for migrating, and their migration history and experience. A draft of the instrument was submitted to the INM for approval, at which time the instrument was cut in length and the number of questions reduced.

The majority of the interviews, fifty-three, were conducted with children detained in the INM detention center (*estación migratoria* or migration station) in Tapachula, Chiapas. The others were conducted at the railway tracks in Lechería in the state of Mexico and in a public (DIF) shelter and private humanitarian shelters in the state of Chiapas.[2] We decided to conduct interviews in the detention center and DIF shelter in Tapachula because according to government officials and stakeholders interviewed all Central American minors are eventually transferred to Tapachula, no matter which migratory path they took or where they were apprehended in the country, from where they are repatriated to Central America by land. The train tracks in Lecheria was also chosen because various train lines coming from the Southern part of Mexico meet, and therefore, the population encountered there had taken various routes north.

---

[1] 80 interviews were conducted but we decided to eliminate three of the surveys from analysis because during the interview process we discovered that the child could not be classified as an unaccompanied minor, using the UNHCR definition of an unaccompanied child, which is a person "under the age of 18, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so." *Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Guidelines on Policies and Practices in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum*, February 1997. While the number of interviews was too low to generate statistically significant findings, the findings are nevertheless relevant as a portrait of one group of unaccompanied children encountered in Mexico.

[2] The national child welfare agency, Sistema Nacional Para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (SNDIF), in collaboration with their state counterparts, under interagency agreements, are responsible for the detention of children under 12, thus all of the children interviewed in the DIF shelter (public) were detained. The children interviewed in private shelters typically were not detained but receiving services of either a religious or humanitarian organization.

The interview sample was not necessarily representative of the overall population of unaccompanied children migrating through Mexico, because we did not have access to migrants traveling with smugglers that were not apprehended by Mexican authorities. For the most part, interviews were conducted in two main locations, the railway tracks and the detention centers. Migrants traveling by train tend to be the least resourced and thus unable to hire a smuggler. Merely six children in total, all of whom were detained at the time of the interview, hired a smuggler to help them migrate. Given news reports and reports of humanitarian organizations working in the field of migration and trafficking in Mexico and the authors own observations while conducting fieldwork, this number seems low. This suggests that the Mexican authorities immigration enforcement efforts are not necessarily targeted at the population migrating with the assistance of a smuggler, or at the very least, are not very effective with respect to these migratory routes. Indeed, most of the children who spoke of their arrest were detained either on the trains, on the tracks awaiting arrival of a train, or while traveling on a bus, rather than through anti-smuggling operations. In sum, the population interviewed does not necessarily represent the overall population of unaccompanied children migrating from Central America through Mexico, but more closely represents (although our sample is not statistically significant) the detained population and those traveling by train (Lecheria´s interviews).

Demographic and Social Profile of the Children

Overview

According to official statistics of the National Migration Institute (INM for its initials in Spanish), 5,983 minors (accompanied and unaccompanied) were repatriated in 2007 from Mexico, approximately 72% of who were traveling unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. Approximately 48 percent of all children repatriated were of

Guatemalan origin, 37 percent were Honduran, and 16 percent were Salvadoran.[3] Only one Nicaraguan child was repatriated in this time period. Of all children repatriated, approximately 24 percent were girls and 16 percent were under 12 years old.[4] In 2007, the INM did not disaggregate the data of children under 12 by accompanied or unaccompanied status. For the year 2009, however, the INM made available statistics of numbers of returned children under 12 that were unaccompanied; of 743 detained children, 117 were unaccompanied (INM 2009, 78). Unfortunately, the INM do not disaggregate the data of children 12 and over who are unaccompanied.

Similar to the official detained and repatriated minor statistics, of the 77 interviews analyzed for this project, 23 percent were female and 77 percent were male.[5] Besides for this indicator, however, the demographic indicators for the interview sample differed from the total population of children repatriated by the INM. Below we have included more specific findings on the demographic and social profile of the children interviewed.

Nationality

Merely 33 percent of the interviewees were Guatemalan, approximately 60 percent Honduran, and 8 percent Salvadoran. Of the sample of detained children only, however, approximately 40 percent was Guatemalan. The difference in the demographic breakdown of both samples could be due to the fact that the INM or other Mexican authorities had not apprehended approximately 22 percent of the population interviewed (rather they were interviewed at the train tracks or shelters). In other words, the populations migrating and the populations apprehended may differ. Or, the difference

[3] When rounded to the nearest whole number, the total was higher than 100 percent.
[4] Data retrieved at http://www.inm.gob.mx/estadisticas/2007/rechazos.mht on March 18, 2010.
[5] In 2007, 23.6% of children repatriated were female. Data retrieved at http://www.inm.gob.mx/estadisticas/2007/rechazos.mht on March 18, 2010. In a report of Central American unaccompanied adolescents encountered in Mexico in detention and in countries of origin upon repatriation prepared by the Catholic Relief Services, they found similar findings, (CRS 2010, 4).

could be a result of the fact that almost 20 percent of the interviews were conducted at the railroad tracks in Lechería, where we encountered a disproportionately high percentage of Honduran migrants. Given that the poorest of migrants—those who cannot afford the assistance of a smuggler and even at times the price of a bus ticket to the northern Mexican border—tend to travel by train, it is no surprise that Hondurans are disproportionately represented in the sample of children interviewed at railroad tracks because they are amongst the poorest of the migrant populations. Indeed, a larger percentage of Honduran children stated that they were financing the trip through personal savings as opposed to the Guatemalans who were more likely to have received the funds from a family member.

The theory described above—that the Mexican authorities are not apprehending unaccompanied minors that travel with a smuggler at as frequent a rate as the total population of unaccompanied minors—is supported by the relatively low number of Salvadoran children in the interview cohort. In the U.S., according to statistics of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the agency responsible for the care and custody of unaccompanied minors in the U.S., 27 percent were Salvadoran in 2007 and most children are apprehended crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.[7] In our sample, only six of the 77 interviewees were Salvadoran. According to INM, merely 17 percent of the children detained (which includes unaccompanied and accompanied minors, and were this data to be disaggregated might be much lower) were of Salvadoran nationality. Thus, it seems that Salvadoran unaccompanied children are arriving in the U.S. at higher rates than they are being apprehended in Mexico. According to stakeholders interviewed, Salvadorans tend to have the most sophisticated migration routes, and their communities in the U.S. tend to have slightly more resources then their Guatemalan and

[7] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Division of Unaccompanied Children's Services, "Fiscal Year 2007 UAC Summary Statistics," provided to the author by email on March 27, 2008.

Honduran counterparts (in 2007, 21.4% of Hondurans and 19% of Guatemalans living in the U.S. are living in poverty, versus 14.6% of Salvadorans) (Pew Hispanic Center). It is possible that the number of Salvadorans encountered during our research was low because they tend to travel with smugglers who manage to effectively avoid Mexican authorities.

Gender

Our sample seems to match the gender breakdown of the total population repatriated. According to INM, 24 percent of the children repatriated were female and 23 percent of our population interviewed was female. While a little more than 23 percent of the interview sample was female, when the data is disaggregated by country of origin, there is significant variation amongst the top two countries of origin. Forty four percent of the Guatemalan children were female, whereas, merely 6.5 percent of the Honduran children were female. When interviewing near the railroad tracks, where the vast majority of children encountered were Honduran, we did not encounter any female children, which might partially explain the low level of Honduran girls. Some migrants reported that some females were waiting for the trains in more isolated locations at a distance from where most of the men congregated (most likely as a safety precaution), although it is unclear whether this included females less than 18 years of age. In fact, as the train would arrive, we did observe some women suddenly appearing to jump onto the train. However, when we disaggregated the data and analyzed only the detained children cohort, the percentage of females did not dramatically change. Approximately 46 percent of the detained Guatemalans and 10 percent of the Hondurans were female.[6]

[6] In the CRS study they found, contrary to our findings, that 20 percent of the Guatemalans interviewed were female and 23 percent of the Hondurans. It is unclear why the percentage of Guatemalan girls was so high in our sample and the Honduran so low, but our interview locations were different in the two studies that could account for this difference. Also, their sample in general includes many more

Age

The average age of the interview sample was approximately 16 years old. The female interviewees, however, were on average approximately one year younger than the males (15 years old). The average age of the children varied also by nationality. Salvadorans were the youngest, 13 years on average; however, because the sample of Salvadoran children was so small (6 children) and many of the Salvadoran children wound up in detention because of unique circumstances (such as the children who were turned into child protection authorities because of abuse and/or neglect), this data has little meaning. Of the two principal nationalities, Guatemalans were younger with an average age of approximately 15 years old and Hondurans on average were approaching 17 years old, although this difference may be related to the difference in gender breakdown by nationality (44 percent of Guatemalans interviewed were female).

In addition, only four children interviewed were under the age of 12, and those that were interviewed could not respond to all interview questions due to their capacity to understand the questions. This number is very low but seems consistent with what little statistical data we have of unaccompanied minors under 12. For instance, according to the Mexican national child welfare agency (DIF for its initials in Spanish), which is responsible for the detention of all children under 12 under an interagency agreement with INM, of 371 children served in the Chiapas DIF shelter in 2006, only 127 were under 12. In this same year, 8,120 minors were repatriated from Chiapas (CNDH (child migration) 2009, 94). As described above, in 2009, of the 743 children under 12 in custody of federal authorities for immigration violations (*alojados*), merely 117 were unaccompanied (INM 2009, 78). Thus it seems the majority of the sixteen

Salvadoran children, because their interview locations included two shelters for repatriated children in El Salvador (a little over 20% of the children were interviewed in these two locations) (CRS 2010, 21-23).

percent of repatriated children that were under 12 were migrating accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Language, Education, and Literacy

The vast majority of children spoke only Spanish, although approximately five percent spoke some English and twelve percent spoke Spanish as well as some other local language (mostly Guatemalans who speak indigenous languages and a small number of Garifuna children from Honduras). A larger percentage of the children detained at the Migration Center in Tapachula spoke indigenous languages, 17 percent, but this higher percentage most probably reflects the larger proportion of Guatemalans detained in this location. Almost 77 percent of the children were literate and another 18 percent stated that they could read and write a little bit. The literacy rates of our sample closely match national averages of the principal countries of origin: Guatemala 69.1%, Honduras 80%, and El Salvador 80.2%.[7] Most children have at least a minimal level of schooling, with average years of education of 5.66.[8] The majority of children interviewed had completed primary school. Merely three children never went to school. The average number of years of education was slightly higher than the average levels of the poorest populations of the principal countries of origins of the children interviewed. The level of education of the bottom 20% of the population 15 to 24 years of age in Guatemala in 2004 was approximately 3.5 and in Honduras 4.5 (USAID, 9). Despite the fact that the children we interviewed were probably amongst the poorest of the overall population of migrants in transit through Mexico, given the data on levels of education and literacy, it seems that these children may not all be coming from the poorest communities in their respective nations.

[7] Data retrieved from U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html, retrieved on March 10.

[8] The CRS study also found that most respondents in their study sample had completed elementary school through grade 6 (CRS 2010, 24).

Living situation and principal activities prior to migration

The majority of the children interviewed (65 percent) lived with one or both of their parents prior to migrating. Those that did not live with their parents lived with grandparents in a household that may have included other family members as well. Many of the children who lived with grandparents had one or both parents in the U.S.; however, many were living with grandparents because their parents were no longer alive, sick, or merely did not have the resources to care for them. The great majority of the children had already entered the labor force prior to migration. Sixty-two percent of the children reported that their main activity prior to migration was work, while nine percent worked as well as studied, and almost three percent had worked in the past and was seeking new employment at the time of migration. On average, Hondurans seem to have the largest percentage of children who worked prior to migration, with 72 percent reporting their principal activity to be work and thirteen percent work and study, as compared to 52 percent of Guatemalans with a principal activity of work and 4 percent work and study. Of the overall interviewee sample with prior employment, 46 percent did so in the agricultural sector, 22 percent in the informal work sector (e.g. car washing, selling clothing on the street, etc.), 17 percent in construction, and 11 percent in trades (such as plumber, electrician, and carpenter). Only one person worked in the recreation sector (bars, restaurants, etc.) and one as a domestic worker.

Migration History and Experience

The Decision to Migrate and Preparation

The vast majority of interviewees reported that they migrated directly from their community of origin and that at the time of the interview and/or their detention, they had been in transit to the United States. Seventy-two percent of interviewees lived in their last residence prior to migration since birth. Another 24 percent lived in their last

residence for at least one year or more. While several children reported having migrated internally within their country of origin for a short period of time prior to their most recent migration, these stories were uncommon. The children's responses seem to indicate that rarely had it occurred to them to move to another city within their country of origin to look for employment; rather, their first instinct or solution to their economic challenges seems to be to migrate to the United States or, to a lesser extent, Mexico.

Eight-eight percent of the children stated that the United States was their destination country, while merely nine children or twelve percent stated that their destination was Mexico. Of these nine children, two children stated that they planned to work in Mexico for some time to save money before embarking on the journey to the United States.

Often, according to the children's account of their decision-making process, it seems that the adolescents are making independent decisions to migrate, based on their own assessment of their options and what they perceive to be in their interests. Most children, 68 percent of the interviewee sample, claimed that the decision to migrate was made on their own without the assistance of other family members. Merely 32 percent stated that they consulted their parents; and of those cases, only a handful indicated that the parents put pressure on the child or was the principal decision maker. Approximately 16 percent of those that made the decision alone stated that they did not even inform their parents of their decision to migrate. Some of these children stated that they did not want to anger or cause worry to their parents. They also articulated concern that their parents would have stopped them from migrating had they known of their children's plans. Some of these children also expressed fear of returning to their home upon repatriation, because they will have to deal with parental anger at their having migrated without advising the parents.

When speaking with the children about their thought processes prior to traveling to Mexico, they often discussed their concerns and desire to construct a better future. However, we often observed that their decision making process was hurried, lack planning and forethought, and undervalued the risks. At times, peers also influenced the children's decision. For instance, one child recounted his decision-making process. He stated that on the day prior to migrating, he was sitting in his home watching television when a friend stopped by. His friend proposed to him that they try to make the journey to the United States, the interviewee agreed, and that very same day they embarked on their journey to the United States. They left their homes without clothing and without money. They hitchhiked much of the journey, and then were arrested on the train line in Veracruz. Unfortunately, this story was not unique. Many children interviewed put little preparation into planning their trip, often assuming that they would figure it out as they went along, and they traveled with little financial resources.[9]

Fifty three per cent, at the very least, sought advice of others prior to traveling. Most commonly, this information came from friends (49 percent), but at least 15 children (39 percent) received it from a family member. By and large, the friends and family informed the children that the journey would be very dangerous, and counseled them that they should be very careful and not travel with very much money. About a quarter of those who received guidance were also given information about how to migrate, including routes and means of transport. Most of this advice, however, was given in very general terms. For instance, many children were told that the journey was dangerous but without description of the specific dangers and how to avoid them. While most children had heard that migration through Mexico carried risks, most of the children who spoke of these risks felt they personally would not be affected by these

[9] According to the CRS study, more than 50% of the children they interviewed were traveling with $100 or less when they began their journey (CRS 31).

dangers. This attitude we observed in the adolescents is consistent with the literature on adolescent development that adolescents tend to have a different attitude towards risk than adults, in particular that adolescents tend to discount the future more and weigh more heavily short-term consequences, and that they are less focused than adults on protecting themselves from losses or harm than on opportunities for gains in making choices (Scott 1995, 230). Research also shows that adolescents may experience differences from adults in the perception of risks, which may be due to differences in information access and different temporal perspectives (Scott 1995, 232-235).

Almost half of the children interviewed gathered the financial resources to travel through personal savings, although as many of them pointed out, they did not travel with very much money. Another 44 percent of the children received money from family members who either gifted or lent them the funds. When this data is disaggregated by nationality, we see much variation in the source of funds. Approximately 24 percent of the Guatemalan children versus 63 percent of the Hondurans made the journey with savings; while 33 percent of the Hondurans and 57 percent of the Guatemalans migrated with money either lent or given to them by a family member. Several children also worked for short periods of time in Mexico in order to help cover the costs of migration.

Surprisingly, merely six of the 77 interviews analyzed mentioned hiring a smuggler; also known as a "*coyote*" or ¨*pollero*¨ All of the children who had hired a smuggler had family members in the United States. An additional five children mentioned that while they had yet to hire a smuggler, they would do so once they arrive at the northern U.S.-Mexico border. All the children that paid a smuggler were interviewed while in detention, most probably because children and other migrants traveling by train or residing in shelters are typically attempting to migrate without the

assistance of a smuggler, although they may be planning to hire a smuggler once they arrive at the northern border.

Many of the female children, versus the male interviewees, modified their behavior and choices with regards to migration based on reports of the risks. Many girls, for instance, discussed their fears of traveling by train, and some even expressed fears of sexual assault as influencing their decision not to take the train route. The girls often chose to travel by bus, which they perceived as the safer route. In fact, most of the girls interviewed at the detention center were apprehended while traveling on a bus towards the northern parts of Mexico. A few male children, similar to the girls, expressed fear of riding the train, but typically this fear was a result of a personal experience rather than based on common knowledge of the hazards (as was the case with many of the female interviewees). The most extreme example was one child who was petrified of taking the train because his brother had had a fatal accident on the train few years prior to his migration.

Recidivism

The vast majority of children (78 percent), at the time of interview, stated that there were migrating for the first time and had never before attempted the voyage.[10] When disaggregating the sample by detained status, the percentage of first attempt at migration increases to 86 percent. This difference in result for the detained subgroup is possibly due to the fact that first-time migrants are more likely to be apprehended. Of the seventeen children that had migrated or attempted to migrate in the past, thirteen spoke of a prior deportation—seven had been deported from Mexico and six from the United States.

[10] Similarly, the CRS research study found the majority of children were migrating for the first time (CRS 2010, 4).

Despite common perceptions that the process of repatriation is typically followed immediately by a subsequent attempt at migration, recidivism amongst our sample was relatively low. Moreover, in the interviews, many children informed us that they did not think they would attempt the journey again. As one child explained, "I was dirty, at times I did not eat, and the train officials rob you of your money. In Tennosique delinquents assaulted me and robbed me of everything I had." Because of the suffering he experienced, he said that he would not try to migrate again. While most children are informed of the dangers and difficulties of migration through their social networks, many did not think that these challenges would affect them until they personally experience them. Four children reported that the trip was so much more difficult than they anticipated that they preferred to turn themselves into immigration authorities to be repatriated, rather than continue on their journey. None of these four children were victim to any egregious crime or human rights violation. Mostly, they discussed the difficulties of walking, being robbed, and subsequently having to travel with little or no money. In other words, the journey was simply much more difficult than they had imagined. Common to almost all of the children who declared that they would try to migrate again after repatriation is that they luckily managed to avoid the challenges of the journey and had had a relatively easy time. For instance, one child who stated he would attempt the journey again explained that he did not have any trouble during the journey, he walked for merely 12 hours, and nobody attempted to extort or rob him.

Factors influencing decision to migrate

In general, most children stated that they were migrating in seek of work. In response to a question about their motivation for migrating, 26 percent stated to work and send money to their family, 21 percent said to get money, and another 23 percent stated to work and get ahead (*salir adelante*). Another 10 percent said that they were

migrating because they wanted to get to know the United States. Merely 12 percent stated that they were migrating to reunify with family members in the U.S. (despite 83 percent reporting family members in the U.S.).[11] Three children reported that a situation of domestic violence in the home led to the migration, and two children cited public safety problems in their community as the motivation.[12]

Often, children have multiple and overlapping reasons for migrating, some of which they may not even be aware. While it is important to note their direct responses regarding their motivation for migration, to understand more fully and holistically their possible reasons for migration, it is also important to analyze their answers in the context of their responses to a range of questions. For instance, the fact that 83 percent had family members in the United States most likely influenced their decision to migrate in that the option of migration and employment in the United States seemed more easily attainable. Indeed, many of these children, while their motivations for migrating may have been economic, had plans to reunite with their family members in the United States. Seventeen percent said that they had at least one parent in the United States, and while some of these children stated that they were migrating for economic reasons, the presence of one or both of their parents in the United States most likely had a significant impact. Some of these children stated that their parent was not even aware that they were going to the United States and expressed reservation about reunification with their estranged parent, while others were clearly enthusiastic about the prospect of seeing their parent.

[11] This finding is consistent with a detention study conducted by the Regional Conference on Migration, entitled the Mexico- Canada Joint Study on Migrant Children in the Region, published in October 2002 (RCM).

[12] The CRS study found 59 percent were migrating in search of employment and 21 percent for family reunification, whereas in our sample 70 percent provided employment or economic motivations and merely 12 percent for family reunification. It is possible this difference is due to the considerably larger percentage of Salvadorans in the CRS interview sample and the fact that Salvadorans in the CRS sample were more likely to be migrating to reunite with family than the other nationalities, which is not surprising given the large number of Salvadorans in the U.S. (CRS 2010, 4).

Interviewers also asked a series of questions regarding home and community life in effort to develop a better understanding of factors that may have influenced the decision to migrate. For instance, issues of public safety and gang violence often are discussed in the literature on unaccompanied children as a push factor in migration of Central American unaccompanied minors (Bhabha and Schmidt 2006, 20-22; CRS 2010, 18). Less than half of the children, 44 percent, stated that their communities had problems of safety. Of these 32 children, 69 percent said that the security issue caused them fear. However, 64 percent of the children who reported safety issues in their community of origin stated that they have not been affected by this problem. Ten children reported having been affected by the violence, either generalized violence (four children) or gang (six children), but only two children mentioned public safety and violence as their principal reason for migrating. It is also important to note that there was great variation in responses about public safety by country of origin, with Guatemalan children stating in only 21 percent of the interviews that there were problems of insecurity in their community of origin, in contrast to the 55 percent of Hondurans who responded that there were problems of insecurity in their community.

Domestic or family violence has also been cited as a push factor in the migration of unaccompanied children (Bhabha and Schmidt 2006, 22; CRS 2010, 18). As stated above, three children declared that domestic violence was the cause of their migration.[13]In one of these cases, the father of the child was involved with a gang, in another case an alcoholic brother was abusive to the mother who was ill with cancer, and in the third case the child witnessed the stepfather murder the natural father. While not necessarily the primary motivation for migration, as described in more detail below,

[13] We only interviewed the children one time and thus it is possible that they did not reveal problems of domestic violence because they needed more time to feel comfortable. The children, however, were not asked directly whether they are victims of domestic violence. Rather, we asked a series of questions about whether there were any fights or arguments in their household.

at least two or three of the young children detained were victims of domestic violence. It is also important to note that additional children may have felt uncomfortable in our short time with them to discuss sensitive and potentially embarrassing issues such as domestic violence.

While domestic violence may have not been cited by a large number of the children as their principal reason for leaving their country, most likely the presence of violence or abuse in the home environment had some impact on the child's perception of the benefits of staying in his or her community and the quality of his or her life prior to migration. Almost 14 percent of the children interviewed mentioned use of alcohol or drugs in the household. But of those, only two seemed to involve serious abuse and problems associated with alcohol or drugs, which might have affected the child's decision to migrate. Approximately 20 percent mentioned that there were fights or arguments in the family, although it seems that very few involved serious problems of domestic violence directly involving the child as opposed to verbal arguments between family members and violence between family members living outside the immediate household. Guatemalan children were less likely to report family problems—only 8 percent reported family arguments or fights, in comparison to 23 percent of Honduran children. Almost 29 percent of those that responded that there were fights in their family stated that the fights were between the father and the mother, 14 percent said the fights were between the interviewee and his or her parents, and 29 percent stated that they were between the child migrant and other members of the family.

While domestic violence may not have cited as the principal motivation for migration, in more than a quarter of the interviews, the child discussed some difficulty in their home life that may have influenced the choice to migrate, even though they stated the primary reason was economic. Some of the difficulties or instabilities in the

household discussed by the children were illness in the family, aging grandparents inability to continue working, or one or both of the parents may have passed away or are in the United States.

Problems of health within the family unit seemed to be a more common issue amongst the interviewees than substance abuse and domestic violence, with 33 percent of interviewees indicating some sort of health problem in the family prior to migration, although the severity of the health issue varied greatly. In at least four cases, the health issue was severe and contributed to the child's desire to help the family financially. One of these children had a mother with heart problems, another had both a mother and sister who were about to undergo surgery, a third child's mother had cancer, and the fourth child's mother had diabetes which got severe enough that she could no longer work. Many children who lived with their grandparents prior to migrating also discussed how their grandparent was no longer able to work due to their age. It is possible that this situation led to the children feeling compelled to earn an income to help support themselves and/or their family, even in cases where the ill family member was not supportive of the decision to migrate.

Repatriation

The vast majority of the children interviewed (90 percent) planned to return to their families and residence in their country of origin if and when they are repatriated. A little less than six percent said they would return to no one and a little more than one percent insisted that they would not go back to their country of origin (it is likely that this group plans to reattempt migration after repatriated). Of the approximately 21 percent stated that they feared going home; only three interviewees stated that they feared gangs or violence in their community. Six children feared problems with their family, four of whom said their parents would be angry with them for having migrated. Another three

children were afraid of poverty. The rest described fear resulting from disappointment at their failure, explaining that the journey cost a lot of money and that they would not have enough to reattempt migration, or they simply stated they were ashamed of their failure.

Different subpopulations

Below, data was disaggregated into different subgroups in order to form a more subtle understanding of the differences amongst different populations, such as those who have family in the United States versus those that have no family in the United States, and even more specifically, we examined cases of children with a parent residing in the United States. We also analyzed the interviews of children who had Mexico as their destination and those with family in Mexico. Finally, we looked at the cases of children under 12 detained by immigration and child welfare officials.

Family in the United States

Merely 12 percent of the children interviewed stated that their principal reason for migrating was to reunify with family members in the United States, although 83 percent had family there. Even though they may not have stated it was their principal reason for migrating, almost 13 percent of the children had plans to reunify with parents when arriving in the United States (17% have a parent in the United States see below), 28 percent with brothers or sisters, and 31 percent with uncles or aunts. Most have not seen the family member they want to reunify with for more than a year (91.2%). Particularly those children with extended family members or siblings in the United States as opposed to parents seem to state that they were migrating for economic purposes or to get ahead (*salir adelante*). Of all children with family there, almost 25 percent said their motive for migrating was to work and send money to their family, 18 percent said to earn money, 12 percent said to get to know the United States, and 25

percent said to work and get ahead. In some cases the family members assure the children of a job upon arrival; in other cases, the family member is not even aware that the child was in the process of migrating. In a small subset of cases, the non-parental family member in the United States sent the child money to assist in the trip. Either way, it seems that, in many cases, the presence of family in the United States most likely gives the child hope or confidence that they indeed can survive there, even though it may not be the principal motivation according to the child.

Parent in the United States

Approximately, 17% of those interviewed (13 children) stated that they have a parent in the United States, although most had not seen this parent for many years. In some cases, the children have had regular contact with the parent, whereas in other cases, they have not had any contact with the parent since their separation. Some stated that their motivation for migrating was to see this parent, while others stated that they had no desire or intention to reunite with their parent. Six of thirteen people with parent/s in United States or Mexico migrated, at least in part, due to their desire to reunify with a parent. And in a few cases, the child mentioned that they had a parent, typically a father, in the United States with whom they would like to meet, but that the parent was not even aware that the child was migrating. In one case, the mother of the child migrant might have passed away during her migration north. In some cases the child expressed resentment towards the parent in the United States for having abandoned them, and even at times refusing to seek assistance from the parent who could have assisted them with their immigration issue. In most cases, the parent knew the child was migrating. In at least one case, the child had a parent in the United States but was not intending to migrate to there. The aunt of this child, who was his primary caretaker, brought him to Chiapas to work on a ranch. Another child had a mother in the

United States, but was intending to migrate to Mexico where his father lives to get to know him, even though he had had no contact with the father since the separation of his parents. Hondurans seemed less likely to desire reunification with parents than other nationalities (7.5% versus 20% of Guatemalans and 25% of Salvadorans).

In analyzing the subgroup of children with parents in the United States, we expected that we would see a particularly high number of children responding that they decided to migrate with the assistance of their parents or with their parents being the principal decision maker, that they would be much more likely to travel with a smuggler, and that they would be more likely to have been full time students prior to migrating than the overall population. However, of the children with parents in the United States, only one child traveled with a smuggler and surprisingly low number consulted parents in deciding whether to migrate (5). Although not statistically significant, data analysis showed a correlation between parents in the United States and the child dedicating his time completely to studying rather than working prior to migration. However, the number of children with parents in the United States who did not work was still low (5).

No family in United States

Of the 77 children whose interviews we analyzed, merely 12 did not have any family in the United States. For the most part, this subgroup's responses closely matched those of the larger population. In a few important ways they differed, although the size of the group was so small that the differentiation in results might not have been caused by the fact that the child has or does not have family in the United States. For instance, a bit higher percentage of this subgroup versus the total population had attempted to migrate in the past. Also, all of these children indicated that they decided on their own to migrate without the assistance of their family, and none of these

children paid a smuggler (although very few of the total sample had hired a smuggler). In regards to their principal activity prior to migrating, this group was less likely to have been studying only and not working. A higher percentage of this group indicated that they had no problems of insecurity and violence in their community of origin.

Children with Family in Mexico and/or Destination Mexico

Nine of the 77 children whose interviews were analyzed stated that their destination was Mexico, although two of these children mentioned that they were planning to work in Mexico for a limited time prior to embarking on the journey to the United States. Most of the children with their destination as Mexico were working or planned to work in the South of Mexico in the agricultural industry. Eight interviewees in total had family or friends in Mexico. Two of the migrants who had friends or family in Mexico had Mexico as their destination country, while some of the others planned to seek assistance from their family in Mexico for the journey north. Only one child with close family members in Mexico migrated with the intention of living in Mexico, and this child wanted to reunite with an estranged father with whom he had had essentially no contact since their separation. This child's desire to reunite with his father was so strong that he preferred living in Mexico and meeting his father—whom his mother had left due to the abusive nature of their relationship—than migrating to the United States where his mother and other family members resided. An adolescent girl intended to migrate to Jalapa, Mexico where she had a friend living and married to a Mexican national.

Children under Twelve

Merely four children interviewed were under the age of twelve. While we did not expect to have many interviews with young children, this proportion seemed particularly low given that the INM statistics show that approximately sixteen percent

of repatriated children in 2007 were under twelve. However, the INM statistics were not disaggregated by accompanied or unaccompanied status and thus it is possible that a smaller proportion of children under twelve migrate unaccompanied. Or possibly, younger children tend to travel with a smuggler at a higher rate than older children, and as mentioned above, it is possible that a smaller percentage of children traveling with a smuggler were interviewed. In the United States, the Office of Refugee Resettlement statistics indicate that twelve percent of all unaccompanied minors admitted into their custody are between zero and twelve years of age in 2007.[14]

In addition, unlike the older children, only one of the four younger children was in transit to the United States when apprehended. This child's mother, brother, aunt, and grandmother were living in the United States. He stated that he did not want to migrate and he was eager to get back to his home community, but his mother had insisted that he join the family in the United States and had hired a smuggler. According to the child, at various points during the trip, his mother wired funds to the smuggler. Eventually, however, the smuggler abandoned this nine-year old boy, and then subsequently the child was detected by authorities and detained.

The three other young children interviewed were living temporarily in Mexico at the time they were detained. Two, if not all three, of the cases involved some form of abuse and neglect of the child. Two of these children had physical manifestations of abuse, the third child barely communicated with interviewers or facility staff and therefore his history is unclear, but it seemed that he was suffering from some form of trauma. In one case, the child's aunt, who was his principal caretaker from the time that his mother migrated to the United States, turned the child into the consulate after her husband beat and harmed the child. In another case, a teacher who worked at a farm

[14] Division of Unaccompanied Children Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, *Fiscal Year 2007 UAC Summary Statistics,* provided to the author by Maureen Dunn on 3/27/08 by email.

where the interviewee lived brought the abused child to the INM detention center in Tapachula. Overall, not only were there very few children under twelve, they also seem to have been arrested or identified under different circumstances as the older children who most commonly were detained at the train tracks or traveling on a bus. It is possible that the different manner of being detained is a result of the fact that children under twelve, in general, tend to migrate using different methods than the older children.

Conclusion

Whether children are interviewed in their home communities prior to migration, in Mexico in transit or in detention, upon repatriation to their home country, or in the United States after having made the grueling journey up north, may affect the findings of research based on interviews of unaccompanied children. For this reason, it is important that U.S. based scholars and practitioners working with unaccompanied children are familiar with the children's experiences and attitudes during these various stages. Indeed, while conducting interviews with children in Mexico, I was struck by the tone of their comments, in particular their hopefulness and excitement. When I have spoken to unaccompanied children in detention centers in the United States, I found them to be more frustrated, scared, tired, and hopeless. The journey from Central America through Mexico to the United States is a grueling, dangerous, exhausting experience, and most children's attitudes when interviewed in the United States are most likely affected by this experience. Moreover, the children that arrive in the United States may not represent the total cohort of children who set out on the journey north. Many children I interviewed in Mexico decided that the process of migrating was too difficult and either turned themselves in to authorities or were caught and chose not to reattempt the journey, thus never arriving in the United States.

While the interview sample was merely 77, and the results are not statistically significant, the findings from the interviews provide a snapshot of the demographic and social profile, migration history, and decision-making processes of this particular sample of migrants and their perspectives at the time they are in transit in Mexico. What we observed in this group is that they were a vulnerable group of migrants, who set off on the journey north with the hope of building a better future for themselves and their family, and largely report making the decision to migrate on their own, at times without the emotional and economic support of their families. Thus when developing interventions on behalf of this vulnerable group, we must keep in mind their agency as well as their vulnerability and their need for their life experience to be respected. We have also observed that while these children, mostly older adolescents, were making serious long-term decisions about their lives, their decision-making process differs from adults in that they assess and perceive risks differently. As both the literature on adolescent development and our findings suggest, adolescents tend to discount future consequences more, they are less focused than adults on protecting themselves from losses or harm than on opportunities for gains in making choices, they lack the same quality of information as adults, and that they may perceive risks differently than adults. In part, because of these concerns about adolescent decision-making, the international, the U.S., and the Mexican legal frameworks have sought to protect adolescents and provide for their special needs by encompassing them within the protections of children's rights statutes. Consequently, in developing polices and programs involving the migration of unaccompanied children, it is important to take into account their vulnerability, their needs, their agency, and their rights as a child.

References

Belén, Posada del Migrante, Humanidad Sin Fronteras, A.C., and Frontera Con Justicia, A.C.. *Quinto Informe Sobre la Situación de los Derechos Humanos de las Personas Migrantes en Tránsito por México*. Saltillo, MX: May, 2009.

Bhabha, Jacqueline, and Susan Schmidt. *Seeking Asylum Alone: Unaccompanied and Separated Children and Refugee Protection in the U.S.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies, June 2006.

Bhabha, Jacqueline, and Mary Crock, Assisted by Nadine Finch and Susan Schmidt. *Seeking Asylum Alone - a Comparative Study: Unaccompanied and Separated Children and Refugee Protection in Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies, retrieved at http://www.humanrights.harvard.edu on April 15, 2010.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS). *Child Migration: The Detention and Repatriation of Unaccompanied Central American Children from Mexico*. Baltimore, MD: CRS, retrieved at http://www.crsprogramquality.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/LACRO-Migration-final_opt.pdf on April 15, 2010.

Haddal, Chad C. *Unaccompanied Alien Children: Policies and Issues*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007. RL33896. Retrieved at <http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33896_20070301.pdf> on April 15, 2010.

Johnson, Jennifer. *The Forgotten Border, Migration & Human Rights at Mexico´s Southern Border*. Washington, D.C.: , Latin American Working Group, January, 2008.

National Human Rights Commission (CNDH for its initials in Spanish), *Special Report of the Human Rights National Commission Over Kidnapping Against Migrants.* Mexico City, MX: CNDH, retrieved at http://www.cndh.org.mx/informes/especiales/infespsecmigra.pdf on April 15, 2010.

National Human Rights Commission (CNDH for its initials in Spanish). *Child Migrant: Trafficking and Child Exploitation in Mexico, Emerging Themes in the National Agenda, Forum on Child Migration and Child Exploitation.* Mexico City, MX: CNDH, 2009.

National Institute of Migration (INM for its initials in Spanish), *Boletin Mensual de Estadisticas, 2009*. Mexico City, MX: INM, , retrieved at http://www.inm.gob.mx/estadisticas/2009/dic/BoletinEst09.pdf on March 10, 2010.

Pew Hispanic Center. Data and Resources, Country of Origin Profiles. http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-EducationalEquityCentralAmerica-English_WP.pdf.

Regional Conference on Migration. *Migrant Children: Human Rights, Protection and Services in the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration' from*

the Mexico-Canada Joint Study on Migrant Children in the Region. RCM: October, 2002, retrieved at www.rcmvs.org/investigacion/Can_Mex_**study**_FINAL.doc on April 15, 2010.

Thompson, Amy. *A Child Alone and Without Papers,*" Austin, TX: Center for Public Policy Priorities, December 2008.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum*. Geneva: UNHCR, 1997.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Trends in Unaccompanied and Separated Children Seeking Aslyum in Industrialized Countries, 2001-2003*. Geneva: UNHCR, July 2004.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID). *Working Paper, Educational Equity in Central America: A Pending Issue for the Public Agenda*. Washington, D.C.: USAID, retrieved at http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-EducationalEquityCentralAmerica-English_WP.pdf on April 15, 2010.

United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Division of Unaccompanied Services. Unaccompanied Alien Children. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/unaccompanied_alien_children.htm.