A Glimpse into the Experience of Family Reunion in the Lives of Immigrants from El Salvador

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A GLIMPSE INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF FAMILY REUNION IN THE LIVES OF IMMIGRANTS FROM EL SALVADOR

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Ana Cristina Diaz
June 2016
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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact family separation had on both the child and the parent after reunification. Semi-Structured qualitative interviews were conducted. One participant was left behind by parents while they immigrated without proper documentation and eventually reunited with them. There was one mother who immigrated to reunite with her children. There were also four parent participants who left their children behind while immigrating into the United States. This study provides a glimpse of what an undocumented family reunification looks like.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to the people who venture into an experience without knowing what will become of them, to those who have left their country of origin and have struggled to be a part of our communities. I would also like to dedicate this research to the grandparents of the children who are left behind because they play a very important role in their experience while away from their parents. Most importantly I would like to dedicate this research to the brave children who experience family separation due to immigration and venture off in a dangerous path to reunite with their parents.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Immigration causes family separation. When migrating, "it is common for a mother or father (or both) to migrate to the United States and leave their children behind, in the care of relatives or friends" (Gindling & Poggio, 2008 p.4). Family separation can cause stress (Cleaveland, 2010; Hawthorne, 2007; Salcido, 1979) and depression (Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian & Belin, 2005). Immigration also has other effects on immigrants and their families, effects that need to be shared and heard. With semi-structured interviews, this study of immigrants from El Salvador will explore the struggles and stresses individuals face after family reunification. This study will focus on the reasons why people from El Salvador immigrated, the impact separation has on the individuals involved, and the effect age at the time of migration has on reunification and its implications. According to Pew Research Center analysis of the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Salvadorans are the third largest Latino group living in the United States with 1.95 million people (Cuddington, Gonzalez-Barrera, Lopez, 2013). The results of this study are significant for social workers, who must attend to this vulnerable population.

Many studies have analyzed immigrants, but few focus on undocumented immigrants or the fears and struggles they face day to day. Some studies have focused on the stress levels of immigrants both documented or undocumented
pertaining to family separation (Abrego, 2014; Cleaveland, 2010; Hawthorne, 2007; Salcido, 1979) and others have focused on the depression that family separation causes on Latina mothers (Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005); but once again, few have focused on the outcomes family separation brings for both the child and the migrant parent (Abrego, 2009; Bacallao & Smokowski. 2007; Suarez-Orosco, Bang & Kim, 2011). This qualitative study will focus on the reasons why people from El Salvador immigrate into the United States while leaving their children behind and include the impact that family separation has on the parent and child relationship after reunification.

Problem Statement

Even with the lack of data on undocumented immigrants, past studies have shown that immigration statuses can cause distress. Undocumented immigrants in the United States and their family members in El Salvador are afraid to participate in studies (Abrego, 2009; Salcido, 1979), which can be problematic for those who are trying to serve those communities because they lack the information such studies could provide. Documented immigrants are more likely to participate in research studies, while undocumented immigrants refuse due to the fear of being turned in to immigration services (Abrego, 2009; Salcido, 1979). The reluctance to participate in research is based in a fear of deportation, if they get turned into immigration services, they could get deported and sent back to their country of origin (Abrego, 2009; Salcido, 1979).
Undocumented immigrants are seen as criminals because they are in the country without legal permission but they are normal people like you and me. According to Oscar Martinez (2014, p.1), the majority of the Central Americans entering the United States “never wanted to leave their country” they are fleeing unlivable conditions. According to the Salvadoran Ministry of Public Security and Justice in a country of 8,100 square miles, and of 6.1 million people there are about 60,000 active gang members who reside in all 14 states of the country (Martinez, 2014). In 2013 alone, there were 15,328 lives lost due to gang violence (Martinez, 2014). Undocumented immigrants from El Salvador are in the United States because they are looking for the financial opportunity and the safety that their country did not provide them or their families (Martinez, 2014). Their illegal act was only committed for them to engage in honorable tasks such as seeking safety (Martinez, 2014) and working (Cleaveland, 2010), which helps communities grow by contributing to the economy (Cleaveland, 2010; Salcido, 1979).

Undocumented immigrants face many stresses apart from their legal status. The main problem faced by many undocumented immigrants is family separation (Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005) and its implications. There are parents who migrate into the United States with the hope for a better life for their family. In the process of reaching their “American Dream,” they leave their children behind, in their country of origin with family
members or friends while they immigrate into the United States of America with the hopes that one day they will reunify.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the impact family separation due to undocumented immigration has on both the child and the parent. In this study, the main focus will be to explore the impact of family separation and identify the effects it has on the parent-child relationship after family reunification. With the recent trend of undocumented migration of minors, it is necessary to conduct such research to assist families dealing with the process of reuniting with their loved ones. There has been a rise between 2013 and 2014 in undocumented immigration by unaccompanied children crossing the border (Hennessy-Fiske, 2014). According to a 2014 report by the Congressional Research Services children are immigrating into the United States from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico (Rappleye, 2014). Most of the minors were fleeing their country from abuse, violence and poverty (Hennessy-Fiske, 2014). Some of the children who arrived unaccompanied were trying to join their parents who were already established in the United States. These children who travel and cross the border undocumented face many struggles that one may not even imagine. This study provides a better understanding of the experience of immigrants which may aide professionals who may one day work with this population. Not only do the children reuniting with their families have to adapt to a new culture, they also may need to adapt to
their new life with their family. The purpose here is to explore how children and their parents are affected due to undocumented immigration at reunification.

To better capture the experiences and the journeys of each participant, a qualitative approach took precedence over quantitative. Through the use of open-ended semi-structured interviews, participants were able to share their story about how they reunited with their families and what has been the aftermath. With this approach the reader may immerse him/herself in the data provided by this study. At the end of this study readers will be able to identify the various stresses immigrants face after an undocumented reunification and how it impacts the parent and child relationship.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

More studies are needed on family separation caused by undocumented immigration. The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008) clearly states that social work must strive for social justice on behalf of the poor, the vulnerable and the oppressed; undocumented immigrants clearly fit the categories. This study gathers evidence on the experiences families face by being undocumented immigrants and having faced family separation at one point and how it impacted the parent and child relationship.

The findings of this study can be beneficial for the social work profession. In a different study, Cleveland (2010) stated that “social workers have the opportunity to support the immigrant population through work at the national, community, and individual levels” (p.80). With the insight gathered through this
study, social workers will be able to consider the stresses and burdens undocumented immigrants from El Salvador are facing. They will also be able to advocate for the families that have gone through family separation caused by immigration, on the individual, community and national level. This study informs social workers of the causes and effects of family separation and reunification on individuals and the needs that they have.

The National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008) would support that social workers ought to help immigrants because they fit the criterion of the people that social workers serve. At the individual level social workers could offer one-on-one service for healing trauma (post-traumatic stress) of abuse and violence as well as the experience of their journey to reunite with their families in the United States. They could also provide new immigrants to the U.S. with a guide to survive in the United States as an immigrant; documented or undocumented. At the community level social workers can help families cope with the stress of changes in roles after a prolonged absence from the family. Through focus groups, social workers can help undocumented immigrants when they first arrive. Such services could include a beginner level of English, Math and the basics of life skills needed in the United States, which would include laws and the way society functions. At the national level social workers can advocate for immigrants by educating others and advocating for this population.
This study seeks to answers the following research question: What are the various stressors undocumented Salvadoran immigrants and their families face before, during and after family reunification?
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Reasons for Migration

The reasons given for people to leave their countries of origin in order to immigrate into the United States are numerous. In Sacrificing Families, Abrego (2014) dedicated a chapter to the reasons why parents migrate from El Salvador to the United States while leaving their children behind. The reasons given from participants were the civil war, a weak economy, and subdued optimism in the face of despair (Abrego, 2014). During the civil war men left because they were escaping the possibility of being killed for supporting one or the other opposing sides of the civil war and women left due to their parental responsibility as a result of economic hardship (Abrego, 2014).

In the literature, the main reasons given for the migration of Salvadorans were due to the civil war, poverty and seeking safety due to violence. For example, Cleaveland (2010) and Abrego (2014) said that because of the frustration of continued poverty and shrinking opportunities, migrants were forced to immigrate into the United States. The poverty that undocumented immigrants come into in the United States cannot be compared to the poverty in their country of origin. Smokowski and Bacallao (2007) described the poverty immigrants face in their country of origin as chronic and the poverty that they face in the United States as an improvement.
Another reason given by immigrants for immigrating into the United States was the search for a better future for their children, education and becoming better persons (Abrego, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). Getting ahead is the term that Smokowski and Bacallao use in their study for describing why the parents immigrated for their children. In order for their children to have a better life, someone had to take the risk and be brave enough to get into the United States, even if it meant leaving their loved ones behind (Abrego, 2014).

Personal experience and conversations with undocumented immigrants in the past have provided researchers an understanding of how a person immigrates into the United States. Usually the way immigrants describe the experience of immigrating is by stating that someone in the family had to decide to leave their country of origin in order to seek a way out of poverty and provide assistance to their family. That someone used to be the man of the house, the father, the oldest brother; but now, with the progression of time women seem to be immigrating more and some while leaving their children behind (Abrego 2014; Cleaveland, 2010; Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005; Winship, 2014).

Once that one individual gets into the U.S., they find a job, usually a low paying job and become financially stable. According to Salcido (1979), immigrants “are victims of job exploitation. Employers take advantage of them by forcing them to work long hours for low pay” (p. 306). Then they send money to
their family members who were left behind on a monthly remittance (Abrego, 2014; Martinez, 2014) while at the same time saving money. The reason why most of the first immigrant family members in the United States save money is so that they can send for their family members. They save their money because it costs money to immigrate into the United States because they have to pay a coyote. In Merriam-Webster’s dictionary (11th Ed.), coyote is defined as a Spanish slang word used to describe the person that illegally smuggles people into the United States from other countries. The amount one pays a coyote varies depending on the migrant’s country of origin (Cleaveland, 2010).

The reasons why people decide to immigrate into the United States vary, but most tie back to economic opportunity. Alegro (2014) and Martinez (2014) included more reasons; people leave seeking income, in order to provide for a sick family member, or migrate in order to get away from violence due to the maras (gangs). Oscar Martinez as a journalist has covered publications on the violence in El Salvador related to the gangs and the effects it has on communities. In The Horrors of Home, Martinez (2014, p.33) stated that the families are threatened “because they didn’t want to join a gang, because a family member filed a police report, because they won’t let a gang member rape their daughter” or for visiting someone who lives in enemy territory. In 2013, gang violence in El Salvador claimed 15,328 lives (Martinez, 2014). The Independent Monitoring Group of El Salvador estimated that on a daily basis
somewhere between 200 and 300 Salvadorans leave the county for an undocumented migration into the United States (Martinez, 2014).

There are also people that immigrate because they are following their loved one’s path so that they can reunite with them. This study examines the many reasons to determine why it is that people leave their countries of origin, leaving their family members behind, while not knowing if they will ever see them again.

Impact of Family Separation

It is said that very little is known about the psychological impact of family separation arising out of immigration (Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005). Yet, the impact of separation that arises out of immigration results in negative effects on families at reunification (Bacallao & Smokowski 2007; Gindling & Poggio, 2008). Family separation causes stress on both the parents and the children (Alegro, 2014; Gindling & Poggio, 2008; Hernandez, 2009; Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005). When parents leave the country without their children, they are taking the risk of losing their children’s love and respect (Alegro, 2014; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Immigrant parents’ stress levels must be constantly changing because they have to cope with the fact that they are in this country as undocumented immigrants and without their family while they work, save money and send money to those family members left behind.
Many Americans consider undocumented immigrants criminals. The label of criminal can create stress for undocumented immigrants because they have to try and get away from being labelled. According to Cleaveland (2010), when asked, migrants said they weren’t criminals and characterized criminals as the people who murder or steal. In the same study, many men stressed that their illegal act was committed to allow them to engage in an honorable task: work (Cleaveland, 2010). In the United States, unauthorized immigrants typically do not have paths to legal citizenship and face lengthy marginalization in efforts to acquire work and avoid poverty. Their illegal status clearly becomes a burden for immigrants. This status can keep them from attaining jobs (Cleaveland, 2010; Salcido 1979).

Parents who leave their family members behind can be at risk for facing depression. Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian and Belin (2005, p.720) stated that “the sadness many of these women feel about leaving their children may make them particularly vulnerable to major depression.” Immigrant women who are separated from their children should be screened for depression because the outcomes of the previous study show evidence that depression does exist among these women. Miranda et.al. (2005) suggests that there are mental health consequences due to familial separation during immigration.

Age of Reunification

The age of reunification and duration of separation determines the implications for emotional and discipline problems at reunification. A study
conducted by Gindling and Poggio (2009) at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, found that, children who arrive as teenagers have more emotional and discipline problems in comparison to those who arrive at a younger age. Gindling and Poggio (2009) confirmed that family separation due to immigration impacts the education success of children negatively. In the literature reviewed for this study, this was the only piece of research that indicated a comparison between the ages in which children arrived and the implications that could be brought on because of the age that they had reunified with their parents. The lack of information on the subject makes the researcher want to know the effect duration of familial separation due to immigration and the implications for emotional and discipline problems at reunification.

Family Reunification

According to a study conducted by Bacallao and Smokowski (2007), families pay a cost for trying to get ahead. The cost involves a shift in roles and boundaries because of separation, an adjustment period once the family is reunited, and a loss of connection with family members left in the countries of origin (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). At reunification, Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) stated that the families face a system change, which consists of family role changes. Given that both parents work, there is a decrease in the time families spend together, which creates a different atmosphere compared to what the children were used to in their countries of origin (Bacallao & Smokowski,
The parents also become stricter because of conflicts they face with their children as a result of the role changes (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

When parents leave their children behind, while they immigrate to the United States, they are not immediately conscious of the emotional damage it will cause them and their children. Their main focus is the opportunity that the United States provides for them, that their country of origin denied them. Cleveland (2010) declared that his respondents planned to return to Mexico, though several stated they would prefer to remain in the United States were it not for family commitments. According to Bacallao and Smokowski (2007), the absence of family members can bring “significant changes in family roles and patterns of functioning, contributing to family stress” (p.56). In that study, there were times when the parents left the children with grandparents, aunts or uncles while both immigrated, which created a “loss of key parent relationship which sometimes allows adolescents to drift into high-risk situations” (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p.56).

Once families reunite after immigration, they go through a period of adjustments. In that period of adjustment, families adjust their structures by configuring roles, boundaries and communication processes (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007). Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) called this adjustment time a stormy period, one that according to mother participants of the study lasts about one year.
One would expect that once families reunify, things would fall into place and that everyone would be content, but this literature says the opposite. Family reunification is an addition to the stresses faced by immigrant families. This study will explore the implications faced by undocumented families from El Salvador in California during their process of adjustment after family reunification.

As more and more studies are conducted with immigrants, researchers are forgetting an important issue: whether the family dynamics change because of the separation caused by parents immigrating into the United States while leaving their children behind with somebody else to look after them. One possibility is that because of distancing from the child, the parent loses the authoritative position towards the child, which may lead to the loss of respect from that child.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Previous research on immigrants has focused on acculturative stress, attachment theory, cultural learning and ethnic identity to understand immigrant families and the social factors impacting their psychological well-being (Hernandez, 2009). Researchers have also focused on object relations theory, which predicts that ruptures in parental relationship lead to significant developmental challenges (Orozco, Todorova, &Louie, 2002). According to attachment theorists, when children are detached from their caregivers they experience phases such as protest, despair, and possibly detachment (Turner, 2011). At the first stage, the child may express high levels of anger, the use of
uncooperative behavior, looking for their caregivers and anxiety (Turner, 2011). While in despair the child may become sad, and withdrawn and possibly angry and anxious due to the separation. If the caregiver failed to return, the child may detach emotionally from the caregiver. If there are substitutes for the original caregiver, the child may attach to those available.

In combination with objects relations theory, attachment theory fully describes the experience of immigrant families before, during and after reunification. Not only does research show that families face hardship and stressors after arriving in their new home, the United States, it also shows the impact it has on their families. In terms of undocumented families who experience family separation, John Bowlby’s attachment theory may be applied. Bowlby (Turner, 2011) defines the stages that families encounter during their detachment from their parent/caregivers before, during and after reunification. For this research, the focus will be to explore the impact family separation has on the parent and child relationship after reunification, guided by attachment theory and detachment.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter will focus on the methodology of the study. It will describe the design of the study, the sample, the collection of the data and procedures taken to collect and analyze data. Due to the legal status of participants, their identities are confidential.

Study Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the outcomes of family separation due to immigration brought for both the child and the parent. In this study, the hope was to discover the impact family separation had on the parent-child relationship after reunification. A qualitative method was used for data collection in this study in order to immerse in the experiences of the participants. There is a lack of studies conducted with undocumented immigrants and when there is, it includes mostly Mexican individuals. This study involved individuals who have emigrated from El Salvador; that in itself is a strength of this study. Having open ended questions allowed for the participants to expand on their answers and provide a better understanding of their experiences in comparison to close ended questions where the answers would be a yes or no.

Due to the importance being placed in the lived experience of undocumented family reunification in families from El Salvador, the researcher
decided to opt out of a quantitative method. The research question this study was seeking to answer from immigrants from El Salvador was; what are the various stressors undocumented Salvadoran immigrants and their families face before, during and after family reunification?

Some of the stressors may include acculturation, coping with the restructuring of the family, making up for lost time, role shifts within the family, lack of employment or education opportunities and many more. The parent and child relationship may be impacted due to the duration between the separation and reunification. Some children may resent their parents for leaving them behind while others may be thankful for providing a different life for them.

Though the research design of this study has several strengths, the limitations of the study design are worthy of note. A limitation for face-to-face interviews may be that participant may have felt embarrassed to share their experiences or even participate in the study. Some individuals may not have wanted to participate in this study due to fear of their legal status and others may not have trusted a stranger presenting as a student researcher. Due to the lack of research on undocumented families from El Salvador, more quantitative research studies are needed to explore and measure other types of stressors faced by families at reunification. The main interest of this research is merely to provide the reader an opportunity to learn about a small group of undocumented families affected by immigration.
Sampling

The sample for this study was a purposive sample; the first people to volunteer were able to participate in the study. The sample consists of six immigrants who migrated to the United States from El Salvador. Participants met the following criteria: Must have entered the United States as an undocumented immigrant, have been separated from their family members for at least one year because of immigration before reunification, are a parent or the family member who was left behind. The ages of participants vary, due to the inclusion of one participant left behind as a child while parent immigrated, a mother who stayed behind while her children immigrated and the four parents who left their children behind. To further understand the implications at family reunification in immigrant families this type of sample is necessary. To offer a representative sample of children as adults and parents who have reunited and have dealt with the outcomes of separation due to immigration, it was necessary to use families who have had to immigrate into the United States undocumented to offer an insight into the experience of the journey it took them to reunite.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data collection was conducted by using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Appendix A). Consent from study participants to conduct and record the interviews in English or Spanish was carried out prior to the interviews (Appendix B). Demographic characteristics were gathered from participants through the use of a brief survey (Appendix C) which ask participants
to self-report age, income, the number of children in a family, the year the person immigrated and the amount of time it took to reunify with family.

**Procedures**

In the process of finding a sample for this study and gathering information, researcher conducted a visit to the Galilee Center in Southern California in the spring of 2016. At Galilee Center, the researcher introduced herself as a graduate student from California State University, San Bernardino. Researcher provided Flyers (Appendix D) with information of study and contact information for those individuals interested in participating. People that were interested in participating and verbally stated said interest during the site visit, wrote their phone numbers on a small notebook, each person wrote their number on a different page to protect confidentiality, no names were taken. Researcher took participant phone numbers to schedule interviews at a confidential location of their choice. Forms for informed consent were provided to participants (Appendix B). After consent was provided, the researcher conducted open ended interviews lasting from approximately one hour to two hours. After the interviews, researcher read debriefing statement and provided additional phone numbers of resource where the participants of this study may receive counseling services at no cost (Appendix D). After data was collected, the researcher transcribed audio recordings into written transcripts and coded the data.
Protection of Human Subjects

Subjects were limited to any risk of harm as their identity was confidential. A participant number was used to identify participants at all times. After receiving informed consent forms (Appendix B), the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at a location of the participant’s choice, so that researcher did not know where the participants live, so that there could be no harm to their families. The names and personal data given by the participants is confidential. Identifying information was omitted to protect the identity of participants. All data was kept in a locked box at all times when not in use by the researcher for confidentiality and the protection of the participants of this study. Data was destroyed May 5, 2016. Any ethical dilemmas that arise during the time of this study were discussed with the faculty advisor of this study, Dr. Erica Lizano. If for any circumstances the participants felt that they could not answer a question or provide certain information because it made them feel uncomfortable, that question was skipped and interviews were subject to being stopped depending on the participants’ comfort level. Participants were able to withdraw consent at any time.

Data Analysis

After the interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed and themes were coded based on similarities faced by participants and common issues faced. This process allowed the researcher to immerse herself in the lives of the participants of the study. Data from the interviews was categorized and coded
based on common themes that emerged. Based on the findings, the researcher used a cross-case analysis and themes were created to refine the data. The similarities and differences amongst participants were identified. With a cross-case analysis, the researcher will provide a closer look into the lives of immigrants from El Salvador and the effects family separation and reunification has on them.

Summary

For the completion of this study, the researcher sought out participants at the Galilee Center in Riverside County. The participants had immigrated without proper documentation into the United States from El Salvador. They were either current adults left behind as children, a parent who stayed behind or the parents who left their children behind. Participants are identified by a number and were interviewed and audio recorded by the researcher in Spanish. Their identity of the participants was maintained confidential. The researcher analyzed the data to provide an understanding of what it is like to be an undocumented Salvadoran family facing reunification after family separation due to immigration.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter includes a brief analysis and presentation of data collected. It provides the various stressors undocumented Salvadoran immigrants and their families face before, during and after family reunification. The data in this study is presented in three themes; insecurities, path to family, and reunification and its implications.

Presentation of the Findings

In the interviews participants discussed how their lives were in El Salvador and the stresses they faced. The family relationship in El Salvador was described as being good by all of the participants (personal communication, April 2016). They also talked about the reasons why they decided to come to the United States. Most participants did not feel safe in their own country (personal communication, April 2016). Most of the participants came to the United States seeking economic opportunity (personal communication, April 2016). Others came because their lives were in danger back in El Salvador due to the civil war or the gang violence (personal communication, April 2016). Others came to the United States following their loved ones (personal communication, April 2016).

Four of the participants came to the United States first before their immediate family and two reported making the journey to the U.S. to follow their loved ones. All of the participants had family in the United States when they
immigrated. Four of the participants were parents who came to the U.S. before their children, one was the parent immigrating to the U.S. after his/her children to reunite with them, and one participant was the child left behind who then immigrated to the US to reunite with the rest of the family. Participants also talked about their journey to the United States (personal communication, April 2016). All of the participants migrated to the U.S. without proper documentation, some eventually became documented and others did not (personal communication, April 2016).

At the time of the interview Participants 2, 3 and 6 were undocumented while participants 1, 4 and 5 were documented (personal communication, April 2016). Participant 1 was from San Vicente, Participant 2 was from La Libertad, Participant 3 was from Morazán, Participant 4 was from San Miguel, Participant 5 was from Usulután and Participant 6 was also from San Miguel (personal communication, April 2016). Participant 4 and 6 were not related. (personal communication, April 2016) Participant 4 and 5 were mother and daughter (personal communication, April 2016).

The age of the participants ranged from 31 years to 70 years. All participants were currently working in agriculture. The income of those who worked ranged from $0 to $19,000 a year. The participants immigrated between the years of 1992 and 2010. Participant 1 immigrated in 1992, Participant 2 immigrated in 2007, Participant 3 immigrated in 2010, Participant 4 immigrated in 1992, Participant 5 immigrated in 2006 and Participant 6 immigrated in 1996.
The first person from this study who immigrated has been here for nineteen years and the last ones who immigrated has been here for six years. The number of children per participant varies from 1 to 9 with an average of 6 children. Two participants stayed in El Salvador and came to the United States to reunite with their immediate family members. Those were participants 3 and 6. One was a child at the time and the other was a mother. The rest of the participants were the parents who came to the United States while leaving their children behind.

Salvadoran immigrants repeatedly spoke about the insecurities they faced in El Salvador. They also emphasized the dangers faced in the desert during their journey to the United States. Participants also talked about their experience when they first arrived in the United States and their experience when they reunited with their family and how they were. Everyone in this study called their reunification “beautiful and filled with joy” (personal communication, April 2016). In the following data, immigrants from El Salvador talk about their experiences of family reunification by focusing on three themes: insecurities, path to family and reunification and its implications.

**Insecurities**

In order to explain the insecurities that immigrants faced in El Salvador first life in El Salvador is described. Then the actual insecurities that the participants described such as: safety, necessities, poverty and the lack of opportunity faced in El Salvador are described and discussed.
Life in El Salvador was described as a “difficult; as a poor and a
dangerous life” (personal communication, April 2016). When asked about their life
in El Salvador Participant 2 described the life as a poor life, she stated that “one
barely had enough for sugar, soap and oil those were the main things one could
have because of the poverty”, (Participant 2, personal communication, April
2016) Most participants stated that they were required to work for others or for
their own land in order to cultivate their own crops for survival. Participant 6
stated he worked too hard “I planted rice, corn, beans, melons, and watermelons”
(Participant 6, personal communication, April 2016) what he learned at work; he
then planted on his own for his family. For Participant 4, life in El Salvador was
difficult because she “was a mother and a father” to her five children (Participant
4, personal communication, April 2016). She used to live with a family that
supported her after her husband died. She stated that “even though my
relationship with my family was good they could not help me, because they
couldn’t afford to” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016). Work was
described as unstable and only temporary. She also stated “It was the only way I
had to survive and to get them ahead” in reference to her children (Participant 4,
personal communication, April 2016). Participants 2, 4 and 6 worked in
agriculture, Participant 1 worked for the mayor’s office, Participant 5 was a
student and Participant 3 did not work, she was a housewife. Participant 2 also
worked for people in the city by washing clothes, cleaning houses, and cooking.
Most participants worked so that they could have something to eat. They didn’t work for income. Their earnings were what they harvested.

An insecurity participants faced in El Salvador was the lack of safety. Living in El Salvador was described as dangerous in the year of 1992 as well as in 2007 and 2016. In 1992 the violence in the country was due to the civil war. Participant 6 immigrated into the United States due to problems with a man who kept going to his house to recruit him, “before that man does something, shoot at us, better that he talks in front of me, I am not afraid… he would not remove a shotgun and a machete he always had” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2016). Most people in his town had left which made that man even more upset. When participant 6 left El Salvador in 1992 his son was in the army. In 2010 the situation in El Salvador was described as dangerous due to the increase in gang violence. Participant 3 stated that

“life in El Salvador was very dangerous. They [gang members] would ask for money because I was Christian and when I went out they wanted my money and I didn’t have money. They would say at least give me for a snack, that’s how they would talk, since they were gangsters” (Participant 3, personal communication, April 2016).

According to the experience of participant 2 and participant 3, there was no guarantee that once a person left their home that they would return. One is not safe in their own home, Participant 3 stated that when she left El Salvador the gang members
“put some out of their house and they put $1000 of rent on my husband. They even started telling him they were going to kill him, even as an old man. They said they were going to kill everyone”.

In 2016 participants were concerned that there is no such thing as safety in El Salvador. Participants describe El Salvador as a place where gangs rule the country, Participant 2 stated:

“they [gang members] took my mom to the bank and made her withdraw the money and threatened her to not to say anything and to not to make a fuss because if not then they would go after the whole family and that is why I say that life in El Salvador is very ugly with the things of the maras [gangs]. Youth are at risk and well that gives me fear that they are there because there are being watched because they think that because one is here that one has money but they do not know that one is here to survive” (Participant 2, personal communication, April 2016).

Participant 2 recounted how gang members led her to a lonely place and demanded that she hand over the money or she would be killed. Participant 2 is concerned for the safety of her two children who are currently in El Salvador, a male and female. Participant 2 also stated that

“it is very dangerous… Look if they tell you, you are not going to wear this clothing, and if they say this pair of shoes I do not want you to put them on then you have to listen and obey because if you don’t obey well they send to kill or give you a good beating. The mareros [gang members], no over
there you cannot walk with anything made of gold, because if you do they
kill you. It’s very ugly over there.” (Participant 2, personal communication,
April 2016)

Another type of insecurity that participants faced while in El Salvador was abuse
from their assigned caregivers. Participant 4 stated that she left in search for the
opportunities that her country denied her, the opportunity to work and provide the
opportunity for her children to obtain an education. She realized that “sometimes
the best thing is not the best” in her absence her daughter was abused by her
caregivers at the age of 11 (Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016).
Participant 2 was also a victim of abuse, which lead to her decision to immigrate.
Her husband left her and their three children for another woman and he wanted
to take the very few things they owned. She stated,

“He wanted was to leave me in the street. What we had was little. But
where I lived was land of my mother. So we only had a small dirt house
covered by a tin roof. What he wanted was to leave me with nothing.
Take away everything that we had there, which was just the beds and tin
roof. He wanted the tin to make a home for the woman he was with”
(Participant 2, personal communication, April 2016).

As a result of this altercation, Participant 2 was incarcerated because her
mother-in-law called the police. When the police arrived, Participant 2 and the
father of her children were arguing, so they took both of them to jail. Participant
2 was the victim in this situation and she was re-victimized by the authorities.
All of the participants, who immigrated as parents stated that they made the sacrifice to leave their children behind to provide greater opportunities for their children to get ahead. The parents immigrated to work so that their children had the opportunity to study, and opportunity that their country doesn’t provide for those who don’t have the means to pay for their educational materials and fees.

Path to Family

It is necessary to talk about the reasons of why participants decided to come to the United States and about the risks they faced in their path to the United Stated in order to understand their experience. Their motives were countless. According to the literature review, finances are the primary reason why people emigrate from El Salvador to the U.S. All of the participants left their country in search of a better life for their family. Each and every participant of this study had a family member already living in the United States at time of immigration. When they made it to their destination, participants had someone that was prepared to receive them. Some participants spoke about wanting to come to the United States to work, and for a better future. Others spoke about coming to the U.S. seeking safety. *El camino* is the term that the participants used in order to describe their journey to the United States. The risks that they faced in *el camino* varied, from falling, to being caught by the border patrol, to death.
Participant 1 said he came to the United States to “work and improve the family” (Participant 1, personal communication, April 2016). Participant 2 said she came to “provide more and to get ahead” with her children and the disappointment of seeing the father of her children with another woman and in close proximity of her home (Participant 2, personal communication, April 2016). Participant 3 came to the United States to be with her children and also because she was afraid of how dangerous El Salvador had become. She said, “One of my kids got shot real bad … They shot him five times, but God is so good, God is all-powerful, they didn’t kill him” (Participant 3, personal communication, April 2016). She also stated that, “It’s better to suffer here, because you suffer here as well” she doesn’t understand why someone would want to go back to El Salvador she believes that there is more security and that life is better in the United States (Participant 3, personal communication, April 2016). Participant 4 also said that she immigrated to give the best to her children, to provide an educational opportunity for her children and due to the lack of employment where she lived. Participant 5 immigrated to reunite with her family; she was the only member of her family who remained in El Salvador. Participant 6 came to the United States during the Civil War in El Salvador, he was seeking safety due to a man who was harassing him and his community.

The journey to meet with family was mostly described as a terrible and difficult experience. Participant 1 stated that on the path to reaching family, immigrants experience discrimination in Mexico. He also indicated that you risk
your life for example at the beginning of his trip “there were 80 on that trip, from those 80 only 12 stayed.” Participant 1 also said that they “had bullets thrown our way, but we were not hit because we are here.” According to Participant 1, not only is the path from El Salvador to the US dangerous because of kidnappers and gang members, but it is dangerous because the Coyote, a human trafficker who smuggles immigrants into the United States, will either throw the immigrant back across the border into Mexico or will kill the immigrant if the Coyote does not receive payment from the immigrant’s family. Participant one said, “we took four people that had been there 22 days because family had not received them. I heard when someone was told, that if by midnight the next day the family didn’t call they are going to throw you back in the other side…it is dangerous because for them it is better to kill instead of to seize. It is dangerous if you are sent back because you are left with many dangerous people and can be killed there.”

In the camino, Participant 2 suffered due to the heat because she immigrated in July. She said, “I don’t know how it was that I endured and not stay behind. It is not easy to come already with your feet filled with sores and still endure the heat.”

Participant 3 did not immigrate with a coyote, she ventured off with another female friend who like her happened to be Christian. They started their trip with $500. Once they reached Mexico they got on the train known as , The
beast”. On the train, they were confronted by a man and a female who she described as kidnappers:

“Then the thieves came with big braids and they asked us where we were headed. We are headed to pray for the sick and to evangelize. And because I like to pray, I said look sir since there was a female and a male. Look sir, Christ loves you, and I do too. That is what we are doing, looking for the souls of God so you can serve the Lord. Do not be in this world wanting to hurt people, wanting to kidnap people, and I didn’t know he was a kidnapper. I told him look, you don’t have to be on the streets. You would be worthy enough to be preaching the word of the Lord, speaking in the streets preaching the word that Christ is coming. And you know he humbled himself and I could see his face change with the words. Then he said, I don’t think your prediction will happen. Well I am preaching to you. He didn’t want to kidnap me anymore, because I had family over here, and they were going to kidnap me to take their money. And you know since I was wearing a skirt, since I don’t wear pants he said I’m going to find you pants grandma so you can be on the train, because grandma he said, it’s going to get very cold. I put the pants on under the skirt. From there we took the train.”

Participant 3 and her companion rode a total of seven trains. Participant 3 held on to her belief that God would protect her. She faced hunger and would sleep when the train stopped. Her concern was that someone would sexually abuse
her and her friend. Once they arrived at Piedras Negras, Mexico, they decided to pay a Coyote to cross them across the Mexico-U.S. border. In order for them to pay a Coyote, Participant 3 and her friend began working to make money. They helped someone by making tortillas and cooking. Once they gathered the money for the Coyote, they crossed over to the United States and once on the other side were detained by immigration.

Another participant that described the path as difficult was participant 4, she stated the following:

“It was difficult because pass by places that we walked, two three days and then the most difficult thing for me was when they got us in a boat into the deep part of the beach and there were 27 people in a small boat. We entered at six in the afternoon and at twelve at night it got ruined, and we stayed at the beach, and it rained and rained and rained and we were all hurling water so that the boat would not sink. Then until the following day we were found at nine in the morning. People in another boat were looking for us.”

Participant 4 also stated that in her experience, she had to spend most of one day hiding from border patrol agents or surveillance. Once it was safe to do so, her group of 27 got into a van “they just threw us in there, it didn’t matter how you landed” and they made it to their destination. For her daughter Participant 5, stated that her journey to the United States was a “powerful experience,” as she and her daughter were sexually assaulted. She stated that her group got
kidnapped and were taken to a place where there were rags, underwear and bras all over the floor,

“They told us if we did not give them our money they were going to rape us and kill us. They put their hands all over me. My cousin told me to stick my money up in there. I did, and I think one of the men saw and asked me to take my money out. I told him I had already given it to him and he stuck his hand in there, up in my private parts. They also wanted to take off my daughters clothes and touch her on her private parts to see if she had money there too. There was nobody around and I thought they were going to kill us and rape us. There was a pregnant girl in our group and they used to tell her she was beautiful and that they didn’t care if she was pregnant, that they wanted her because she was beautiful. They used to tell her, what if I put another baby right next to that one you have. They took her away. They said that they raped her but we didn’t know. We didn’t see her again.”

As she stated before, Participant 5’s experience was difficult,

“We walked three days and two nights and on the last day we had nothing to eat or drink. When we passed canals we drank water. We passed big canals. The water went up to my neck. One day my menstruation came. The next day the guide/ coyote told us to take all of our clothes off, so that when we crossed we wouldn’t drip and leave marks behind us. I was full of blood; I did not want to do that. The camino is hard you are risking
everything and for nothing to happen. You live through and see things that you never imagined. You live through things that you would have never thought possible. So many people die in el camino. There are many people that get lost and are never found. Like when I was coming there was a place where we were waiting for a truck to come pick us up. We were lying down on the ground on our stomachs waiting for a long time. There were a lot of bushes and we had to dig in to hide. Since we had nothing to do we kept digging down. We dug until we found a bone. My cousin said it must be a leg bone of somebody who must have died.”

After such traumatic events, in order for her daughter to cross the border, Participant 5 had to hand her over to other people, “Then to leave my daughter because she came with me and give her to other people that I did not even know” (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2016). For Participant 6, the camino was not as difficult as most of the participants experiences. He said “thanks be to God that we did not have a lot of problems. We struggled to get here… It took us 15 days to get here” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2016). It took Participants anywhere from 15 days to 23 days to make it to their destination.

The path to reunify with family is a sacrifice that people make every day to see their family members. As the participants of this study said, it is a “difficult experience, and in their experience they hold hope and believe that God will protect them” (personal communication, April 2016). Almost all participants
made the statement “solo tu con Dios” It’s just you and God” (personal communication, April 2016) in reference to the trip. Holding on to that belief, helped participants reach their destination and not give up or stay behind in the desert.

Reunification

For some participants it took one year to reunite with their families, while for others it took up to nineteen years. All of the participants described their reunification with their family as being filled with joy. First, the responses of the participant who came to reunite with her mother will be laid out and then the remainder of the participants.

One participant was the person who was left behind while her mother left to the United States in search of an economic opportunity to provide for her children. During her mother’s absence and the time Participant 6 was left alone in El Salvador, she was able to get an education. She also benefited from the material goods that her mother provided. After 13 years Participant 6 reunified with her family. Participant 6 stated that when she arrived, seeing her family was good, but that does not take away the things that she had been through in order to get to them. Participant 6 seems to believe that there were family role changes and that there were reproaches from her part towards her mother for leaving her in El Salvador for 13 years. When asked about the effects the separation had on her family she stated the following:
“I think so, because when you are young we do not understand the reasons why they left you in El Salvador why they did it because you needed your mom and that but once you grow and mature one understands and look at everything, that it was a sacrifice that was worth it and then changes. I think there was a change. Even though it is hard to accept it, I know there was a change in roles. I think that these are things that happen when one is in adolescence and that have not yet matured one does not understand very well why. But since one lives all that and go through what happened before, one then changes their opinion and said it was a sacrifice that was worth it, they did so for something not just to leave you. But I think that at some point it is affects when one is more young do not understand that very well.” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2016)

Then she talked about an experience that made her forgive her mother for leaving her behind.

“I turned in my daughter so that they would cross her. I gave her to somebody who I did not know. Just because a woman told me that they were waiting for her and that they would take care of her. I did not even know what to do but I had to. Imagine that, that was my daughter I turned her in without knowing if I was going to see her again. That was the ugliest thing I lived because she was my daughter, my everything and I turned her in.” (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2016)
She said this made her think about the choice her mother had to make when she decided to come to the United States because if she did not, they were going to suffer. This seems to be what most people think about the decision of leaving children behind. They have to sacrifice years of being with their children in order for them not to starve.

Participant 4 with sorrow expressed her burden of leaving her children behind when she left El Salvador, and stressed that her daughter paid for her choice of migrating and leaving them alone. She thinks that the roles changed because her children were all without her for a long time. She said that there were some reproaches especially from the younger ones. Her daughter was treated badly and molested back in El Salvador by the people who took care of her. She sometimes blamed herself because she had left her alone.

“When she got here she used to say it was my fault for leaving her alone for so long. She said she suffered because of me. Now she is a mother and understands and recognizes that one does things for the best and to help them. Sometimes I say yes, she is right because she was my little one but I wanted the best for them. Sometimes I reflect and say I should have just stayed there and suffered with them, but at least I would have been with them and that would not have happened to them.” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016)

It took participant 4 fourteen years to reunify with all of her children. Her oldest son, was recently deported and she stated that it has “almost been five years that
he was deported, he has made two attempts to come and he cannot. He is over there alone because their children are here.” When she described her experience of reunifying with the oldest she started crying,

“When I saw my son I said what I exposed my son to. He came very skinny, dirty and smelly. They handed him over as if he was a criminal because we waited for him at a gas station. The one who brought him said that the person who was going to receive him had to stay alone in the car and that he was to take the other person out of the car and leave them far. And to not see him. It was good because If it was me I would have looked at my son perhaps had not been able to deliver the money or know that because it is a very strong expression. Once he was handed over he was given the money. He went out to look for me. The man said not to move the truck until his truck had left.” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016)

After seeing her son, Participant 4 stated that she was thrilled since it had been 10 years since she last saw him. Participant 4 has brought all her children, when he daughters immigrated they each immigrated with their children. The children suffered in their path to the United States and the family suffered while they waited,

“I suffered a lot because one of the children his little teeth had been broken. Immigration captured the woman that brought him, and the one that he stayed with broke his teeth. And another one would tell her she
was going to throw her off the bridge. Then my son brought his daughters
one was ten and the other seven and these girls were left thrown out in a
park and it was hot. That’s because immigration was there. They ran and
they just left them there. There were three the was 12 years old and it took
us about 15 days without knowing anything about them.” (Participant 4,
personal communication, April 2016)

Her granddaughters had been detained by immigration in San Diego and taken
by a church in Georgia and the 12 years old was taken to Las Vegas. Participant
4 stated that the girls were given to the family after two months because “the
small one got hepatitis” (Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016) and
that her son and daughter in law were devastated. Now that the family has
reunited participant four happily stated that they are “very close and well united”
(Participant 4, personal communication, April 2016).

Another participant described his reunification with his son as a joyful
event, was participant 1. He then said, “my joy lasted a little because I received
him in Los Angeles at 6:30 and by 8:00 the joy had already ended” (Participant 1,
personal communication, April 2016). His son decided to stay with his aunt
versus living with his father who had sent for him. He also described a similar
situation in which his grandson did not want to live with his father but instead with
Participant 1. His other children are in El Salvador. All of his children in El
Salvador have good jobs, one is a certified public accountant, one does
mechanics and electronics and his daughter is a secretary. One of his children
died at the age of 32, and participant 1 was not able to see him before he passed. Due to his permit, he had to ask immigration for permission to travel. His ill son did all the errands so that he could see his father before he died. His son died on September 13th and it wasn't until October 30th that participant 1 received his permit to travel to El Salvador.

Participant 2 reunified with one of her three children. She also described her reunification as filled with joy and with sadness that her other two children couldn’t be here. Participant 3 after a long journey and being released by immigration, she reunited with her children and stated that she was happy to see them. Participant 6 reunited with all of his children except for his wife. After all the children were here, he asked her to come here and she refused. After many attempts, he decided to start a life in the United States with his children and look for a new partner. He married a woman from Mexico.

Summary

After all that participants experienced in El Camino such as; all the thirst, the hunger, the sleepless nights, the sun burns, the mosquito bites, the fear of being raped or killed, being kidnapped, being robbed etc. when they reunify with their family it’s like they forget about that because of the joy they feel in seeing their family members.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This chapter concludes this study. It includes a brief discussion of the data analysis. It also includes the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research. The study ends with the implications for social work practice.

Discussion

The research question this study was seeking to answer was; what are the various stressors undocumented Salvadoran immigrants and their families face before, during and after family reunification? The data collected suggest that the participants of this study were affected before, during and after reunification like in Sacrificing Families (Abrego, 2014). Before reuniting, families were separated by the distance that separated El Salvador and the United States. The distance affected families due to the availability of the person and their inability to be present in the lives of their family members for events, emergencies, and for emotional support other than what could be provided over the phone (Abrego, 2014). In one situation, the parent and child relationship was affected due to the absence of the mother while the daughter was sexually abused by the person whom her mother had entrusted with. When these two participants were reunited, the child resented her mother and blamed her for everything that had happened to her in her absence. As Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian and Belin (2005) said, some of the participants in this study became depressed because they missed their children.
Listening to the experiences of participants in their path to reunite with their families was not a surprise; it was described as tough as the literature predicted. One interesting aspect of the data was the inclusion of a mother who immigrated in order to reunify with their children. That participant immigrated after her children while her husband stayed behind in El Salvador. The history of immigration is that the father immigrated first, followed by the mother and eventually the children (Abrego 2014; Cleaveland, 2010; Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005; Winship, 2014). The experiences shared by participants and the difficulties they faced in their path to the United States to reunite with family, seek safety and seek opportunities for growth/education show how much people are willing to sacrifice to have a glimpse of an improvement to their lives in their country of origin. The reasons given for immigration by participants were the same as those given by Abrego (2014) in Sacrificing Families, seeking safety, economic opportunity and reunifying with family. The term most participants use to describe economic and educational opportunity was get getting ahead just as the literature analyzed for this study (Abrego, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). The majority of the participants in this study referred to the current gang violence in El Salvador as described in The Horrors of Home and The Beast by Martinez (2014) some were afraid because things are getting worst and others because they were threatened by the mareros (gang members) but even in their search for a safer environment participants ran into the same type of dangers with gang members in their path to
the United States as Oscar Martinez in his journey on The Beast (Martinez, 2014).

Limitations

Immigration is a wide-ranging theme. Research can be done with individuals, groups, families and communities. The focus of this study was on the individual experiences of people and how their experiences affected their family. Within the population interviewed, there are also a variety of themes to be looked at, for example; the experience of immigrating, life in El Salvador and navigating the system as a minor, the individual experiences of immigrants in the United States, adapting to a new family system and much more. Further research with the undocumented population is needed. Research is needed for a better understanding of the population and the implications that come with the label of undocumented immigration. The sample for this study consisted of only one adult who was left behind as a child, which only gives us one perspective of what it was like to be left behind. More data is needed to identify if others have similar experiences as Participant 5. It would be fascinating to interview complete a family system to explore the impact family separation has on each member at reunification. The data of this sample was limited to parents leaving in search for a better future and lacked the representation of the children reuniting with the family.
Recommendations for Social Work

The findings of this study are beneficial for the social work profession. As Cleveland (2010) stated “social workers have the opportunity to support the immigrant population through work at the national, community, and individual levels” (p.80). As a social work profession, more advocacy for families that have gone through family separation caused by immigration, on the individual, community and national level is needed. With the insight gathered through this study, social workers are able to consider the stresses and burdens undocumented immigrants from El Salvador are facing when providing services to this population. This study informs social workers of the causes and effects of family separation and reunification on individuals and the needs that they have. As a profession, social workers can provide information, moral support to undocumented families and education on navigating and adaptation in the United States.

Conclusions

People immigrate into the United States in search of an opportunity to succeed. They come to find employment opportunities that their country of origin lacked. Poverty was the main reason why people immigrated while leaving their children behind. Others immigrated to reunite with their loved ones. Immigrants risk their lives in search of a better life. Some make it and some do not. Not only do immigrants suffer in El Salvador, they also suffer in the camino toward the United States and they suffer in the United States. Some of that suffering is
based on the stresses that families face at reunification based on the time and
distance that kept them apart. The immigrants who participated in this study told
their stories in hope that people would realize that they do exist in this country
and that they mean no harm to anybody.

This study was done in hopes that the information the participants
provided would contribute to the social work field and raise awareness of Social
Workers working with that population. In order to study the impact that family
separation has on reunification more studies need to be conducted with families
who have been separated because of immigration.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
1. Como era su vida en El Salvador?
   What was your life like in El Salvador?
2. Cuáles fueron sus motivos de inmigrar?
   What motivated you to immigrate?
3. Cuénteme sobre su experiencia en el camino a los Estados Unidos?
   Tell me about your experience on your journey to the United States?
4. Cuénteme sobre su experiencia al llegar a los Estados Unidos?
   Tell me about your experience, once you got to the United States?
5. Cuénteme sobre su experiencia al reunirse con su familia?
   Tell me about your experience in reuniting with your family?
6. Como ha sido afectada la relación con su familia después de reunirse?
   How has the relationship with your family been affected after reunification?
7. Cuénteme sobre su relación con sus familiares?
   Tell me about your relationship with your family?

Developed by Ana Diaz
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
School of Social Work

A Glimpse into the Experience of Family Reunion in the Lives of Immigrants from El Salvador/Un Vistazo a la Experiencia de Reunificación Familiar en las Vidas de Inmigrantes de El Salvador

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study. The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the various stresses immigrants and their families faced after family reunification. This study is being conducted by MSW student researcher Ana Díaz, under the supervision of Dr. Erica Lizano, assistant professors of School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee Institutional Review Board of the California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explore the impact family separation due to immigration on both the child and the parent after reunification.

DESCRIPTION: The interview with the student researcher is estimated to take approximately one hour. You will be asked seven main questions.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is appreciated and completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect services provided at Galilee Center.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Please be assured that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential and all of the HIPAA (Health Insurance and Portability and Accountability Act) protections will apply to protect your personal health information. Your data will be given a subject number rather than your identity while handling data. All data will be kept in a locked box. Any publication of results will be with anonymity of data, and your confidentiality will be protected.

RISKS: This research is considered to be of minimal risk. There are no foreseeable overt risks. However, some people may experience feelings of anxiety, stress, anger, or discomfort in talking about the topic of family separation and reunification in making personal disclosures, or in thinking about your experience as an undocumented immigrant. Every effort will be made to minimize risks or discomfort during the study.

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A Glimpse into the Experience of Family Reunion in the Lives of Immigrants from El Salvador/Un Vistaso a la Experiencia de Reunificación Familiar en las Vidas de Inmigrantes de El Salvador

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Gracias por su consideración en participar en este estudio. El estudio en el que se le está pidiendo a participar está diseñado para investigar las diversas tensiones inmigrantes y sus familias que se enfrentan después de la reunificación de la familia. Este estudio está siendo realizado por la investigadora estudiantil Ana Díaz, bajo la supervisión de la Dr. Erica Lizano, profesora asistente de la Escuela de Trabajo Social, Universidad Estatal de California en San Bernardino. Este proyecto de investigación está aprobado por el subcomité de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Escuela de Trabajo Social de la Universidad Estatal de California en San Bernardino.

PROPOSITO: El propósito de este estudio es explorar el impacto que la separación familiar debido a la inmigración tiene en el niño y los padres después de la reunificación.

DESCRIPCION: Su participación en consiste en una entrevista con la investigadora estudiantil, que tardara aproximadamente una hora. Se le preguntaran siete preguntas.

PARTICIPACION: Apreciamos mucho su participación y es completamente voluntaria. Usted no tiene que responder cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. Usted puede saltar o no responder a cualquier pregunta y puede retirar libremente su participación en cualquier momento. Su decisión de participar o no, no afectará los servicios recibidos en Galilea Center.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD: Puede estar seguro de que toda la información personal se mantendrá estrictamente confidencial y la totalidad de HIPAA (Ley de Responsabilidad del Seguro de Salud y Portabilidad) de protección previsto para proteger su información personal de salud. Toda la información proporcionada por usted en este estudio será confidencial, y su nombre no aparecerá en ningún material. Se le asignara un número a sus datos en lugar de su identidad. Todos los materiales relacionados con el estudio serán guardados en un lugar seguro bajo llave, sólo la investigadora tendrá acceso.
RIESGOS: Esta investigación se considera de riesgo mínimo. No existen riesgos evidentes previsibles. Sin embargo, algunas personas pueden experimentar sentimientos de ansiedad, el estrés, el enojo o incomodidad al hablar sobre el tema de la separación de la familia y la reuniﬁcación en hacer revelaciones personales, o en el pensamiento acerca de su experiencia como inmigrante indocumentado. Se hará todo lo posible para minimizar los riesgos o molestias durante el estudio.

BENEFICIOS: Los resultados de esta investigación pueden resultar en beneficio futuros de la mejoría de los tratamientos integrativos

CONTACTO: Para cualquiera pregunta con respecto a este estudio, por favor, póngase en contacto con la ia asesora de investigación Dr. Erica Lizano, (909)537-5584, profesora de Trabajo Social, de la Universidad del Estatal de California en San Bernardino.

RESULTADOS: Los resultados de este estudio estarán disponibles en la biblioteca de La Universidad Estatal de California en San Bernardino 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407 después de Julio 2016.

DECLARACIÓN DE CONFIRMACIÓN:

Yo entiendo que tengo que tener 18 años de edad o más para participar en el estudio. He leído y comprendido la descripción del proyecto de investigación.

________ Estoy de acuerdo en ser grabada/o en audio.

________ No estoy de acuerdo para ser grabada/o en audio.

Ponga X aquí:

________________________________  Fecha:__________

Developed by Ana Diaz
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHICS
Participant/Participante # _____________________

Age/Edad _________________________________

Birth Place/ Lugar de nacimiento ______________________

Annual Income/ Ingreso anual

1. $0 - $9,999 _______________
2. $10,000 - $19,999 __________
3. $20,000 - $29,000 _________
4. $30,000 - $39,000 _________
5. $40,000 - $49,000 __________
6. $50,000 + _______________

Geographic Location/ Ciudad donde vive

1. Mecca _______________
2. Coachella _____________
3. Thermal _______________
4. Other _________________

Number of Children/ Numero de hijos _______________

Immigration year/ Año de inmigración______________

Reunification year/ Año de reunificación __________
APPENDIX D
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
A Glimpse into the Experience of Family Reunion in the Lives of Immigrants from El Salvador

Debriefing Statement

This study was intended to explore your experiences as an undocumented immigrant from El Salvador who was at one point separated from family due to immigration. The interest of this study is particularly on the impact your experience had on your relationship with your family. With this study the hope is to bring awareness and a better understanding of what undocumented families are experiencing and how they may be supported.

If you feel that you were negatively affected by this study, please don’t hesitate to call one of the numbers provided below for further assistance.

Catholic Charities:
83180 Requa Ave #9, Indio, CA 92201
(760) 342-0157

Riverside County Latino Commission:
1612 1st Street, Coachella, CA 92236
(760) 398-8800

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1 (800) 273-8255

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Ana Diaz or Dr. Erica Lizano at (909)537-5584. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact Ana Diaz at the end of June 2016.

Developed by Ana Diaz
Un Vistaso a la Experiencia de la Reunificación Familiar en la Vida de Inmigrantes de El Salvador.

Declaración Para reflexionar

Este estudio pretende explorar sus experiencias como inmigrante indocumentado de El Salvador que en un punto estuvo separado de su familia debido a la inmigración. El interés de este estudio es particularmente sobre el impacto que tuvo su experiencia en su relación con su familia. Con este estudio, la esperanza es traer conciencia y una mejor comprensión de las experiencias de las familias indocumentadas y cómo pueden ser apoyado/as.

Si se vio afectado negativamente por este estudio, por favor, no dude en llamar a uno de los números que aparecen a continuación para obtener más ayuda.

Caridades Católicas:
83180 Requa Ave #9, Indio, CA 92201
(760) 342-0157

Comisión Latina del Condado de Riverside:
1612 1st Street, Coachella, CA 92236
(760) 398-8800

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1 (800) 273-8255

Gracias por su participación. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, por favor no dude en contactarse con Ana Diaz o la Dr. Erica Lizano al (909) 537-5584. Si desea obtener una copia de los resultados de este estudio, por favor póngase en contacto con Ana Díaz a finales de Junio de 2016.

Desarrollado por Ana Diaz
My name is Ana Diaz, I am a student researcher at the California State University of San Bernardino. I am conducting a study on the experiences of family reunification in the lives of undocumented families from El Salvador. To participate you must meet the following criteria:

- Must have come to the United Stated from El Salvador without papers.
- You must be the parent who left or the child who was left behind
- Must have been separated from parent/child for at least one year.

If you are interested in participating please call me for an interview at (760)397-3883

Participation in this study is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits, and you may discontinue at any time.

Developed by Ana Diaz
Participe

Mi nombre es Ana Díaz, soy una investigadora estudiantil de la Universidad Estatal de California de San Bernardino. Estoy realizando un estudio sobre las experiencias de la reunificación familiar en la vida de las familias indocumentadas de El Salvador. Para participar es necesario cumplir con los siguientes criterios:

- Debe de haber llegado a los Estados Unidos de El Salvador sin papeles.
- Usted debe ser el padre que se vino o el niño que se quedó atrás
- Debe de haber estado separado de padre / hijo por lo menos un año.

Si le interesa participar, por favor llame (760)397-3883 para programar su entrevista.

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria, al negar su participación no se implicará ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios, y usted podrá terminar su participación en cualquier momento.

Desarrollado por Ana Díaz
REFERENCES


