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This dissertation examines the life stories of two Costa Rican families, including those members who migrated to the United States and those who remained in Costa Rica. My research challenges and enriches existing assumptions about immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented: that they come to the United States because of poverty, war, or instability in their own countries; it also call attention to those who are left behind.

This study utilizes narrative research methodology (Casey, 1993, 1995/1996) by asking the open-ended question: "Tell me the story of your life." Sixteen participants were interviewed in two cities in Costa Rico and three states in the U.S. By listening to immigrants' stories told by the interviewees, the public can be educated by the people and not by second or third parties

These narratives shift our attention from the traditional research perspectives on immigration, from the lens of economic and political issues, to a humanist-feminist approach. Powerful feminist discourses appear as the women in their stories affirm their autonomy and express pride in the way that they provide for their families. Topics of hard work, resilience, unconditional faith in God and family values appear in their stories. These families contest the culture of patriarchy; they live and prosper in women-headed households. Yet they suffer the sorrows of separation; they cannot risk returning to Costa Rico to see the other members of their families.

What compelling reasons lead the citizens of this idyllic country to abandon family, neighbors, friends, secure employment and cultural traditions? Why do they embark on an immigration adventure into a country where they are undocumented, where they suffer segregation and racism, where the language is different and where their culture, identity and ideas clash with those of the dominant society? This research story argues that undocumented Costa Rican women who immigrate to the US leave their country and their husbands to improve their financial status and to provide educational opportunities to their children.

CONFITES EN EL INFIERNO: LIFE STORIES OF TWO COSTA RICAN FAMILIES
LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN COSTA RICA

by

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A los Grandes Maestros del Universo - ¡GRACIAS!
(To the Great Masters of the Universe – THANK YOU!)

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been accepted by the following committee of the Faculty of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The best source of information to better understand immigration issues of non-documented workers in United States with their successes and perils, and their struggles on a daily basis, is ask the immigrants themselves. The purpose of this dissertation is to present the life stories of two families of undocumented immigrants who arrived from Costa Rica into the United States more than ten years ago. Listening to these life stories and analyzing their content draws attention to their own particular viewpoint on immigration. These narratives shift our attention from the traditional research observation of immigration, from the lens of economic and political issues, to the perspective of a humanist-feminist approach. It is my belief that these stories can enrich current research on immigration issues from the standpoint of women. Additionally, my interpretation of these stories challenges the traditional stereotypes popularly used to refer to “illegal aliens.”

Overview

La diferencia de una persona que puede pasar con visa a uno que vaya indocumentado es una diferencia del cielo a la tierra. (Fernan—el “coyote”)

The difference between a person entering the country with a visa and one who is undocumented is the difference between heaven and hell. (Fernan—the “coyote”)

This statement reflects the true reality of the life stories of my participants who are working in the U.S. and enjoying some benefits but, at the same time, they are living a life of sacrifices, often paying high prices for being undocumented. The immigrants in my study, mainly women, taught me about their daily struggles on how to survive in a receiving society. Their roles as grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts set examples of courage, fortitude, caring, and love in the family unit. Their life stories could be considered a successful achievement of the “American Dream” if they could have the required paperwork to be legal in the country. They shared with me their stories of hard work and resilience, while never losing hope; it is all in the hands of God, as they say.

Y yo siempre digo que la economía tan fuerte que tienen y ellos por sentirse más que nosotros hacen que uno los envidie y quiera viajar allá. Entonces como que ellos se buscan que la gente vaya allá. Se lo buscan, verdad, porque como nosotros nos sentimos más que los nicas, los gringos se sienten más que nosotros. Es la verdad. En el fondo se sienten más. (Fernan)

And I always say that their strong economy and because they feel superior from us, it makes us envy them and want to travel there. So, it is like they are asking for it. They look for it, right, because just as we (referring to Costa Ricans) feel superior from Nicas (Nicaraguans) gringos (North Americans) feel superior from us. It is the truth. Deep inside they feel superior. (Fernan)

Although immigration into the United States is not a new issue, it is for Costa Ricans. History refers to Costa Rica the “American Switzerland” where peace and political stability, where the beautiful tropical weather and the friendliness of the people only attracted others to come to the country to stay, so why leave? Neighboring countries that struggle with social, political, and economical issues became pushing societies, while Ticos leaving the country seemed unthinkable.

Compared to other Central American countries, research on Costa Rican immigrants in the United States is relatively recent (1980) in growth and on frequency. This research shows that causes to migrate from the home society and the reasons for reception of immigrants in the receiving societies share similarities and differences with neighboring countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009; Morales Gamboa & Castro Valverde, 2006). Even “local” reasons for moving follow the demand of global markets that displace, place, and replace individuals in different parts of the world. People move, as stated by Bauman (1998), to societies where the geographical borders are difficult to delineate in the “real world,” since modern transportation and sophisticated and accessible technology make borders “artificial.” Nevertheless, this movement of citizens affects both societies. Even though causes and consequences have an effect on everyone, on the issue of migration, attention focuses on the newcomers.

Costa Rica is affected financially, culturally, and socially by the migration process. Our ways of life have changed (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009; Rosero Bixby, 2001; Sandoval Garcia, 2007). Since this is a relative current topic, further research will not only bring forth emerging themes that can shed new light on existing ones, but research also can open a new perspective on Costa Ricans’ immigration in the United States. How do the themes of globalizations, education, democracy, identity, nationality, and culture interact independently and in conjunction to impact the surroundings and the essence of the persons involved?

In my dissertation I describe immigrations issues from two perspectives: from the side of those moving to the United States and from the side of the severed family left behind in Costa Rica. I pose these questions:

- How do immigrants begin their migration journey and what resources help them in the host country? What resources do social networks offer and how do immigrants access them?
- What is it like to be left behind, on the other side of the border? What issues and concerns are these families facing?

To complete my study, I traveled to two countries, United States and Costa Rica. I interviewed two families separated by the decision to move. This unique way of studying immigrants and their families gives the public a view of the two worlds and how immigrants, as whole human beings, are placed, replaced, and perceived in these two societies, the hometown and the host country. I have collected the life stories of two families, and one “coyote” who is not part of either family. This selection was made by word of mouth with no requirements for gender, social class or ethnicity. I was only looking for non-documented immigrants working in the United States and their relatives in Costa Rica.

Using narrative research approach (Casey, 1993, 1995/1996), I selected phenomenology methodology as my preferred research tradition; I want to describe and to understand the meaning of migration from the point of view of migrants themselves. This research tradition allows me to listen, reflect, analyze, interpret, and understand the life stories of my participants while they answer the open-ended question “Tell me the

story of your life.” In this manner, I could look for selectivities, silences, slippages, and intertextualities (Casey, 1993). In Chapters V and VI, I analyze and interpret the stories of my participants through lenses of feelings, beliefs, behavior, and real-to-life happenings (Maxwell, 1996). It is through data analysis that ideas emerge to develop into themes (Richards, 2005) flourishing from the life stories of my participants.

My study explores the immigration experiences of two families residing in the countryside in Costa Rica and in two states, South Carolina and New Jersey. Due to their legal status and to protect their anonymity, their real names are not used nor are the places, situations, or circumstances that might jeopardize their security. In writing about a relatively current issue and in opening a space for other Costa Ricans who have an idea or ideas of the American dream, I hope that their life stories educate other aspiring migrants before they make the decision of traveling into the United States.

My study, constructed around the life stories of these two undocumented families, challenges current ideas on undocumented immigrants. Undocumented immigrants have been the scapegoats of all the evils in society, in the workplace, and in politics in the broadest sense of the word. They are useful victims: useful, since they work in places where very few citizens would select as their workplaces while earning low wages; and victims because the Other—the immigrant—can be blamed for the problems of society.

I the Researcher

Twelve years ago while I was walking through customs and collecting the only two pieces of luggage allowed per person I thought that I was going to be working in the United States for only one year. I passed immigration as a participant in an educational

and cultural program with a “J” visa. A year was a good period of time to get a taste of working in the United States, of experiencing a different culture. I was given a social security number, so I opened a bank account, and selected a place to live.

My privileged working conditions allowed me to save and to appreciate a better-paid job; my salary back home as a language teacher was substantially less compared to the salary in the school system here. At that time I was teaching Spanish and English in private bilingual schools and teaching adults in private companies. Although my children were not with me, I was not alone. My best friend, my husband, was sharing this adventure with me. My emotional memory had enough in store to help me live a year without my children. My migration luggage was plentiful since this was another experience of living and working outside of my country. My privileged position as an immigrant gave me the choice of going back home if my job was not satisfactory. I even had the opportunity to continue with my education as an in-state student.

Not long after we arrived, we moved into a comfortable town house with a tennis court, a swimming pool, gardens, and a breath taking view to the lake. We had two cars, five TVs, kitchen appliances, and other gadgets advertised on the local newspapers and on TV. I had acquired quite a taste for the consumer society. I am a perfect example of the “shop ‘til you drop” consumer and the first one to line up for the door buster weekend. I became the family supplier for clothes, shoes, goodies, and the first class hotel for family, relatives, and friends to come and visit. Surreptitiously, consumerism crept into my life.

My story as an immigrant and as a current U.S. citizen is one of success and privilege, a fairy tale that came true for me but it is not one that necessarily mirrors the story of the majority of the immigrants. Nevertheless, the beginning of our migration journey is similar because we share a main motivation: we are all looking for better life opportunities. Although the concept of a “better life” varies from one person to another, the idea is similar based on the logic that we share the essence of this thought. We have the same objectives: we are looking for ways and opportunities to provide shelter, food, and a safe living environment for our families, a peaceful neighborhood for our children to grow. We want to have the possibility of providing them with the prospect of a better education. The migration story fills people with hope, with ways of rearranging reality.

As a Costa Rican immigrant, I am acutely aware of the origin of my fellow citizens. Costa Rica is my hometown. This beautiful tropical country has a tradition of having teachers instead of soldiers. There is no military service and there is no army. This happened as a result of a dispute after a presidential election where more than 2000 people died back in 1948. The victorious junta wrote a constitution guaranteeing free elections and the abolition of the military, an event that has permitted the country to have no military involvement in political affairs different from what happens in neighboring countries. Additionally, funds that at one point were assigned to military services were now allocated to improve the education system.

Costa Rica’s international known tradition in education attracted the VIF (Visiting International Faculty—a private owned business). This corporation was founded with the goal of looking and selecting Costa Rican teachers to teach in the public school system in

North Carolina. This program started with the president of Elon College back in the 80's and Rodrigo Carazo, the president of Costa Rica at that time (1978-1982). They joined efforts to fulfill a need for language teachers, at that time, in North Carolina. It was through this visiting program that twelve years ago I was selected to teach languages in the public school system in North Carolina.

I am part of the 2% of Ticos (Costa Ricans are referred to as Ticos) that migrated to the United States. I represent part of the migration phenomena housed under the category of "brain drainage," immigrants who have a college education and leave the home country at a productive stage and move into another country. Even though a number of my research participants have some years of formal education, their legal status halts them for their involvement in the workplace since they are undocumented. As we hear in their stories they move north searching for opportunities; their move is a consequence of global economic issues that directly affect Costa Ricans with actions and decisions mandated by others and consequently give the Ticos limited choices.

Globalization, technology, consumption, international alliances and demands, natural and human resources are current issues that concern everyone but that are controlled by the more powerful countries. As a consequence the poorer communities fight a helpless war trying to live a day at a time. It should not be a surprise to find that the people from oppressed countries see hope in the act of migrating as the only opportunity to stay alive and to be better providers.

As we know, television programs and Internet have no land boundaries. In their invading journey with their extensive grip these two means of communication reach the

poor communities with the tempting messages of wealth and opportunity while the real awakening happens when people look around their homes and neighborhoods. In a poor and oppressed community surrounding choices and opportunities are limited to reproduce the culture seen on TV.

In addition to my personal experience as an immigrant, this project evolved from an early experience I had while teaching English to a group of Mexican construction workers in North Carolina. The main objective of the people who hired me was to teach the workers enough English so that they could understand the requirements of OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), the federal regulations for safety and security. This group of students, who for the most part had barely completed formal elementary school in their hometowns, voiced their current language needs. They wanted to learn how to order in a fast food restaurant, how to ask directions, how to do banking, how to explain when they were sick, and in general, how to express their survival needs.

Consequently their communication needs went way beyond simply understanding the OSHA regulations. For them this organization was not relevant because it was not a part of their immediate needs. As the class sessions progressed, I was aware of their two major issues: first, the need to be able to communicate in the dominant language spoken in the receiving society and, secondly, since the need communicate their experiences. Not surprisingly, we deviated from OSHA to other topics such as: how to survive in the U.S.? How to deal with feelings of longing?

Teaching these workers the English language was important to me because I am a language teacher and that was my job. But the issue of their experiences went beyond

language. I found that their life stories were captivating and fascinating since not only were they very emotional, but their stories were awakening to the crude reality of some underprivileged people. They were very emotional as told by them. Tears in the eyes of a “*macho*” are silent words that speak to deep emotions. Through their anecdotes I learned of the dangers they had to outlive when crossing the border and of the daily threats that they had to survive. Some of them had been captured and deported more than once.

Of course I am, as I have previously mentioned, a privileged immigrant myself, one who was able to follow all the legal requirements to live and to work in this country. Unexpectedly, I was now suddenly aware of how little knowledge I had about a different side of immigration issues. Teaching the English language had suddenly become an interesting challenge because in that situation I was no longer the professor; I was the curious student. We were creating a space to dialogue; where we were talking about similar experiences. I was learning their language to critically understand their struggles, their doubts, their fears, and their hopes. Through their experiences, I understood my own position. We had opened a space to dialogue, to start the process of knowing each other through shared experiences.

With this group of undocumented immigrants, I explored many questions I had on this subject. For example, I began by asking them what a “normal” day for them was like. Their stories spoke of loneliness, sacrifice, suffering, resiliency, hunger, xenophobia, racism, prejudice, and a sense of hope expressed in a language of “God willing . . .” At that time while listening to their anecdotes I found out that they had two pillars to

survive: a fervent religious belief in God and the inner strength coming from their willingness and determination to help their families who were living back in México.

A great majority of these male construction workers was living in the United States by themselves. Their families were left behind, back home. It was at this point that I, from a female's perspective tried to imagine the other side of the family, and the everyday dynamics of those left behind such as grandparents, aunts, mothers, and children. How was their life experience? In the framework of a macho society, how was the ruptured family reorganized? Who was now the head of the family?

In Chapter II, I consider globalization in relationship to issues of immigration. In Chapter III, I review factors that influence Costa Rican immigration to the U.S. In Chapter IV, I describe the theory, methodology and social relations of my narrative research project. In Chapters V and VI, I present my analysis of the narratives. Finally, in Chapter VII, I offer my conclusions and reflections.

CHAPTER II

GLOBALIZATION

The term globalization is used to talk about how the world has changed by fast and effective communication and transportation. The movement of goods, labor, services, capital, and migrants is unprecedented. It is a term used on the news, by politicians, writers, and the general public. As loosely or as seriously as we hear it, the vital question is: *How is globalization impacting our everyday lives, our environment, our agency in making decisions and what are the consequences?* Globalization is a phenomenon that is happening and is affecting all of us, our environment, our natural resources, technology, and in general, messes with everything and everyone. Bauman (1998) captures the ambiguity and the anxiety that we face: “The deepest meaning conveyed by the idea of globalization is that of the indeterminate, unruly and self-propelled character of world affairs; the absence of a centre, of a controlling desk, of a board of directors, of a managerial office.” (p. 106).

In the process of becoming globalized, the local becomes the global; the private becomes public. The planet Earth is exposed as a global society with all the intimacy of each sub-society being exposed to the world. The global economy de-breathes the local business, sometimes family owned businesses, with the intention of helping the big global companies grow; the national economy is absorbed by the borderless international economy. Although globalization is mostly used to speak of economic globalization, this

modern way of organizing the globe impacts and affects all other aspects of human life: society and social organizations, politics and political interests, communication means, the speed of technology, and the movement of people—migration. When the environment is on the move, people follow; we are on the move.

The more I think about globalization, the more my life experiences as an immigrant explain my decision to migrate; it is about creating opportunities where I can thrive.

When I was growing up life seemed very simple. We, my brothers and sisters, played outside in the street with neighbors, my father worked eight hours a day from Monday to Friday and an additional half day on Saturdays, my mother stayed home as the house administrator making daily home decisions and on Sundays we went on family picnics to the beautiful tropical Costa Rican countryside. We played kickball assigning bases on streetlights, made camping tents with bed sheets hanging from cloth lines, built tree houses using cardboard boxes and broken umbrellas, and we marked the sidewalk with lime to play hopscotch and similar games. Dominoes, card games, Old Maid, board games, jacks, and ouija board were some of our favorite games to play when we were indoors. Additionally, I read Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys mystery series, as well as classic literature written by the Bronte sisters, Dickens, Stevenson, Alcott, Kipling, Hawthorne, and Spanish authors, too. Food was made from scratch with fresh ingredients and aromas that started coming out of the kitchen as soon as it was cleaned after every meal. My first pet was a grasshopper that I kept in my bedroom in a jar and I punched holes with a nail to allow oxygen into the jar. I fed it with my mother's rosebush leaves. I

started school at seven in the morning and I was home at one, ready for lunch with all my family members, and a short siesta afterwards. As soon as I completed homework early in the afternoon I was out playing with my siblings and a group of neighbors. Once a week, I walked to my piano teacher's house for an hour-long lesson. TV did not exist, and of course, neither any of the other modern gadgets. Communication basically was the telephone with a telephone operator connecting both ends, and, additionally, listening to what other people said to gossip with friends at later times. Transportation was mostly public such as buses, streetcars, trains, taxis; only those who had means had their own car. Buying groceries, clothes, shoes, and other items was local business, mainly consisting of neighborhood stores. Storeowners, for the most part, were friends more than business people. I remember the storeowner coming to my house when my mother was unable to do the shopping herself and he personally home delivered. When my father got sick, he came by the house to see how he could help. Additionally, while shopping, choices were simple; not only they responded to immediate survival needs but the selection was limited. The measure of stress was different and as seen from our modern standpoint, it was not an issue. Life was simple.

My childhood and the early years of a child nowadays depict the speedy drastic transformations occurring as I illustrate my point with my own grandchildren who live in Costa Rica. My granddaughter has a "game" where she can create her own imaginary pet that comes with a set of instructions to follow to take care and watch her cyber pet grow or die in cyberspace. Hence, this is the death of my grasshopper. My grandson can play alone many team sports with his "wii" game and does it on a HD TV to make images

“more real.” Another of my childhood games becomes extinct. My other grandson “plays” the guitar with a cyber rock group directed by a computerized program that gives him the *go* or the *try again* or shows a frustrated booing audience depending on how well he plays with the band. The outcome of this experience is his request for true-to-life guitar lessons with a real teacher and his mother will drive him to and from his lessons. Hopefully, when he experiences reality, he will continue interested in his lessons. Nevertheless, it is a fact that today more than ever before in history, at an early age, children are impacted with technology in unimaginable marketable ways.

The comparison between my childhood and what children are exposed to at the present time is an awakening reality that is awesome for the young crowd and scary for the not-so-young, or for the crowd who is working so hard that time to keep up with “leisure technology” is very limited or nonexistent. Experts called it globalization. The act of being globalized demonstrates how the simplicity of life has evolved into a complex world due to three main topics that come forward on stage covered under the big umbrella of business, economics, investment, and money: technology, communication, and mobility. At times these three themes act alone; however most of the time they dance together. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define where one begins and the other ends. Nonetheless, globalization invades all aspects of the human being; it affects the way of life in all aspects as well as every society in every corner of the world, from the family cell into the neighborhood and into the city where it will march into other cities and eventually into all and every country in the world. In my opinion, after digging layers through enticing marketing techniques and unfolding convincing fallacies looking for a

truth, I would simplify the name globalization as “selfish greed at whatever cost it takes.” People move as a result of the exposure to the world of better life opportunities in developed societies. It is a human condition, like the nomads at the beginning of human history, to follow the path of the food source. It should not be a surprise to anyone to understand the need for the poor to look for better opportunities. Nevertheless, migration occurs as a cause and as an effect of this intricate convulsion called “globalization.”

I started my migration story with ideas of who I was at that point, but in the process I changed. I can compare my journey as traveling through the Monopoly Table Game: I begin at GO, move through different “states” —stages. I experience good and bad situations, and always buy properties, things, stuff as I travel. As in the game, I make decisions and choices. At other time I throw the dice to “chance-and-luck” and then make my move. I pass GO and get the money, my salary, and then continue in a new cycle that is born from the previous round and will give birth to the future round of working and shopping. In the process I am aware, through modern communication systems, of what is going on around me. My inner *I* undergoes constant transformations.

What is the impact of this movement of people across national borders? Will it have the potential to be a catalyst for increasing social conflict in one hand, or will it increase tolerance in the other hand? To answer these questions I voice my personal immigrant story supported with quotes from Bauman, Maalouf, and Melucci with their insightful thoughts on identity and mobility.

Leaving Tiquicia—The Magnetic Attraction

Immobility is not a realistic option in a world of permanent change. (Bauman, 1998, p. 2)

Where do I come from? Why did I perceive my own society as a push factor and how did I make the move? I begin by briefly explaining some aspects of my country that help me build the stage for factors that encourage my migration. I address the topic of identity as an important component in the migration issue supporting my ideas with literature from Bauman and Maalouf.

Costa Rica is my home country. This beautiful tropical country has a tradition of having teachers instead of soldiers. There is no military service and there is no army. This happened as a result of a dispute after a presidential election where more than 2,000 people died back in 1948. The victorious junta wrote a constitution guaranteeing free elections and the abolition of the military, an event that has permitted the country to have no military involvement in political affairs different from what happens in neighboring countries. Additionally, funds that at one point were assigned to military services were now allocated to improve the education system. As a consequence of this movement and in addition to it, Costa Rica is known as a country with more teachers and educators than soldiers.

Costa Rica's internationally known tradition in education attracted the VIF (Visiting International Faculty Program) to my country. This corporation was founded with the goal of looking and selecting Costa Rican teachers to teach in the public school system in North Carolina. This program started with the president of Elon College back

in the 80's and Rodrigo Carazo, the president of Costa Rica at that time (1978-1982). They joined efforts to fulfill a need for Spanish language teachers, at that time, in North Carolina. It was through this visiting program that fourteen years ago I was selected to teach languages in the public school system in North Carolina. Statistically speaking, I am part of the 2% of Ticos (Costa Ricans are referred to as Ticos) that migrated to the United States. I represent part of the migration phenomena housed under the category of "brain drainage," immigrants who have a college education, leave the home country at a productive stage and move into another country.

While in Costa Rica, I was part of the middle class working force. As a language teacher, I worked in a private school teaching English as a second language. I owned a modest house in an increasingly dangerous neighborhood. In my leisure time, I played tennis as a member of a private club. Weekends were dedicated to family and friends. Fridays we met with friends at the club either to dance or just to talk. On Saturdays, we played cards. And Sundays was the day for all of our children and their families to come for lunch and spend the rest of the day with us.

As much as I love my country, I did not feel safe in Costa Rica and I wanted my security. In the recent, the "pura vida"¹ lifestyle of the Ticos has changed drastically from a peaceful society to one of socially being scared and distrustful. The citizens are constantly exposed to robberies that have escalated from petty incidents to life threatening confrontations if the owner of the car doesn't comply with the demand of

¹ "*pura vida*" is used to express a way of life. Literally translated it means "pure life," which reflects a positive, lively way of living and leading life.

handing the keys over to the thief. The news constantly reports life-threatening incidents, and gives advice on how to protect our belongings and ourselves. Consequently, the idea of looking for a safer place to live grew stronger. The timing was just right when I was offered a job to work in the United States.

As an immigrant, I have to acknowledge all “my baggage” or my “allegiances,” as Maalouf (2000) calls it, when I enter the receiving society. The easiest part of who I am is visible such as how I look, the way I dress, and the way I move. However, the essence and the most important “luggage” is invisible and intangible; it is my identity, all the components that make me the person I am. It is not unless I know whom I am that I will be able to interact and accommodate myself in my new home. Bauman (1995) articulates that there are four identities that work as life strategies: *the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist, and the player*. A combination of each of these categories helps me explain my migrant journey. The following section addresses actions and reactions in the receiving society to define how immigration either enlightens the receiving society as accepting differences, or, how this movement of people across national borders can be a catalyst for increasing social conflict.

The “Tourist” in Me

As I look back into my migration journeys I realize that this was not my first time to move and live in another country. I have lived in Costa Rica, my hometown, in Mexico and in Spain. While the past reasons to move differ, this time another factor that pushed my decision to move was the need to change my life, the call for a purposeful adventure:

professional growth. Bauman's (1995) tourist strategic way of living mirrors my reason when he states that

The tourist moves on *purpose* (or so s/he thinks). His/Her movements are first of all 'in order to', and only secondarily (it at all) 'because of' (even if that 'in order to', happens to be but the goal of escaping the disappointment brought on by the last escapade; as Chris Rojek pointedly put it, the tourist streak in us is born of 'the relentless dissatisfaction and desire for contrast . . . We are never convinced that we have experienced things . . . fully enough; we are always dully aware that our experiences could be better; no sooner do we enter 'escape' activities than we feel nagging urges to escape from them' (pp. 95-96)

Like the tourist, I have traveled many miles in many different countries, packing experiences. I am on the move, looking for new excitement and securing my move along the way with my profession and having my home as my safety net.

Nevertheless, as I look into the past and enjoy all the memories for these escapades, I realize that time passes and that it may be the time to settle down. I have added another tourist character trait described by Bauman; I am homesick.

"Homesickness is a *dream of belonging*—of being, for once, *of* the place, not merely *in*" (p. 97). The spirit of "belonging to and not just being in," in my experience reflects my awareness of having climbed many hills, having experienced how to work and blend into different cultures. Finally I feel that I have reached the plateau at the end of my journey, an elevated place where I can look around and enjoy the pleasurable memories of my trips. Nevertheless, I will open another door: I will probably move once more to my home country to be with my family when I retire—a characteristic of the tourist, always on the move.

The “Vagabond” in Me

[M]obility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor; the stuff of which the new, increasingly world-wide, social, political, economic and cultural hierarchies are daily built and rebuilt. (Bauman, 1998, p. 9)

Bauman’s life strategy as a vagabond reflects another way in which society interacts in the presence of a stranger, or conversely, how the immigrant behaves in the new community. Although the vagabond and the tourist are very similar in the sense that they live at the margin of society, they are different in the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. “First, the balance between ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, in the case of the vagabond heavily weighed on the side of the ‘push’, in the case of the tourist shifts toward the ‘pull’ end” (Bauman, 1995, p. 95). Another difference between the two lies on the fact that the tourist has a home because the tourist needs a home, one to return to after the journey.

Bauman defines a vagabond as a free-roamer with unpredictable destination who is constantly searching for a place to settle with an unsuccessful ending, since in the end she finds out that those places do not exist; they are all already settled by other people. The vagabond is constantly looking for a place to settle, but the paradox lies in the person herself; she feels that she doesn’t belong and, at the same time, she feels that she needs to belong.

Wherever the vagabond goes, he is a stranger: he can never be ‘the native’, the ‘settled one’, one with ‘roots with the soil’—and not for the lack of trying: whatever he may do to ingratiate himself in the eyes of the natives, too fresh, too fresh is the memory of his arrival—that is, of his being elsewhere before: he still smells of other places, of that beyond against which the homestead of the natives has been built. (Bauman, 1995, pp. 94-95)

Twelve years ago while I was walking through customs and collecting the only two pieces of luggage allowed per person I thought that I was going to be working in the United States for only one year. I passed immigration as a participant in an educational and cultural program that legally allowed me to work as a language teacher in the public school system in North Carolina. I thought that a year was a good period of time to get a taste of working in the United States, of experiencing a different culture, and at the same time actively participating in a society that I admired so much. Even so, I was not thinking in extending it more than one year. Upon entering the United States, I was assigned a social security number that allowed me to immerse into society in a legal way. I was able to open a bank account, apply for an ATM card, a checkbook, and all in all, I had an open door to start a life in the States. I was given a “J” visa.² This was a delightful entrance and I savored it with joy and with a sense of safety. In the past I had had an unpleasant experience that made me reluctant when traveling into the United States. On one of my return trips, I walked into the San Juan airport in Puerto Rico, a port of entrance into the United States. There were two signs only in charge of organizing the incoming crowd into two distinct categories: “United States Citizens” and “Aliens.” I had

² **J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa General Information:** The United States government issues J-1 Visas to individuals who take part in a wide range of exchange visitor programs sponsored by schools, businesses, and a variety of organizations and institutions. These programs are envisioned for business and industrial trainees, scholars, students, international visitors, teachers, research assistants and those on cultural missions. In addition, there are several exchange visitor programs for young people, including summer employment programs, internship programs for university students and au-pair programs.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Eligibility Requirements: You meet the criteria for a J1 Exchange Visitor Visa if you are coming to the United States as a student, scholar, trainee, teacher, professor, research assistant, medical graduate or international visitor who is participating in a program of studies, training research or cultural enrichment specifically designed for such individuals by the United States Department of State, through its Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

never been called an Alien before and the realization of being of outer space created an ‘ET phone home’ awareness of it’s *US* and *YOU* (*US* as the pronoun us and *US* as the United States). Additionally, the absence of a *WE* started to shape as I began looking for ways to belong into a new society. As a vagabond, I was caught in a land where neither was I *a part of* or had *a space in*, a place to fully become part of the new society. I “smelled” and still do “smell” like “the other.”

Even so, I had hope. “The vagabond is pushed from behind by hopes already frustrated, and pulled forward by hopes yet untested” (Bauman, 1995, p. 94). And ultimately, the vagabond’s hope also lies on mobility: “It is better for the vagrant, therefore, not to grow too accustomed to the place” (Bauman, 1995, p. 95).

The “Player” in Me

The game of life is fast and all-engrossing and attention-consuming, leaving no time to pause and think and draw elaborate designs. But again, adding impotence to bafflement, the rules of the game keep changing long before the game is finished. (Bauman, 1995, p. 91)

In Bauman’s desire to order and categorize the aspects of human life, he places the player in the life strategy as the one whose concern “is how well [she] plays one hand” (p. 98). Immersion into another society is a way of shuffling the cards that the player has in her hand. Uncertainty of how ‘the migration game’ is going to work depends on a stroke of luck. My cards, when I started the migration hand, were stacked with potential success. I had a solid financial situation; I had savings that I brought into the country and deposited in my new bank account. I was going to improve my income because I had a better-paid job in the United States. I was, and still I am, physically and

emotionally healthy. I like to think that I have a balance between work and play. Nevertheless, the cards shuffle again as time changes the game with new beginnings and different endings. I have worked in different places and I have moved into different homes. I have made new friends and I have blended into the game of belonging in a new neighborhood with a new beginning. I am constantly looking for opportunities and I have played my cards successfully.

Even if “the game” sounds just like “a game,” whenever I make the move it is a considered and conscious thought. There are controlled actions and risks as well as unknowns and uncertainties. Isn’t this part of the game of life? “The mark of postmodern adulthood is the willingness to embrace the game whole-heartedly, as children do”

(Bauman, 1995, p. 99).

The “Stroller” in Me

Physically, strolling means rehearsing human reality as a series of episodes—that is, as events without a past and with no consequences. It also means rehearsing meetings as miss-meetings, as encounters without impact: the fleeting fragments of other persons’ lives the stroller spun off into stories at will. (Bauman, 1995, p. 92)

I relate the life strategy of a stroller as “the consumer in me,” as the stroller acts in free time and shops and shops while strolling. “He was the man of leisure and he did his strolling in his time of leisure,” says Bauman (1995, p. 92). As a stroller, there is no compromise, no responsibility. In a mall, I just walk into a place and select what I want with no attachments. It is just a moment of pleasure that, in my reality as an immigrant, I use to buy all the “stuff” that I am sending home. This moment in a society of

consumerism gives me the opportunity to play the powerful role of buying and sending boxes of clothes, shoes, books, and other things home that will give pleasure to the receivers, my family. The freedom to walk in a shopping mall in a secure area surrounded by people I don't know is very different from my childhood memories, but it gives me many more choices. I am in a society, a super-consumer society, where I can purchase and consume and, above all, enjoy life. Additionally, I enjoy the anonymity of the experience; my identity is just another walking person with very little, if any, eye contact.

While I was conducting my interviews, I went to Concord Mills, a big shopping mall in Charlotte, NC. My research participants and I agreed to meet at the food court, since it was the most convenient place. We had not met personally so it was a matter of just watching for a Latino looking Costa Rican. Was I in trouble! At least half, if not more, of the people eating there were Spanish-speaking people. For the immigrants this "playground" serves not only as a predictable safe place but it represents the immediate gratification for the not so pleasurable work they do outside these safe walls. This has been my experience as well.

Identity—A Work in Progress

Identity can't be compartmentalized. (Maalouf, 2000, p. 2)

The unknown is a call for experiencing the new. Immigrants in the eyes of the locals are strangers and create a paradox. On one hand, as an immigrant I know that I create a reaction in "local" people, one that is enticing because I have a different look, food, dress, music, tradition, that is "exotic and tempting." On the other hand, immigrants

are rejected because these differences create the fear of the unknown, a threat to the culture of the receiving society. This anxiety affects both fronts, the newcomer and the local. The dynamics when two people face each other, not in the free, lawless, and faceless cyber space, but in a true physical space, in an eye-to-eye contact, is a state of ambiguity, of multiple possible exchanges. This interaction of “I am here and you are here” creates a reaction that can be either a negation or an acknowledgement. The awareness of “looking and smelling” various aspects of another human being is an awakening that the Other is here; the Other is here with an identity that can ‘checkmate’ my own.

I was born in a society where authority roles were clearly defined, where “the man” of the house was the provider and “the woman” of the house was the home administrator in charge of everything dealing with the house, including the children’s education, a perfect example of a patriarchy. It was obvious that my father was a producer and both of my parents were consumers, when that was possible. As an immigrant, my journey begins as a producer, and eventually, I became a major consumer. In the move as a migrant I gave up some of my home security to enjoy freedom as a consumer, as a stroller in the mall, and as a tourist and a vagabond who belong everywhere and nowhere, as a player to enjoy the pleasures of life. As Bauman states the move from being a producer to being a consumer marks the shift from ‘modernity’ to ‘post-modernity’. In addition, the life strategies of the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist, and the player create the complex uniqueness of my identity.

Maalouf (2000) states that our personality is a “recompilation” of everything that surrounds us with our environment such as experiences, childhood, culture, and sexual, political, education, and religious orientation. What he calls “allegiances” are all the issues, experiences, and circumstances that surround us since the first day of our life. In addition, he adds that the uniqueness of how we process the information makes us totally different. We are the product of a complex, intrinsic, and continuous negotiation between our allegiances, the social environment, and our connections with the Other. This process of uniting environmental experiences and information makes me who I am, my identity. “My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anyone else” (Maalouf, 2000, p. 10). It is a work in progress. “Identity isn’t given once and for all: it is built up and changes throughout a person’s lifetime” (Maalouf, 2000, p. 23).

My mother use to say: “It takes two to pick a fight” or “If one doesn’t pick the fight, there is no fight.” Her words come to my mind as I think about my experience as an immigrant since “it takes two,” the receiving society and the immigrant. The complexity of the immigrant in the face of the local turns into a choice for *both*: one, I accept you how you are, or two I reject you. Or, conversely, you accept me or reject me. The awareness of the other’s identity is a complex exposure where there is an exchange, a negotiation, a selection of what I see in you and that I want to acknowledge or to ignore. What is more interesting and unsettling is the fact that in the presence of the Other, I see the Self. So, in the amalgamative process of selecting and rejecting I am fractioning myself under the same magnifying glass that I am using to judge the Other. The Other is present yet unfamiliar, strange and local at the same time and so am I. The responsibility

lies on both ends although the local ‘feels’ the advantage since this is her playground. My mother was right, I need the other to “fight” my own identity. It takes two.

The first months in the United States were more than just understanding the school system and negotiating my life with my unknown surroundings. I was trying hard to become part of my new environment; I tried to be like my colleagues, and in the process I selected what I wanted to share, show, and change. I had mixed feelings. I was afraid of rejection so I chose to emulate a successful teacher in the school who later became my best friend. But my heart was lonely because I wanted to be this adaptation and myself and transformation process was hurting me. At times I was sad and other times I was angry. As an immigrant,

One’s first reflex is not to flaunt one’s difference but to try to pass unnoticed. The secret dream of most migrants is to be taken for “natives.” Their first temptation is to imitate their hosts, and sometimes they succeed in doing so. But most often they fail. They haven’t got the right accent, the right shade of skin, the right first name, the right family name or the proper papers, so they are soon found out. A lot of them know it’s no use even trying, and out of pride or bravado make themselves out to be more different than they really are. And needless to say some go even further, and their frustration turns into violent contestation. (Maalouf, 2000, p. 39)

I started negotiating with myself. I made the decision to stay and I was going to look for ways to make this transition. In fact, at that point I realized that I had an important component for being successful in the host society; I spoke the language and in the process I had learned about the culture. What is more, I had had the opportunity of living in the United States when I was younger. My other asset was also very valuable; I had control over my mobility. As Bauman (1994) states in his book *Broken Lives, Broken*

Strategies: “What made the vagabond so terrifying was his apparent freedom to move and so to escape the net of previously locally based control. Worse than that, the movements of the vagabond were unpredictable; unlike the pilgrim or, for that matter, a nomad, the vagabond has no destination” (p. 94).

I was here by choice and I could go back whenever I wanted, a freedom that did not attach me to any responsibility. I was going to try my best to stay in the host country. Consequently, I started searching for ways to help me work with my decision. So I added to my identity a very important American Dream environmental component, the consumer society.

My monthly salary was “too delayed” and I had to have immediate gratification, that is to say, an incentive to look forward to that would get me out of bed in the morning and to help me start my day. (Isn’t immediate gratification as a consumer a significant component of the American Way?) So, as an incentive to look forward to getting up every day, I started motivating myself with little things such as hairpins, shoes, flowers, doughnuts, and anything that would give me an extra encouragement to get up in the morning. At the beginning of this motivational journey and since I was just getting to know my surroundings, I walked to neighborhood stores, pharmacies, markets, and grocery stores. When I conquered my fear of driving an automatic car, shopping escalated moving from the neighborhood into the mall.

Once at the mall, while I was shopping for “my incentives,” I soon learned that there were great buys for my children back home. Needless to say, soon I became the provider of the family. I started shopping for my kids and sending boxes home with all

imaginable and unimaginable “stuff” in them, such as clothing, shoes, books, kitchen things, video games, all the “ware” such as software, hardware, silverware, chinaware, and other non-traditional things, such as olive oil and Basmati rice! I had contacts in stores who would call me whenever there was a big sale. At that point, my daughter-in-law opened a children’s store and I was the supplier. I became “the discount queen” as I mastered all the coupons and the “take an extra X% off.” Since Costa Rica is a tropical country, I was the “out of season” expert shopper. I remember buying brand-name children clothing at low prices, some less than \$1.00, while the article had an initial price of \$20.00 or more. In addition, my son has an electronics store in Costa Rica and now he had an USA address to send his online purchases. I would box them again and re-direct the merchandise to Costa Rica. I became the shopping/shipping and handling link. I walked the stores and I searched on-line. Soon I had to reserve a pallet for the number of boxes had grown from one to nine or ten. Technology became a useful friend that brought the malls into my home within seconds. I gave birth to a hyper-activity computer mouse that clicked frantically on all the cyber choices. In this process, I learned not only about the school system but also about how to fit in a globalized world.

My gratification story and the following life story of a Costa Rican in NC, serve the purpose of showing how the pieces of the globalization puzzle have a micro-place in a macro-bigger puzzle. I evolved from a consumer into work-generating second-hand entrepreneur. In a business world of globalization people see opportunity in the smallest way to make it a successful business. As I mentioned, I was exporting merchandise to Costa Rica and I was looking for the best deal, making the most of two guaranteed

components of a successful business: efficiency and low costs. By word of mouth, I found a Costa Rican immigrant who started his business in Morganton. He had the vision of providing export services to Ticos in North Carolina had an interest in sending things back home. His service includes picking up the merchandise from each house and in two or three weeks, it is door-to-door delivering in Costa Rica. He has a set fee for size, not for weight, which makes it very convenient to put in the box heavy things without worrying about the weight. He started his business “Transportes Costa Rica” in North Carolina and now he collects and delivers boxes in South Carolina, New Jersey, and Georgia. This is an example of how an immigrant can be successful.

My story as an immigrant and as a current U.S. citizen is one of success and privilege. It is a fairy tale that came true for me but does not necessarily mirror the story of the majority of the immigrants. We hear in the news, in people’s life stories, and other means of communication why people migrate. I react with mixed feelings of unfairness, disgust, and sadness knowing that the real life stories of the participants are not heard. Those who want sensationalism and a place in the news interpret them from a biased position, planting their thoughts on the minds of the listeners. The listeners accept their opinions many times without questioning, either because it is easier to accept the others position of authority or because it is comfortable to have someone “eat and digest” the news, while the viewer sits in her comfort zone. This is the nature of my research: to open a space for the voices of undocumented Costa Rican immigrants in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and New Jersey and to analyze the complexity of “success.”

Conclusion—The No Man’s Zone

I am a tennis player and a tennis fan. While learning the game on the court, I was taught that there is a zone called “the no man’s land,” a part of the court where the player is very vulnerable to the opponent’s shot. If the player claims the territory and wins the points, the performance of the appropriate movements determines her success and happiness or failure and embarrassment. Very successful players use “the no man’s land” to re-position themselves from a defensive player into an aggressive controller of the game. As a tennis player in an immigrant “game,” I see myself in a “no man’s land.” I am vulnerable to either being a “a blank sheet of paper on which everyone can write whatever he pleases” (Maalouf, 2000, p. 40) or one that has to accept “the host country as a page already written and printed, a land where the laws, values, beliefs, and other human and cultural characteristics have been fixed once and for all” (Maalouf, 2000, p. 40). This area is where anything and everything can happen; it is the marginal neighborhood where limits are not clearly defined. The “no man’s land” is a land of paradoxes, of ambiguity and possibilities and of HOPE to win the game.

It is a fact that the receiving society has the “no man’s land;” it exists and can be claimed by the powerful moves on either side, the immigrant or the local. Immigrants arrive because this new region presents itself as a place with great opportunities to “rewrite” their reality. Locals are in the place because this *is* their home. The question arises: who will be the ‘conqueror’ of this tug of war in the ‘no man’s land’, the immigrant or the local? Is this the area where participants will work with each other to

understand their human differences and learn to live with each other or will it create more conflict?

“Money attracts money” is a popular saying in the Spanish-speaking communities that comes to my mind when I observe what “values” matter to those who are in command. The more money millionaires have, the more they want. For example, I watched the news earlier today and I saw what I call two ‘tribimultimillionaires’ (trillion, billion, million, millionaires) in the world claiming the first place as the richest man in the world; Bill Gates lost his first place to a Mexican citizen Carlos Slim Helu, the son of a Lebanese *immigrant!* They publicly embrace each other and smile into the camera. The two most financial powerful men in the world continue to generate more money for personal interests, more money that they can spend in their lifetimes. What is more, their fortunes are uncountable since they reproduce in a geometrical progression.

Where are we heading? I believe that issues of countries of origin, skin color, cultural differences, race, gender, and immigration issues are “petty cash” used to disguise the bigger picture: power and money control the system to favor the few already in control. In the process, people, locals and immigrants without distinction, are seen as resources to exploit. At the same time, Mother Nature is abusively used, depleting Her potential to regenerate. Unfortunately, the commanders seem to forget that their trillions will not “work” when Mother Nature shuts down. Money does not buy everything.

The race for dominance continues, be it personal or national. The voices of the greedy are monologues in the cacophony of selfish discourses. People and countries continue to profit and control. However, there is a fundamental difference in their

legacies: when 'tribimultimillionaries' die, their descendants fight over their inheritance; but when it is a country's legacy, it becomes part of a mythical cultural luggage that will permeate public thought. The people in power stay in power, not because they are locals or immigrants, but because of the assets they control. The problem is not the immigration issue. What really matters is greed.

CHAPTER III

ROOTS AND WINGS

Causes and Consequences of Migration to the United States

The complexity of the migration³ issue includes a combination of factors that answer the questions of why, how, when, where, and what, and quantitative questions along the figures and percentages of how many and how much. While cause and effect factors that obligate people to migrate are difficult to single out and to identify as motivators, three truths emerge: first, migrants have powerful reasons to make the decision to migrate; second, some migrant workers in search of a source to live, move nationally from the countryside to the outskirts of the city as the beginning of their journey while others move internationally, and third, this phenomenon affects the home society as well as the receiving society, impacting both in similar or in larger magnitude. Similarly, history attests that migrating has been a common practice since the onset of human kind. Nevertheless, the fact that this is a continuing issue from the onset of human kind and therefore is not an innovative contemporary issue does not diminish the importance of this happening. On the contrary, part of this research, as we will see, is to discover the ambiguous facts that perpetuate the continuance of this phenomenon.

³ For clarification purposes I will use the following words as defined: migration—the act of moving from one region or country to another; emigration—to leave a country, especially a native country, to live in another country, to go and live elsewhere; immigration—the act of settlers entering a new country with the intent to settle permanently or for a long period of time.

As we are going to read in this chapter, even if Costa Rica didn't suffer wars such as its neighboring countries, the issues next door impacted my country. Traditionally, immigrant Spanish speakers came from Mexican workers and from Cubans seeking political asylum. For other Latin Americans, economic reasons were the original motivating factors, as well as moving away from political instability, that affected the family life and the monthly income. Moreover, even if the quake is localized at the epicenter, the ripple effect will spread throughout the continent and, eventually, into the whole world. The act of migrating regardless of the reasons to migrate, affects the pushing society as well as the receiving society. And to make this issue more complicated, it is difficult to disentangle where one pushing factor begins and the other ends.

Furthermore, the analysis done by Sandoval García (2006) reflects the seriousness of the causes, the effects, and the consequences for these countries.

En los últimos cinco años, la emigración de centroamericanos hacia Estados Unidos ha sido de una magnitud considerable. En términos relativos ha oscilado entre el 40% y el 20% de la población de los países, con excepción de Costa Rica donde la expulsión de población no ha sido un componente importante (aproximadamente el 2% reside en el exterior). El Salvador sobresale con una población estimada de 2.75 millones de personas que residen en Estados Unidos, Guatemala con casi un millón y medio y Nicaragua y Honduras con menos de un millón. (p. 13)

In the last five years, the migration of Central Americans towards the United States has been of a considerable magnitude. In relative terms, it has oscillated between the 40% and the 20% of these countries population, with the exception of Costa Rica where the population's expulsion has not been an important component (approximately 2% resides outside of its territory.) Salvador leads with an estimated population of 2.75 million of people who reside in the United States, Guatemala close to a million and a half and Nicaragua and Honduras shy from a million. (p. 13)

Costa Rica is part of the group of countries located in Central America. This community of small countries shares this strip of land and their livelihood. Therefore, in order to speak of Costa Rica's migration, I have to address the history of the other Central American countries, since their interconnectedness goes beyond land. Following this section, I will focus on Costa Rica's push factors and what are the pull factors that attract them to migrate into the United States.

Socio-economic-political Factors of Central American Migration

In Central America, I will focus on three major topics that define the destiny and the opportunities of their people: Poverty, Military Factors, and the Industrialization of Agriculture. As we will see, the common factor of poverty affects these third world countries. The citizens get caught in the crunch of local survival within the reality of a fast-paced global economy. The second pushing factor is the establishment of organized military forces that are characterized by constant abuses from the parties in power, creating instability and insecurity in these societies. And finally, farmers and their families are replaced by industrial machinery, creating social and family chaos.

Poverty. The meaning and the definition of poverty are relative and circumstantial because the notion of poverty is shadowed by personal awareness that is influenced by a persistent condition or by an abrupt awakening of a constantly changing environment. Needless to say everyone has different perceptions of poverty. Therefore, for clarification purposes, we will work under the simple generic definition that poverty is the physical state and the inner awareness of not having enough money to supply the basic needs of housing, food, and clothing. The pressing question at this point is: Is

poverty a pushing factor in Central America? To answer this question I looked at the GNP (Gross National Product)⁴ data for 224 countries in the world and situated Costa Rica and its neighboring countries within a parameter of the highest and the lowest countries in the world, and the United States as guides to where the Central American countries are situated in the poverty level in the world. Table 1 shows the wealth levels around the world per capita in dollars (2005):

Table 1

Gross National Product of Selected Countries in Dollars (2005)

Country's GNP position in the world	Country	Gross National Product (GNP)
No. 1	Luxemburg	\$65,602
No. 6	United States	\$43,743
No. 19	Canada	\$32,546
No. 75	Belize	\$7,900
No. 100	Panama	\$4,626
No. 101	Costa Rica	\$4,589
No. 132	El Salvador	\$2,445
No.159	Honduras	\$1,192
No. 170	Nicaragua	\$906
No. 223	Dem. Rep. of Congo	\$120
No. 224	Burundi	\$96

Source: <http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/infopays/rank/PNBH2.html>.

⁴ GNP—the Gross National Product is “the value of all the goods and services produced in an economy, plus the value of the goods and services imported, less the goods and services exported.” Ref: About.com Economics.

Is poverty in Costa Rica a pushing factor? The GNP shows that Costa Rica is placed slightly above the middle, clustered very closely by its sister countries. Consequently, in search of the answer we must keep in mind that not only poverty is relative, but also that it is shaped by other influencing issues that add complexity factors to this issue. What is clear and materializes at this point is that the effects of social chaos land on the disenfranchised. The socio-political circumstances of cause and effect influence the country's economy immediately turning this issue over to the people; but the people mostly affected are not the middle class or to the wealthy who have means to travel comfortably if necessary. Not surprisingly, the people who unwillingly and unwisely inherit the consequences of financial turmoil are the displaced workers and the "poor." Even though the impact of the economy hits the poor, the "poor-poor" are the ones who are left with little or no power to make their decisions. They are pushed into the margins because their allegiances have little to offer if they decide to travel. On the other hand, the not-so-poor are in an advantageous position because they have resources such as networks, ways of financing their trip, family support, and they are better informed by people's stories and by technology. Nonetheless, the incongruence relies on the fact that policy makers make a decision that will affect the poor and they will suffer the consequences. Further on, I will answer the questions, why and under what conditions do non-documented Costa Rican's migrate. And additionally, are they "poor-poor?"

Military factors. Most Central American countries not only have an army, but have also been affected by internal wars that have lead to horrendous abuses by the party in power, supported by the military. Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, and El

Salvador are countries with historical scenarios of political instability, social insecurity, and a tradition of its citizens being governed by power abuse from the controlling class or dictators and with no option but to submit to reigns of terror and fear that pour as a waterfall on individuals and families. These dictators, as well as other dictators from other Latin American countries were known for their brutality, cruelty, and corruption. They amass enormous personal wealth, at the cost of the sacrifice, oppression and suffering of the disfranchised. First world countries covertly and overtly supported these actions, especially one country that is geographically close. “The new dictators served U.S. interests by guaranteeing order. Their authoritarianism was ignored under the guise of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s new policy of non-interventionism in the region, known as the Good Neighbor Policy” (Bradford Burns & Charlip, 2007, pp. 213-214). Consequently, many people from these countries started to migrate in search of security and safety.

The civil war in El Salvador (1980-1992) between the national right wing military of the government and the FMNL (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) occurred when this group challenged the right-wing military and the coffee plantation oligarchy. They were also fighting for better social conditions and for fair elections. One of their struggles was for better wages since initially the farmers were paid by peonage or by tenancy. The oligarchy controlled the government and oppressed the *campesinos* (peasants, country farmers and workers). The *campesinos* worked for the elite group on the land that used to be theirs, a land that was taken away from them, either peacefully or violently. Easily inferred, this situation creates resentments and frustrations in the face of

such abuse and injustice. Fruitless efforts and constant struggles proved to be unsuccessful as the poor became “more poor-poor” with the aggravating factor of people living in constant fear for their families and their lives. The teaming up of the oligarch families with the government and the military proved to be a threat to the majority who was not in the chosen, the elite group. The oligarch families opposed any popular movement that would unite the oppressed and they refused to relinquish their power and to share their wealth with the working class. The violence in El Salvador, for example, escalated when the government death squads assassinated a Catholic priest in 1980; part of his speech was a plea to the United States Government asking to end the military aid to the Salvadoran Government. Another example of the violence and the brutality from the president and his followers was the uprising led by the president Hernandez Martinez in the town of Sonsonate, better known as *la matanza* (the killing-the massacre) of 30,000 dead was a brutal attack on the *campesinos*. This civil war for so many years pushed people to migrate in order to stay alive and hoping to find a life. “According to the 1990 U.S. Census, there were 565,081 Salvadorans in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993)” (Menjivar, 2000, p. 6).

A synopsis of the history of Nicaragua depicts several political alliances with the United States. From 1910 to 1926 when the conservative Chamorro family was in power the “Bryan-Chamorro Treaty” signed in 1914 gave “the U.S. control over the proposed canal, as well as leases for potential canal defenses” (Wikipedia, 2011, para. 24). When the U.S. marines left, a conflict between the liberal and the conservative party justified the returning of the U.S. marines (1927-1933) after a five-year revolt “they set up the

Guardia Nacional (National Guard), a combined military and police force trained and equipped by the Americans and designed to be loyal to U.S. interests” (Wikipedia, 2011, para. 25). Anastasio Somoza, a supporter of the U.S. International Policy, was put in charge. For the rest of the twentieth century the Somoza family dictatorship was in power until the last of the Somoza’s was forced to leave the country in 1979 when the left wing Sandinista party gained control and governed of the country.

In the case of Honduras and Panama, even though they do have an army, their role has been more of receiving societies rather than expulsion societies, as we will read in the following synopsis about these two countries. The immigration history of Honduras has characterized this country as a receiving society for Salvadorans and Nicaraguans. Back in 1982 a freely elected government came into power after more than twenty years of being under the military rule. It was during this time that the anti-Sandinistas from Nicaragua and the leftist guerrillas from Salvador migrated to Honduras. The “*Contras*” from Nicaraguan and the FMLN were supporting their causes from this neighboring country with the aid of the United States. For example, the United States had a very large military presence and eventually the airbase Palmerola was built near the border between Honduras and El Salvador. In addition, this place served as a training base to train the *Contras* and the Salvadoran military. At the same time, the Honduran army created a squad with the objective of “forcing disappearances” of political opponents. The battalion members were trained and supported by the United States CIA.

Since its construction, the Panama Canal has set a comfortable income for the country's economy. Other revenues have come from international commerce and banking, from tourism and from private enterprises. The strategic geographic location serves as a main income in the country's economy and adds to the banking system, to commerce and, in general, to trading between private and public industries with other countries. The free trade zone "*Colon Free Trade Zone*" accounts high percentages of the country's import and export businesses. Panama's ecology and socio-political stability attract tourists that add to the country's economy. Nevertheless the political life of the country includes military dictatorships, a situation that was brutally enforced and reinforced by the oppression of the Panamanian citizens. Manuel Noriega's dictatorship was not the exception and in 1989 the United States invaded Panama with orders to remove the dictator and to reinstate Guillermo Endara who had won the free elections. He was privately sworn president in a Panama Canal Zone Military Base while Noriega was taken to pass the rest of his life in a Miami high security prison.

It is necessary to clarify that Costa Rica's history is different. While the sister countries were struggling with internal wars, abuses from military governments, and the rupture of a comfortable life, my country was focusing its forces in education and abolishing military in all of its branches. Nevertheless, the pushing societies and the pulling societies as experienced by these countries are causes and consequences of social-political-economical issues. It is also clear that what ails one country will have a direct effect on neighboring countries. Moreover, migrants influence both, the receiving and the

expulsing society. This phenomenon is exemplified by the main income for these countries' economy: agriculture. This theme requires further explanation.

Agriculture and industrialization. While political instability, social insecurity, civil wars, and dictatorships are contributing factors to migrate, they are not exclusive pushing and pulling migration factors. By the end of the 1950's, agricultural modernization and industrialization impacted Central American rural areas and encouraged internal migrations, seasonal migration, and international migration. The expansion of estates and the oligarchy families displacing the landowners from their self-sufficient food growing land caused major changes in the agricultural style.

- First, there is a change in agriculture at the expense of small farms. Farmers grow cash products to supply the U.S. markets. They are surreptitiously forced to change their traditional agricultural tropical fruits and vegetables products into ones that are “desire by demand” by international markets.
- Second, farmers shift from planting into growing livestock to supply demands for a fast-food hamburger growing market as well as for other fast-food chain markets. Livestock production required less human labor, and consequently unemployment numbers increased.
- Third, the birth of mechanized agriculture eliminates human jobs. (Hamilton & Stoltz Chinchilla, 1991)

These exclusion factors for humans in the workforce are pushing factors that obligate farmers to move to other farms and to the margins of city life. The latter places the worker in a disadvantageous position since he/she does not have the necessary work training to be successful in this new society. Dislocated workers face the greatest disadvantage of working for the necessity of survival and not necessarily in tune with

their likings or for the skills they are prepared to work. Similarly, they lose the autonomy they had before and now they depend on job availability in a foreign neighborhood.

In conclusion, the agricultural issue is another significant factor for pushing and for attracting workers. Powerful groups who see their future fortune as landlords displace small landowners and make them change their crop production to satisfy other powerful societies. At the same time, agricultural hands are quickly replaced by modern ways of agriculture and by industrialization, creating unemployment. Consequences are set off quickly. First, at the arrival of this limbo state and in search of a source to live, workers move nationally from the countryside to urban areas, especially to bordering countries, at least at the beginning of their journeys. Second, others see hope in international migration. And finally migrants will most likely be unprepared for the meager labor opportunities to accommodate all of the workers. Not surprisingly they fall once again into an inescapable and a now familiar jobless state. As a result, migration of lower social class is larger in numbers and in frequency because the poor class is greatly impacted by the financial situation of a country.

Taylor (1980) describes the Costa Rican agricultural situation as follows:

The Costa Rican peasant—one small landholder in the *meseta*, displaced, the small landholder in the periphery, again displaced—is left with no alternative but to set out on a trek which will almost invariably take him to the urban center. Yet the system strips the peasant of his livelihood in the countryside denies him a livelihood in the city. For most migrants, there will be no jobs available wherever their migrations take them. (p. 89)

Migration of Ticos

The history of Costa Ricans migrating into the United States is a recent narrative especially if we compare it to European immigration groups into the United States and the early pilgrim settling around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Moreover, Costa Rican migration story is only recently recorded in history when compared to other Central American countries. In fact, it is not until recently that Costa Rican immigrant issues attract the attention of researchers and the media is now bringing into the public life the narratives of those who migrate with the intent to expose the “*truth*” about this adventure and to create public memory.

From a socio-political perspective, differently from neighboring Latin American countries, Costa Rica has enjoyed a past history of peace since 1949 and has never been involved in a major war or military revolt. There has never been a structured a military service and there is no army in my country. What was once known as such was abolished as a result of a political revolt in 1948, staged by the losing party after a presidential election with a doubtful outcome. More than 2000 people died as a result of this uprising. The victorious Junta wrote a constitution guaranteeing free elections and the abolition of the military, an event that has allowed the country to have no official military involvement in internal and external political affairs. A very different situation happened in neighboring countries where a large portion of the national budget is spent for military purposes. In Costa Rica funds that at one point were assigned to the military were now allocated to improve the education system. My country is also internationally known for

having a tradition in education, for harvesting teachers instead of soldiers and invests on books rather than on weapons.

Then why would Costa Ricans want to leave the Central American “Switzerland?”⁵ Why would any Tico⁶ want to leave this tropical country of idyllic weather, with such beautiful and rich nature and a tradition of being politically peaceful and democratic? Why would Ticos change their “*¡Pura vida!*”⁷ lifestyle into a daily struggle in a foreign society, with different traditions, culture, and language and even extreme weather conditions? My personal narrative as an immigrant has answers to these questions. However, it is my intention to find answers by listening to the story of other Ticos migrating into the United States. And this is the nature of my research.

Why do Ticos migrate? When I made the decision to move into the United States my interest appeared to me as a new opportunity of professional growth. I was going to join the educational system as a language teacher and I was offered the opportunity of being “legal” in every sense: I had a social security number, a place to live, a bank account, and a place to work as a legal immigrant. My reason to migrate was for personal professional growth, a push/pull convincing reason; but this was not the only one. Certainly, working in the States is tempting, earning dollars and spending them. Looking back, I believe that there were other powerful motivations: first, the intent to make money, to amass capital, to improve personal income. Second, a consumer society

⁵ Nickname given to Costa Rica.

⁶ Nickname given to Costa Ricans.

⁷ “*Pura vida*” translates literally into “Pure life,” a popular expression that expresses the optimistic and enthusiastic Costa Rican way of life. This is a typical answer when somebody greets you: “How are you?” “*¡Pura vida!*”

offers very powerful, luring and tempting reasons to checkmate any comfort zone. What are the motivators for other Costa Ricans?

Most of the “push” towns in Costa Rica base their income on agriculture, mainly coffee and bananas, as their most important income. In the past, family coffee and banana parcels were managed by the owner and by the country’s economy, a local arrangement. Nowadays, however, international organisms regulate coffee and banana growing by establishing quotas as a condition to be a part of the global market. This modern international arrangement has consequences for the micro-farmers because other more powerful exporting countries and competitors drive the small farmers out of the global market. Not surprisingly, in this process, small agricultural families who have their own plantations lose their income.

Market globalization with its rules and regulations smothers small family businesses; eventually and consequently, the family provider or providers are obligated to turn their heads away from local agriculture and migrate into other job offerings. Some farmers decide to migrate into cities like San Jose or other province capitals, while others see their only hope in migrating to another country.

Historian Kordick-Rothe (as cited in Sandoval Garcia, 2007) states: “It is undeniable that migration is closely related to a series of global economic relationships: the decline of the exporting agricultural products, like coffee, and the economic inequalities in the American continent” (p. 177).

As a result of men leaving their homes, two logical consequences will influence the migration of Costa Ricans. First of all women are left with the full responsibility of

taking care of the family, not only as a “the traditional mother role” but increasing her responsibilities as a family provider. This certainly calls for a reorganization of family roles in the traditional Hispanic conception of a family. Women become the head of the family; they have to make decisions, and to work outside of home. Victims of what is a modern economy now called “globalization,” the women need to look for a way or ways to support and provide for their families. A second consequence happens within time: sooner or later women also migrate, pushed by the lack of job opportunities in their home countries and attracted by the pull of the receiving country that offers jobs they can supply. Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) approach the interesting topic of international female migration as follows:

the increasing migration of millions of women from poor countries to rich ones, where they serve as maids, and sometimes sex workers. In the absence of help from male partners, many women have succeeded in tough “male world” careers only by turning over the care of their children, elderly parents, and homes to women from the Third World. This is the underside of globalization, whereby millions of Josephines from poor countries in the south migrate to do “women’s work” of the north—work that affluent women are no longer able or willing to do. These migrant workers often leave their own children in the care of grandmothers, sisters, and sisters-in-law. Sometimes a young daughter is drawn out of school to care for her younger siblings. (p. 2)

The explanations for Ticos to migrate will be enriched by the true-life experiences from my participants. Their narratives will shed the light that will personalize their purposes for migrating as a consequence of the pushing issues exposed previously. I do anticipate, based on personal experience that their stories will address the following themes. Cautiously, I must add that factors for migrating intertwine and are difficult to single out as “the only truth.” First, it is my personal assumption that there is an

undeniable attraction to become a part of a consumer society that shares with the wishful all the wonderful things you can purchase, the “junk” that people must have in order to belong. Additionally, there are multiple ways for paying the “must have” goodies offered in this consumer society. Second, the banking system in Costa Rica offers limited, complicated, and complex opportunities to buy a house or to start a business, making it extremely difficult for *Ticos* who cannot attest that their income, although is in the national currency of *pesos*, has to be a loan backed-up in U.S. dollars. Therefore the bank requirements for a loan are most of the time out of reach for the majority of the people including the struggling middle class. Third, sprouting from the previous case, Costa Rica as part of a third world country, offers limited opportunities to start a business.

Consequently, migrants need to work and to save in order to begin their own family income. Fourth, personal experiences and stories from other migrants are enticing, mouth-watering, and hope builders on the listeners who are looking for an adventure to improve their finances. A fifth reason for some *Ticos* to migrate would be to get a better education to improve job opportunities. This last reason belies all the other motives since what most migrants under these dire circumstances and regardless of their formal education level are looking for ways of working and making money. Their needs are quasi-immediate with overnight gratification since their survival and emotional needs fall into the same time frame, *now*. Isn't this temporality what a consumer society is all about?

How do *Ticos* migrate? How do non-documented Costa Rican migrant workers immerse into the receiving society of the U.S. labor market? What resources await them

to facilitate or not the newcomers? How do *Ticos* afford their trip? Since the Costa Rican educational system requires by law that all the children have to attend school, most likely *Ticos* that migrate have some level of education: they can read, write and do math computation to some extent and to some level. (I will elaborate on this issue with the participants' narratives.) For everyone, traveling is a costly process. However, for most non-documented travelers, the trip costs more because they are impacted by added costs of corruption such as additional means of transportations, lodging in different countries, bribery, and unexpected expenses. Non-documented immigrants pay more when they do not comply with the social construction of the traveling requirements. As an example of this situation the local paper, "*La Nación*," published the article where irregularities and corruption begin in the national migration office, "*Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería*," where 24 government employees charged from \$150 to \$300 to stamp the passports allowing the holders to stay legally in the United States in hopes of fooling the migration officers at the airport. These are some of the reasons that speak to the impossibility of the poor-poor to migrate. So that leaves us with the question, who can migrate? Or cannot migrate? The exposed arguments state that the poor-poor do not have the allegiances and the resources to pick up this venture; but the poor can find resources. They have at hand a trusting network of family and friends who have a support group in the country of destination. In ways that we will hear from my participants, they have the financial resources, the money that undocumented migrants have to start the move. Finally, the stories, the perils, and the "know-how" of other migrants will serve as learning experiences to make a more informative decision.

Where do Ticos migrate? How do they find jobs?

En los últimos cinco años, la emigración de centroamericanos hacia Estados Unidos ha sido de una magnitud considerable. En términos relativos ha oscilado entre el 40% y el 20% de la población de los países, con excepción de Costa Rica donde la expulsión de población no ha sido un componente importante (aproximadamente el 2% reside en el exterior). El Salvador sobresale con una población estimada de 2.75 millones de personas que residen en Estados Unidos, Guatemala con casi un millón y medio y Nicaragua y Honduras con menos de un millón. (Sandoval García, 2006, p. 13)

In the last five years, the migration of Central Americans towards the United States has been of a considerable magnitude. In relative terms, it has oscillated between the 40% and the 20% of these countries population, with the exception of Costa Rica where the population's expulsion has not been an important component (approximately 2% resides outside of its territory). Salvador leads with an estimated population of 2.75 million of people who reside in the United States, Guatemala close to a million and a half and Nicaragua and Honduras shy from a million. (Sandoval García, 2006, p. 13)

Around 1990, the Costa Rican population that migrated into the United States was 43,530 to Canada 1,652 and 1,521 to Mexico (Rosero Bixby, 2001, p. 22). In the last five years, Central American migration into the United States has been notorious. Of the approximate 100,000 emigrant Ticos, 76% of them totality immerse themselves into states such as California, Florida, New York, and New Jersey (*La Nación*).⁸ The term 'approximately' justifies the fact that this figure is an estimate since when undocumented immigration occurs it is difficult if not impossible, to get the reliable number of migrants. Presently, in the receiving society, they labor in construction sites, cleaning (homes or offices), human care for the elder and for children, maintenance, and businesses most likely in restaurants, shopping malls, and with landscaping companies.

⁸ http://nacion.com/In_ee/2008/noviembre/09/pais1768902.html.

The following chart ends in the year 1990. However, it is evident that the ten-year difference is proof of the growth of the Central American immigrant population.

Table 2

Cuadro 6: Population born in Central America that Resides in the United States around the Years 1970, 1980 and 1990

Central American Country	United States		
	1970	1980	1990
Costa Rica	16,691	29,639	43,530
El Salvador	15,717	94,447	465,433
Guatemala	17,356	63,073	225,739
Honduras	27,978	39,154	108,923
Nicaragua	16,125	44,166	168,659
Panama	20,046	60,740	85,737
Total Central America	113,913	331,219	1,098,021

Source: “Estado de la Región en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible.” Proyecto Estado de la Región. San José, Costa Rica. 1990. *Cuadro, 14(8)*, p. 372.

How do Ticos find jobs? As a beginning stage, the migration process does not start in isolation; there is a network, a social network that includes family, neighbors, friends, friends of friends, and acquaintances. Nowadays, because of communication technology, information travels faster and more efficiently than ever, either by electronic devices and/or by the human richness found in word of mouth. Non-documented Ticos coming into the country are connected to a network. For clarification purposes, a generic definition for social network is an information source made by people (e.g. groups of friends, family, neighbors or acquaintances) that will provide the migrant with

information about the receiving society. On one hand, they facilitate the migration process because they offer support and provide means before the move and, on the other hand, they are welcoming and helpful when the immigrants arrive. The “resident group” welcomes the new arrivals and they facilitate the job search and the immersion process into the receiving society. Additionally, the communication between the migrants at the same time, determines the city or town for the newcomers. Furthermore, external resources also include the stories and the experiences, successful or not of other migrants.

Another way of finding out information is the newspaper. Rafael Alberto Lizano’s narration (newspaper article in *La Nación*⁹) illustrates how he came to the States and his brother was waiting for him. Journalists Moya and Parrales quote Lizano’s experience: “In a matter of weeks, he started working as a gas attendant, a job found with the help of his brother” (e.g. support system). The success of migrating is closely related to a social network in the host country or otherwise it is very hard for the migrant to be successful in the new environment. This social network has the experience of the new society, knowledge that he/she is going to share with the newcomer. This welcoming person has the fundamental role of advising, sharing knowledge and the “know how” of the pulling society. Another example that illustrates the point in case, is the article in “*La Nación*” (November 09/08) interviews a Tico. His reason for migrating into the United States was because of a personal business in Costa Rica was not successful and he saw no other option but to migrate. (It doesn’t say what type of business). “Business was not good here. Also, my education is not very high, so I didn’t see any hope for me. I left thinking

⁹ http://www.nacion.com/In_ee/2008/febrero/17/sucesos1428774.html.

on giving them (the three daughters) a better future.” His multiple traveling within the United States and in and out of the country makes him a modern “nomad.” However, his goal is clear, he wants to be a better provider and to empower his daughters with what he didn’t have within reach for himself but now he plans to endow his children. He has resources to give them an education: first, he has financial resources to begin his journey; he has emotional autonomy to make decisions and he has the approval of his family; additionally he is physically healthy so he can travel, and very importantly, he has the support system, at home and in the receiving society. He has contacts that give him support to travel from and to the receiving society. Menjívar (2000) reaffirms this concept by assuring that the quantity and quality of social contacts that undocumented immigrants bring to the border are believed to shape their eventual crossing, and, I add, to help them in their new environment.

Without the support of social networks recent migrants would stifle surrounded by loneliness and by the scary jungle of an unknown city, more often than not, a big city. Sandoval García (2004), when speaking about Salvadorians, acknowledges the importance of this issue:

migration is beginning to be perceived as a possibility when the individual becomes a part of social and relationship contact nets with other people and social groups that reside in the destination country. Outside of these social relations immigration is not viable or the success of it is more difficult. These nets are social systems that connect social groups and/or families on both ends of the migration flow in a transnational fashion, the relations between the pushing society and in the receiving society is achieved through these transnational social webs. (pp. 30-31)

Even though the people in the network provide the newcomers with useful information available for them to share (e.g. shelter, food, and job opportunities), success is no guarantee. Factors such as immigration laws and job opportunities that the host countries' financial stand can offer have a significant impact on the achievement, and consequently, the "success" on the immigrants' dreams.

What are the socio-cultural consequences of migration? When people migrate, they will occupy a space in the receiving society and similarly, they will leave a space behind them. This dynamic "musical chair" placement and displacement is in constant movement, growing, changing, and blending into both ends of the migratory phenomenon: the receiving and the pushing society. These places will not remain empty since there is always someone who needs a space, the space. The intriguing factor lies on the cultural background and on the professional qualifications of the "given and the taken" spaces.

I was working in Costa Rica as a language teacher when I moved into the United States to work as a language teacher in the United States. I left a job space and I entered into a job space that reminds me of the law of conservation of matter which states that everything must go somewhere, that matter changes from one place to another. The purpose with this example is to establish that when I left my country, someone took my space the same way in which I took the space someone left. What is questionable and complex is the quality of the exchange. Who takes up the space?

The phenomenon of "brain drainage" or just leaving a space in a given society leaves the push country with areas that must be occupied. In the process of filling up the

left-behind spaces, the employees fall into three categories: (a) they have the same or more formal education; (b) they have equal experience and knowledge as the one who left; and (c) they are less prepared to fulfill the position. Demand and job opportunities are regulated by these three norms. A college-educated person more often than not finds good working opportunities in the destination society while the less educated are powerless to control their working opportunities; very often they end up doing work alien to their skills. As a consequence migration of lower social class is larger in numbers and in frequency because the poor class is greatly impacted by the financial situation of a country.

Not only is migration influenced by the “musical chair” space occupation, but also sophisticated immigration laws presently regulate it where visas and passports are necessary, by modern transportation systems, and by empowering technology.

Conclusions—Reflections

Relatively little is written about the specific issues of non-documented Costa Ricans living in the United States. First, from a quantitative research point of view the numbers are too small compared to other Central American countries and for many people, numbers carry importance and significance. Second, the issue of Ticos migrating into the United States is a relative recent narrative. As I mentioned previously, Ticos did not want to leave the comfortable life style in a peaceful tropical country. Third, until now, environmental and global issues had not significantly disturbed Ticos lifestyle. Our economy is, yes, dependent on the United States, but farmers had choices. And finally, narratives from non-documented participants are difficult if not impossible to record.

They emerge in one area of the country and surreptitiously return underground to move to another city. And, the issues of *trust and confidentiality* are vital, fundamental, and critical for the success of their life stories.

Nevertheless, Ticos are migrating. Differently from neighboring Latin American countries, as I mentioned before, Costa Rica has enjoyed a past history of peace and has never been involved in a major war or military revolt and political violence have not been causes to migrate. Additionally, those Ticos who are able to migrate are not the poor-poor. They have means to begin their journey and in fact, they have support networks at home and in the new society to help them with the transition process. And, I anticipate, they have a certain level of formal education. So, they buy into the migration adventure, basically, to improve their economic status, attracted by the glamour of achieving the “American Dream.”

CHAPTER IV
THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND SOCIAL RELATIONS
IN MY NARRATIVE RESEARCH

When the other person is hurting, confused, troubled, anxious, alienated, terrified, or when he or she is doubtful or self-worth, uncertain as to identity—then understanding is called for. The gentle and sensitive companionship offered by an empathic person, provides illumination and healing. In such situations deep understanding is, I believe, the most precious gift one can give another. (Rogers, 1983, pp. 160-161)

Theory

Why Narrative Research?

One of my undergraduate requirements was to conduct a research for a statistics course. The requirements were to compare groups, to collect and to analyze data applying the concepts learned in class such as outlier, standard deviation, percentile, average, mode, median, predictability, and variables. When I selected my topic I had many possible participants. My children and my students were between the ages of 14 and 16 years old which was a perfect age sample. My topic was very appropriate for that age; I was very curious about their understanding on moral values, what were their own ideas on the topic, how they exercised and perceived them. So I designed *my* questionnaire that would help *me* find out and understand what “moral resources” were palpable in them and how they were influential in their lives. A section of the questionnaire included *my* proposed list of moral values expected to burgeon when peers and friends were

interacting amongst themselves. Although my “sample” was vital for my study, this type of research is centered on “I the researcher,” a characteristic of quantitative research.

Moving ahead “some” years, I started to take graduate courses on qualitative research and on narrative research. This was the perfect setting to compare and contrast qualitative research with quantitative research. It provided me the opportunity to choose which research tradition was more appropriate for my doctoral dissertation. As the classes progressed and as I read other authors, I became very interested in person-centered research as my inquiry methodology. Narrative research opens this dialogical space where participants have the opportunity to tell their life stories in their own terms. I was convinced that I want my participants to own their own stories, to speak their reality, with emotions, longings, expectations, frustrations, and hope while having the voice and the agency to express themselves as whole, visible, and “alive” human beings, as people with seminal differences. Additionally, when the storytellers practice their freedom to tell their own stories they can critically and creatively transform their reality. This emancipation liberates the speakers to reclaim the agency and use the language to name their own world. It gives them a new sense of dignity stirred up by new hope. This is the nature of narrative research; storytelling in a free stage where there are no scripts, no pre-edited dialogues, and no prescribed scenarios; a space to validate and share “This is who I am” as told by the protagonists. Consequently many unexpected and mysterious spins occur when listening, discovering, describing, interpreting, and writing life stories as told by the “owners” as whole human beings.

Another significant advantage of narrative research is to alert the public with *ears-on experiences*, narrated by the main protagonists. By listening to immigrants' stories told by the protagonists, the public can be educated with the real people and not by second or third parties. Television, newspapers, computers, and modern technology are popular and very powerful communication means that reach the public with their version on immigration laws, issues, stereotypes, and opinions. These sources inform and form the general public with questions, answers, and myths that they place in the minds of the general public in the form of the "banking system of the culture of silence" (Freire, 1970). Freire speaks of people being silenced by a banking system (as an analogy of depositing ideas/money) with the further intention of indoctrinating the public to accept their reality without questioning. The goal is to produce a dominant hegemony, a passive, silent, acceptance of disempowerment and oppression, canceling change and annihilating hope. In other words, it is easier to repeat, rephrase, and broadcast a twisted interpretation of immigration than to be curious about the subject and the subjects. To form an educated opinion the public has to listen to first hand sources since it is the desire of the participants to own their narratives and to be accepted as a subjective whole person with intimate ways of experiencing and interpreting life, as human beings.

Humanism and humanistic thinkers believe that people have to be acknowledged as "whole-human-beings," as a social person member of a society who has interests and needs, as one being with subjectivities and commonalities in daily life struggles and desires. Humanism is a system of thought where human needs, feelings, decisions, ability to discern, and values are of utmost importance. The humanistic philosophy is the perfect

example of the teachings of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Carl Rogers. These thinkers insist that people should walk in the world as whole human beings with ideas and identities that are totally different from everyone else's, with a unique mind, body, intellect, and feelings. They advocate that human beings are integrated selves that cannot be separated without deeply compromising the essence of the person and their freedom.

Freire, Dewey, and Rogers contend that in order for change to happen there has to be a space to educate and empower people, as human beings and as citizens, with the purpose of giving them the right to name their world and to change their reality. This is the free, unthreatening and amicable space to ask participants the open-ended question, "Tell me the story of your life" (Casey, 1993). Storytellers can make their own meaning with their own language, as perceived, analyzed, and interpreted through their lenses of understanding. The empathetic nature of narrative research opens an understanding space for people to be whom they are without skimming and screening their identity to blend into the environment and to conform a theory. The creation of this space with social equality and respect for the Other within a community is the essence, the principle of a democracy (or should I say a humanistic democracy?)

Even though information is very important, interpretation is the rudder that controls actions and interactions when cultures and ideas encounter in a given space. A receiving society that calls itself a democracy has to allow the immigrants a cultural integration, a call to respect immigrants' identity and ideas based on the principle of social equality and respect. There is no democratic integration without the acknowledgement and the protection of such valuable social differences (Jiménez

Matarrita, 2009, p. 68). Narrative research and humanistic interactions open the impervious door to let in information that can change the perceptions, the judgments, and the condemnations of migration issues.

It is under humanistic circumstances that narrative research allows a unique, personal, and authentic version; it reaches the root source by opening places for those who need to be heard, and for those who need to listen. This mode of informal education on telling the immigration story is how it is presented, discussed, argued and “resolved” by politicians, the media, and the public. To define immigration as a “problem” is only going to obscure the truth, as antagonists create more problems and conflicts in the consciousness of the uniformed. Labeling immigrants as dangerous, accusing them of threatening ways of life, taking away our jobs, abusing the system, and several other myths creates a biased and fallacious reality. Where do immigrants have agency to speak for themselves, to share their stories, and to work on their own solutions? Narrative research allows immigrants to speak and, what is most important, *to be* and *to become*. This is the beauty of narrative research. Consequently, history is reborn in a free space.

Analyzing the Texts

When we tell our life stories as participants on narrative research or while interacting on a daily basis, we select what we want to share with our listeners. We modify and adjust our history with moments of *silences*, *slippages*, *selectivity*, and *intertextuality*. These characteristics and modifications of everyday communication as whole human beings are in harmony with narrative research; participants adapt

experiential language to accommodate and satisfy the moment and their interests as well as making adjustments to please the audience.

When choosing where to begin their life stories, some of my participants *select* to begin when they were in Costa Rica. Julita, 19 years old (all names are pseudonyms to protect participants privacy and ages are based on my own perception), lives in one of the southern states and her story begins:

Voy a comenzar cuando me vine para acá por primera vez. Yo estaba en tercero de la escuela.

I will begin when I first arrived here. I was in elementary in third grade.

Alejandra, 37 years old, is Julita's aunt. She lives a few miles away from her. Her narrative, same as Julita's, begins in Costa Rica.

Yo siempre he sido la consentida de la casa por ser la menor. [Yo] en la escuela siempre pertenecía a todos los juegos, el día de la independencia, siempre participaba en todo.

I have always been the pampered child because I am the baby. In school I always was part of all team games, I participated on celebrations such as Independence Day. I was a part of all activities.

Carmen, 50, is Julita's sister who lives in a nearby neighborhood.

Nací en Grecia. Y después de ahí estudié en Costa Rica, saqué mi bachillerato.

I was born in Grecia – a town in the outskirts of San José, Costa Rica. I studied and earned my “bachillerato.” (A “bachillerato” degree is comparable to a High School degree)

Ruth says:

La verdad que como historia yo no tengo historia. No, no, ninguna historia. La vida yo la veo así, lo que se da, se da cada día. Para mí yo no tengo historia. Uno si vino aquí es porque uno decidió venir aquí y ya.

The truth is that I have no history. No, no history. This is how I see life, what happens, happens every day. I don't have history. If I came here, is because I decided to come here and that is that.

Alice begins her immigration story when she got married:

Yo me casé de 17 años, a los 18 ya era mamá. A los 22 años tenía dos hijos, Fernando y Tommy. Mi ex-marido fue un hombre muy grosero, un agresor. Y pasamos 20 años casados. Y lo soporté 20 años. Los últimos 10 años el cambió pero ya yo no lo amaba cuando el cambió. Ya yo no lo amaba. Y entonces luchó para traerme para acá con mis hijos. Yo no quería pero, buen, vine y al año de estar aquí me divorcié de él.

I got married when I was 17 years old, and a mother at 18. When I was 22 I had two sons, Fernando and Tommy. My ex-husband was a very rude, an aggressor. And we were married for 20 year. I put up with him for 20 years. The last 10 years, he changed but I didn't love him anymore when he changed. I didn't love hi anymore. And then he tried hard to bring me here with my children. I didn't want to, but I came and a year later I divorced him.

The relatives who remain in Costa Rica mainly stay with the children.

Not only when narrating their life stories my participants choose where to begin, as a form of *selectivity*, but also *selectivity* additionally explains moments of uncertainty while the person decides and selects what themes to share and how to say them.

Hesitations can be interpreted as silent minutes that the participant needs to organize ideas, or to quietly remember deep feelings of regret, and ponder on longing memories.

They can also be silent periods to remember emotional encounters to quietly elaborate on previous ideas or time to connect them and to select what to say. Human beings prefer to maximize pleasurable situations and to minimize painful experiences, to ignore or to keep

secret. When the situation is too traumatic, the person has the choice of denying the matter; it is too painful to talk about it. Still, another conclusion to selecting what to share, is the individual's need to "look good," to appear favorably to the eyes of the listener.

Participants have the option of selecting where they want to begin their life stories. They can begin their narratives on turning points in their lives, academic achievements, role validation, childhood, professional achievements, and other topics. The life story answers the questions of priorities, patterns, perspective, repetition, and chronological order. Human beings are meaning making creatures that express themselves and think in patterned ways; our consciousness is always putting the pieces together. "[I]n all life stories, there are selectivities and emphases, and the particular details and their ordering, as well as the implicit and explicit understanding in which they are set" (Casey, 1993, p. 30). It would be of great interest from an introspective psychoanalysis to analyze and to reflect on the themes that are kept silent and those that are expressed; this, of course, is a personal endeavor.

Silence names the unspoken word and/or the denied action, the idea that was born but not shared, the voices that haven't been heard. In the broader context of culture and structure in narrative research, the meaning of silence can be situated at the following different levels:

1. There is a possibility that the public, the world, "plays" deaf; there is no acknowledgement of "the thing" (whatever it might be) that disrupts "the order."

2. In the world of immigration, this silence can mean invisibility as workers, as whole human beings, and as participants in a democratic country. Although immigrants' work brings benefits to society, to personal "pockets", even to the enrichment of everyday cultural living, they remain invisible, (or so they may wish to remain) for others to enjoy their benefits and collect their privileges.
3. In the immigration issue, immigrants themselves may be oblivious to their vital and powerful role in the local society as well as in the global market. At this crossroads of consciousness, undocumented immigrants, in particular, hide from "la migra" (slang and popular name that refers to INS-Immigration) to become invisible silent workers so they are able to continue working in the country as undocumented laborers.
4. Immigrants are actually *silenced* by fingers pointing at them as "non-documented and un-wanted aliens" and by the legal system that wants them to keep quiet, to hush, to deliver, and to quietly and "peacefully" disappear.

"*Factual disparities,*" or "discontinuities between the structural and the cultural readings" are labeled *slippages* (Casey, 1993, p. 12), or contradictions in the story or between stories. Slippage can refer to discrepancies in perceptions of an issue or a happening. The protagonist participates on an event or events and the interpretation is incongruent with what really happened; this omission or interpretation shows how the person perceives the event. It is inevitable that an encounter between two cultures places the traveler and the citizen in awkward positions in relationship to one another. Each, the

citizen and the immigrant, speaks as a representative of a different discourse and a different worldview.

Intertextuality is the purposeful act of comparing and contrasting texts. It is the underlying grid that connects, like a hidden script, the life stories of the participants. Every text has a context; it is like a shadow that is sewn to the cultural filters that reflect the environment of the owner. The challenge of reading, interpreting, and understanding life-stories is constantly influenced by how the protagonist chooses to present her/himself. Texts can be congruent; however, disagreements in the stories may be of great importance as well.

Social Relations

Initial Reactions from Participants

Being “on the spot” is comparable to the first musical note breaking the silence or the first brushstroke on a clean canvas; it is intimidating, scary, and uncertain. In the process of telling their life stories my participants showed hesitation as they broke the silence to start their narratives. Some of them stammered while organizing their ideas, probably selecting where to begin. Others prompted themselves by asking questions such as: Where do I begin? What should I say? A few were uncertain and they asked me: “Where do you want me to start?” “What do you want me to say?” I also heard the putting-down remark: “There is nothing outstanding or important in my life.” And last, but as important as the other reactions, was the pensive: “Let me think. I would like to start when . . . or maybe with . . .”

I also observed that gender marked a difference in the quality and the quantity of stories. The five men that I interviewed told their stories, for the most part, in chronologically order while validating their achievements with a collection of “I did.” I could even interpret this speech as pride or perhaps arrogance. Their jobs are in restaurants starting at the lowest rung in the workplace and gradually working their way up as soon as they could understand some English. Other participants work in jobs related to construction and golf courses. Menjivar (2000), when referring men’s social networking states that they “also engaged in enduring exchanges with other men. They too taught one another about life in the United States, informed one another about jobs and housing, and in general, shared vital resources” (p. 178). Additionally, their support of each other is related to money as they “either lent or borrowed money from other men to stay in an apartment during hard times; they rarely mentioned issues related to moral or emotional support” (p. 178). In general, men had more control over making job decisions, as I show when I incorporate their stories.

When I interviewed eleven women for the most part they started talking on topics related to family. Menjivar (2000) talks about women’s networks in which “related and unrelated alike, (they) loaned each other money, shared housing, looked after other women’s children, and informed one another about matters that ranged from job tips to housing vacancies and legal and health services” (p. 172). The life stories of my women participants also relate to their workplace, in landscaping, restaurants, housekeeping and childcare. They speak of effort, dedication, and pride in what they do as workers and as

wage-earners. They also mention how they had to adapt to their new environment, how their identities followed a transformation.

New arrivals in a new society welcome the newcomer with an inevitable negotiation between their own 'luggage' and the one presented by the receiving society. This challenge not only reflects learning the language but it also reflects the adoption of the culture that comes with the new language such as events, holidays, folklore, food, dress code, social behavior, and other intangible actions. Similar to Nicaraguans in Costa Rica they live in a 'third space.' Neither do they feel traditionally Costa Rican nor do they feel a strong attachment to Nicaragua, and hence thus fit neither single identity. As Maloof states, we are a compilation of a multiplicity of identities that cannot be compartmentalized.

Theoretical Background—How?

Learning can be enjoyable if it is humanized. What's more, learning which retains the human element is much more relevant to life. The intellectual must be coupled with the emotional if behavior is to retain a human quality. (Lyon, 1971, p. 18)

My background as an educator firmly corroborates and confirms that formal and informal education is the key to open or close doors when preparing the person to interact in today's very fast-paced and complex world. Formal and informal systems and ways of education begin at a tender age; that is to say, the very first day of birth is the beginning of the educational process. The genetic composition defines what the child will look like as well as other tendencies, but for the most part the child's personality is formed when she hears and learns the language spoken by others in her surroundings. It is at this tender

age where adults teach their kids to perpetuate their values, whatever they might be. Schools consistently and unequivocally reaffirm and reinforce beliefs and behaviors since they are part of the surrounding community; the parents and guardians leave academic affairs to teachers but at the same time they impose their own interests, enforce personal agendas, and demand the right of their voices being heard and followed.

My insistence on bringing this very short excerpt on the formation of the child's personality is to shed light on the importance of how, at a very early age, people are educated to **conform into** a social structure and into a systematic structure impacting their consciousness. My commitment with my students' education is to interrupt their thinking process, to disrupt notions that are taken for granted and to instill questioning on their quotidian behaviors with the purpose of creating an epistemological appreciation of differences in people, cultures, and ideas (identities). Three thinkers whose humanistic teachings have prevailed the pass of time and impacted education are the pillars of my theoretical background. Freire, Rogers, and Dewey are the main authors based on their conviction, as well as my own, that human beings must be address as whole-human beings, with feelings and intellect

The adult's idea of the most important activity of youth is attending school, itself done for the purpose of getting good grades in preparation for the competition of society (perhaps very accurately labeled as "the rat race"). All other activities of youth—music, driving, dating friendship, hobbies, need for one's own money and time—are treated by the adults as something maturity or education will help youth outgrow. (Lyon, 1971, p. 19)

Psychologist Carl Rogers (1902-1987) is one of the most influential psychologists in the history of psychology; he is the radical founder of his "client-centered" approach to

therapy. This communicative dialogical space opens an atmosphere to understand and respect each other, initially in a client and therapist interaction, and later moving into a student and empowering teacher dialogue. His work is based on the fundamental belief that people need to have a “leader,” a teacher, a facilitator with an open mind who encourages reflection on one’s decisions and understandings of reality. “The only man who is educated is the man who has learned how to learn; the man who has learned how to adapt and change; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of *seeking* knowledge gives a basis for security” (Rogers, 1980, p. 120).

Similarly to narrative research questions begin with “hows and whats” to encourage self-analytical awareness of thinking processes and behaviors and to be “**the architect of his or her own life**” (Rogers, 1980, p. 183). This idea of “to adapt and change” reflects Dewey (1916) when he expresses the importance of and the ability to change:

The worst thing about stubbornness of mind, about prejudices, is that they arrest development; they shut the mind off from new stimuli. Open-mindedness means retention of the childlike attitude; closed-mindedness means premature intellectual old age. (Dewey, 1916, p. 175)

The shift from client-center therapy to student-center brilliantly carries this form of inquiry into education as an empowerment for the student and the teacher to create a dialogical space for **questioning the significance** of their education and the practical application of formal learning in the real world. So, what is the “real world?” “The only reality I can possibly know is the world as *I* perceive and experience it at this moment. The only reality you can possibly know is the world as *you* perceive and experience it at this moment” (Rogers, 1980, p. 102). Therefore, there are as many realities or real worlds

as there are people in the world, multiple interpretations and multiple truths with small t's, opposing the Truth with a capital T. The reality doesn't change, what change is the way we look at it, our perspective joined without interpretation. The crux of the matter falls into the individual realm of perception and interpretation, adding to the complexity of understanding and interacting with the Other. And, it has been my experience, that ignorance, fright, stereotypes, and personal agendas are the thick myopic lenses used to analyze, judge, and condemn migration issues.

Throughout his book *Freedom to Learn for the 80's*, Rogers (1983) states that human beings are good by nature and that life is a process and not a state of being. When people are working and when they are interacting freely, they can be constructive and honest. He states that when we are able to free the individual from defensiveness, so that he is open to a wide range of his own needs, as well as the wide range of environmental and social demands, his reactions may be trusted to be positive, forward moving, and constructive. We do not need to ask who and how the person will be socialized since one of the deepest feelings of people is the need for acceptance, to have an affiliation with and to fulfill the need to communicate with others (Rogers, 1983). Human beings are social; isolation can be the worst scenario, punishment, for any human being.

To help students in the learning process, Rogers (1983) states that the facilitator (teacher-researcher) has to be a genuine person. "When the facilitator is a real person, being what she is, entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade, she is much more likely to be effective" (p. 121). Similar to an educator creating conditions for students to have the freedom to express their interests, the

researcher has to open a space in which both parties feel they can be authentic, sincere, honest, and be who they are as a “whole person” (Rogers, 1983). This interaction occurs when the researcher and the participant share a space where they can respect and trust each other, where they are accepting and valuing of the whole person in order to have a successful interview. Harold C. Lyon, author of the book *Learning to feel—Feeling to Learn*, refers to the ‘realness’ of the human being as a full person with intellect, emotions, and feelings. His quest is to criticize education programs and teachers that emphasize only intellect, creating a “half-person”:

Educators have traditionally emphasized the development of the cognitive capacities of their students. The school’s or university’s prime responsibility has been the fostering of intellectual learning. The nurturing of the affective or emotional side of the student—love, empathy, awareness, and fantasy—either has been neglected or left to the individual, his family, or chance. All too often, chance prevails, and the result becomes a half-man who, like his teachers, has been educated, at best, to function effectively on only the intellectual plane. (Lyon, 1971, p. 18)

A common practice of learning how to do something, perhaps the most popular and most commonly used, is by doing it. Similarly, the best way to know about immigration issues is to speak to immigrants, opening a space in which they can narrate their life stories. “Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?” (Freire, 1970, p. 45). Who are better prepared than the immigrants to understand the significance of being one? Their narratives show the importance of their life stories described by those who are undergoing the issues of the controversial topic of immigration.

Oppression—overwhelming control—is necrophilic, it is nourished by the love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power. (Freire, 1970, p. 77)

This selective form of “oppression,” people prefer to accept the “**common sense**” of what is said, instead of questioning what they hear. “Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created and how little they question it” (Freire, 1970, p. 76). The oppressors, the minority, continue to lead the majority as they use the “theory and practice of banking education” (Freire, 1970) to indoctrinate the public and to adapt them to the world of oppression. Indeed, this form of oppressive education permeates all ambits of daily life, including my topic on migration. Bauman (1988) targets this issue from a moral perspective: “‘To be moral’ does not mean ‘to be good’, but to exercise one’s freedom of authorship and/or actorship as a choice between good and evil” (p. 1). Our task as educators is to create an awareness of one’s unique reality and to identify “forms” of oppression that make us behave as we do, to reconsider one’s situation in society in order to search for justice. Addressing who we are is of vital importance. If there is an awareness of how we became who we are and what attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors guide our behavior then there is a moral response to act.

Freire’s profound and revolutionary criticism of the annihilation of the individual’s power to participate in making decisions and in having agency in negotiating her world not exclusively mirrors the principles of qualitative research but adds to the

importance of educating people to eliminate ignorance and to empower the oppressed.

The silencing of a voice is an “act of violence.”

Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them to objects. (Freire, 1970, p. 85)

The objectification of a human being, when put into practice, is the concept of the oppressors’ heaven when those “whose tranquility rests on how well people fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it” (Freire, 1970, p. 76). As I mentioned before, the irony and the singularity of this issue is that not only immigrants are oppressed by the system; those citizens who listen and validate what others “eat and digest” for them are as dominated and as oppressed as immigrants. The opposite of capriciously modeling the person by the “banking system” to conform and satisfy the oppressors is by liberating and empowering learners through dialogical lessons between the instructor and the student in “problem-posing education” (Freire, 1970) to make them proactive critical thinkers. The liberating process changes the way in which human beings interact with each other in the real world. The public can be whole-human beings and not just manipulated puppets if they, as children are educated and as adults are re-educated (a very difficult task!), as people with a humanistic education.

Educators have traditionally emphasized the development of the cognitive capacities of their students. The school’s or university’s prime responsibility has been the fostering of intellectual learning. The nurturing of the affective or emotional side of the student—love, empathy, awareness, and fantasy—either has been neglected or left to the individual, his family, or chance. All too often, chance prevails, and the result becomes a half-man who, like his teachers, has

been educated, at best, to function effectively on only the intellectual plane. (Lyon, 1971, p. 18)

John Dewey (1859-1952) American philosopher and psychologist is the co-founder of the philosophy of pragmatism. His pedagogical belief reflects the need of “hands-on” experiential education and the practicality of how what is being taught in the classroom has (or should have) practical action and application in the real world. The practicality of his treatise connects to reality as a response to creating commonality in ideas in order to better understand one another and to create a community.

To have the same ideas about things which others have, to be like-minded with them and thus to be really members of a social group, is therefore to attach the same meanings to things and to acts which others attach. Otherwise, there is no common understanding, and no community life. (Dewey, 1916, p. 30)

Not surprisingly, immigrants and locals pull in different directions since their knowledge is a disconnection on ideology and on shared history. There are no common grounds on traditions and ideas; both parties may operate simply for each one’s pay and, in this particular case, many times the immigrant tug is a disadvantageous weaker pull.

Methodology: Theory in Practice

My experience as a teacher of immigrant Mexican learners trying to learn English was the *Eureka!* moment that awakened my curiosity on the migration topic. I could relate to their stories as the “departing” party but not as the part of the family that was left behind. I knew that I wanted to pursue my research with non-documented Costa Rican immigrants because I wanted to have the opportunity of listening to both sides of their life stories: those who arrived to United States and the other part of the family that was

left behind. In other words, I was not exclusively interested in understanding how immigrants live their migration experience coming from the receiving and the pushing society but I also wondered about the family nucleus and the social implications in the phase of the immigration phenomenon.

The inclusion and exclusion process of selecting my participants is one of my privileges as a researcher. My initial plan of working with non-documented Costa Rican immigrants included both genders but excluded workers with proper working documentation. In doing so, I limited my possibility of finding participants in both countries and I stressed my limitations since the United States is such a big country. However, due to that same fact, the size of this country, it was my hope to find Costa Ricans in the southern part of the USA, close to my home state. As it turned out, I traveled to three bordering states in the South to interview eleven adults, six women and five men. The nature of my study was conditioned to traveling. This process of traveling in the United States and in Costa Rica lasted from three and a half to four years. As a result of my search, I collected my narratives in three southern states: North Carolina, South Carolina, and New Jersey. In Costa Rica I went to cities in the southern part of the country such as Turrialba and San Isidro del General, as well as the capital city of San José.

A subsequent reason for choosing Costa Ricans with no documentation follows my inquiry of a minority group who is subjected to the gaze in second and third discourses by interested political and social parties. These “illegal” immigrants are the ones whose stories can influence social perception, more so, than the privileged

immigrants who get immersed in the receiving society with privileges and possibilities of completing their goals in the process; such is my personal immigrant narrative. It is the oppressed who need to be heard and whose muted voices are silenced by numerous myths and other biased political agendas. This is one of my main dissertation goals; to open the ears of those who want to listen to the multiple truths (with small t's) of what immigration really is about.

I finished my fall semester '05 courses and I traveled to my home country, Costa Rica for the spring break '06. For the duration of the flight I was ruminating on the logistics of hows and whats. At one point I was in doubt of who to approach first, non-documented "Ticos" (popular name given to Costa Ricans) in United States or Ticos in Costa Rica but opportunity played an important role. Since I was on my way to my country, I was going to begin my search in this country. Having recently taken a narrative research course I knew that I wanted to maximize my participants' active participation by asking the open-ended question: "Tell me the story of your life." In my mind, I was thrilled with the idea of interviewing people in their own environment, another valuable characteristic of this kind of research. The plane landed and I was not sure how to find Costa Ricans who were relatives of non-documented immigrants working in the United States.

Finding My Participants

My country of Costa Rica, one of the seven countries that are known as Central American Countries, is slightly smaller than the State of West Virginia (51,1000 sq km). It has an estimated population of 4,516,220 for the year of 2010

(www.cia.gov/library/publications). Funkhouser's (2000) report on immigration issues states that not only are Costa Rican immigrants into the United States a "recent" happening, but these immigrants are the smallest in number, 40,000, compared to the smallest country in Central America, El Salvador, who accounts the largest number of immigrants, one million. More recent data (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009) affirms that the number of immigrants in the California, Florida, New York, and New Jersey as selected receiving states is of 127,000. "Even though Costa Rican immigrants in the United States comprise the smallest Central American population, it was the second immigrant group in growth, moving from 2.8% in 1980 and 1990, to 5.7% that between the years of 1990 to 2000" (Jiménez Matarrita, 2006, p. 36). Even with this growth, my search represented a challenge since there were less possibilities of finding my participants. Recently, to my advantage, North Carolina, my home state, has been a receiving society for Ticos. Additionally, New Jersey is close to my home.

I began the search by asking my family and my friends if they knew someone, man or woman, who had relatives working in the United States without proper documentation. As a small country Costa Ricans can find each other and information through social connections, by asking, by word of mouth. I used this modus of communication by asking everywhere I went: "Do you know anyone who has relatives in United States working without legal documentation?" I told everyone I knew that this was my dissertation project. My son in-law was the first one to volunteer his two aunts, Rose and Alina, who work in landscaping in South Carolina. (For protection of anonymity, Rose, Alina and all other names are not my participants' real names.) And a

very convenient surprise at that moment was that their mother in Costa Rica lived in Turrialba, a town familiar to me and relatively close to my home. Therefore, as a family, my son in law, my daughter, their two children, and I drove to their home in a typical tropical summer day with the humidity at its highest, the sun hidden by cumulus clouds and a sense of future rain showers in the air.

In a humble, very clean small kitchen with delicious aromas, sitting on sturdy rustic stools at a kitchen table, and surrounded by homemade food, doña María and I recorded our interview with the open-ended question “Tell me the story of your life” (Casey, 1993). I carried with me a notebook to write my observations and other information. I also interviewed and recorded Rose’s two daughters and one son. During the duration of my vacation I continued my search and I found two other families.

Different from my first in-home experience, I interviewed and recorded Noily and Roxana in a coffee shop. They were friends of friends of my daughter-in-law. We were “introduced” by phone and decided to meet in a public space. We chose a date to meet in a well-known café in the heart of San José, the capital city. This cozy café is facing a busy plaza with kiosks, tourists, and locals coming and going through a noisy crowd. How would I know who I am looking for if I had never seen them before? What worked at that time might work again or might not; we made eye contact. I was looking for them and they were looking for me; there was a non-tangible way of knowing. It is my perception that not being “part of the family” made the difference on the issue of unconditional trust. Before recording their stories, I had to look for some common ground by exploring themes that would encourage them to trust me. We began talking about our

families' last names and where we grew up. In a matter of minutes we had established social and family connections, town stories, my experiences as an immigrant, and similar topics. This happens in a small country where everybody, in a way or another, is related or familiarized with other people, or knows a person in common.

After conversing and after some time elapsed, we reached a point of feeling comfortable and confident; I interviewed mother and daughter using the same open-ended prompt. I heard their stories separately and then jointly. As successful as I felt for such a favorable initial outcome I was not certain how to approach the other part of the family in the United States; how would they respond to a complete stranger asking about their lives while knowing that they are not legal in the country? I had to develop a plan so that they could trust me. Up to this point, two conditions had joined hands and successfully worked for starting the path to gain trust: first, relatives informing them from their country of origin about my quest, my doctoral dissertation. And second, establishing contact by phone and having a 'real person' on both ends of the phone line.

My vacation ended and on the way back home, I was still ruminating on the issue of trust since time and distance play an important role. Even if relatives were "putting in a good word" for me, how was I going to encourage my participants in the United States to continue trusting me and convince them that I had no other motive than to hear their voices to write my doctoral dissertation? Once more, my background as an educator bridged my dilemma with reality. As a language teacher with students from many parts of the world I know that I have to create a classroom environment where students feel safe, comfortable, and happy, as "real" and "whole-human" beings. When the climate of trust

is establish I know that outcome is joyful learning. With this idea in mind, I contacted “the aunts.”

I spoke with the Aunt Alice and Aunt Ruth, who live in South Carolina. Since I live in High Point, we had to look for a convenient place to meet. So we decided to meet in the food court of Concord Mills Outlet Mall in North Carolina, where we had to drive for about an hour. Such a public space offers very little privacy but the hardest thing proved to be transcribing the recordings because of the surrounding noise. The interviews lasted all afternoon.

Days later I called Alejandra in New Jersey. Different from traveling to Charlotte now I was paying and flying to this state to stay at a hotel where I will meet her. I had to trust her. During the weekend, in the town of Gillete in New Jersey, I interviewed Alejandra, her mother, two sisters, and a niece. These interviews were recorded in four hospitable homes, while enjoying homemade food Costa Rican style.

My next destination was in South Carolina where I interviewed three Costa Ricans, two women and a man in a small ethnic store. The place was divided in one section for selling different types of foods from various Spanish-speaking countries and a second section was a “counter/stool/restaurant” with two or three additional tables. The two women had a daily menu with typical food from Central American countries all made from scratch. When the customers came in, they greeted each other with genuine affection and with a smile showing how happy they felt to see each other. They sat to eat together and to converse. I could pick out different forms of the Spanish language that pointed at the different countries of origin. If the women had late arrival customers and

the menu for the day was gone, they will offer “typical fast food” from these countries such as rice and beans, with fried eggs and fried plantains accompanied by chopped cabbage with tomatoes and fresh cilantro, topped with fresh made tortillas. Their origin is in a small town in Costa Rica.

Perspective—Costa Rica and the United States: “Cultural Frameworks of Meaning”

In my study the countries of Costa Rica and the United States are the two worlds that come into contact. When the immigrant arrives to the new society, with considerable importance is the fact that the person as a whole person crosses the border with the entire cultural luggage, adding diversity to his own baggage as well as to the host country.

The act of migrating confronts the migrant, who carries the cultural heritage with himself/herself, the demand of integrating into a different culture. This requires the person to look for meaning and to contrast his/her own culture with the culture of the places where he/she arrives or passes through. The migration experience surfaces and creates awareness of one’s own cultural behaviors to the other. In this sense, it implies collisions and negotiations between individuals with diverse cultural visions. Immigration provides conditions to strategically select and reinterpret our own and the other’s culture. (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009, p. 74)

Costa Ricans come into the United States with previous knowledge of the country’s culture, because of American television programs, advertisements, news reports, comments, movies, comedies, and similar programs. It is even possible to say that this is the luring hook, covertly or surreptitiously hidden, that makes people want to migrate in the USA. There are topics, nevertheless, that the media does not address when Costa Ricans want to migrate into the United States and these are the ones that will weigh the heaviest. Each one deserves an explanation on its own significance.

CHAPTER V

INTRODUCING TWO FAMILIES

In this chapter I introduce the two Costa Rican families who have members in both countries, Costa Rica and United States. I chose narrative research analysis to collect and analyze my participants' life stories because this type of analysis opens the space that allows my participants to express their reality, to name their world, to own their thoughts, and create expectations for their future. While they are making sense and giving meaning to their lives, I, the researcher, can listen to their interpretations.

I began the interviews with the open-ended question "Tell me the story of your life," a broad question that allows the participants to choose where they want to begin, how they want to share their life experiences, and what parts of their stories they share or which ones they omit. As a researcher, I know that narrative research allows participants to modify and to adjust their life stories by selecting what to say and what to leave out (*selectivity*). Themes such as "Life is hard" and racism against Hispanics, among others, are common among their stories.

Telling their life stories, participants have moments of silence (*silences*) where their facial expressions reflect deep concentration on what to share, what to keep silent, or how to get ideas organized to continue on their stories. These silent moments can be interpreted as moments of longing for the family members who are away. Additionally there are *slippages*, those contradictions or inconsistencies in their stories; there are

“*OOPS!*” moments that very often are not noticed by the person telling the story but the researcher/observer grasps them. For example, very often my interviewees explained the importance of family togetherness, on one hand and, on the other hand, they have very little time for family life. To compare participants’ stories, I look for *intertextualities*, for similarities, commonalities, and differences among their stories, unconscious to the participants but evident to me, the researcher. As an example, the theme of racism against Hispanics appears in all of their stories. As a commonality, all my participants mention (a) how hard they work; (b) how some people treat them rudely—a form of racism against the Hispanics; (c) how they look for ways to bring the family unit together and to keep them together; (d) how there is a strong resilient female figure; (e) how most of them are in constant fear of being deported; (f) how they talk about the importance of a driver’s license and how difficult it is to renew it; and (g) how all of them have a great unfaltering faith in God. These themes are explained and analyzed in future sections on my dissertation.

For all the interviews, I was the only researcher present at the time of recording their life stories, except for Zinnia and her daughter, Noily. Most of my interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes, which is an ideal situation since sitting at the kitchen table with smells of homemade food encouraged the participants to confide in me. It is also my interpretation that being at home made them feel safe. I interviewed two participants in restaurants and two other interviews took place in the food-court of a shopping mall.

As this analysis of the methodology evolves it is important to keep in mind the following differences since they will help understanding the interaction, the commonalities, and the dissimilarities between the U.S. and Costa Rica involved in this study. Both countries have languages that are considered a heritage from the good “mother land languages”: the Queen’s English and the “Madre Patria” Spanish. Both languages have dramatic cultural, historical, and ideological identities that shape the idiosyncrasy of both societies and set the stage for this analysis.

Por eso es necesario pensar y discutir la historia de cada sociedad desde el punto de vista de su justicia o injusticia, su crueldad o su hospitalidad. Los procesos migratorios son una ocasión propicia para saber finalmente quiénes somos y cómo respondemos ante ciertos desafíos. (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009, p. 177)

That is why it is necessary to think and discuss the history of each society from the point of view of their justice and injustice, their cruelty or their hospitality. Migration processes present the propitious occasion to finally know who we are and how we respond to certain challenges. (Jiménez Matarrita, 2009, p. 177)

My interviewees have many commonalities. They talk about the motives for migrating and reasons for staying. They mention how they blend into their host society while maintaining ties with their relatives back in their home countries; modern technology (computers and cell phones) helps them connect with love ones regularly, and remittances are sent home faster and safer. As they tell their stories the topic of family life, financial support, deportation, racism, drivers’ licenses, work, and their faith in God (with the mantra “God willing”) emerge in all of their discourses. The female figure—mothers, daughters, wives, grandmothers, or aunts - plays a decisive and dominant role. They are acknowledged as the movers, the shakers, and the fortresses-creators, those who

approve of the migration project. These women express the need of buying a house, educating the children, and becoming active participants in a consumer society. Most of them, as well as the children and the male participants, address the topic of racism against Hispanics in the receiving society, either in school, on the job and/or in everyday interaction. They speak of “success;” this concept has multiple interpretations as seen in the stories of the participants in my project. Finally, they talk about the limited mobility in the United States as they are “stuck” in a free, democratic society.

All my participants were not jobless when they were living in Costa Rica, nor were they in a state of poverty. All of them had a house either owned or had a bank loan pending on the property. They were not poor since at the time of their departure, they had the means to move. They had money to pay for a passport and for their visa to enter the United States (\$14.00 for an appointment, \$131.00 for the interview); they had years of formal education and/or a degree. And as expressed by their stories, they had cash with them. Not only they had a formal education, but also they had the “know how” of the hidden rules to belong to a group, to successfully move from one place to another. Of great significance is the fact that they didn’t walk or drive to cross the border; all of them flew into the United States. This piece of information adds to the statement of not being poor since a round ticket is no less than \$600.00. My participants had plenty of resources to consciously and deliberately make the move.

The participants counted on relationships to encourage them with their move; they had an external support system such as family member and friends. Of equal importance, they had spiritual resources with the unconditional belief of a higher power;

that there is a purpose for living, and that worth and love are gifts from God. This is a powerful resource because the individual does not see him/herself as hopeless and useless, but rather as capable and having worth and value. (Payne, 1996, p. 8)

Very often in their stories they mention God as guiding their lives and their decisions. In their discourses I very often heard the phrases—“Si Dios quiere,” “Dios así lo quiso,” “Gracias a Dios,” “Por algo Dios lo quiso,” (*God willing, This is God’s way, Thanks to God, God’s decision*) to state their situation and to confirm their decisions.

Introducing Two Families

For this project, I interviewed members of two families who are living in two countries, United States and Costa Rica. For anonymity purposes the names have been changed; they are in bold. When clarity is necessary, I have included the family tree for each family in Appendix A. As I continue introducing both families I have named the two families by the first generation female: **Mamá María** and **Mamá Hilda**. I also include an introductory paragraph for each family followed by two sections: the first section addresses “Who came and stayed in the United States,” and the second section is “Who stayed in Costa Rica.”

Mamá María

My first family is **Mamá María’s** from Naranjo. She is married to **Ramón**, a taxi driver who voluntarily retired from his job to join two daughters in the United States. They have five daughters. Out of their five daughters **Miriam, Julia, Carmen, Zinnia,** and **Alejandra**, four of them and their families are currently living in the United States. At one point in their lives, as we will read, all five daughters were living in the same neighborhood. Everyone has been in the country for more than eighteen years.

Who Came and Stayed in United States

I interviewed four of **Mamá María** and **Ramón's** five daughters, three in the United States and one, **Zinnia**, in Costa Rica. **Miriam** and **Alejandra** were the first ones to migrate. Eventually, as we read in their stories, all the family followed them to settle in a northern state.

This family is part of the migration phenomena, “brain drain”; immigrants who have an education and at a productive stage leave the home country to join the working force in another country. To illustrate this point, similar to testimonies from my other participants, I quote **Alejandra** and **Miriam**. The two girls have a “bachillerato,” which is equivalent to a High School Diploma in the United States. In our interview **Alejandra** says:

Yo me gradué en 1989. Cuando estaba en décimo, en el año '88, mis profesores nos decían que teníamos que estudiar mucho. A mí no me gustaba inglés para nada. Entonces elegí francés. Pero no habían suficientes estudiantes por lo que no se abrió el curso. Entonces para completar mi bachillerato mis papás me pusieron un profesor para que viniera a la casa y fue una de las notas más altas en el bachillerato. Igual que en matemáticas. Yo era super buena. Pasaba estudiando. Mami no me dejaba limpiar o cocinar. Siempre todo era estudie, estudie, estudie.

I graduated in 1989. When I was in tenth grade, in the year '88, teachers told us that we had to study a lot more. I didn't like English at all. So I had picked French. But there were not enough students so the course was not offered. So to complete my “bachillerato” my parents hired a private teacher to come to my house. My grade was among the highest, same as in math. I was very good at math. I spent most of my time studying. Mom did not want me to clean or cook. But all she said was “study, study, study.”

Ironically, **Alejandra** now works in the family cleaning business. She contradicts herself in a significant example of slippage as her past surreptitiously jumps into her present.

Alejandra's sister **Miriam** also completed her high school education and started college. However, she did not pursue her college education and she quitted after her first year of college. She admits that she switched from being a student into being enticed as a producer; she preferred to work. I interpret this as a personal character trait that help determine **Miriam's** decision to travel and to stay working in this country after inviting her sister to travel.

Yo me gradué de quinto año y yo me metí a la Universidad a llevar generales porque yo quería estudiar farmacia; a mí me encanta la farmacia. Por eso fui a trabajar a la Farmacia Fischel. Y después ya no fui más a la universidad porque . . . ¿por qué fue que no fui? No, porque ya después me puse a trabajar y ya no fui a la universidad.

I graduated from high school and I started to take the first year courses pursuing a career as a pharmacist. I love pharmacy. And that is why I started working at Fischel Pharmacy. And then I did not go back to school because . . . why didn't I go back? Because I decided to work and I didn't go back to school.

Mamá María's daughters, **Miriam** and **Alejandra**, were the first ones to migrate. For **Alexandra's** birthday **Miriam**, the oldest sister, gave her youngest sister a ticket to Florida where they would be traveling together. The girls came to this country as tourists; they wanted to have fun, to shop and they had no intention of overstaying their visa, **Miriam** says.

Y bueno, cuando yo vine aquí solo era para pasear. Y yo traía dinero solo para eso, para pasear y veníamos a quedarnos solo como ocho o quince días . . . y a **Alejandra** le gustó. Ella también se hizo de un novio y yo también con el que es mi esposo ahora y eso fue lo que nos hizo quedarnos.

*And well, I came here just as a tourist. And I brought money only for that, to visit. We wanted to stay one or two weeks . . . and **Alejandra** liked it here. She also*

found a boyfriend and so did I, with the person who is my husband now. And that is what made us stay.

Zinnia, another of **Mamá María's** daughters, followed her parents and her sisters to New Jersey. However, as we will learn later, she had to return to Costa Rica with her family. She corroborates her sisters' stories and adds that her mother had to travel because the girls got pregnant and the children were expected to be born at the same time. So the girls asked **Mamá María** for help.

Y cuando ellas iban a dar a luz le pidieron a mi mamá que se fuera para que les ayudara. Entonces se llevaron a mi mamá y a mi papá. Aquí nos quedamos mi hermana mayor con sus hijos y yo con mi esposo y mis hijos. Y después mis padres se llevaron a mi hermana mayor con todos los chiquitos y al final de cuentas ellos me mandaron a mí dinero para que yo fuera a conocer allá.

Era la única que no conocía. Me fui con mis hijos, tengo tres hijos. Y yo me fui porque yo iba a conocer supuestamente por quince días. Y mi esposo se quedó aquí. Pero llegando allá una hermana mía me dijo, ¿por qué no vamos a matricular los chiquillos a la escuela? Y yo le digo, idiay no sé. Y como yo vengo a pasear me dijo que fuéramos a ver y si los aceptan bien y si no también. Y no ve que fuimos y me los aceptaron. Llamé a mi esposo y le dije que los había matriculado y hiciera las vueltas y que se viniera porque yo sola no me iba a quedar. (**Zinnia**)

And when they were going to give birth, they asked Mom to come and help. Then they took Mom and Dad. So my older sister and her children and my husband, my three children and I were the ones left behind. And later my parents took my sister and her family. And finally they sent me the money so that I could come and visit.

*I was the only one who had never been to the United States. So I left with my children. And supposedly I was going to stay for only fifteen days. My husband stayed in Costa Rica. But upon arriving one of my sisters said, why don't we enroll the kids in school? If they accept them, fine, and if not, it will be fine as well. And they were accepted. I called my husband and told him about school and the kids. I asked him to get his paperwork together and to join us because I was not going to stay here alone. (**Zinnia**)*

Their migration pattern is common to many first generation migrants: an adventurous family member begins the journey. She finds a job and then starts pulling other family members. **Mamá María's** is not the exception: daughters **Miriam** and **Alejandra** are first arrivals and eventually the rest of the immediate family members follow them with the idea of overstaying their visa status.

What is their line of work? All the sisters have joined forces and have started their own family business cleaning houses and baby-sitting, an income that has allowed them to consolidate their stay in the country and to build relationships. They created their own working network by word of mouth and by working hard. Yet there are times that **Alejandra** suffers from depression:

Trabajando duro, muy duro. Es muy duro. A veces yo me levanto con una energía y a veces yo ya no me quiero levantar. El cuerpo ya no me da. Son 18 años de mucho trabajo. Demasiados, muchas angustias, muchos problemas, que a veces la gente te trata bien, a veces no. Pero gracias a Dios hablo el inglés que aprendí en el colegio.

Working hard, very hard. It is very hard. Sometimes I get up with lots of energy and sometimes I don't even want to get up. My body can't work anymore. It has been 18 years of a lot of work. Too many, too much anguish, too many problems, that sometimes people treat you nicely, sometimes they don't. But thank to God I speak English that I learned in school.

Another member of **Mamá María's** family who came and stayed in the U.S. is **Julio**, her son-in-law, who works in the same town as the rest of the family. He found a job as a waiter in a restaurant in a social club golf course. He is married to **Zinnia** who lives in Costa Rica. They had to split apart for the sake of the family. As we will read, he

stayed in the United States while his wife and their three children were forced to travel to Costa Rica.

Who Stayed in Costa Rica

Not every member of **Mamá María's** family is currently living in the United States. One of the daughters **Zinnia**, returned to Costa Rica. Her husband, **Julio**, had to stay in United States since he was the main provider. Their daughter **Noily** graduated from high school and was unable to continue her studies as an undocumented student and they could not pay her college tuition in a private school. **Noily** is an excellent student and she wanted to continue her studies in United States. After several attempts she had to give up this part of her dream and return to Costa Rica along with her mother and her two siblings.

Yo le dije a mis papás que yo quería tratar de matricularme en una Universidad. Y ellos me animaron para que lo hiciera. Hice los Sats y todos los exámenes. Salí muy bien, una nota muy alta. El día de mi graduación me gradué con honores. Llenamos papeles para un montón de universidades y me aceptaron en varias. Encontré una en donde nos daban un número como inmigrantes porque no teníamos el número de social security. Pero a final de cuentas para la beca que me dieron me daban \$7,000.00 al año y tenía que pagar \$36,000.00. Y eso no incluía todos los pagos.

I told my parents that I wanted to go to college. They encouraged me and I started by taking the SAT tests. My grades were high and I graduated with honors. We completed the paperwork for several colleges. I found a college that gave students a number as undocumented students with no social security number. But at the end, I had \$7,000.00 from a scholarship but I had to pay \$36,000.00. And that did not cover for all the expenses.

Noily's mother, **Zinnia**, starts her marital separation story by stating how difficult it is for her to be the only daughter living in Costa Rica. She finds comfort knowing that the three kids are with her but she misses her family.

Cuando yo me monté en el avión, yo lloraba desesperadamente. Porque yo decía, yo no sé si yo voy a volver a ver a mis esposo o a mis papás. Porque yo sé que yo no me puedo devolver para allá, a no ser que algún día o pueda obtener la residencia y me pueda ir. Y de hecho, mis papás están allá. Ya tengo cuatro años de no verlos. Y yo les digo que vengan y ellos no porque a ellos les gusta ese país, sino porque ellos están bien allá. Y como allá están mis otras hermanas, ellos dicen: ¿qué nos vamos a ir a hacer a Costa Rica nosotros? Y claro, ellos se acostumbraron también allá.

When I got on the plane I was desperately crying. Because I said to myself, I don't know if I am going to see my husband or my parents again. Because I knew that I couldn't go back there, unless some day I get my residency and I will be able to return. And my parents are still there. I haven't seen them in four years. I ask them to come back and they say no, not because they like that country but because they are fine over there. And since my other sisters are there they say what are we going to do in Costa Rica? And of course, now they are accustomed to that life style.

Zinnia and the kids in Costa Rica have suffered for four years of separation, and **Julio**, **Zinnia**'s husband, and the rest of the family are torn apart because the immediate future will follow the same pattern. Hope is in their hearts, but awakening to reality affects their immediate consciousness as they wake up every day to look for ways of changing their immigration status. So far the family is stuck. **Julio** as well as the other undocumented family members can leave the U.S. but coming back is the problem since the INS will have them in the system as overstaying their visa. Being torn apart, says **Mamá María**, is so sad and “tengo unas ganas de verlos, pero me da miedo que no me dejen entrar después. Como esto está tan feo y si no puedo entrar pues lloraría en Costa

Rica y quizás me enfermo porque la mayoría de la familia está aquí.” (*I want to see them so much, but I am afraid that I will not be able to enter the country afterwards. Things are not looking well and if I can't come back then I will cry in Costa Rica and I will probably get sick because the majority of my family is here.*)

Changing of roles as providers and caretakers has been a constant in this family. The fathers were the providers when all the family was in Costa Rica. When the daughters moved, they became the providers and as the family trailed them, the women in the family continued to be the ones supporting the family and making their connections to the receiving society. Now that **Zinnia** and **Julio** are separated, **Zinnia** who is living in Costa Rica, is the mother who stays home while **Julio** works in the U.S. to send the money for his family's support, for their children's education, and for building a home.

Mamá Hilda

In **Mamá Hilda's** family, **Alice** and **Ruth**, her daughters, made the decision to travel for family reasons; both of their husband and wife relationships were deteriorating. As I read their stories I interpret this “amorous disillusion” as a consequence of a tight financial situation at home that provoked frustrations, confrontations, unhappiness, and a sense of disempowerment for both couples. So the women followed the migrating journey to a country that promised a better-paid job and a way to become better providers. They have the belief that they can't have social mobility in their country of origin; since they can't go up, they have to go out. The possibility of more economic resources in a first world country and perhaps a sense of adventure are important incentives to accept the pull and make the move.

Who Came and Stayed in United States

Mamá Hilda from Turrialba has ten children. (On part of her interview she mentions nine because one of them died). I interviewed two of her daughters: **Alice** and **Ruth** who are working in a greenhouse and landscaping business. Different from **Miriam** and **Alejandra**, they were not the first in their family to migrate. They arrived with the support of a family social network connection. **Alice** was the first one to migrate; years earlier her husband came to work and then asked her to join him. At first she didn't want to come but in an attempt to reconcile with her husband, she arrived in the United States and soon after that, the couple got a divorce. "Me divorcié y alquilé una trilla y empecé a vivir sola. Mis hijos no me quisieron seguir, se quedaron con el papá. Les ofrecí mi casa, mi apoyo, pero no, el papá los convenció que yo era una mala mujer" (*I got a divorce and I rented a mobile home and started to live alone. My children did not come along with me; they stayed with their father. I offered them my house, my support, but no; their father convinced them that I was a bad woman.*) Eventually, her son Tommy moved in with his mother.

Ruth came to visit her sister as a result of her marital separation. "Después de la separación, el padre siempre vio por ellos pero yo ya no existía." (*After the separation, the father continued to provide for the children, but I no longer existed.*) Although she earned her physical therapist degree, she started working in her brother-in-law's warehouse, since the accreditation process for her degree is close to impossible. This temporary situation lasted for almost a year before she decided to contact her sister **Alice** since her financial situation was not working. "Me contacté con mi hermana y le pregunté

que qué posibilidades tenía de estar acá, de venir aquí porque cada día que pasa yo crezco más y no quiero estar dependiendo del padre de mis hijos.” (*I contacted my sister and asked her to come here because each day that goes by, I am getting older and I do not want to depend on my kid’s father.*) She planned on staying only six months since her three children were left in her hometown of Turrialba under the care of her **Mamá Hilda**, the grandmother of the children. At the time of our interview, she had been in the U.S. for more than eight years ago. Her main objective is to work hard, save as much as possible, and send money home to finish the construction of her house.

Who Stayed in Costa Rica

Mamá Hilda lives in the city of Turrialba. This part of Costa Rica bases its economy on agriculture, mainly coffee and sugar cane plantations, and other non-traditional exports such as exotic tropical plants, macadamia nuts, and pejívalles. She takes care of **Ruth**’s three children: **Paula**, **María**, and **Pablo**. We had the interview in her house in Turrialba in a homely environment with the smell of homemade bread, tortillas, beans, and fried plantains. The expression of love, the way the grandmother looked at the grandchildren and how they return her look, and the spontaneous laughter amongst themselves supported their narratives of how much they enjoy each other’s company.

Mamá Hilda has not seen her daughters in more than ten years. She knows that it is a difficult task to get a visa since she comes from a region that is well known by the American Embassy agents as an emigrating zone. She has made several attempts to get her visa but she has not been successful.

Y es que yo fui con una nieta y si uno dice que es de Pérez Zeledón, no le dan la visa. Y la chiquita dijo que iba a ir conmigo y yo voy a pedir la visa también y me voy a pasear con Ud. Mis papeles iban bien pero cuando ella dijo que era de Pérez y una muchacha joven dijeron que ella se iba a quedar allá. Y con la visa talvez la abuela también se va a quedar allá. Y entonces por eso nos dijeron que no, que la próxima vez. Pagué más de 100 mil colones que gastamos entre las dos.

And I went to the embassy with a granddaughter and if I say that I am from Pérez Zeledón, one will not get a visa. (Pérez Zeledón is a southern region that is known as a pushing society). And my granddaughter said that she will travel with me so she was going to ask for her visa. My papers were coming along but when she said that she was from Pérez and she is a young girl, they said that she was planning to stay there. And with a visa, maybe grandmother was going to stay, too. That's why the visa was denied. I paid more than 100 thousand colones for both of us.

Taking care of the children is her mission. “Yo los chineo yo les hago todo. Gracias a Dios toavía me muevo.” (*I take care of them, I do everything for them. Thank God I can still do it.*) However, she acknowledges that the children miss their mother, and so does she.

A ellos les hace falta la mamá. Y ojalá que este año ella se venga. Me duele mucho no verlas, me hacen muchísima falta, para el día de la madre, para el 24 de diciembre, uno quiere estar unido como éramos antes con mis hijos.

They miss their mother. And I hope that she comes back this year. It hurts me a lot not to see them, I miss them immensely, for Mother's Day, for Christmas, I want to be together with all my children, like it used to be.

While **Alice** traveled with her two children to the United States to meet with her husband, **Ruth** left hers behind at the care of her mother, **Mamá Hilda**. She misses her daughter and the children miss their mother.

Their narratives present the ambivalent conflict between longing and justifying: Moms miss their children as much as the children miss them but at the same time

everyone justifies the absence by realistically accepting the need of the money and by encouraging the mother to stay in the United States.

Paula is the oldest of **Ruth's** children. She assumes the “guardian” role with her younger sister and brother, and an authoritative role with her father, as **María**, the middle child, corroborates when she says that when **Paula** speaks, it is like an order for dad.

Following Mom's dream, she wants to have her own house.

Nuestra casa . . . nos robaron los materiales y estaba en ruinas prácticamente. Y cuando mami se fue ya empezaron a botar la casa y un mes después comenzamos a construir la casa. Y yo le dije a mi papá: vea papi, mami se fue y yo no quiero estar más en este apartamento. Yo me quiero ir para mi casa, sin pisos, solamente póngame ventanas, ciérreme las paredes, metámole un baño decente y nos vamos para la casa.

Our house . . . they stole all the materials and our house was practically in ruins. And when mother left, they started to tear it down and one month later we started to build the house. And I told my father: Look, Mom left and I don't want to stay any longer in this apartment. I want to go to my house, without floors, only windows and a decent bathroom and we will go home.

The family project of building the house brought all the family together, including grandma Hilda. “Nosotros somos muy unidos.” (*We are very close.*)

Paula completed her secondary studies and started working for the Rowling baseball company in Turrialba. She is very proud of her work. “Yo estoy bastante contenta ahí. Son puros hombres y de vez en cuando se da el machismo.” (*I am very happy there. There are a lot of men and sometimes machismo happens.*) Here is another example of slippage.

She is probably not aware of how this manufacturing company is a perfect example of outsourcing as a consequence of globalization where companies move jobs to

a country that employs low wageworkers. I can use **Paula**'s job as an example to illustrate why people migrate. Every baseball used in the major leagues in the United States is made in this town where they are handcrafted with high precision, with 108 perfect stitches. A worker makes about \$2,750.00 a year while a baseball player makes \$2,377.00 per year. Although the final ball production demands the precision of a machine, they have to be handmade; balls have to be exactly alike. Each worker can make four balls per hour and "they are paid by the ball on average about 30 cents a piece. Rawling Sporting Goods, which runs the factory, sells the balls for \$14.99 at retail in the United States" (<http://corpwatch.org>). If Paula has this information and she was no longer content with her job, with her mother in the United States, it would be of no surprise to see **Paula** migrating in the future.

María and **Pablo, Ruth**'s children, are attending secondary school. **Pablo** begins telling his life experience with the rupture of his parents and continues with the house construction.

La vida estaba muy dura y había menos plata. Había que hacer muchos pagos y todo. Y empezó lo de la construcción de la casa. Entonces había que comprar materiales para la casa. Y ya los cosa estaba más tallada porque estábamos alquilando un apartamento y entonces había que pagar el alquiler. Mamá decidió irse y ella ya tenía la visa. Entonces mi papá le ofreció pagarle el tiquete y ayudarle con un mes de estadía aunque ella iba a ir a vivir con mi tía. Pero igual, mi mamá no se iba a ir sin un cinco.

Life was very hard and there was less money. We had to make a lot of payments. And the construction of the house started. Then we had to buy construction materials for the house. And things were going real tight because we were renting an apartment. Mom decided to leave; she had her visa. So then my father offered to pay her the ticket and to help her with the first month expenses, even though she was going to stay with my aunt. But, all the same. Mom was not going to travel without a cent.

While **Pablo**'s analysis to **Mom**'s departure is practical, **Maria**'s memories are totally emotional as she is emotionally torn apart. She says: "Mami se fue el primero de septiembre en la madrugada. Yo me levanté y yo me puse a llorar mucho. Entonces mami le dijo a **Paula**, si **María** sigue llorando yo no me voy. Entonces yo me calmé y me fui para el baño. Y ella se fue." (*"Mom left on September the 1st at dawn. I woke up and I cried and cried. So Mom told Paula, if María continues crying, I will not leave."*) Their life stories show that they have survived the initial shock and their lives go on. **Pablo** says, "Y uno sabe que no es porque ella quiere estar fuera, uno sabe que es por la necesidad del dinero, de poder trabajar y de estar bien." (*"And one knows that it is not that she wants to be away; one knows that it is for the need of money, for the possibility of work and also to be well."*)

CHAPTER VI
ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES

“Blending In”—The Life of an Undocumented Immigrant

It’s so hard to explain how I feel whenever I go to my classes. When I enter history class, I feel like an old tired woman that does not what is going on in the world; when I go to my English class, I just feel that I am like a five year old girl that cannot understand the language of adult people; when I go to math class, I feel that life is too hard and I got to find a way to understand it. It’s SO hard to be a STRANGER. (Mays Alshami, my student from Iraq)

My interviewees and I come from one of the seven Central American countries: the beautiful tropical country of Costa Rica. Different from neighboring countries our country does not have a military service; there is no army. This happened as a result of a dispute after a presidential election where more than 2000 people died back in 1948. The victorious junta wrote a constitution guaranteeing free elections and the abolition of the military, an event that has permitted the country to have no military involvement in political affairs different from what happens in neighboring countries. Additionally, funds that at one point were assigned to military services were now allocated to improve the education system. As a consequence of this movement and in addition to it, Costa Rica is known as a country with more teachers and educators than soldiers. Furthermore, this is a country that is portrayed as the “Central American Switzerland,” a peaceful democratic country that has a Pura Vida (Pure Life) lifestyle with stunning natural beauty where friendly people have a laidback approach to life in a country with more than 26

ecological protected national parks and zones where citizens and tourists enjoy the tropical weather to practice all kinds of leisure activities.

So, if this country has an “ideal” situation, why do “Ticos” migrate? What compelling reasons make the citizens of this idyllic country abandon this comfortable life style and embark in the migration adventure into a country where they are undocumented, where they suffer segregation and racism, where the language is different and where their culture, identity and ideas clash with those of the dominant society? Perhaps if I mention the specific situation of each family and if my participants speak, these questions will be answered.

The two families who participated in my research, as I briefly mentioned in my methodology chapter, come from two agricultural towns in Costa Rica: Naranjo and Turrialba. These towns base their economy on agriculture. Products for internal consumption and for exportation can include traditional crops such as coffee, sugarcane, and bananas. Other crops include tropical fruit, vegetables, corn, beans, flowers, potted tropical plants, macadamia nuts, wood (lumber), and beef. The income for the two households in my study is impacted by the global economy. Changes in agricultural patterns and produce mark a shift in everyday life for those farmers who suffer the consequences of globalization. Even if my interviewees were not exclusively depending on farming to support their families, global agricultural shifts and demands affect them similar to a second hand smoker; they don't plant and harvest, but when the farmers move, they don't move alone; their journey includes and affects others.

In this chapter I explore the life stories of two families who live in two countries, Costa Rica and the United States. Sixteen life stories merge to share common themes. Since many voices participate in this analysis, I have separated this chapter in two sections for better understanding the milieu of who came, who stayed in the U.S., and who stayed in Costa Rica. Each section is separated into sub-topics that emerge from my participants' stories. As we read their stories, it is essential to continuously remember: first, my participants' dominant language is Spanish and second, they have overstayed their visa status in this country.

This chapter addresses the initial stage of their departure from their country of origin and their arrival in the receiving society. It addresses the themes of (a) traveling and staying in U.S.; (b) family, work, and finances; (c) the family rupture; and (d) limited mobility. Some of these topics, or related subjects, were introduced in my methodology section.

The second part of my analysis in Chapter V speaks to the adaptation-acculturation in the dominant culture with discourses of (a) the kids' voices; (b) work and the driver's license; and (c) adaptation and acculturation. Similar to the first section, some of these topics might have been directly or indirectly been introduced in the methodology section.

Traveling and Staying in the United States

Immobility is not a realistic option in a world of permanent change. (Bauman, 1998, p. 2)

The press strategically informs the public of immigrants who have been selected to join other societies and who have been very successful in their move. They are admired, respected, and they serve as models. On the flip side, the media contrasts these successful stories with disastrous journeys where immigrants die in their perilous journey after being promised the fulfillment of a dream and after someone has taken advantage of their hopes. However, most of the time, there is little or no mention of the “ordinary people” who travel and dedicate their life working in another society. Jiménez Matarrita (2009) says:

Nuestros medios de comunicación se interesan especialmente por quienes emigran cuando se trata personas relativamente prestigiosas. Pero nunca se las llama emigrantes aunque en sentido estricto lo sean. Artistas, científicos, futbolistas, y ese universo informe y patético de seres a quienes se llama *modelos*, representan, para nuestros periódicos y periodistas, el talento excepcional del país. Se los utiliza para exaltar las virtudes nacionales. De los otros, anónimos trabajadores, se habla como migrantes y no con tanto orgullo cuando en realidad son los que sostienen la vida de miles de costarricenses con su trabajo en otra parte. (p. 54)

Our communication means are especially interested on prestigious emigrants. But they are not addressed as such although in the strict sense of the word, they are emigrants. Artists, scientists, soccer players, and that pathetic universe of those models, represent, for our newspapers and journalists, the exceptional talent of our country. They are utilized to exalt the national virtues. The other anonymous workers are called immigrants. And they are not mentioned with such pride when in reality they are the ones that sustain thousands of Costa Rican households with their job in another place. (p. 54)

In this section I bring together my participants' stories to further illustrate how they interpret their reality. Financial reasons make many Costa Ricans move into the preferred country: United States. Fernán says: "A mí me motivó irme para los Estados Unidos las deudas y ganas de trabajar donde ganara más dinero para pagarlas." (*My motivation to move to United States was the need to work in a place where I could earn more to pay my debts.*) Another reason to move is family, or as expressed by Ruth, matters of the heart since she not only had financial problems but also her marriage was not solid. Even though she had a job in Costa Rica to support the family, her financial situation was not enough to satisfy her family's needs. "Yo administraba una ferretería, de mi cuñado. Pero no me alcanzaba el sueldo y los gastos eran grandes. Me estuve ahí un año y la situación era muy dura para mí. Entonces contacté a mi hermana Alice que vive en Estados Unidos." (*I was manager of my brother-in-law's hardware store. But my salary was not enough and the expenses were too high. I stayed there for a year and the situation was very hard for me. Then I contacted my sister Alice who lives in the United States.*) Ruth seeks for ways to help her family and finds the solution in migrating, probably a decision encouraged by the fact that her sister is already established in the receiving society. She will not be alone; her sister, Alice, has valuable resources to share with her. She has a home, a workplace, and connections to help her find a job. "Yo ya sabía que la vida es dura. Y viajé el 2 de septiembre y ya para el 5, comencé a trabajar." (*And I knew that life was hard. And I traveled on September the 2nd and by the 5th, I was working.*) How did Alice get into the country?

Alice begins her migration story when she decides to travel to join her husband who had previously traveled to work in the United States. They had been separated for many years. Eventually, he asks her to join him. She traveled with the children after years of the couple's separation to eventually find out that she was no longer in love. She was ready to continue with an independent life, one of her own.

Yo no quería venir aquí, pero bueno, vine y al año de estar aquí me divorcié de él. A los dos meses de haber llegado me dí cuenta que ya yo no lo amaba. Entonces me divorcié de él y alquilé una traila y empecé a vivir sola porque mis hijos se quedaron a vivir con él. El papá los convenció de que yo era una mujer mala.

I didn't want to come here, but well, I did and after one year of being here I divorced him. After two months of my arrival I knew that I didn't love him anymore. So I divorced him and I rented a motor home and then started to live on my one since my children stayed with him. Their father convinced them that I was a bad woman.

As single parents, both sisters, Ruth and Alice, are the breadwinners. Searching for a better way of providing their families' needs, they find in the act of immigration the solution to their family financial needs and, at the same time, a relief for their emotional situations. For both of them immigration is the result of the family rupture between husband and wife, consequently affecting the children. In this case, Mamá Hilda, the grandmother stays in Costa Rica as the guardian of Ruth's children.

When Miriam and Alejandra started their journey; they did not have a network to help them. When they made the decision of overstaying their Visa all the members of Mamá Maria's family were in Costa Rica. The initial reason for traveling was looking for an adventure. "A mí me gusta mucho viajar," (*"I like to travel a lot"*) were Miriam's first

words when we started our interview. She had already visited other countries such as Mexico and San Andrés.

Y yo me quiero ir para Estados Unidos. Entonces cuando Alejandra, mi hermana menor, cumplió 15 años, yo le dije que le regalaba el viaje o una fiesta. Y ella me dijo quiero viajar. Y nos fuimos a sacar la visa y como yo llevaba una carta de Oscar Arias porque yo trabajaba con él, nos dicen, bueno, para qué van a los Estados Unidos y entonces yo le dije que yo voy a llevar a mi hermana a pasear.

And I want to go to United States. So when Alejandra, my youngest sister, turned 15 I told her, what would you like a party or a trip? And she told me, "I want to travel." And we went to get the visa and since I had a letter from president Oscar Arias because I worked for him, the embassy agent asked us, "Why are you going to the United States?" And I told him that I wanted to take my sister on a fun trip.

At the time of our interview, the sisters had overstayed their tourist visa for more than 18 years on a trip that started as an adventure. They found jobs where they were paid in dollars, they started working and consuming, and their lives changed. Now, after living so many years in the United States, changes in their personal and emotional lives have rooted them in their new community.

Alejandra mentions another powerful reason for staying; she wants a good education for her son. She wants him to be fully bilingual. At home the family speaks Spanish to him; she plans to teach him how to read and write in this language. And as an American citizen, or as a child who has to go to school, the school system gives him the opportunity to learn English. In the future, it is her desire for him to receive a college education; there are better job opportunities for a graduate student from a university in the United States than from one in Costa Rica.

The Magnetic Trilogy: Work, Finances, and Family

Remittances

Las remesas son una expresión del vínculo entre las actividades colectivas de emigrados y sus comunidades de origen, son un medio para el desarrollo, ya que las mismas ofrecen una importante fuente de recursos de capital predecibles tanto para los países como para las familias, por su impacto en el mantenimiento de los niveles de bienestar de los hogares receptores. Las remesas, son reflejo y expresión de profundos vínculos emocionales entre parientes, separados por la geografía y las fronteras. (Iglesias, 2001, p. 165)

Según estimaciones del BID, el envío de remesas del exterior hacia América Latina está creciendo a un ritmo aproximado del 15 por ciento anual. De esta manera las remesas familiares se han tornado en una de las principales fuentes de ingresos de muchos países y en el arma más eficaz para combatir la pobreza en economías emergentes. (Iglesias, 2001, p. 165)

Estimaciones extraoficiales apuntan hacia un ingreso de remesas en Centroamérica cercano a los 3,000 millones de dólares anuales. En términos per cápita, estos recursos son muy superiores a los que recibe México. Aunque en dicha región su importancia varía según los países, los ingresos derivados de estas transferencias llegan a alcanzar una proporción significativa del Producto Interno Bruto, dándoles un gran aporte a las economías nacionales. (Chávez Ramírez, 2007, p. 166)

Estimations point to a remittance income in Central America close to \$3,000 million of yearly income. In terms per capita, these resources are superior to those received in Mexico. Although in this region, its importance vary according to the countries. (Iglesias, 2001, p. 165)

Remittances are an expression of linkage between the immigrant collective activities and their communities of origin. They are means for development, since they offer an important source of predictable capital assets for both the countries and for their families; they impact the well being of the receiving homes. Remittances are a reflection and an expression of deep emotional ties between relatives who are separated by the geography and the borders. (Iglesias 2001, p. 165)

According to an Interamerican Bank of Development estimate, the sending of remittances from abroad into Latin America is growing at approximate annual rate of 15 percent. In this manner, the family remittances have become in many

countries one of their main source of income and the most efficient weapon to fight poverty in emergent economies. (Iglesias, 2001, 165)

Unofficial estimates lead towards a remittance income in Central America close to 3,000 million dollars annually. In per capita terms, these resources are much higher to those received by Mexico. Even though its importance in that region varies according to each country, the income derived from these remittances reaches a significant proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), providing the national economies with a considerable boost. (Chávez Ramírez, 2007, p. 166)

Finding work, sending remittances home to pay debts or mortgages on homes, buying a car, paying the bills, saving money, and other indispensable financial reasons entice and convince my participants to stay in the United States. As it turns out for my two families, those who have stayed in the U.S. have settled down; they have jobs, cars, and a formal education for their children; some own a house. The part of the family that stayed in Costa Rica gets similar benefits from the worker in the U.S. as we read Ruth's quotation: she has a job, she has savings, and she built a house for her children. Additionally, she plans to return home and to use her landscaping skills learned while working in the U.S. She says:

Es muy duro pero es gratificante porque cuando llega el viernes y te pagan por lo que has hecho, me siento muy orgullosa. Además yo estoy adquiriendo conocimientos y me encanta la jardinería. En Costa Rica mi casa está hecha un desastre, no tiene jardines por ningún lado. Ahí ví las fotos que me mandaron. Pero yo con lo poco que sé con lo poco que he aprendido aquí creo que voy a hacer un jardín bonito para mí.

It is very hard but it is very rewarding because when it is Friday and I get paid for what I have done I feel very proud of myself. Additionally, I am learning and I love gardening. In Costa Rica, my house is a disaster, there are no gardens. I saw the pictures. But with the little I know and what I have learned, I believe that I will be able to have a beautiful garden for me.

Different from Ruth's family, most of Alejandra's family is in the U.S. She is the breadwinner for her parents (she brought them into the country to help her with her son and to keep the family together) who are living with her and for her three-year-old son born in the United States. After working and living so many years in the United States she sees no hope as a provider if she returns to Costa Rica. Besides, if she decides to return to her hometown, once again she has to leave her family behind not knowing when they can be together again. During this long stay (18 years), Alejandra gave birth to her American son, Brandon (an American name). If she wants to travel with him she will most likely have difficulties not only for getting his passport and taking him out of the country but for explaining her legal situation in the country. This might be a case where she would be deported and her son would have to come with her, even though he is an American citizen. If the majority of the family is in the U.S. or if the mothers give birth in this country, chances are they will stay in the country, even if they have little or no chance of changing their legal status. Their children are American and this is a powerful reason to stay. Besides now they have another responsibility, to take care of a son or a daughter. It is very hard, if not impossible, to separate the close relationship between family and finances, consequently with work.

When my participants speak of their life stories they mention how hard they work, how proud they are of being providers, how they support and bring their families together. Mamá María's family has started a business; her five daughters clean houses. They live in New Jersey and they work in New York, where they get better wages. Since Alejandra has the youngest grandchild, her parents live with her. Therefore, she has the

responsibility of providing for her son and her parents. She has to pay for living facilities, for her car, which she needs to travel back and forth to work, and for other family needs such as her mother's healthcare. (They have no health plan or financial assistance so each time one of the family members needs medical attention she pays for the doctor's bill and for the medicines, too.) Alejandra's life story speaks of many powerful pulling/staying financial and family factors; she is the provider of the family since most of her immediate family is living with her; she wants to give her son better education opportunities; she pays for her family's medical expenses as well as her own; and she covers living expenses such as food, social life, family gathering and car maintenance.

Alejandra's sisters, Miriam and Julia, have very similar stories. When they arrived in the United States, they were not alone; they brought their children with them. Their roots grow deeper in the new host society when they get jobs, they learn the language and they make friends. Once they start their productive stage, adults get immersed in a work-home routine; children start their formal education intensifying their social ties. In fact, the sisters provide a home for their families in this country. Furthermore, their income stays in this country; they are not accountable for sending remittances back to Costa Rica.

Ruth is Alice's sister and they both work together in the same landscaping company. Although both women are breadwinners, Alice's financial commitment is for the maintenance of her needs in the U.S. while Ruth sends money to Costa Rica to support her three children who are under the supervision and care of mother/grandmother, Mamá Hilda, to pay for their needs, for her children's education and expenses, and for paying the bank in Costa Rico for a house loan. She is part of the

“remittance community”. According to the CIA World Fact book, in 2006 remittances sent to Costa Rica from Ticos working outside of the country summed up to \$513.000,000 and remittances represented 2.3% of the country’s GDP.

Miriam says:

Pero bien que mal hemos pasado, más bien que mal gracias a Dios. Y ya cuando vino la familia, ya fue mucho mejor. Pero nosotros somos demasiado ‘close-up’, demasiado unidos. Nos llamamos todos los días y a cada rato todas mis hermanas. Así mismo, la familia de mi esposo. Ellos son de Ecuador y la mamá y la hermana vinieron y después al tiempo se vino el hermano, la esposa y los hijos que viven aquí en Jersey también. Y una hermana también con el esposo y los dos hijos que vivían en Los Ángeles también. Todos estamos acá. Y la meta de nosotros este año es ver si podemos comprar una casita aquí. Nosotros vivimos aquí en un apartamento. Y ya la familia se hizo más grande y necesitamos más espacio. Entonces queremos comprar casa.

But for good or for bad we have been fine, thank God. And when the family arrived, it was much better. We are a very close family, too close. We call each other daily and I speak more than once with my sister. My husband’s family is the same. They are from Ecuador and the mother and the sister came here for and later his brother, his wife and their two children who live here in New Jersey. And the other sister with her husband is here, too. They used to live in Los Angeles. We are all here. And our goal this year is to see how we can buy a house here. We are currently living in an apartment. And the family grew so we need a bigger space. That’s why we want to buy a house.

Looking for ways to buy a house in this country shows Miriam’s intention of staying in the country. Living in New Jersey and working as housemaids in New York gives the sisters the opportunity of making a substantial amount of money. Living in Costa Rica with a cleaning business similar to the one they presently manage would most likely obligate them to look for a second and perhaps even a third job to be able to support their immediate and their extended family, to pay their bills, and to buy a house.

For Hispanics, the family unit is very important; nuclear family members and extended family members are very close. The beginning of Mamá María's life in Costa Rica is the family imprint that she will follow when traveling and staying in the U.S. as an effort of keeping everyone together.

Mamá María says:

Mis papás eran muy pobres. Después se acomodaron un poquito más pero cuando yo me casé a los 14 años ya ellos estaban reponiéndose de aquella pobreza. Nosotros somos seis hermanos, tres mujeres y tres hombres. Y donde estaban papá y mamá ahí andábamos todos detrás de ellos. Íbamos a una tienda y ahí estábamos todos con mamá. Llegaban varias personas y decían - ¡Qué linda familia! Parecen los pollitos detrás de los papás. Siempre juntos.

My parents were very poor. We were very poor; at 14, when I got married, they were recovering from that stage of poverty. We are six siblings, three girls and three boys. And wherever Mom and Dad went, we were with them, always following them. If we would go to a store, we would be together with Mom. Several people would say: "What a lovely family! They look like chicks following their parents." We were always together.

Mamá María's early childhood experience is an example of how many Hispanic families begin their journey as a unit. She also remembers her childhood by emphasizing how happy she was when she and her family were always together. "Uno recuerda historias lindas de los papás y de los hermanos siempre juntos" (*I remember pretty stories with my parents and my siblings always together*). One of her daughters, Miriam speaks about her mother (who was 14 when she got married) as always being with them, playing as if she was one of the siblings. "Ella parecía más una hermana que nuestra mamá." (*She looked more like a sister than like our mother*). Interestingly enough, Mamá María mirrors her words when she adds that she knows her daughters are very close because she always

was around them, playing with them and making sure that they would never get into a fight. Not surprisingly, when I heard the life-stories of the other girls, they all made the same comment: “We are very close, we never fight.” Because of her feelings about family ties, when her two daughters come to the U.S., Mama Maria wants the rest of the family to join them.

Keeping the family together is a commitment; it is also the most important “business” to invest time and resources. So, it is a logical consequence to see how one family member travels and gets established in United States, and eventually how this person starts pulling others into the country, as some of my participants have already mentioned. After three months of Miriam and Alejandra being in the country, Julia, the third sister of five, decided that she, her husband, and her family would like to come and live in the United States. As strong as family ties pull Hispanics together, Miriam introduces another reason for staying.

Cuando llegamos yo estaba triste, pero mi hermana Alejandra quería quedarse. Y a los tres días de haber llegado aquí conocí al que hoy es mi esposo. Fuimos a buscar trabajo y ahí lo conocí. Él también es inmigrante, es de Ecuador.

When we arrived, I was very sad, but my sister Alejandra wanted to stay. So after three days of being in the country, I met the person who is my husband. We went to look for work and I met him there. He also is an immigrant; he is from Ecuador.

Not long after arriving, both Julia and Miriam got pregnant. Different from the United States, daycare culture is not a tradition in Costa Rica. Traditionally, grandmothers or a relative would step in to help with the baby; however, nowadays if both parents work, it is acceptable to look for a housemaid. However, following our

Costa Rican tradition grandmother Mamá María came to help her daughters with the babies. She takes care of them while her daughters go to work. Given that most of this family was already in United States, Ramón (husband and father) traveled too. Only one daughter, Carmen and her children were in Costa Rica at this time. But not for long. She also came to the States with her three children, joined the rest of the family, worked in the family cleaning-house business, got involved in a tumultuous relationship, got pregnant and gave birth to another American citizen.

Episodes in Family Rupture

After living away from home for so many years, many things can happen in the family unit. In fact, territorial separation will not prevent or guarantee, “Life will not go on.” While my participants are away, events happen: there are newborns and deaths in the family, celebrations, baptisms, holidays, birthdays, parties, and illnesses in the family. Mamá María’s parents died while she was in the U.S.; Julio’s younger brother died, too and Ruth’s daughter got very sick and had to be hospitalized. Their emotional distress is palpable when they speak of the difficult decision they had to make either by staying or by traveling and being unable to re-enter the country. For any decision they make they have to pay a high price and, as I explain later, they are *stuck*.

Mamá María speaks to this state of uncertainty as she talks about her mother’s death. She is caught between two situations: first, wanting to go to her mother’s funeral and second, the fear of being unable to re-enter the country:

Como lo de inmigración está tan feo y si no puedo volver a entrar pues lloraría en Costa Rica y quizás hasta me enfermo porque la mayoría de la familia está aquí. Cuando papá se puso grave y murió, yo no pude ir a verlo ni al entierro ni a nada.

Y cuando mamá, me avisaron días antes de morir ella, que estaba muy grave, que estaba agonizando que me fuera. Y entonces me fui porque me daba cosa de que no había ido cuando papa murió y yo por acá muerta del sufrimiento. Entonces las mismas hijas me dijeron que mejor fuera porque después me iba a pasar lo mismo que cuando papá murió y no fui. Yo me puse muy mal. Y entonces me fui. Yo llegué sábado y el lunes murió mamá. Como dijo una enfermera—ella la estaba esperando.

Since immigration is so ugly and if I can't come back into the country, well I would cry in Costa Rica and maybe I would even get sick because the majority of my family is here. When my father got very sick and died, I couldn't go to see him, not even was I able to go to his funeral. So when I was told days before Mom died that she was very ill, I went to see her because I felt that I had not been there for my father's death and I stayed here; I was almost dead due to my suffering. So my own daughters told me to go see her before going through what I had suffer when my Dad passed away and I hadn't gone. At that time, I got very ill. So I left. I arrived on Saturday and by Monday, Mom died. Like a nurse said, "She was waiting for you."

Further on Mamá María says that she had promised her mother that she would “dress” her for the day of her funeral. This promise was more powerful than the fear of not being able to re-enter the country. As she says, she left the country to fulfill her promise. However, she does not say how she returned to the U.S. or if she had difficulties in the process of re-entering the country as an undocumented immigrant.

Another member of Mamá María had a similar experience, her son-in-law, Julio. He had been in the country for three years when his youngest brother passed away. When he came to the country, Julio had resigned from his job with a well-thought out plan; if he wanted to pay for the bank loan to start the construction and to pay for his home, he had to stay in the country no less than five years. If he wanted to save some money to be able to start his business in Costa Rica when he returned, he would have to work for a longer period of time. Either way, similar to Mamá María, he is *stuck*. Julio says:

Porque yo me acuerdo que lo más duro para mí fue que tres años después de estar aquí se me murió un hermano, y fue triste porque tenía problemas, tomaba, y él era el menor. Pero luego conoció a una muchacha que lo cambió completamente. Se casaron y ella quedó embarazada pero a los seis meses a mi hermano le entró una bacteria en la sangre que le estaba comiendo los glóbulos rojos y cayó en coma y sí, despertó del coma pero luego le dio un ataque cardíaco y se murió.

Tenía 33 años. Y yo estaba aquí. Para mí fue algo muy duro, muy duro. Yo lloré y lloré y hablé con mis papá, mi mamá, mis hermanos y no me podía ir porque sabía que si me iba no podía volver a regresar. Y no iba a dejar aquí a mi esposa con todos los chiquitos y la escuela y toda esa cuestión. Y no nos íbamos a ir tampoco. Y entonces mis papás me dijeron, no se venga, no tiene nada que venir a hacer, quédese allá.

Because I remember that one of the hardest things happened when after being here for three years my brother died and it was so sad. He had a problem, he drank too much; he was the youngest. But then he met this girl who changed him completely. They got married and she got pregnant but six months later, my brother got sick. He got bacteria in his blood and it was eating the red globules; he fell into a coma. And yes, he woke up from his coma but he suffered a heart attack and he died.

He was 33 years old. And I was here. It was so, so hard for me. I cried and cried and I spoke with my father, my mother, my siblings and I couldn't go because I knew that if I went there I would not be able to return. And I was not going to leave my wife and my children who were in school and all of that here. And we were not going back either. And so my parents told me not to go, that there was nothing for me to do there, to stay here.

I interviewed Julio in his sister-in-law's kitchen in NJ, a very small place, with very little storage place but very clean and organized. The kitchen table was comfortable to sit two people but there were two stools, three chairs, and a high chair for Brandon, Alejandra's two-year old son. Alejandra's apartment is very small to accommodate all the people who live there. In this small apartment, her parents occupy one bedroom, she and her son sleep in the second bedroom, and she rents a room to another undocumented Costa Rican. It has three small bedrooms, one bathroom and this small kitchen area that is also the living

room. In addition to the kitchen appliances and utensils such as pots, pans, a microwave, a coffee maker, and a toaster, this area has a fresh-water fish tank, natural plants, stereo system, a television set, and conveniently placed shelves with books, DVDs, and CDs. Although the front of the apartment faces a secondary road, there is a large backyard where Mamá María has a section for gardening vegetables and herbs in the spring, a grill, and a place for Alejandra to park her car.

This modest and homey environment is the perfect setting for Julio's words: not only is family very important but they also have to have a safe place to be together. His quotation addresses the high price undocumented immigrants have to pay when they are in the United States. In his case, it was the death of a family member that makes him ask himself: "What should I do?" "What must I do?" "What would I like to do?" If he decides to stay in the country, he longs to be with his family for comfort and to mourn with them; but if he leaves, he knows that he will not be able to return. Now, he is not only suffering from the family separation but also he is *stuck* by either decision; he is split and stuck between finances and family. Either way, he will pay a high price for his choice. The complexity of these indecisive moments happens to most undocumented immigrants; it is not a unique situation for Julio. Ruth says:

Lo más duro es que yo no pude ver a mi tía. Yo casi me muero. Yo a ella la amo mucho. Fue muy linda la relación que tuvimos y mis primos son como mis hermanos. Nos queremos mucho. Yo la cuidé unos días y siempre fue durísimo lo de mi tía. Yo siempre le regalé flores. Y de acá yo le decía a mis hijos que se las compraran o se las hacía llegar por medio de una amiga. No quiero que las flores le falten a mi tía

Hablé con ella el 31 de diciembre y me dice, - Mire Rutica, eso sí me duele, que no nos vamos a ver-. Y yo le contesté que sí, que sí nos íbamos a ver aunque ya

yo sabía que no. Y cuando me llamaron para decirme que había muerto, eso fue muy duro, no verla, no despedirme de ella. Duele mucho, el sacrificio es muy grande. Duelen muchas cosas que uno ha dejado allá.

The hardest thing was not to see my aunt. I almost died. I loved her very much. We had a very nice relationship and my cousins are like my siblings. We love each other very much. I looked after her for some days but what happened to her was very hard. I always gave her flowers. And since I came here, I asked my kids to buy some for her or I asked a friend to get them to her. I want her to always have flowers.

I spoke with her on December the 31st and she said, "Look Ruthy, this really hurts, that we will not see each other." And I answered, "Yes, we will see each other again," although I knew that this was not going to happen. When they call me to tell me that she had died, it was so hard for me; I didn't see her, I didn't say good-bye. It hurts too much and the sacrifice is very big. Many things hurt many things are left behind.

Similar to Julio, Ruth had to remain in the country for the same circumstances: leaving the country is a possibility, but returning with the legal documentation is not an option, at least not in the near future or as long as the law doesn't change. Although they experienced a death in the family, there are other situations happening at home such as weddings, birth of family members, birthday parties, Mother's Day, Christmas, and New Year's among others that they are going to miss. Ruth talks the sickness of one of her daughters who is under the care of Mamá Hilda in Costa Rica.

Duele que mi hija estuvo enferma y estuvo en el hospital y para mí fue terrible, y fue muy doloroso y no poder irme. Y yo la llamaba y le decía – Gorda, Ud. está bien.- Y ella me contestaba – Sí, mamita, sí. – Pero no, ella no estaba bien. Ella tenía dengue y es una enfermedad terrible, desgasta mucho a las personas. Y yo la llamaba y ella estaba en el hospital. Y ahí estaba su papá pero Ud. Sabe . . .
Duelen mucho las cosas. El corazón lo dejas allá y te venís con el estuche nada más y aquí a sobrevivir y a hacer lo que se pueda porque hay que seguir adelante, para atrás ni para coger impulso.

It hurts that my daughter was sick and she went to the hospital; it was terrible, it hurt very much that I couldn't go see her. And I called her and told her, "Honey, you are OK." And she answered: "Yes, Mommy, yes." But she was not well. She had dengue and this is a terrible sickness; it debilitates people a lot. And I called her; she was in the hospital. And her father was there but you know . . . Many other things are very hurtful. I left my heart there and I came here with my body only. I am here to survive and to do what I can because I will move forward, backwards, not even for an impulse.

As long as they are not detected by the INS they can stay as long as they wish. However, they are stuck either way, leaving and staying in either country. And as Julio and Ruth constantly mention in their quotes "Life is hard and things are very hurtful."

Family members who are living in Costa Rica have the same desire to be together "like it used to be" but their experience is different since not only are they in the country of origin but also they are not able to get the visa to travel to the United States. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, agents in the American Embassy in San José screen potential "tourists" who are looking for ways of staying in the U.S. Mamá Hilda's voices this yearning:

Y así ha pasado la vida. Me hacen mucha falta. Me duele mucho no verlas, me hacen muchísima falta, para el Día de la Madre y el 24 uno quiere estar unido como éramos antes con mis hijos. Yo tengo un montón, nueve hijos. Para estas fiestas vienen nietos, vienen ellos, vienen nueras y esta casa es un montón de gente. Y yo estoy feliz de llenarles la mesa de comida. Yo le pido a Dios que me de vida para verlas porque no me dieron visa para verlas.

And life goes on. I miss them a lot. It hurts so much not to see them. I miss them tremendously. For Mother's Day and Christmas one wants to be together like it was before with all my children. I have a lot, nine children! For these holidays my grandchildren, my children and their spouses come to this house and it is a lot of people. And I am so happy to put a lot of food on the table. And I pray to God to let me live to be able to go visit (Ruth and Alice) because they did not give me a visa.

Having limited mobility is the consequence of not having proper documentation to be in the country; yet, being deported is the most denigrating embarrassment. As Alejandra mentions in her story, people are taken from wherever they are and they are not given a chance to get things together, to pack, or to go home for their belongings.

Limited Mobility—Stuck in a Parallel World

My Costa Rican participants freely chose to migrate. Different from neighboring Central American countries, such as Nicaragua, there were no political reasons or life-threatening circumstances. Furthermore, all of them had visas to travel into the U.S. and, different from other undocumented immigrants, they safely flew into the country. In their life stories, all of them expressed their desire to stay for a short period of time; however, more than 10 years later, they are still here. But as times goes by and as they choose to overstay their visa as tourists, circumstances change. Mobility is very limited for my undocumented migrants because as we will see, their mobility as a family and as an individual is stuck.

Five of my participants share their family stories to explain how, as a divided family, the act of being undocumented in the U.S. limits their mobility to the extent of being *stuck*. No matter what decision my Costa Rican undocumented immigrants in the U.S. make, they are in a “no win” situation possibly exemplifying what happens to other undocumented immigrants from other countries.

Mamá María says:

Ya tengo 15 años y medio de estar aquí. Y aquí estoy hasta que Dios se acuerde de mí. Aquí también estaban Marlen, Miriam y Alejandra. Después mandé a traer a Carmen que se vino con los chiquitos y después a Julito (yerno) que se vino con

Zinnia, mi otra hija. Pero yo pasaba pensando en ellos que estaban allá. Me llamaban por teléfono y me decían - Mamita, qué cosa tan fea es estar sin Ud. Porque ellas siempre estaban metidas conmigo, llegaban todos los días donde mí.

I have been living here for 15 and a half years. And I am still here until God remembers me. Marlen, Miriam, and Alejandra were already here. Then I sent for Carmen who came with her children; later I sent for Julito (son-in-law) and he came with Zinnia, my other daughter. I was always thinking of them when they were there. They would call me on the phone and they would tell me: "Mommy, it is horrible to be here without you." Because they were always with me, they would visit me . . . every day.

When Mamá María traveled to the United States, her intention was to help her daughters during the last stages of their pregnancies and to be around them to help them in every possible way. As she states, the children are over sixteen and she is still in the country. How did she make the decision of staying? What powerful factors influenced her determination to bring the family unit together in the U.S.? How did she claim the authority of challenging a patriarchal society so typical in Costa Rica?

I interpret her decision as one of action and reaction; when she is exposed to a different social location, she re-imagines her life following the example set by her daughters—thus empowering her liberatory ideas. Presently, she has fulfilled her desire of keeping the family together. However, from a mobility stance, they have three choices; (a) stay “undercover” in the country as undocumented immigrants with limited mobility; (b) leave the country with restricted possibilities of returning; and (c) begin the paperwork to get legal documentation with the fear of being deported.

Mamá Hilda lives in the agricultural town of Turrialba. Her two daughters, who I have mentioned before, Alice and Ruth, live in South Carolina. The family has been separated for years and they are always looking for ways to get together. The two sisters

can definitely go back to Costa Rica; however, since they have overstayed their visas they will be “punished” for ten years (unable to return on a visitor’s visa). Her town is close to Pérez Zeledón, an area well known by Costa Ricans and by agents in the American Embassy in this country as a pushing society. She says:

Yo le pido a Dios que me dé vida para verlas (A Ruth y Alice - que viven en Carolina del Sur) porque no me dieron visa para verlas. Y es que yo fui con una nieta y si uno dice que es de Pérez Zeledón, no le dan la visa. Yo fui con una nieta a la embajada porque ella también quería viajar. Conmigo iban muy bien los papeles, pero cuando ella dijo que era de Pérez, y una muchacha joven ellos dijeron, ella se va a quedar allá. Y con la visa, talvez la abuela también se va a quedar allá. Y entonces, no nos la dieron. Me dijeron que no, que la próxima vez. Más de 100 mil colones nos gastamos ahí entre las dos. Pero, idiay, el sueño de uno, verdad, de ir a conocer América, de ir a conocer.

And I ask God to keep me alive to see [Ruth and Alice] because I did not get the visa to travel and to see them. Well, I went with my granddaughter and if one says that one is from Pérez Zeledón, well, you don't get the visa. I went with my granddaughter to the embassy because she wanted to travel, too. My paperwork was OK but when she said that she was from Pérez Zeledón and she being a young girl they thought that she was planning to stay there. And if we both had a visa, they thought that the grandmother was going to stay there, too. And so we didn't get it. They said no and that maybe next time. I paid more than 100 thousand colones between the two of us. But, well, that is my dream, to see and to know America.

Although she can travel to other countries, visiting her daughters, as things are at the moment of our interview, it is impossible. She is stuck in Costa Rica along with her grandchildren, Ruth’s kids. They have been separated for more than five years. Alice is another one of her daughters living in the U.S. Perhaps it is time to listen to her story of why she can’t move freely.

Alice has been in the country for more than ten years. She has three sons:

Fernando, Tommy and Armando, the youngest who was born in the United States. This family is also split and stuck.

Yo pienso que Tommy si va a quedarse aquí un tiempito más conmigo y mi otro hijo Fernando pues le castigaron la visa y no puede regresar. Se fue después de seis años de estar acá conmigo y cuando entró no me hizo caso y le dije que no entrara por Charlotte, vaya por Orlando, Miami, Atlanta u otro lugar que no fuera Charlotte. Y aterrizó en Charlotte y lo devolvieron.

Entonces como le dije yo a él, tranquilo, Ud. está en su país, sos soltero, no tenés compromisos de nada, haga su vida y trabajo con su papá. Mejor que se quede en Costa Rica; yo mojado ni loca. En primer lugar, yo no voy a dormir no sé cuántas noches pensando en sí ya pasó la frontera, que por dónde viene, que si comió, que si no comió. No, eso debe de ser la muerte para mí. Entonces mejor quédese con su papá en Costa Rica. No se mate por lo que ya tuvo y si ya lo perdió, ya lo perdió. (Alice)

I think that Tommy is going to stay with me a little longer and my other son, Fernando, well, his visa was "punished" and he can't come back. He left after being with me for six years and when he came back, he didn't listen to me. And I told him not to come in through Charlotte, but to try Orlando, Miami, Atlanta or any other port of entrance but not Charlotte. And he landed in Charlotte and he was returned.

So as I tell him now, stay put, you are in your country, you are single with no commitments, build up your life and work with your father. It is better for him to stay in Costa Rica because trying to come back as a wetback will drive me crazy. First, I would not be able to sleep I don't know how many nights thinking if you made it through the border, trying to figure out where he is, if he has eaten or not. No, that is death for me. So I tell him that he better stay with his father in Costa Rica. Don't kill yourself with what you had and what you lost; it is gone. (Alice)

Fernando (the oldest of Alice's sons) overstayed his visa as a tourist. If he would not have been caught when he left and then when he tried to re-enter United States, he could have stayed with a low profile for as long as he was not caught. Yet, once he leaves the country, coming back is a risk (as we read in Alice's story) and he was trapped trying to

re-enter the country. The INS computerized system “knows” this situation and he is deported with a “punishment” visa. He will have to stay out of the country for many years and he will probably not be granted a visa since this information is in the INS digital system that is accessible a click away. He is banned from traveling to the United States to see his mother and his younger brother. What is more, the same thing will happen to his mom if she leaves the country. For her, however, there is a most aggravating circumstance: five years ago, she gave birth to Armando, her American son.

Alice, Miriam, and Alejandra, undocumented mothers, gave birth to American children. The children, who were born here, will not have legal problems as undocumented; but the mothers will. Almost on a daily basis, the news shows many separated families who have lived in the country for many years and who have to leave the country leaving behind their American children since they are citizens. Perhaps the incidence of this situation is exemplified by the fact that I interviewed two families and each family has mothers who have given birth to American children. This happens very often with undocumented immigrants who stay for a longer period of time. They are scared if they happen to be discovered and caught by immigration agents. As expressed by Alejandra, “I will die. I will not know what to do but I will not leave this country without my son.” Now, these mothers are stuck in a free and democratic country; if they want to travel with their American kids, they have to come out in the open as undocumented and the law will follow its course. The mothers would have to explain their situation and risk being separated from their children. Perhaps this is a good time to hear the children’s side of the story in chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII

SILENT GRIEVANCES—UNHEARD VOICES OF THE KIDS

What determines a person's affiliation to a given group is essentially the influence of others: the influence of those about him—relatives, fellow-countrymen, co-religionists—who try to make him one of them: together with the influence of those on the other side, who do their best to exclude him. Each one of us has to make his way while choosing between the paths that are urged upon him and those that are forbidden or strewn with obstacles. (Maalouf, 2000, p. 25)

The life stories of parents and grandparents do not include the voices of the children who are directly affected by the decision to migrate. The children's interpretations reveal a different reality. They were uprooted and placed into a "pulling" society where they did not choose to belong and perhaps, they did not want to belong. However, these children had some formal education from their schools in Costa Rica, which is different from children migrating into the United States from other Central American countries. They had had some form of education in the English language and their immersion into the public system of the United States was less traumatic than for Salvadorans, for example (McKay & Wong, 2000).

Tommy is Alice's son. He came to the country when he was in seventh grade, a critical age not only for a successful formal education but also for social relationships. At this age, building friendship and having girlfriends are extremely important factors in the life of an emerging adolescent. Undoubtedly they define a successful immersion in the receiving society. Tommy knew that English was the spoken language; probably he

didn't know the extent in which language is "the culture" since language is alive; it is changing and evolving as people use it to interpret their lives.

Yo al principio no quería venir. Soy muy apegado a Costa Rica, me gusta mucho. Y allá me siento muy bien. No podía quedarme por allá porque tenía 14 años y no podía valerme por mí mismo. Entonces nos vinimos para acá y cuando tenía que ir al colegio no hablaba nada de inglés. Era fatal para mí porque tenía problemas con el idioma, problemas de racismo y todo se te cierra. Yo me acuerdo que llegué el segundo o el tercer día de clases y le dije a mi mamá que no quería estar aquí, que me quería ir para Costa Rica, que no entendía nada, que nadie me entendía y qué cómo iba a tener amigos y novias, porque me encanta tener novias, y que me quería ir.

From the beginning, I didn't want to go. I am very attached to Costa Rica; I like it very much. And there, I feel great. But I couldn't stay because I was only 14 years old and I couldn't stay by myself. So we came here. And when I had to go to school, I didn't speak one word of English. It was awful. I had problems with speaking the language, racist problems and everything closes on you. I remember that the second or the third day of school I came home and told my mother that I didn't want to stay here, that I wanted to go back to Costa Rica, that I did not understand anything, and that no one understood me and that how was I going to make friends and have girlfriends, which I like very much. I wanted to go back home.

While in high school Tommy meets a girl five years older. She is from Honduras and she arrived to the U.S. when she was 2 years old. She is the daughter of a pastor. They fall in love and at the age of 15 he became a father. At the time of our interview this daughter is 6 years old. Not only was he a minor but also he was undocumented and his partner's father threatened to "echarme la migra porque el papá me empezó a amenazar con echarme migración y la policía y yo lo que hice fue apartarme completamente para no tener problemas y mucho menos ella." (*"Her father threatened me with calling INS and to call the police. So I decided to stay away to avoid problems with them and with her."*)

Another way of being “stuck” is for the children who came into the country at an early age and who started their formal education. After certain number of years they get Americanized in many ways: they speak the language, they blend cultures, ideas, and lifestyles to survive and most importantly, to belong. In school, they like to believe that they are unnoticed as immigrants, whereas to their families, they are Costa Ricans.

The children who were “imported” into the United States are now young adults. I interviewed Tommy, 22 years old, Julita, 20 years old, and Noily, 19 years old. (I am estimating their ages.) In all of their stories, they are stuck, too. Their situation is slightly different but nevertheless, their freedom is limited. All of them were given an identity number when they started school. That is what the system has to do, give them a student number with no questions asked as their legal status. As a matter of fact, no one in the school system should ask them if they are or if they are not documented. The school number that is assigned to them is not a social security number stating that they are legal in the country; but with this number when they reach high school, they can get a driver’s license, they can buy a car, they can open a bank account, and other privileges that American students have once they reach certain age.

However, and this is their situation, once they complete high school and they graduate, sooner or later their driver’s license expires and so do their possibilities for an education in an American college or university as American students. Even their possibilities of going on living as free Americans expire. Julita says:

Entonces estábamos con el problema de que como íbamos a estudiar si no teníamos papeles, si no teníamos “*social*”. Yo tenía un número de identificación de los taxes entonces dijimos, tratemos con eso. Yo siempre llevaba notas

buenísimas y apliqué con ese número de “tax” a varias universidades y me aceptaron en las cuatro. Entonces ya era cuestión de plata. No podíamos pedir ayuda financiera porque no teníamos papeles y las becas con muy difíciles que me las dieran sin papeles. Era un problema porque la universidad a la que yo quería ir en Philadelphia me costaba \$32 mil por año, sin incluir los materiales, la comida, el transporte, casa, y todo eso. Bueno, se me fue abajo esa idea.

Then we had to problem of how I was going to continue my education if I didn't have the papers or the social security number. I had my ID for the taxes so we decided to try it that way. My school grades had always been excellent and so I decided to apply with that tax number to several colleges and I was accepted in four. So now it was a matter of money. We couldn't apply to loans because we didn't have the papers and scholarships were almost impossible since I was undocumented. It was a problem because the college that I wanted to go to was in Philadelphia and the tuition was \$32 thousand a year, without supplies, food, transportation, room and board, and all of that. Well, that was the end of this idea.

Julita and Noily are two of my participants; they are cousins. They graduated and they become part of the estimated 65,000 illegal immigrants that graduate from U.S. high schools each year (www.washingtonpost.com). When Julita made the decision of staying in the United States, she thought that she had some freedom to move, that she would stop being stuck. Her aspirations were to continue her education, to get her driver's license, to work, to be independent, and to be able to continue with her social life. Noily suffered from the same situation. While Julita decided to stay in the United States, Noily returned to Costa Rica to continue her higher education.

In Noily's case, her family who had been in the United States for more than ten years, had to split: Mom (Zinnia) traveled to Costa Rica with her other two sons and Dad (Julio) stayed in the United States as a provider. Since none of them have “papeles” (paperwork to be legal in the country) they know that they will probably not see each other for a long period of time. When the family split, Julio got stuck in the United States

as a provider for his family who is stuck in Costa Rica because for more than ten years they overstayed their tourist visa. If the part of the family who is in Costa Rica would like to travel to the United States they must go to the United States Embassy to get a visa. Most likely the system will show their legal situation and not only deny them their visa, but they will be “punished” for ten years. Their only hope at this time is for Julio to get his “papeles” in order here in the United States; therefore, he would be able to travel the Costa Rica.

Julio had to make the decision of a separation from his wife; he would stay in the United States while his wife and their three children had to return to Costa Rica. The reason was that their daughter, Noily, wanted to continue her college education and being undocumented, her chances were very limited to one: pay out-of-state tuition which was more than \$32,000 a year plus other expenses. So Julio encouraged her to go back to Costa Rica to pursue her college education, knowing that the family would be separated and stuck in these two different worlds. Now he is left alone in a small room in his workplace (he pays \$200 a month, a sum that is deductible from his paycheck). Not only does he pay for his living expenses here, but he also works after-hours to provide for his family living in Costa Rica and for a bank loan. From Julio’s side we hear: “Noily está en la Universidad Latina y tuve que pagarle las mensualidades, la matrícula, los gastos de los muchachos, los gastos de la casa.” (*Noily is attending “Universidad Latina” and I had to pay her tuition and her enrolment expenses, the kids’ maintenance, the house expenses.*)

Echoing her father's words, Noily speaks about her situation of being stuck in Costa Rica. She would have liked to stay with her family in the United States, to keep her family together, but if she wants to continue with her college education she has to move to Costa Rica. If she wants to be a college student, her only option is to first, change her legal status in the country from an "alien" to a student (she would have to disclose that she has been an undocumented immigrant for many years), and second, pay full college tuition. However, if she goes to Costa Rica for her college education (which is what she did) her visa is classified for "punishment" and she will not be able to legally re-enter the country. So Julio (Noily's father) promised to work for her college education in Costa Rica, one more powerful reason for him to stay in the United States.

Julita's had bad experiences with not being able to continue with her education after she took courses at a community college "Quiero ver si puedo sacar la mejor educación de aquí e irme para Costa Rica." (*I want to see if I can get the best education out of here and then go to Costa Rica.*) But as she says, as soon as she completes the courses that she is taking, she plans on traveling to Costa Rica. Julita says:

Ahora me voy a meter a estudiar y voy a aprovechar lo más que pueda yo aquí para sacar otra carrera más y en el mismo college donde estaba hace dos años y entonces después de ahí me puedo pasar a otro college a estudiar y sacar otro associate degree y sacar lo mejor de aquí e irme para Costa Rica. No quiero estar más aquí. Odio este país, lo odio.

Now I am going to study and I am going to take advantage as much as I can here to earn another associate degree in the same college that I studied two years ago. And then, after that, I will look for another college and get another associate degree. I plan to get the best out of this and then return to Costa Rica. I don't want to be here anymore. I hate this country, I hate it.

At this point I want to interject my personal comment on the blindness of those in power, those who make decisions for undocumented immigrants. Although this observation fits in the conclusion chapter, it is very appropriate to mention it now. All of my “kid” participants have been in the public school system long enough to graduate from high school. They face the disjunctive of continuing their studies or returning back home. They are conscientious students who want to continue with their formal education. Not only are they excellent students but also, after being so many years in the country, they have made friends and they feel comfortable in the receiving society. Presently, they face the conflict of acculturation with non-acceptance. The incongruence begins when they are very abruptly ostracized and stopped at a moment when they can be productive and “pay” back into the system. Consequently, they either “milk” the system or they leave the country, carrying the taxpayer’s money, if they want to pursue graduate studies. As expressed by those who relish on “the immigration myths” they took advantage of the public education system and, in a way, they are right because that is what the public chooses to see. However, the public and/or the communications means do not refer to the Dream Act, which will give unauthorized young immigrants a chance to continue their education or to serve in the military, as a profitable investment and as a connection amongst education and production. But this is only one piece of the puzzle.

Noily is Zinnia’s daughter. At the time of her initial journey, she was 9 years old. As I have previously mentioned, her mother traveled to New Jersey to join her family who had already moved and were settled down with their newborn babies. When she

arrived to New Jersey her mother and aunts enrolled her in school where she had a rough landing.

Al principio fue muy difícil porque yo no sabía nada pero nada de inglés. Yo tenía dos primas que son de mi misma edad y ellas si hablaban bien el inglés. Entonces ellas a veces se ponían a hablar y yo deseaba ponerme a llorar porque yo no les entendía. Y me acuerdo que yo iba a clases y todo el mundo hablaba inglés y para mí era como si me estuvieran hablando en chino. Fue algo muy difícil y yo me acuerdo que después de la escuela yo llegaba a tratar de hacer las tareas y no las podía hacer. Me ponía a llorar y a llorar porque no podía hacerlas. Fue algo muy difícil.

At the beginning it was very hard because I didn't speak one word of English. I had two cousins my same age and they did speak English and when they did I did not understand. So I cried and cried because I didn't understand them. And I remember that I went to school where everybody spoke English and for me it was like Chinese. It was very, very difficult. And I remember that after school I got home and tried to do my homework and I couldn't do it. I cried and cried because I was not able to complete it. It was so very hard.

Perhaps the biggest difference between Tommy's and Noily's immigrant story is age: Tommy is a teenager and Noily is a child. Nevertheless, the impact of trying to belong to a new society affects both of them in the same way. Their ideology and their cultural language abruptly collide with the receiving society. Julita says:

Yo estaba en tercero de la escuela. Y me vine para acá con mis abuelos porque mamá mi tía estaban embarazadas. Entonces mis abuelos venían nada más a cuidarlas en lo último del embarazo y cuando iban a nacer mis primos para cuidarlos mientras ellas trabajaban porque ellas limpiaban casas.

I was in third grade in grammar school. And I came here with my grandparents because my mom and my aunt were pregnant. Then my grandparents were coming to take care of them in the final weeks of their pregnancy. And when my cousins were born, they would take care of the grandkids since my mom and my aunt cleaned houses.

Julita stayed in Costa Rica in the town of Naranjo with her grandparents while her mother and her aunt started their adventure. As we have read, they got pregnant, so Mamá María was needed to take care of the girls. As a new arrival to the country, not only did she have problems at school with the language but also Mom was a stranger who had no authority over her. But without the legal papers, she is unable to get a driver's license, which enables her to continue with her life, to move on and to complete her education. The driver's license is the survival key. Perhaps this is the moment to continue with the next theme: work and the driver's license.

Work and Deportation—Candies in Hell

De aquí no me puedo ir en realidad. Me quiero quedar acá. Quizás lo único que ahorita me pudiera hacer más feliz por el hecho de que podría estar más segura en este país es el hecho de tener los papeles al día. Y de ahí en adelante nada me mueve. Lucharé por quedarme aquí. (Alejandra, one of my participants)

Really, I can't leave. I want to stay here. Maybe the only thing that can make me happy now is get my papers to feel safe in this country. And from there on, nothing will move me. I will fight to stay here. (Alejandra)

“Confites en el infierno” is a popular saying in the Spanish speaking community that literally translates into “Candies in hell” an expression that has to be translated by meaning and not by word-by-word translation. In essence, it states that although candies are so good, are they worthwhile to have in such an unfriendly, unpleasant, and unwanted place such as hell? This moral comes to my mind when I listen to the abuses Julita and other of my participants express about their workplace.

Fue terrible, terrible. Yo odiaba ese trabajo hasta el punto de que yo misma me enfermaba psicológicamente para no tener que ir a trabajar. Nunca entendí por

qué los americanos tienen hijos y no los quieren criar. Está bien si trabajan, yo lo entiendo. Pero esta señora para la que trabajé ella no trabajaba, no hacía nada más que ver televisión y 'scrap booking.' Y a como fueron pasando los años se me fue montando y montando más. Y yo como no sabía defenderme y tras de eso que yo la veía a ella con tanto respecto que no hallaba como decirle que no, que me tiene que pagar más. Y también yo le cocinaba a los chiquitos, les lavaba la ropa a todos.

It was terrible, terrible. I hated that job to the point of psychologically getting myself sick so that I didn't have to go to work. I have never understood why Americans have children and they do not want to raise them. It is fine if they both work, I understand that. But this lady that I worked for she did not work, she did not do anything except watch television and scrap booking. And as time went by, she started taking advantage of me. And since I did not know how to stand up for myself and say: "no, you have to pay me more." I cooked for the children and I did the laundry for everyone.

Julita's initial job was babysitting at the age of 15. For eight years, she took care of the children in a household where her mother cleaned. She was taking care of a diabetic one-year-old kid and a younger sister who was born two years later. To her astonishment, the kid's father never spoke to her nor did the father's parents. As she expresses, she is disturbed by the fact that even though she had been taking such good care of their kids as if they were her own, the parents and the grandparents did not acknowledge her as a human being.

Entonces yo llegué a odiar ese lugar y yo no podía estar ahí. Los papás del esposo de ella, los suegros de ella eran bien racistas. Bueno, más que todo la señora. Y vivían bien cerca. Entonces cuando venían, ella me hacía caras y todo eso, verdad. Sólo me hacían caras y no me tomaban en cuenta para nada. Y el esposo, durante todos estos años era racista también. Él ni siquiera me decía hola a mí, que lo cuidaba los chiquitos y que los quería como si fueran míos y les hacía todo . . . y él ni siquiera me podía decir hola.

Then I started to hate that place and I couldn't be there anymore. Her husband's parents, her in-laws were very racist. Well, the mother-in-law more than the others. And they lived nearby. When they came to visit they were always making

faces to me and all of that. They made all kinds of faces to me and they never included me in anything. And the husband was very racist, too. He didn't even say hello to me, I, who took care of his children and that I loved them as if they were mine and I did everything for them . . . and he couldn't even say hello to me.

Julita expresses her frustration because she resents the racist atmosphere, but she expresses her joy since she loves the children. Indeed, it is very interesting to analyze the contradiction in the parents' messages; while they trust an immigrant to take care of who they loved children, yet they, at the same time, reject the person whom they have entrusted their love ones. Julita finds herself caught in this incongruence. Unable to understand ingratitude, she subconsciously starts to become physically ill in order to have a tangible excuse to call in sick. In fact, her interpretation of her bosses' behavior is racism in the workplace.

Issues of "Race"

According to the CIA Fact book Costa Rica's population is mostly white and mestizo (94%), 3% are black people, 1% Amerindians, and 1% Chinese. The white population is from European descendents who were migrants from Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, and France. The black race or black immigration is seen as a "necessary evil" for labor purposes, for the development of a place such as a town or a group of people. Nor were the Chinese encouraged to immigrate into the country. What is more, laws, rules, and regulations were created to encourage the exclusivity of this type of European white race migration into the country.

Ya a finales del siglo XIX la población de Costa Rica integrada al proyecto nacional, ubicada en el Valle Central, se considera "racialmente" homogénea y predominantemente blanca. [. . .] Los gobernantes, ya desde mediados del siglo

XIX, decidieron apoyar empresas de colonización siempre que, por supuesto, éstas atrajeran a la ansiada población europea. En 1850 el gobierno de Costa Rica crea la Junta Protectora de las colonias, con el propósito de incentivar la inmigración de colonos y colonas de origen europeo y, 1982, con la Ley de Bases y Colonización se prohíbe la colonización de “razas africanas y chinas” y, en caso de que esta inmigración sea imprescindible, el gobierno queda facultado para limitarla y controlarla (Murillo, 1995, p. 73) (Sandoval, 2007, p. 5)

By the end of the XIX century the population of Costa Rica incorporated to the national project in the Central Valley, is considered as “racially” homogenous and predominantly white. [. . .] The governors, since the middle of the XIX century, decided to support colonization enterprises as long as, of course, these would attract the desired European population. In 1850 the Costa Rican government create the “Junta Protectora” (Protector Junta) for the colonies, with the purpose of encouraging European settlements and, in 1982, the “Ley de Bases y Colonización” (Colonization Law) prohibits settlements of “African and Chinese” and, in case this type of immigration is essential, the government maintains the faculty to limit and control it. (Murillo, 1994, p. 73) (Sandoval, 2007, p. 5)

When my participants immigrated into the United States they were surprised by the racism issue since they are part of what can be labeled as the “Costa Rican European White Race.” All of my interviewees “look” white and it is my assumption that they would never feel rejected in the United States due to the color of their skin. But, as expressed by my participants, racism happens because they are Hispanic. They do not belong and it becomes evident when they start working.

Similar to Julita, Alejandra’s first job reflects the act of racism and work abuse coming from her employees. Since she had just arrived to the country, she did not have a place of her own; so her employers offered her to stay in the house as a full-time housekeeper. “Me pagaban como atrasado. Y ella me decía que no tenía plata esa semana y que me iba a pagar la próxima y así me llevó hasta que me debía miles. Y cuando yo me planté, ella me amenazó con que si no me gustaba, pues que me fuera de la casa.”

(They did not pay me on time. And she would tell me that she didn't have money that week and that she would pay me the following week. These went on for many weeks until she owed me thousands. When finally I decided to stand up for myself, she threatened me and told me that if I didn't like, to just leave.)

This option, as Alejandra mentions, is the best for her employers since they owed her so much money, and never paid her after more than six months work in the house. Her employers threatened to call the INS, and accused her of taking things from their home. Needless to say, she left this household empty handed.

When she started her second job, she got paid but was treated miserably. As my other participants mention, her last sentence speaks of the necessity of a car to get to work.

La señora era super dominante pero al extremo y me trataba pésimo. Tenía que hacerlo todo, hasta overtime que no me pagaban. Y cuando después de un año ellos se fueron para New England yo me fui a vivir con mi hermana y su esposo mientras encontraba otro lugar de trabajo. El problema es que no tenía carro.

The lady was super dominant and she treated me very badly. I had to do everything, even overtime that she did not pay for. And after a year of working in her house they left for New England and I went to live with my sister and her husband while I looked for another job. But the problem was that I did not have a car.

Tommy's work is potting flowers probably in the landscaping company that his mother works for. His high achieving personality challenges him to seek for opportunities of moving up the hierarchy ladder wherever he happens to work. When he was working in Costa Rica in a call-center he was promoted from telephone operator to floor manager; while working in the landscaping company, he says:

No me gusta quedarme en un lugar estancado. Yo soy uno que al puesto que llego, yo no quiero ese puesto. Yo llego ahí pero yo lo que quiero es surgir, surgir y tratar de surgir para salir adelante. Tengo cinco meses de estar donde estoy y empecé sembrando florcitas. Luego me pasaron a trabajar como traductor y después de traductor me mandaron al taller mecánico como traductor en el taller y como mecánico. Y vamos a ver a lo que Dios quiera y a lo que Dios le da a uno.

I do not like to stay stagnant in the same position all the time. I am the type of person who gets a job but I don't want it; I get there but I want to be promoted and to get a better position, the one that I want. I have worked for five months in this place potting small flowers. Then they promoted me to work as a translator and later on as a translator in the garage and as a mechanic. And let's see what God wants for me and what God gives me.

Even if they begin their labor journey with limitations, my participants look for opportunities to reach goods and benefits beyond their immediate environment. Personal resources and the immediate social milieu help them expand on job opportunities and mobilize to new forms of making capital. Tommy's determination to start at a low echelon with a clear image of his future job goes beyond being an immigrant; his characters traits are his winning assets. Tommy says:

Ellos no hacen el trabajo que nosotros hacemos. Al menos donde nosotros trabajamos trabajan más de 800 empleados y Ud. cuenta con los dedos de las manos los americanos que trabajan ahí. Los americanos no se van a meter con 20 grados de temperatura de frío afuera con el viento que le pega que le quema absolutamente toda la boca, la cara y las manos por \$6.75 la hora. No van a hacerlo. ¡Jamás!

Pero uno sí lo hace y uno se va y trabaja en construcción por \$10 la hora haciendo algo que debe de ser pagado a \$20. Pero uno sí lo hace. ¿Por qué? Porque uno \$10 la hora y doce horas diarias. . . Y talvez aquí no es mucho \$120 dólares por día pero Ud. lo convierte a colones por semana y Ud. lo manda a Costa Rica. Porque, vea, yo le digo, nosotros venimos aquí a trabajar pero invertimos en nuestro país. Nosotros no invertimos aquí. ¿Para qué voy a ganar y trabajar y sudar como loco para invertir mi dinero aquí mismo? ¡No tiene sentido! Aquí yo nada más echo gasolina y lavo el carro, y la ropa que tengo la quemo en un año trabajando. En el trabajo me dan uniforme, me dan teléfono y yo no tengo por qué gastar.

They do not do the work that we do. This place that I work for, there are more than 800 employees and you can count with your fingers the Americans that work there. The Americans will not work where the temperature outside is 20° with a wind chill that gives you frost-bite on your mouth, your face and your hands for \$6.75 per hour. They will never do it. Never!

But we do, and we work in construction for \$10.00 an hour which should be a pay of \$20.00 the hour. But we do. Why? We work for \$10.00 an hour for twelve hours a day . . . And maybe it is not much here, but you send it to Costa Rica and convert it into colones and it is money. Because I will tell you this; we come here to work but we invest in our country. We do not invest here. Why am I going to work and sweat here to invest here? It makes no sense. Here I only put gas in my car and wash it. The clothes that I have I get them from work every year as well as a phone. I do not have a reason to spend here.

Tommy's combination of (a) I do what Americans do not want to do, and (b) I do not invest in this country, are powerful statements that address the topics of "They take away our jobs" and "They send most of their money out of the country in the form of remittances." Even though the nature of my dissertation is an invaluable source to deconstruct the myths that hover around the issue of immigrants in the U.S., my focus is on their life stories from a "down-to-earth every-day life" family perspective.

Miriam's experience while working in the U.S. reflects commitment to her obligations. She proves herself as a dedicated worker, if and when she has the opportunity. Her testimony shows that she and her sisters want to succeed at what they do and that they are going to push themselves to be successful.

Lo que yo veo de nosotras es que somos No. 1 para el trabajo. Nunca decimos que no al trabajo y siempre estamos ahí, al pie del cañón. Somos muy responsables. Como dice mi hermana Julia, llueve, truene o relampagué, nosotros siempre vamos al trabajo. Casi nunca faltamos. Y los patronos saben eso también

What I can tell about us is that we are number one when it comes to work. We never say no to work and we are always ready to go. We are very responsible.

Like my sister says, even if it rains or if there is lightning and thunder, we are always ready to go to work. We hardly ever skip work. And our bosses also know this.

Different from Tommy, she works with her family who lives with her in the U.S.; consequently, she does not have to send money back to Costa Rica, contesting the myth that “they come and they send their money back home in the form of remittances.” Miriam and her family use their income to live, to pay, to spend, and to buy within the United States. If my emphasis on this dissertation would be on remittances, these stories certainly bring a different perspective that challenges the myth of remittances.

When Ruth speaks of her working experience she introduces the themes of pride in her work, satisfaction and self-respect in her ability to provide for herself and for her family.

Yo venía por 6 meses nada más. Pero resulta que no se puede con 6 meses es muy duro. Yo ya sabía que la vida es dura. Yo llegué el 2 de septiembre y el 5 comencé a trabajar. Y mis manos, mira, estas son manchas de una planta que se llama colio, viene de mi país, y hay que podarlas con las uñas pues te dejan estas marcas. Mira, los dedos tienen la piel gastada, la piel se me arranca pero me place mucho, me gusta mucho lo que hago, me siento realizada, siento que puedo hacer algo por mí.

Entonces eso me llena mucho, me gusta mucho saber que tú en las mañanas no me muero de hambre porque puedo trabajar en lo que sea. Sí, el trabajo es muy duro. Ayer trabajé todo el día al aire libre con este frío. Mira mis labios, porque el frío te quema, mi cara me la quema y me la brota. Pero bueno. . . Porque yo tengo el bachillerato en terapia física. Pero para ejercer mi carrera tengo que ser licenciada y entonces me faltó esa parte del estudio.

Y aquí estoy trabajando de lunes a sábado de lunes a lunes o a veces hasta los domingos. Pero me encanta. Llego a mi casa muerta, comer un poco, a veces no me da hambre por lo duro del trabajo y llego aquí esperanzada de muchas cosas. Dejé el corazón en mi país, mis hijos, mi mamá. Pero la vida continúa, tengo

salud y ganas de seguir adelante. Y no me puedo quejar porque la verdad que gracias a Dios tengo este trabajo.

I only came for 6 months. But 6 months is not enough, it's very hard. I knew that life is hard. I arrived September the 2nd and the 5th I started to work. And look at my hands, look at this stains. They come from a plant in my country and I have to prune them with my nails. They leave these stains. Look at my fingers, the skin is peeling. But I am very please, I like what I do very much, I feel fulfilled, I feel that I can do something for myself. And this is very satisfying.

I like to know that when I wake up in the morning I will not be hungry because I can work. Yes, the work is very hard. Yesterday I worked all day outside and it was cold. Look at my lips, cold makes them get frostbite and look at my face, it has a rash. But well . . . I have a degree as a physical therapist. But I need some more years to be able to practice, which I didn't.

And here I am working from Monday to Saturday or sometimes even on Sundays. But I love it. I get home exhausted, eat some, and sometimes I am not hungry because I worked so hard. But I get home full of hope about many things. I left my heart in my country, my children, and my mother. But life goes on; I am healthy and I want to work. And I can't complain because the truth is that thank God I have this job.

Alejandra and Carmen, after suffering and surviving experiences of abuse and racism, “thank to God,” as they say, are finally working in homes where their work and effort is appreciated and valued. Alejandra found a job where she had to walk a long distance and suffer from inclement weather. However, her sacrifice and efforts were not in vain. When her employees found out that she walked they offered her their car to help her travel and to run her own errands. As trust built up, they asked her to run family errands such as doing their grocery shopping, bank transactions, and children related situations. She worked in this household for many years. This act of trust encouraged her to stay in this household for a longer period of time. Stronger relationships flourished as

the host family started to grow. When a new family member was born, they named the baby after Alejandra. Alejandra says:

Tenían una niña que bautizaron con mi nombre. Y la chica sólo mama me decía. Y ellos me tenían toda la confianza. Yo les hacía las vueltas de los bancos, las vueltas del supermercado, les limpiaba la casa y nunca se pasaron conmigo para nada. Era lo que yo tenía que hacer y nada más. Me trataban muy bien. Y luego me regalaron el carro, un Toyota Camry del 92, un station wagon y lo tuve conmigo hasta que tuve la opción de comprarme mi propio carro.

They had a baby girl named after me. And she only called me Mom. They trusted me. I ran their bank errands, supermarket purchases, I cleaned their house and they never abused their position. I did what I had to do and they never asked me to do more. They treated me well. Later, they gave me their 92 Toyota Camry station wagon as a gift. I kept it with me until I had the option of buying a new car by myself.

Carmen's story reflects the same element of dedication to her hard-working ethos and, as her story develops, first, she is scared of being deported, and how her bosses react when they find out, by Carmen's own confession, that she is an undocumented immigrant. Her story opposes Julita's experience in the workplace where her dedication and love to the children was not acknowledged.

Comencé a trabajar y a movilizarme y a independizarme. Me metí a trabajar en esta casa haciendo baby-sitting por un día. Eso fue en el 95. Y después me dice, yo quiero preguntarle si me puede cuidar al más chiquitito que tiene cinco meses y yo le dije que sí toda la semana de lunes a viernes. Y yo le dije que tenía otro trabajo en la mañana y entonces me dijo que estaba bien, que lo hiciera y que me fuera apenas podía. Entonces yo le cuidé al chiquito desde que tenía cinco meses. Y a los tres años quedó embarazada de otro. Y me preguntó que si yo me podía quedar y que me iba a aumentar el sueldo.

Pero en ese momento yo estaba muy deprimida porque la situación con la deportación estaba fea. Y yo dije, me van a deportar. Y entonces yo se lo comenté a ella que o tenía problemas legales, que yo estaba ilegal porque me quedé en el país más de la cuenta. Y ella habló con el esposo y me dijo, Ud se queda con

nosotros y nosotros la vamos a ayudar. Buscaron un abogado, me pidieron papeles y los metieron. Y el caso fue aprobado rapidísimo. El señor me pagó a mi todo y también a mis hijos. Él quería que mis hijos estudiaran también. Pagó como \$15.000,00 por mi y por mis hijos.

I began to work and to be independent. I started to baby-sit a five-month old baby in this house for one day a week. That was in the year of 95. Then she asked me if I could stay five days a week from Monday to Friday. I told her that I another job in the morning; so she said that it was not a problem, to finish my morning job and then to get to her house as soon as I was finished. So I was the caretaker for this baby since he was five months old. And three years later she got pregnant. She asked me if I could work for her and that she would raise my salary. At that time I was very depressed because there were ugly situations with deportation. And I told her that I was afraid of being deported because I was undocumented in the country since I had overstayed my visa. So she spoke with her husband and he said, "You are staying with us. We are going to help you." They looked for a lawyer, they asked for my papers and the process began. My petition was approved very fast. He paid for me and for my children, too. He wanted my children to have an education. He paid about \$15,000.00 for us.

I mention Carmen's and Alejandra's successful stories in the workplace to illustrate how some people's hearts open to others who are in pain and who are caught in an unfair world; and how some people feel compassion for the one in need, instead of wanting to punish those who are already suffering. This circumstance makes me think about what I read somewhere: "If we cannot fight poverty, let's fight the poor."

The picture that my participants describe when referring to the workplace includes themes of abuse, racism, challenge, remittances, immigration myths, responsibility, commitment, satisfaction, self-respect, and pride. As I read their stories, there is one topic that is highly important to them and that needs a special space in this chapter: the driver's license.

The Driver's License—And Work: A Via Crucis (Stations of the Cross)

The cultural framework of a driver's license in the United States is very different from Costa Rica, the country of my participants. The biggest difference is that in Costa Rica the driver's license is a permit that allows the holder to do just that, to drive. However, in the United States, a driver's license can be used in many other circumstances besides being just a permit to drive; it can be used as an identification card; it is a document that will allow the holder to open bank accounts; at the time of my interviews, it could be used as a document to travel outside the Continental USA into countries that do not require a visa such as Mexico; to serve in court; and other uses. So when my participants came to the United States, the driver's license becomes a big issue.

Immigrants need to have a car to go to work, which is not different from current residents; to attend social activities; to participate in sports events; to go to school; to join family reunions, to go to into a bar, and other situations. The places where my interviewees live are places where public transportation does not successfully address community or personal needs. My interviewees mention the need of a car to be able to go to work, to socialize, to go to the supermarket, to take their kids to school activities, and in general, to be independent. When Julita or any of my participants are unable to renew a driver's license, they fall into a world of impossibilities and various moments of frustration that, in some of my participants, lead to depression. Julita talks about the steps, situations, and circumstances when her driver's license expired, limiting her mobility and destroying her freedom.

Cuando yo estaba en High School era más fácil sacar licencia sin papeles. Bueno, igualmente había que sacarla haciendo chorizo como dicen, pero era más fácil. Yo saqué la licencia a los 17 años. Y a los 17 como yo trabajaba me compré mi primer carro con plata mía. Manejé aquí 5 años y por esos 5 años yo me independicé. Yo me iba a la universidad, al trabajo, salía con amigas, hacía todo lo que tenía que hacer. Pasó lo de las Torres Gemelas y entonces fue cuando se comenzó a complicar todo para nosotros les emigrantes. Fue cuando ya no podía sacar licencia de conducir tan fácil. Yo tuve que pagar \$3,000.00 para renovar la licencia. Y bueno, yo estaba que yo sentía que me iba a morir adentro del motor vehicle porque yo estaba tan nerviosa y bueno, por dicha todo salió bien.

Ya pasé, me tomaron la foto, firmé, me dieron la licencia porque había tres contactos ahí adentro que todos estaban en lo mismo. Todos se ganaban algo de los \$3,000.00 dólares. Y entonces me dieron la licencia y yo dije, bueno, gracias a Dios. Ya tengo cuatro años más para manejar. Porque fuera como fuera, uno tenía que sacarla porque aquí Ud. no puede hacer nada sin carro. Entonces lo pagué y no me importó. Manejé como un año más con esa licencia. Cuando un día me llega una carta del motor vehicles diciendo que habían confirmado de que yo tenía esa licencia sin haber demostrado social security, certificado de nacimiento y varios papeles que enseñan que uno es legal aquí. Entonces me la suspendieron.

When I was in High School, it was easier to get a driver's license without papers. Well, somehow in HS it was the same to get it with some "adjustments." But it was easier. I got my license when I was 17 years old. When I was 17 and since I was working I bought my first car with my own money. I drove for about 5 years and during those 5 years I became very independent. I went to college, to work, hung out with friends; I did all I had to do. When the Twin Towers attack happened, everything got complicated for us the immigrants. It was then when I couldn't get my driver's license so easily. I paid \$3,000.00 to renew the license. And well, I was feeling like I would die when I was at the DMV because I was so nervous, and well, finally everything was OK.

So I went in and I had my picture taken, I signed, and I got my driver's license because there were three contact persons in there; they all were on the same thing. They all got part of the \$3,000.00 dollars. And I got the driver's license, thank God. Now I had four years with a permit to drive. Because one way or another I needed a driver's license because you can't be in this country without one. So I paid for it, no matter what. I drove with it for about a year. When one day I got a letter from the DMV stating that I couldn't drive with that license because they had confirmed that I didn't have a social security number, birth certificate and other papers to show that I was legal here. So it got suspended.

Everyone gets a piece of the pie. Not only do undocumented immigrants pick up the jobs that many Americans don't want to do, but they "create jobs." Undocumented immigrants must pay people who unscrupulously take advantage of them. Are these immigrants threatening the American society and their homeland security? With a driver's license? Two months ago when I went to renew my driver's license, I paid \$20.00.

Alejandra also had to renew her driver's license. In her case, different from Julita, she traveled to Maryland. She was not comfortable going to the DMV in her state. Even though at that time she got it, eventually it too will expire. And perhaps she will not be so lucky in her renewal. Her piece of the story shows how difficult it is to be in the country without a driver's license. Alejandra says:

Y me conseguí un trabajo pero yo no tenía carro. Tenía que caminar, caminar todos los días, caminar lloviendo, caminar nevando, caminar con aquellos calores que los chorros de sudor me bajaban y era todos los días. Muchas veces me acostaba rendida porque tenía que caminar casi una hora para llegar a trabajar todo el día y otra hora más para llegar a la casa.

Y llegaba rendida a la casa. Y a veces me acostaba casi lista para al otro día nada más levantarme y salir caminando. Pero yo no me moría gracias a Dios. También en ese tiempo nevaba mucho más que ahora. Entonces a veces yo caminaba y la nieve me llegaba casi hasta la rodilla. Me caía y los pies eran congelados. Yo no tenía botas especiales y entonces me ponía doble media y así me iba caminando y era aquél frío. Yo temblaba, los cachetes míos rojos. Así duré casi un año hasta que hice una plata y me compré mi primer carro.

And I found a job but I did not have a car. I had to walk, walk every day, walk when it was raining, walk when it was snowing, and walk with that heat that sweat was pouring down. And this was every day. Many times I would go to bed exhausted because I had to walk almost an hour to get to work, then work all day, and after work, one more hour to get back home. And I was exhausted by the time I got home.

There were times when I went to bed almost ready for the following day just to wake up and begin to walk. But I didn't die, thank God. Also, at that time, it used

to snow more than nowadays. So there were times when I would walk and the snow was almost up to my knees. I fell down and my feet were frozen. I didn't have snow boots so I would wear two pairs of socks and I would start my walking trip. It was so cold. . . I would tremble; my cheeks were red. And this lasted for almost a year until I saved some money to buy my first car.

Alice lives in South Carolina and her story with DMV and police officers is very similar to Julita's story since she needs a car to take her son to daycare and to drive to work. She lives in the countryside and she also needs her car to do her shopping. Her argument is the same as Julita's; there is racism against the Hispanics.

Aquí tenemos un gran problema que es el problema de la licencia. No quieren darle la licencia a los hispanos. Nos piden toda clase de papeles. Llevamos todos los papeles que piden y siempre hay un pero. Yo tuve la del sur y se me venció en el 2002. La fui a renovar y nunca hubo nadie que me renovara la licencia. Cuando ya se venció, ya se pasó la fecha, así la andaba vencida, porque me aburrí de perder días de trabajo y no me atendían. Y cuando me paró un sheriff en el 2005, el día de mi cumpleaños, el 18 de septiembre, tenía días de haber llegado.

Y bueno, ya me dijo que su licencia y entonces le enseñé la licencia del sur y entonces le dije que disculpara que estaba vencida pero que era la licencia que tenía, que era del sur, y le enseñé la licencia de Costa Rica, el pasaporte, la cédula, la tarjeta de circulación del carro con todo a mi nombre y me dijo que lo sentía mucho pero que tenía que llevarme presa porque yo no tenía licencia. Y me llevó presa como una delincuente, esposada y todo lo demás con las manos hacia atrás.

Y me cobró \$650 de multa y al momento salí ese mismo día de la cárcel, a las doce del día ya estaba fuera y luego pagué \$65 por sacar el carro de un garaje que hay al frente y solo por cruzar la carretera \$65 más \$650 de multa porque tenía que ir a corte.

Y no fui. ¿Para qué si no me iban a rebajar nada? Y además voy a perder un día de trabajo más mil y resto que ya estaba perdiendo? Porque lo que ellos piden para la licencia, siempre falta algo. Nunca, nunca, nunca llegás con los requisitos como ellos lo piden, simplemente es un racismo.

Here we have a big problem that deals with the driver's license. They do not want to give it to the Hispanics. They require a variety of papers. And we take all of the

papers that they ask for and there is always something missing. I had my license from the South (South Carolina) and it expired in 2002. I went to renew it, but there was never someone there to renew it. When the date expired I drove with it like that because I got bored of losing more workdays and I never got anyone from the DMV.

And when a sheriff stopped me in 2005, the day of my birthday, September the 18th. I had arrived some days before. And he asked me for the driver's license so I showed him the one from the South and I told him that I was sorry but that that was the only one I had and that it was expired and then I showed him my Costa Rican license, my passport, my 'cédula' (ID card from Costa Rica) and the car's owner card with everything under my name. And he said that he was sorry but that he had to arrest me because I didn't have a driver's license. And he arrested me like any delinquent, cuffed and everything with my hands behind my back. And he charged me \$650 and that same day I paid my way out of jail. By noon, I was out; then I paid \$65 to get my car out of a garage that is across the street from the jail. Just for crossing the street I paid \$65 and then just to get out of jail I paid \$650 because I had to go to court. And I didn't go to court. What for? And besides, I would lose one day of work plus this amount of money? Because, you know, there is always a paper missing for the driver's license. Never, never will you have all their requirements, it's simply racism.

Not surprisingly, the topic of the driver's license needs special attention since, at one point or another; it becomes the significant piece to belong and to continue functioning in this society. This topic has been on the news and my participants are witnesses of the importance of this issue. If undocumented immigrants need to proof their legal status in the U.S. by showing a driver's license, my participants would have been caught, or for that matter, so would any other undocumented immigrant. As Alejandra says: ¡Lucharé por quedarme aquí! (*I'll fight to stay here!*) However, she is not the only one whose future life plans can be shattered by INS. She, as well as my other participants, is scared and aware that their stay in this country is fragile, that the need of a driver's license is vital.

Acculturation—And Now Deportation: So, Where is Home?

Han hecho muchas redadas por aquí y en los shopping centers y la gente corre y se esconde entre las ropas, debajo, detrás. Cerquita de mi casa, a unos diez minutos de mi casa, cerraron todo el shopping center, tiene entrada por dos lados y en el parking lot la gente corría y corría como loca y se metían a las tiendas y se escondían entre la ropa, entre paredes, a donde fuera. Unos se salvaron pero a la tía de mi amiga la agarraron en una de las tiendas. Y la deportaron. No les importa si tienen hijos, si tienen hijos enfermos, si tienen recién nacidos, si tienen papás enfermos, no les importa absolutamente nada. No tienen corazón porque no son seres humanos. Son de otro planeta, definitivamente. (Alejandra)

There have been many raids around here at the shopping centers and the people run to hide in the clothing racks, under them, behind them. Close to my house, about ten minutes away, they closed this shopping center that has two entrances. In the parking lot, the people were running and running like crazy and they would hide in the stores among the clothes, between the walls, wherever. Some were saved but my friend's aunt was caught in one of the stores. And she got deported. They don't care if you have children, if they have sick children, if they have newborn babies, if they have sick parents, they don't care about anything. They have no heart because they are not human beings. They definitely are from another planet.

It is interesting to analyze how Alejandra's interpretation points at the "Other" as one coming from another planet and who are heartless. Yet, she wants to stay in the receiving society with people from the other planet. Clearly, her surroundings create a conflict in "feeling at home," a place where usually people feel safe and secure, with a home that is fragile and volatile. If the status of being undocumented creates a traumatic condition of ambiguity, my participants either value this state of uncertainty so much that they have stayed in the country for so many years or they have a strong sense of hope and an unflinching faith in God that allows them to keep their options open always searching for the security of home. Or perhaps it is not an "either/or" contraposition, but a response to the ambivalent confrontation when the I meets the Other, one of *proteophobia* (Bauman

1995), “[t]he confused, ambivalent sentiments aroused by the presence of strangers—those under-defined, under-determined others, neither neighbors nor aliens, yet potentially (incongruously) both” (p. 181). Negotiating the social space, very often, is *no negotiation*, which in itself is a way of discussing the matter. However, the easiest and fastest way to get rid of the undocumented immigrant in the U.S. is by “strategically and ingeniously” building a wall to keep them away and by a sneak attack to catch them of guard and proceed to deport them.

The complexity of the deportation topic is a combination of many themes that get entangled making it very difficult, if not close impossible, to isolate one issue at a time in order to create core solutions. There are many topics that wrestle in the deportation arena such as politics, social life, family life, personal interests, economics, inequalities, moral values, education, job opportunities, gender, race, xenophobia, to mention some of the components of getting the Other, the alien, out of the way. However, once all these external factors are analyzed and publicized by the media for attention and personal purposes, the end, it is a moral issue. As Bauman (1995) says when referring to Postmodern ethics: “‘To be moral’ does not mean ‘to be good’, but to exercise one’s freedom of authorship and/or actorship as a choice between good and evil” (p. 1). Deportation and the issuing or renewing the driver’s licenses are inseparable actions. To say that this document is issued only as a driving permit is to devalue its social and legal importance. As Alejandra says, she is afraid of being deported if she gets caught while renewing her driver’s license or while driving. So she has faith.

A mí me mueven de aquí y yo no sé. Y aunque a veces yo que ya no echo más y me voy. Ya no doy más y me voy. Pero no me veo en Costa Rica. Tengo media vida de vivir aquí. Y tengo mi hijo Americano y no me quiero ir, Y digo si migración viene y me agarra me tienen que mandar con mi hijo porque yo sin él no puedo vivir. No sé como, pero yo sin él no me voy. Me muero, me muero.

Y sí, me encantaría ir a Costa Rica con mi hijo Brandon. Uno lo que quiere es poder ir libremente a su tierra natal, por lo menos por un tiempo corto. ¡Pero qué va! Algún día será. Como está ahora la cosa, poder ir y regresar está muy complicado. Y todo el mundo me dice, si Ud. se va ya no regresa y es cierto

If I am uprooted from here, I don't know. And even if at times I have no more energy and I think that I can't take it anymore and that I am leaving. I don't see myself in Costa Rica. I have lived half of my life here. And I have my North American son and I don't want to leave. And I say if INS comes and gets me they have to send me back home with my son because I can't live without him I don't know how, but I won't leave without him. I will die, I will die.

And yes, I would love to go to Costa Rica with my son Brandon. One would like to travel freely to my hometown, at least for a short period of time. But Alas! Maybe someday will be the day. The way things are right now traveling is very complicated. And everyone tells me, "If you go leave you will not come back." And that is true.

Alejandra is a single mother. What scares her the most is the idea of separation from her American son, Brandon, if she is found by INS officers.

Miriam states that there are times where she wonders about her life since she feels that she has too many allegiances that influence her decisions and impact her identity and her ideas (Maalouf, 2000). Not only does her quotation express the ambivalence between belonging to two countries but also her “dream” can be interpreted as her fear of being deported:

Ya yo me acostumbré a vivir aquí, a mí me gusta mucho, me encanta aquí. Ya me acostumbré al estilo de vida porque aunque aquí es bien agitado y aquí no se descansa y paso demasiado estresada y da mucha depresión. Pero, idiay, uno sigue adelante porque, bueno, yo a Costa Rica no quiero ir porque todos estamos

aquí. Y entonces ya uno dice - ¿qué voy a ir a hacer allá. Y entonces me acuerdo de los temblores en Costa Rica y digo que mejor me quedo aquí quedita. Yo me he soñado más de una vez que me he ido a Costa Rica y que no me he podido venir y yo lloraba.

Y que tengo que llamar a las señoras porque no puedo llegar al trabajo, y ¡qué sufrimiento y qué angustia me da! Lloro en los sueños y qué desesperación porque yo me veo en Naranjo y es lindo porque cuando yo llego allá me da mucha alegría. Pero ya después cuando en el mismo sueño caigo en razón y me doy cuenta que tengo que sacar la visa y que no me la van a dar, es lo que yo sufro porque no me puedo venir. Y yo ando en el carro una carta que supuestamente dice que ya voy a tener todo lo papeles al día. Y me siento como si estuviera en mi propio país. En este momento a mí no me da nada, yo soy muy católica. Y entonces todos los días me encomiendo a Dios. (Miriam)

I am used to living here, and I love it. I got used to the life style even though it is at a fast pace, you never rest, and I am stressed all the time with constant depressions. But I go on because I don't want to return to Costa Rica because everyone is here. And I say to myself, what am I going to do there? I remember the earthquakes in Costa Rica and I say to myself that I better stay put here. I have dreamt several times that I have returned to Costa Rica and that I cannot return; I cried.

And I have to call my bosses because I am unable to get to work, and how I suffer and the anguish I feel. I cry in my dreams; I get so desperate. I see myself in Naranjo and that is nice because it gives me great joy. But later when in the same dream I find out that I have to get a visa and possibly not get it, that is when I start to suffer because I can't come back. I have in my car a letter that supposedly says that my papers are on the way. I feel as if I am in my own country. Presently, I am not afraid, I am Catholic. So every day I commend myself to God. (Miriam)

After so many years living in the host country, Miriam expresses her identification with both societies: she got used to the American style of life while longing to her memories of lifestyle in Costa Rica; she likes the safety of this society while she remembers her fears, earthquakes, in Costa Rica; she feels happy in her hometown while she is distressed because she can't work that day since she lost her visa. Not surprisingly, she falls into depression. But, similar to Julio, her brother-in-law, she has a very powerful

lifeline: her unshakeable faith in God. Perhaps, this is the time to ask the final question for my analysis, “Where is home?”

Perhaps the questions should be: “What makes home a ‘home’?” “How, in a constant changing world, can immigrants stay in one place and feel that ‘this is home’?” As it happens to my participants when they moved into the U.S., they occupied a ‘space’ left by others, “One person’s home ground is another person’s hostile environment” (Bauman, 1995, p. 130). When my interviewees settled in a home in a neighborhood or when they interact in the workplace they experienced total commitment to their job, (Alice and Ruth) or they established temporary dedication while completing their dreams (Tommy). Whatever the situation might be, they are constantly struggling with finding a home. Perhaps the search, for a home, in itself is the search for a home, that is to say, home is the search for home.

In Chapter IV my participants’ stories spoke of needs of traveling and staying in the U.S. despite of episodes happening back home. Their decisions to stay were characterized by sentiments of ambiguity and of uncertainty in areas of the heart, but on reactions of certainty when addressing the financial outcome of their decisions. Nevertheless, staying in the country without the proper documentation was in itself an action to pay high prize; they are stuck and immobile.

The voices of the children in this chapter open the topic of work in direct connection with the driver’s license as a valid document to validate the legal status; otherwise, they face the denigrating embarrassing action of deportation. At the end of this chapter, I address a future topic that deserves more attention: where is home? Perhaps

this is a theme that I would like to address in a future project or maybe it will intrigue future researchers to address them.

In the next chapter, I follow my analysis of the interviews with conclusions and reflections on the themes that my participants have presented in their stories. It is through the merging of their life-experiences, my own perception of their stories, and my position as a narrative researcher that, I arrive to the conclusions and the reflections on my next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Eating Spiders

One day in my classroom I picked up an encyclopedia that had been laying in a corner of a bookshelf. It had been raining and some ants were looking for dry places in my class. I had seen some spiders as well. And I am not afraid of spiders if I see them first, but they scare me if they unexpectedly jump at me. Well, this happened when I took one volume out of the stack. Unbeknownst to me, one of my Burmese students, Tan Nhat, quickly got it with his bare hands and I was thankful for the good Samaritan act. However, before I even had a moment to thank him, he put it in his mouth and he ate it. YES. Just ate it. Needless to say, I was in shock not knowing what to do; I called the school nurse who was out of words as well. We decided to wait and see if there was some kind of reaction, maybe an allergy, getting swollen, or something similar. When the lunch bell rang, I went with him to the cafeteria, just to keep an eye on him. That day for lunch, they were serving salad, cheese sticks (similar to pizza) with tomato sauce for dipping, a cup with a combination of marshmallows, pretzels, and raisins and applesauce. Tan Nhat didn't eat much of his food. Cheese is not a popular food in his culture, and he had no clue what the "weird circle brown thing" was nor he knew anything about the "small white stuff" that was in the cup with the "little black things." Back in his country, instead of apples, he enjoys mangos, papayas, bananas, and other tropical fresh fruit. Popular

ingredients include ginger, garlic, soy sauce, and a variety of fish sauces, onions, and very hot sauces. Salads, as well as other dishes, have the main ingredient of rice in all of its forms including rice noodles. He no longer eats spiders, at least not in front of me or in class. Today, after being more than a year in the school system, Thursday is his favorite day. Why? Because there is pizza and french-fries. Last Thursday I asked him about the pizza and the cheese sticks that he was eating and he said, "At first, I didn't like them. But today, I do. I got used to this food." So, if I travel to Burma and stay there for a year, would I eat spiders?

Tan Nhat is the perfect example of the two-way negotiation road that happens within as well as outside in his social world; he had to start 'shedding' some of his cultural traditions and selecting which ones to keep. He had to make the decision of what parts of his cultural heritage he desires to keep, those that would most likely cause less trouble in his new host country, and what parts he would "keep secret" or forget momentarily to start being part of his school community and his neighborhood. As popularly said since many years ago, "When in Rome do as the Romans" or you need 'to belong.' As Maalouf (2000) says:

My approach constantly calls for reciprocity, and this out of concern for both fairness and efficiency. It's in this spirit that I would first say to the one party: "The more you steep yourself in the culture of the host country the more you will be able to steep yourself in your own"; and then, to the other party: "The more an immigrant feels that his own culture is respected, the more open he will be to the culture of the host country. (p. 41)

Similar to Tan Nhat, the participants in my research also express issues of ‘how to belong’ as an issue where they have to negotiate their identity with the one of the dominant society.

Tan Nhat exemplifies an immigrant story of how some immigrants come into the United States. Different from my participants, he is legal or documented in the country. Tan Nhat was born in Burma. Tan Nhat’s father is Burmese and his mother is from Bhutan. Due to political instability that threatened their lives and to consistent human rights violations, he and his family had to move to a refugee camp in the Philippines. According to American ethnic standards he is categorized as just Asian, but his heritage is rich and diverse. At home, they speak Burmese and Thai. They have been living in the United States for a year. I met him in school where I teach English to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages – also ESL) immigrant students. Tan Nhat, his family, and other similar families form part of the 21 million legal “permanent” immigrants currently living in the United States. Currently there are students from Nepal, Burma, Bhutan, Vietnam, Mexico, Honduras, Cuba, Cote d’Ivoire, Pakistan, Iraq, Puerto Rico, Ethiopia, and Thailand in my classroom, sitting next to each other in a “safe space” in quotation marks because my experience has been: How “safe” is the classroom” How “safe” is the neighborhood?

The diverse student group in my ESOL classroom is a mirror image of what is happening all over the world not exclusively in classrooms but also in neighborhoods, in towns, in cities, and in countries; people move and are relocated by choice, by necessity, or by decisions made by the dominant class. Moving and relocating to another society

creates an awareness that can be peaceful or threatening. There are several points to consider from both parts, from the citizens in the receiving society and from the newcomer immigrants: (a) we are not alone, (b) the appearance of the immigrant in a receiving society will cause a reaction, (c) our identity and our ideologies will begin a tug of war within and with the environment, and (d) what will be the outcome: assimilation and acculturation.

When immigrants arrive to the receiving society a reaction occurs; this the inescapable moment that enables each one to see that they (we) are not alone. Not merely are we not alone but we do not want to be alone; loneliness is painful (time-out for children). When the immigrant and the citizen face each other there is a sensorial exchange of looks, smells, and hearings; but there is also an intangible but challenging communication of ideas that obligates the participants to make a decision, “a moral choice” (Bauman). This encounter of the diversity in ideas causes a confrontation that leads to ambiguity, to uncertainty, to wiggle uncomfortably. It is at this moment that identity becomes an issue since it is questioned and doubted; identity is in crisis. The surrounding social world impacts and collides with the essence of identity. Being part of a minority group is hard to live in and hard to accept.

When my research participants talk about their initial experiences in the U.S. their life stories reflect an inconsistency, or maybe clumsiness, in the ability to make sense of their surroundings. In other words, the understanding and the acquisition of a different cultural ideology is conditioned by what is relevant and what makes sense to the newcomers. This issue by itself requires time and life experiences. Not surprisingly in the

immigration story, history attests that the assimilation process does not happen overnight; chances are that the first generation of immigrants will ‘suffer’ rejection, xenophobia, racism, labor and other forms of abuse, and different forms of being the scapegoats. The second generation is a combination of both cultures; and history also proves that, by the time a third generation of children most likely born in the country, identity will not be a problem since they are already assimilated into the culture by life-experiences, by formal and informal education, and by no longer being perceived as a minority. This three-generation process is parallel to what happens in the language acquisition process. I heard conversations and I observed many transformations (or mutations) while I was in their homes: (a) parents speak mostly Spanish but there are times where they interject words in English, (b) children communicate with their parents in “Spanglish” but when speaking to each other they mainly use English, and (c) all speak Spanish to the grandparents. Additionally, in the acculturation process both parents and children express the need of wanting stability, a home; they look forward for a college education; they want to have a car that will give them independence; they need a driver’s license; the music they play is from both countries and depends on who is with them; they eat a combination of “arroz con pollo, frijoles negros refritos, escabeche” (*rice and chicken, refried black beans, escabeche-marinated onions, garlic, jalapeños*), hotdogs, and pizza (at least for the ‘quinceañera’ party where I was graciously invited); they would like to have the freedom to travel in and out of the country.

This assimilation or transformation into conforming into the receiving society comes in two realms: social integration and organizational or system integration. Social

integration happens when there is a communion between the person and the surrounding social world—understanding the social world as a society with traditions, beliefs, ideas of the world, folklore, beliefs, family practices, cultural commonalities, observance of holidays, religious practices, music, and traditional food. Systematic integration takes place when the person—the immigrant for my project purposes—comprehends, and accepts dispositions generated by governmental branches, by being aware of rules, regulations, and dispositions established by public institutions, that more often than not, are supported and defined by money. What makes this process unique is the lens with which each one of us analyzes, makes sense, and interprets our social world. Perhaps the assimilation process and the cultural identity formation should not fight each other when the person is trying to make sense of ‘what is going on in her world.’ We are all different; every North American is different from every North American in the same way that every immigrant is different from every immigrant. Even identical twins are ‘different.’

Therefore, being part of a minority group is not what defines identity.

For it is often the way we look at other people that imprisons them within their own narrowest allegiances. And it is also the way we look at them that may set them free. (Maalouf, 2000, p. 22)

How are the participants on my research working through and dealing with the assimilation process? As I mentioned before, not only is their identity permanently ‘under construction’ but also now their major obstacle is the fact that they are undocumented. Blaming the DMV and the INS for laws, rules, and regulations that do not allow them to be part of the dominant society is one part of the problem; the other is that even if they

are legal and documented immigrants, they will most likely go through the process of acculturation; there is this set of ideas, most likely endorsed and emphasized by the dominant class of society, that most of the citizens adhere to such as an inherited consciousness. In a homogenous society, this legacy is accepted. They, my first arrival participants, come with a different heritage that can be called ‘culture.’ If they want to stay, they need to be flexible and to adapt, to change their allegiances as desired, not as imposed, as Maalouf (2000) suggests, re-assemble them and to not deny any of them, to experience it differently.

What determines a person’s affiliation to a given group is essentially the influence of others: the influence of those about him—relatives, fellow-countrymen, co-religionists—who try to make him one of them; together with the influence of those on the other side, who do their best to exclude him. Each one of us has to make his way while choosing between the paths that are urged upon him and those that are forbidden or strewn with obstacles. (p. 25)

Now, as Maalouf (2000) says, “people see themselves in terms of whichever one of their allegiances is most under attack. And sometimes, when a person doesn’t have the strength to defend that allegiance, he hides it” (p. 26). Following this line of thought, immigrants feel “ashamed” of their immigrant status; they are pointed out and many times demeaned and humiliated because of their inadequacy of not having the shared history and culture of the receiving society. Additionally, no one seems interested of acknowledges the reasons that obligated them to migrate. I heard it from my participants when they were telling me their life stories and I see it happening everyday in school with my ESOL students. They are the victims and the “sufferers” for being the first arrivals.

My Participants and Issues in Education

“Illegal immigrants don’t pay taxes.” “They drain the economy.” “They use all the services and they deplete the system.” “Immigrants send most of what they earn out of the country as remittances.” “They invade the school system and they don’t pay for their children’s education.” These and other MYTHS are heavily used by the general public to point at illegal immigrants as *the guilty* for what is happening in the U.S. society. To address these statements I am using two sources: Katel and Marshall (2007), on their article on Illegal Immigration and Chomsky (2007), on her book on myths about immigration. In many ways, they address the issue illegal immigration and myths that impact the topic of education, basically from a financial angle, consequently affecting the participants in my narrative research.

How many illegal immigrants are presently working in the United States? “Illegal immigrants make up only 5% of the U.S. work force, but critics say they are taking many American jobs” (Katel & Marshall, 2007, p. 333). These unskilled workers are hired in chicken plants, carpet mills, painting, landscaping, cleaning houses, fast food restaurants, babysitting, and construction jobs (parents and relatives of my ESOL students as well as my research participants). The job sources that these 5% of 10 million undocumented immigrants do are not only “of the liking” of American job seekers, but are paid low wages benefiting Americans who spend less on food than many other countries, including Costa Rica, the country of origin of my participants. Undocumented immigrants come here to work. And to pay taxes.

“Immigrants, no matter what their status, pay the same taxes that citizens do—sales taxes, real estate taxes (if they rent or own a home), gasoline taxes” (Chomsky, 2007, p. 36). Some undocumented immigrants, immigrants, and Americans are paid under the table in cash for jobs such as babysitting, cleaning houses, lawn care, shoveling snow, and gardening. Regardless of the legal status there is no way of keeping a record.

There are some benefits for employers, and for consumers, from this informal sector. Employers can pay lower wages than those required by law. Consumers receive access to cheap products and services provided by these low-wage, untaxed workers.

But workers in the informal economy don't fare so well. They don't have access to any of the worker protections that come with formal employment, like minimum wage for health and safety regulations. Workers in the informal economy can't get unemployment insurance or workers' compensation and generally get no benefits from their employer (like health insurance or sick leave or vacation time). (Chomsky, 2007, p. 36)

Some undocumented immigrants pay all taxes in the formal way. These are immigrants who have false social security numbers. They do face another problem though; they pay all taxes, they have the benefits, schools and some health services, but they don't have any of the privileges. They pay into the retirement funds, for example, but they don't have the enjoyment of them. Who loses with the false social security numbers? The undocumented immigrants that have false documents and have taxes deducted from them, not the citizens. “As of 2005, Social Security was receiving about \$7 billion a year through false social security numbers—allowing it to break even, because that's about the same amount as the difference between what it paid out in

benefits and what it received in payroll taxes” (Chomsky, 2007, p. 38). And as I mentioned before, they will never receive the benefits that citizens will enjoy.

Paying taxes and putting money into the system is an important part of the education life of my undocumented immigrants. They pay taxes because they rent, they buy groceries, clothing, cars, and other necessities. Alejandra, for example, pays full charge for her mother’s and her son’s visits to the doctor plus full cost of medicine. Is she ‘depleting’ the system? Is she a criminal? Is she, or any of my participants, draining the economy?

Having mentioned economy, education, globalization, and identity as themes that directly impact the phenomenon of immigrants, I want to add a topic that is present in the life stories of my research participants as a survival response to the above mentioned themes: matriarchy.

Two Mamás and Their Daughters: Matriarchy

Relying on already overburdened friends and relatives, often led to resentment, and experiences in obtaining and giving assistance frequently turned contentious. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994a, 189) observes, “Immigrant social networks are highly contested social resources, and they are not always shared, even within the same family.” We have seen that networks are highly specialized; different forms of assistance are expected and come from different people. This is also the case when networks are examined through the lens of gender. Distance of relationship matters here as well; it determines the gender-specific expectations and obligations people have. (Menjívar, 2000, p. 159)

The two families in my study represent a shift from the traditional roles which characterize Costa Rican society, from a *patriarchy* to a *matriarchy*. As we have heard from their stories, all along this study these two powerful women have tried and

successfully completed their mission of keeping the family together. Whereas Mamá María traveled to the United States to reunite with her daughters, Mamá Hilda stayed home in Costa Rica; both of them are bastions to safeguard their love ones as home-keepers. They act as providers and they position themselves as leaders of the family. All my female participants have strong and clear voices at the time of my interview; they had already broken with the shyness of being docile and did not conform to their role in a male dominant society that tried to “domesticate” them. Observations and conversations with them confirm their desires to be independent and show their satisfaction at being self-sufficient and providers to their families. They were determined and focused on what they wanted. Their unsuccessful experiences catapulted their spirits to wake up and courageously look for a new plan of life. Alejandra was physically and emotionally abused; Julita and Alejandra were treated like objects in the workplace, Alice suffered an abusive relationship, Ruth had to deal with the finances in the family, Miriam had to live the reality of a husband who is a child molester and an opportunist since he was living off of her job; Mamá María survived more than 50 years of marriage “putting up” with a womanizer husband; Mamá Hilda “allowed” her womanizer husband to stay in the family house but to spend most of the time in his room and to limit his presence in family and social gatherings. So it is no surprise that after these vicissitudes in their lives, these women searched in their souls, they reflected, analyzed and found the resources to grow strong, to survive and to successfully carry their loved ones with them. As Miriam and Carmen say when they speak about all of them, “Nosotras somos muy fuertes” (“*We are very strong*”). But they are very strong and I believe that strength is supported by a

constantly-used mantras in their stories: “It is God’s will” and “Thank God, it is His will.” All of my participants in one way or another thankfully use the name of God. They are continuously adding to their speech short phrases that show how accepting they are of their lives’ changes because they are part of His plans. These women’s actions reflect independence, autonomy, and as movers and shakers, they are not considered as the “normal” behaviors of women in a patriarchy.

Across countries, however, gender systems may be more or less patriarchal, and if Hondagnewu-Sotelo’s (1992) leading hypothesis is true—that women use international migration as a means to overcome the restraints of patriarchal suppression within the family—then the process of female out-migration is apt to look very different across national settings. (as cited in Massey, Fischer, & Capoferro, 2006, p. 65)

These Costa Rican women support the argument that even though they come from a patriarchal society, they are the ones who make the decision to migrate. Additionally, they have some years of formal education which are unrecognized since they are undocumented but which otherwise would be rewarded in patriarchal societies. It also supports the argument that although male migration is not dependent on marital status, if the wife migrates, men are more likely to migrate as well.

My final conclusion is that these women, as twenty-first century immigrants in a postmodern world, do not choose between being American or being Costa Rican; for the moment, their lives allow them to appreciate both cultures.

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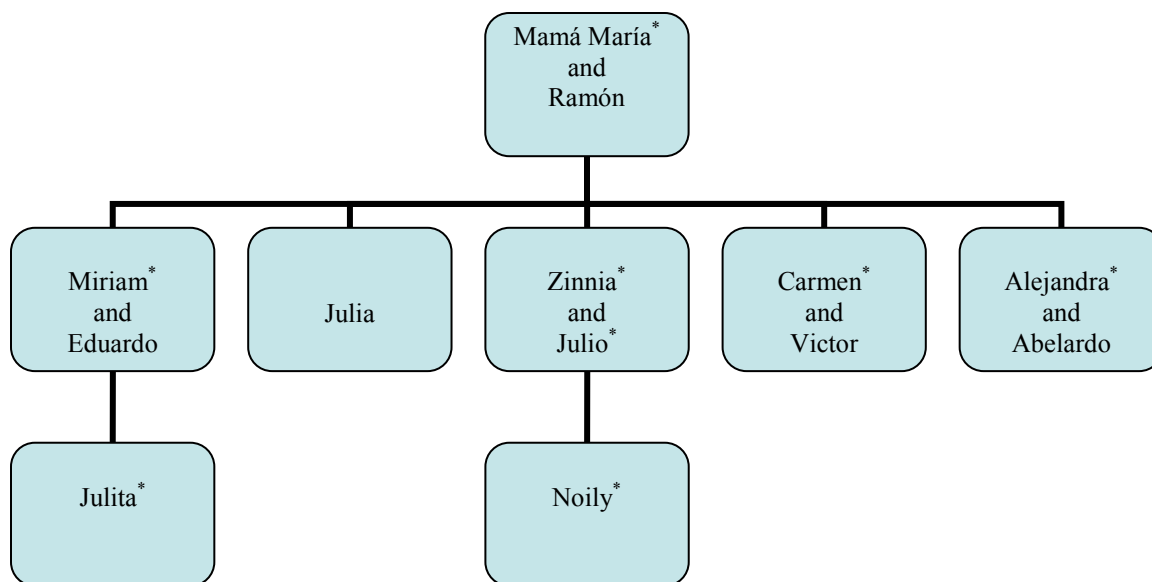
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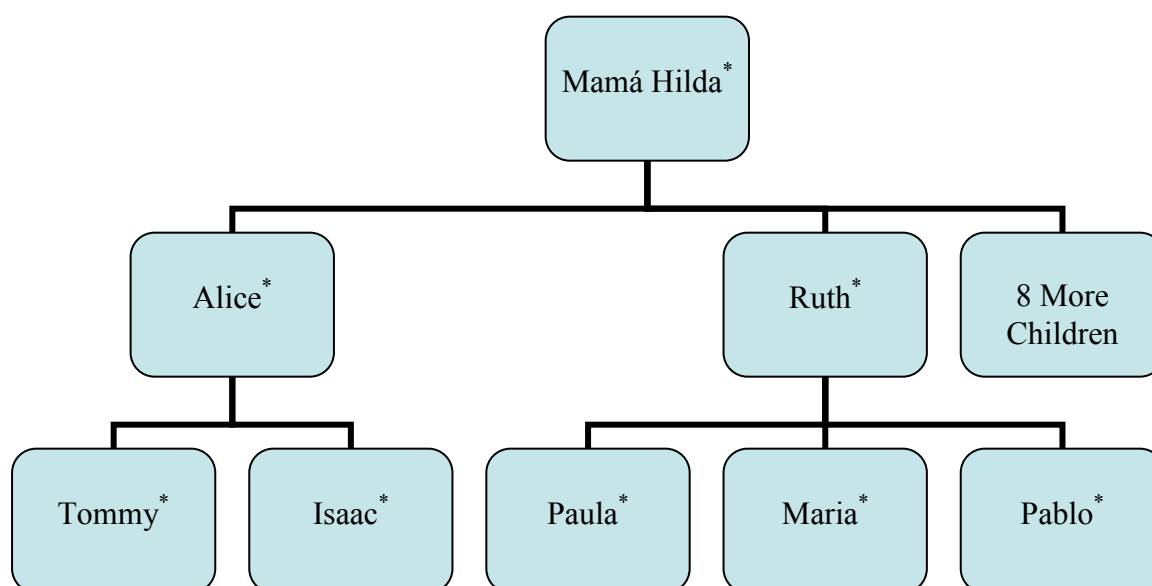
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APPENDIX A
FAMILY TREES AND “COYOTE”

Mamá María’s Family



Mamá Hilda’s Family



“Coyote”

Fernan

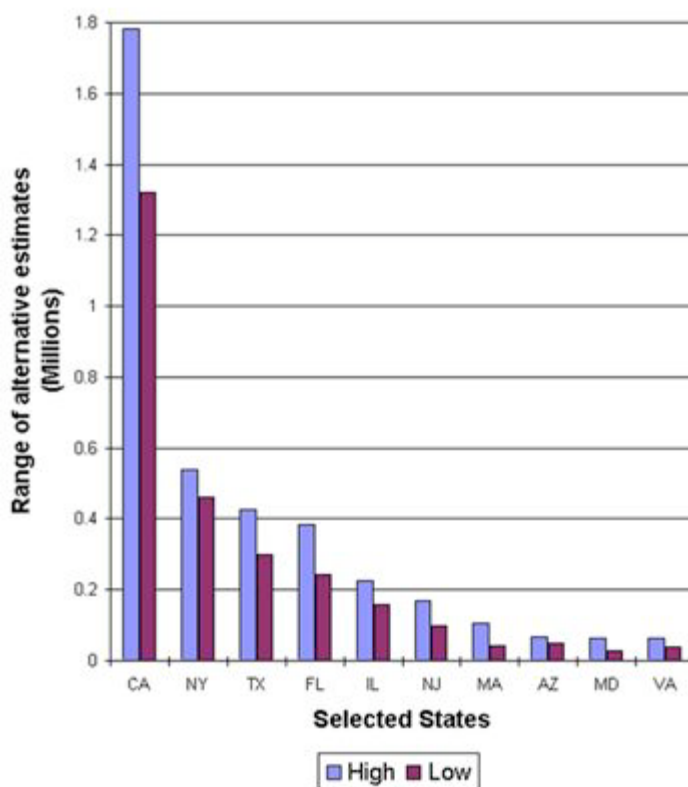
Fernan*

* Research participants

APPENDIX B

RANGES OF ESTIMATES OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS FOR SELECTED STATES

Illustrative Ranges of Estimates of Undoc. Immigrants for Selected States



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census