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El Salvador in Motion: Socioeconomic Causes of Child Migration

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Geography

by

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December 2022

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Acknowledgements

I am out of time and cannot list all the help, support and inspiration I received to get the words that follow into this one document. In order to conclude, I list those most important to finally getting me done with my doctoral program in the past year and acknowledge this means many others who played earlier and critical roles remain unnamed.

In late-2021, I struggled to draft and send an email to a chair, who had always been supportive, encouraging and professional, about the possibility of concluding the dissertation and program I lost sometime in 2016. I am forever grateful to John Weeks for his care, concern and enthusiasm in his quick and willing response. He has embraced me finishing and pushed me forward every step of the way, helping me strategize what would get me done. Likewise, Stuart Sweeney, Jaime Amparo Alves and Piotr Jankowski came on board to share this vision. Right before I headed to El Salvador, I worked with Stuart to interview Central American women about their family planning decisions in Los Angeles, and that experience – alongside our seminars in Santa Barbara – stuck with me. Years ago, Jaime told me that the best dissertation is a done dissertation, and while it took me longer than it should have to heed that wisdom, I'm so glad we got back in contact, and your comments and motivation pushed me to the end. Indeed, life has gone on. Piotr, who was steadfast in the program's leadership and events I attended while living in San Diego from 2011 to 2013, agreed to join at a later date in light of the more quantitative direction my dissertation took. All four added this ball to the many you juggle and got together for a crazy push to get a product long past its due across the finish line. I should have confided in you all sooner, but I'm unendingly thankful that once I did, you all showed up for me in the ways I needed. My forever thanks to you for helping me close this chapter.

I must likewise thank in writing Candra Young, who answered many questions along the way for me to get re-enrolled, access to the library online and graduated. I look forward to the day we meet in person and owe a great debt to you for all your assistance.

Likewise in late-2021, a Central America Monitor position opened with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). WOLA agreed to employ me on its database while I concluded my dissertation and doctoral program, giving me the time, space and benefits needed at every point over the past year. I am grateful not just for these pieces and my healthiest workplace yet but also for the Research Director position I will hold now with the CAM upon concluding. Thank you for letting me apply my dreams to a real dataset so quickly after finishing this.

Far earlier, coming on a decade ago, for reasons I will never fully comprehend, hundreds of children and families decided to trust me with the most intimate details of their lives in our conversations together in a San Salvador migrant return center. … and the years that followed, opening their homes and lives to me all over El Salvador, the United States and a few other places. I have aimed to honor those details since they were gifted to me, and I have struggled how best to deliver them. Regardless, though, I have carried them with me everywhere I go since. Thank you for the wealth and strength in them, and may we continually find each other across the globe over the years to come.

My parents gave me life. Because it is impossible to be, they were not perfect, but they certainly tried to be nearly all of the time. In doing this study, I again and again appreciated the very many ways I got exceptionally lucky to have them from the beginning to now. They always prioritized my education, fullest development and wellbeing. … even when it started – quite early, I imagine – to take twists and turns they could not have foreseen. Their actions

repeatedly modeled to me who I want to be in this world, and their unconditional love meant I felt safe to take so many risks, knowing that if I failed, they would be there. They have nearly always supported me to go in search of my dreams of a more just world, including when it meant sacrifices to their lives that they may not have chosen and even changes in their own thinking. They took me in for a period following my field work when my heart and soul were destroyed by all I had seen and documented. Without hesitation or questions, they provided me space, food, care and love. Without that, this product – even six years later – would undoubtedly not exist. I will never be able to know all that they have sacrificed to make my life and work possible, but I do know that all of it made me and this possible, so this is as much their achievement as my own. More concretely, my mom visited with child migrants at two shelters and then sent them all Christmas gifts. My dad created amazing homicide maps that ended up not making the cut for my dissertation (but will be in publications), also made the five departmental maps in the methodology chapter and happily discussed any and all quantitative data I brought to him. They, like some 40 other loved ones, made calls to the US government about persons who had been deported and disappeared or murdered. They even became child and Central American migrant advocates. Thank you for being the parents to me that I wish all children got, for letting me continually grow and for deciding to grow, too.

Very early in life, the universe gifted me a few extra family members who were not related by blood: the Pasho's next door and Ashanté M. Reese at school. Lucky as I was to get the parents I got, we lived next door to two leftist teachers who never once complained that my friends, siblings and I came and went freely from their yard and magnolia tree. Once in their classes, they formed me, my writing and my analysis more than anyone else had or has. They corrected me in ways my parents could not and took joy in the few accomplishments my

parents were not yet ready to accept at the time – like being a grade school teacher for a few years. Ashanté and I were not immediately best friends, in part because I was a brat, but I have long considered her a sister I choose. She has inspired me and held me up at every stage of my life. She has often had wisdom and knowledge I don't yet possess, particularly around logistical realities of life. As she has said, she also holds my secrets, including some related to this work. Thank you for being the best friend I wish everyone got.

I had the great privilege to meet Karla Castillo in the course of this study. … Even though I could not pay her what she deserved, she showed up every day and did a phenomenal job taking on the weight of her fellow citizens. I lament that I could not model better self-care, because we both suffered afterward, but I do think we are genuinely better humans, researchers and practitioners having gone through it. Thank you for making this study so much richer with your insights and passion.

Although we worked together on a comparative study in Honduras that will hopefully be published in less time than this study, I feel equally privileged to have worked with Marna Shorack during the course of this study. So many of our discussions pushed forward this piece, and she specifically checked over the Ahuachapán department interviews and analyses – the first I ventured to do in a systematic way all the way back in 2017. She also accompanied me to Morazán and other parts of El Salvador that same year.

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Frank-Vitale, who I don't think has ever not responded to even my most random ramblings. Jessica Simms and I met before I got to El Salvador and have let our friendship flow with the workings of her dissertation and PhD and mine. I'm so thankful we discovered voicenotes and have been in more regular contact as I took this on. Likewise, I appreciate Crystal English for mentioning every time we talk that I can still get this done. She proved to be right, and I know she can, too.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Americas

Demography, Gender and Children, Adolescents and the Family

Indigeneity and Race

Community, the Nation State and Human Rights

Organized Crime, Cartels, Gangs and Death Squads

Violence

Migration, Refugees and Internal Displacement

ABSTRACT

El Salvador in Motion: Socioeconomic Causes of Child Migration

by

Elizabeth Gail Kennedy

For four decades now, there has been no consensus on the number of Salvadorans living outside of El Salvador, despite El Salvador's census bureau identifying it in 2008 as the most important factor in determining true population growth in the country. Amidst a time of increasing migrant child and family arrivals from El Salvador to the United States in the 2010s, meaning the country had among the highest rates of emigration in the world, I wanted to speak with children themselves about why they were leaving, and in so doing, speak to the policy and practice needed at different places and times according to the geography, gender and causes children provided.

From January to September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted just short of 600 interviews with 232 girls, 417 boys and their adult relatives who were deported from Mexico, over 90 percent of whom wanted to reach the United States. In El Salvador, children and their families lived in at least 411 neighborhoods of 155 municipalities in all 14 departments of the country. From each department, we interviewed between 15 and 34 percent of the children who migrated in 2014. For this dissertation, I analyzed the combined results for five departments – Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate – on two of children's explicit reasons for migrating (poverty and health) and reasons that children and

adolescents did not explicitly give that nonetheless seemed to play a role in their decisions – or would have entitled them to legal status, if they reached the United States.

Beyond the interviews conducted with children and families, I sought different sources regarding reasons to migrate, in order to validate the data collected, which are presented alongside the interview data. This includes Salvadoran and US census bureau data, in addition to historical documents on the civil war when poor communities organized to demand that their rights be respected. They wanted their own land to farm, healthcare and education for themselves and their children, a dignified life and so much more. They disproportionately fought in the war and lost their lives or became displaced. Yet, they were least served by the war, and in many ways today find themselves in similar or worse situations than in the pre-war and war periods today. Silber (2011) argues that for this reason, having seen that war did not serve their revolutionary goals, migration has become the home of revolutionary imagination and hope for the poor, who disproportionately constituted the children we interviewed. From there, I inspect the contours of poverty in their lives to unpack them in light of the Capabilities Approach. I explore how their hopes to get out of poverty had even more to do with the desire to be able to become, if not fully themselves, at least more of themselves than El Salvador's lowest class structure permits.

This study is the first of its kind in several ways: it interviewed a representative sample of Salvadoran child migrants, crossed those interviews with quantitative and qualitative data sets and provides geographic and gendered insights to both children's and families' migration. As such, the proposed project is critical to better research on migration worldwide and creating holistic and informed policy and practice for child, adult and family migrants at local, national, regional and global levels.

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You gringos are always worried about violence done with machine guns and machetes. But there is another kind of violence that you must be aware of, too.

I used to work on the hacienda. My job was to take care of the dueño's dogs. I gave them meat and bowls of milk, food that I couldn't give my own family. When the dogs were sick, I took them to the veterinarian in Suchitoto or San Salvador. When my children were sick, the dueño gave me his sympathy, but no medicine as they died.

To watch your children die of sickness and hunger while you can do nothing is a violence to the spirit. We have suffered that silently for too many years. Why aren't you gringos concerned about that kind of violence? (247)

– Gabriel speaking with Dr. Charles Clements "Camilo" in the early-1980s on the doctor's last night in Guazapa. Gabriel and his entire family, except one member, were subsequently slaughtered by government forces.[1]

[1] Clements, Charles. 1984. *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*. New York: Bantam Books.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Early one morning in July 2014, the normally-calm Salvadoran official[2] who asked me to their office seemed very worried. We were supposed to drive together to a community radio station outside of San Salvador to discuss why children and families were leaving the country, but they were canceling and asking me to come to them instead. They wrote: "me urge hablar con usted [roughly in English: it's urgent I talk with you]."

A few weeks before, on 30 June, United States President Barack Obama had declared the increased number of unaccompanied child migrants at the Mexico-United States border "an urgent humanitarian situation" (Office of the Press Secretary 2014), and I had noticed both tensions and changes underway among the Salvadoran officials and contacts who had facilitated my access to the government-run migrant return center to do the study partially presented in this dissertation. This official had asked me to their office and insisted they had to tell me what they were going to say.

They urged me to listen, proceeding that they "needed me to stop discussing violence as a cause of migration and instead focus on the extreme poverty of so many children and families in the country." They said they did not want to "put me in handcuffs," but they needed me to do this, warning that if I did not heed their words, "they, who had been protecting me, could no longer do so."

My mind raced in many directions, most of which I will not address in this dissertation. But for it, I highlight that I traced the past conversations that this official and I had – over numerous months – about the labeling of Salvadorans during and after the civil war as purely economic migrants, even though so many were additionally – or solely – fleeing insecurity from which they had no effective protection. They had spoken passionately about the need for better data and advocacy on the latter. They seemingly embraced the emerging results of my study that many children and families – most, if not all, impoverished – were fleeing each time we discussed them privately or publicly.

Why then had this official – or rather, as I suspected then and have confirmed in the years since, their superiors who ordered them to have this conversation with me – decided that only poverty could be a reason for Salvadoran children's migration? That any other reason need be silenced?

The above field note begins this chapter and dissertation, because it conveys the various dilemmas and challenges that this study confronted at each stage. Amidst a time of increasing child migrant arrivals from El Salvador to the United States, I wanted to speak with children themselves about why they were leaving, and in so doing, speak to the policy and practice needed at different places and times. To open this dissertation, I first introduce general

[2] For this official's safety, my own safety and the ability to continue doing research in El Salvador, I am not revealing this person's name, gender or rank. I will not reveal these factors for anyone else for the same reasons.

Salvadoran population and migration statistics, then briefly summarize the study's findings about why children were leaving, only some of which will be explored in more detail in this dissertation and conclude by explaining the selection of which causes to examine here.

1.1 El Salvador's Population and Migration

El Salvador is a unitary state with a central government. It is divided into 14 departments (like states or provinces). The political economy and health and demography chapters to follow examine more fully the trends behind the fluctuating growth rates, but I begin this chapter and dissertation with a brief introduction to El Salvador's overall population and migration dynamics. Broadly, little demographic data exists on Latin American countries prior to 1900 (Arriaga and Davis 1969). Foreign priests and *conquistadores* made the first demographic observations during their visits to the region (Tobar 2020). These did not use a scientific methodology but did provide a basis for calculating taxation, such that they are somewhat reliable (Tobar 2020).[3] Rodolfo Barón Castro's *La Población de El Salvador* is the definitive text: he reviewed historical archives of the church and Crown in Spain to compile his large tome at the turn of the twentieth century. Below, Table 1 shows the population estimates that Barón Castro (1978) compiled for the period from 1524 to 1899.

Table 1 El Salvador's Estimated Population, 1524 to 1899 (Barón Castro 1978)

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1524	130,000	
1551	60,000	-2.0
1570	77,000	1.5
1600	86,200	0.4
1650	100,000	0.3
1700	115,000	0.3
1750	130,000	0.3

[3] Tobar (2020) alludes to *Las Cartas de Relación y Otros Documentos* by Pedro de Alvarado, *Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala* by Diego García de Palacio y Antonio de Ciudad-Real and La Población de El Salvador by Don Rodolfo Barón Castro.

1778	146,000	0.4
1796	161,000	0.6
1800	165,000	0.6
1807	200,000	3.0
1821	250,000	1.8
1855	394,000	1.7
1878	554,000	1.8
1882	612,943	2.7
1887	664,513	1.7
1892	703,000	1.2
1899	758,945	1.1

The genocide of El Salvador's indigenous population by the Spanish conquest is clear. Within just 27 years, over half of the population died from the illnesses the Spaniards brought with them and the destruction of cultural, economic and political ways of life (Morales Velado 1990). It took two centuries for the population to recuperate, but as it did so, the indigenous population steadily declined as illustrated in the Political Economy chapter to follow. Through 1899, El Salvador remained a country with high mortality, although its fertility rates fluctuated with the agricultural economy and cultural changes (Barón Castro 1978). The reorganization of the nation's agricultural activity from communal indigenous lands to large coffee haciendas marked a turning point (Morales Velado 1990).

El Salvador did not do its first census until 1930, but even the Salvadoran census bureau, *Dirección General de Estadística y Censos* (DIGESTYC), considered it incomplete and did not cite to it in subsequent years (DIGESTYC 2008; Tobar 2020).[4] In total, DIGESTYC has performed six censuses to date: 1930, 1950, 1961, 1971, 1992 and 2007. The total population figures obtained are displayed in Table 2 below. Notably, the Bukele administration announced in fall 2022 that it would end DIGESTYC's funding, calling the

[4] After 1950, Caribbean and Latin American nations created an organization for demographic studies, the *Centro Latinoamericano de Demografía* (CELADE), which used the census done in each country. It is part of the United Nations system and is headquartered in Santiago, Chile.

costs "fat" that needed to be trimmed; an *Oficina Nacional de Estadística y Censos*, National Office of Statistics and Censuses now exists within the nation's *Banco Central de Reserva*, Central Reserve Bank.

Table 2 El Salvador's Estimated Population, 1930 to 2007 (DIGESTYC) [5]

Year	Population	Growth Rate
1930	1,434,361	2.9
1950	1,855,900	1.5
1961	2,511,300	3.2
1971	3,554,648	4.2
1992	5,118,599	2.1
2007	5,744,113	0.8

Undoubtedly, the Great Depression and fall of coffee prices and production impacted the population decrease from 1930 to 1950 (Morales Velado 1990). It was also the start of larger-scale emigration: then, Salvadorans primarily went to other countries in Central America (Morales Velado 1990). Improved public health practices imported from abroad drastically reduced high mortality rates beginning around 1950 (Arriaga 1970). Without accompanying family planning campaigns, fertility rates edged up further, and growth rates reached their highest on record (Arriaga 1970). With an "excess population," especially of youth and changing job trends, the period from 1971 to 1979 brought increasing repression and slightly increased levels of emigration (DIGESTYC 2008). The civil war from 1979 to 1992 led to tens of thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of migrants (DIGESTYC 2008). DIGESTYC and *Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía* (CELADE), Latin American and Caribbean Center of Demography predicted that El Salvador's population growth rate would rebound in the war's aftermath (CELADE 1991), but it did not do so for two primary reasons: emigration continued at high rates, and mortality rates for males aged 15

[5] DIGESTYC estimated in 2008 that the percentage of the population omitted from prior censuses were 15.6 percent in 1950, 12.1 percent in 1961, 7.4 percent in 1971, 7.0 percent in 1992 and 5.7 percent in 2007.

to 39 failed to decline substantially (CELADE 1991; DIGESTYC 2008). Additionally, official fertility rates continued to decline (CELADE 1991; DIGESTYC 2008), although this dissertation will call into question how accurate fertility figures are in light of births occurring inside and outside El Salvador, meaning they may not all be captured in official statistics.

For four decades now, there has been no consensus on the number of Salvadorans living outside of El Salvador (CELADE 1991; DIGESTYC 2008; Tobar 2020), despite DIGESTYC identifying it in 2008 as the most important factor in determining true population growth in the country. International migration from El Salvador reached an all-time high from 1980 to 1985, the most intense years of the civil war (CELADE 1991). By 1987, an estimated 250,000 Salvadorans lived in Mexico and neighboring Central American countries, and around one million Salvadorans lived in the United States (CELADE 1991).[6] Smaller but significant numbers were in Australia, Belgium, Canada and Sweden as well (CELADE 1991). In total, at least 1.25 million and as many as two million Salvadorans were outside the country at war's end, representing between 25 and 33 percent of the population. After a brief lull post-war, tens of thousands of Salvadorans were again migrating to the United States throughout the late-1990s and early-2000s (INS and DHS).[7] In 2011, a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), El Salvador's Foreign Ministry and the *Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas* (UCA), Central American University estimated that

[6] The United Nations Population Division publishes this data to date at this site: https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/66,65/locations/222/start/1960/end/2022/table/pivotbylocation .

[7] Prior to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) maintained migrations actions and statistics for the United States government. It did not begin collecting the nationality of persons apprehended until 1987. Even still, it did not report apprehensions by nationality in its annual yearbooks. From 1996 to 2004, it noted that Mexicans constituted between 92 and 96.9 percent of apprehensions, followed by Salvadorans in most years (some years, Hondurans were the second most apprehended nationality, and Salvadorans were the third most) among the 51,000 to 65,000 non-Mexicans. These yearbooks are available at: https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2020 .

2,950,126 Salvadorans lived outside the nation, 2,587,767 (87.7%) of them in the United States. They listed Canada, Guatemala, Italy, Belize, Mexico, Australia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua, Spain, Sweden, Germany and Venezuela as the next 14 most common countries of residence.

This trend has only gained steam. Over the past decade, Salvadorans have left their country at among the highest rates in the world (and likely, even higher than rates during the worst mortality of the civil war), with most of them hoping to arrive to the United States. From 2012 to 2021, according to Mexican and United States (US) government data, officials in both countries made at least 816,000 migration-related apprehensions of Salvadoran migrants crossing their territories, as shown in Table 3 below.[8] These numbers exceed 10 percent of El Salvador's population.

Table 3 Salvadorans Apprehended in Mexico and the United States, 2012-2021 (DHS and SEGOB)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Mexico	12,397	14,610	23,131	35,390	33,531	12,074	14,249	14,890	8,179	24,605
US	38,976	51,126	79,321	51,200	78,983	59,687	42,132	99,750	23,051	98,655

The percentage of children apprehended had increased rapidly from 2011 to 2012. Prior to that period, between 1,000 and 2,000 Salvadoran children were apprehended each year, but then the number nearly doubled, which it did again from 2012 to 2013. Furthermore, beginning in 2014, when I was conducting interviews for this dissertation, the demographics of those apprehended continued shifting from being overwhelmingly single adults to substantially children and families, as displayed in Table 4 below.

[8] While some who are apprehended get apprehended multiple times, others migrate without ever being apprehended. The COVID19 pandemic and Trump administration policies to return migrants to Mexico substantially impacted apprehension numbers in 2020 in ways not representative of recent trends. In Fiscal Year 2020, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials apprehended 23,051 Salvadorans.

Table 4 Percentage of Children and Family Units among Apprehended Salvadorans, 2011-2021 (DHS)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Children	5.6	9.6	13.9	31.5	30.3	41.4	37.7	29.6	42.1	16.2	26.7
Family	-	-	-	-	21.2	34.3	40.4	32.4	57	18.8	38

1.2 This Study

I applied for and received a 2013-2014 Fulbright Student Scholarship specifically wanting to examine what was behind the rise in Salvadoran children's migration. These children and youth are at the intersection of multiple areas for study. As minors, they are caught between discourses that portray them as vulnerable, threatening, and dependent (Bhabha 2008, Bhabha and Crock 2007). Related to the latter, child migrants are rarely asked about their motivations and the impacts of their migration, despite an expanding body of literature that asserts youth's ability to speak, act and participate independently and distinctly from adults (Bhabha 2008, Bhabha and Crock 2007). Finally, little work has occurred in children's geography with transnational families and Central American experiences of childhood and youth. For years now, politicians from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the United States have been saying that child and family migration is a regional problem that requires a regional response. Yet, they lack critical information to effectively develop such.

My study hoped to fill these gaps, providing quantitative and qualitative data on why girls and boys leave El Salvador, according to the children and adolescents themselves. In so doing, specific to El Salvador and through a gendered lens, it sought to examine what it means to be a child, adolescent and citizen in the country today, now 30 years removed from its civil war. More broadly, it inspected the effects of neoliberal globalization several decades after forced Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and climate change on the lives of children and their families. It further sought to fully unpack these dynamics at the departmental and national

level to inform both practice and policy in El Salvador to create tailored programming according to the geography and causes children provided.

The next chapter explains the methodology used more fully, but in a nutshell, from January to September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted just short of 600 interviews with 232 girls, 417 boys and their adult relatives who were deported from Mexico, over 90 percent of whom wanted to reach the United States. In El Salvador, children and their families lived in at least 411 neighborhoods of 155 municipalities in all 14 departments of the country. From each department, we interviewed between 15 and 34 percent of the children who migrated in 2014. For this dissertation, I analyzed the combined results for five departments: Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate. Table 5 below displays the girls and boys interviewed from each of the five.

Table 5 Children Interviewed by Department

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total
Ahuachapán	9	24	29	76	38
Chalatenango	8	24	25	76	33
Cuscatlán	6	50	6	50	12
Morazán	5	15	28	85	33
Sonsonate	8	28	21	72	29
Total	36	25	109	75	145

For the reader's reference, I include Figure 1 below with these five departments starred on the map.

Figure 1 Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate Departments

Acknowledging that some children from the five selected departments gave multiple reasons for their migration, the 145 girls and boys interviewed explicitly provided five primary reasons for leaving El Salvador, as shown in Table 6 below. These reasons were consistent with reasons documented in other studies on Salvadoran migration, although it found different rates of each, especially finding higher rates of children who fled El Salvador. Sixty-two children from the selected departments listed violence, threats, crime or insecurity. Fifty-three listed family reunification. Forty-nine listed their poverty or desire for a better future or more opportunity. Twenty-nine listed studies. Twenty-eight listed work, almost all of them boys, and two listed their health. Four boys had additional reasons.

Table 6 Children's Stated Reasons for Migrating from Five Departments

	Girls			Boys			Total[9]	
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Violence, threats, crime or insecurity	15	42		47	43		62	43

[9] The total adds up to more than 100, because children could – and often did – give multiple responses to why they were migrating.

Family reunification	15	42		38	35		53	37
Poverty, better future or more opportunity	12	33		37	34		49	34
Study	12	33		17	16		29	20
Work	3	8		25	23		28	19
Health	1	3		1	1		2	1.4
Adventure	-	-		2	2		2	1.4
Return to US life	-	-		1	1		1	0.7
Sister's health	-	-		1	1		1	0.7

However, analyzing their daily lives more fully revealed that other factors seemed to play a role in their decisions that they did not mention explicitly. While only 62 children gave violence, threats, crime or insecurity as an explicit reason for their migration, 30 girls – 83 percent – and 81 boys – 74 percent – reported daily interacting with gang members in either their neighborhoods, schools or both, including 15 – seven girls and eight boys – who were themselves actively being threatened with death or had household members who were threatened. Neighborhood news searches in the Salvadoran press further showed that nearly all children lived in neighborhoods with gang presence and at least one homicide per year,[10] even though some had told us that where they lived had no gang presence. Similarly, while only 53 children explicitly listed family reunification as a reason, all girls – 100 percent – and 106 boys – 97 percent – had relatives in the United States with whom they planned to live, including 30 who had a mother, father or both parents there. Additionally, as will be explored in the penultimate chapter, nearly all children seemed to be living in poverty, even though only 49 children named it as an explicit reason. Then, beyond the explicit reasons that children gave, no girls or boys mentioned wanting to escape cultural dynamics or gendered expectations.

[10] I conducted these searches in 15 Salvadoran news outlets: *Contra Punto*, *Cronio*, *Diario1*, *Diario Co-Latino*, *Diario Libre SV*, *El Blog*, *El Diario de Hoy*, *El Faro*, *El Mundo*, *El Salvador Times*, *La Pagina*, *La Prensa Grafica*, *Revista Factum, Revista Gato Encerrado* and *Solo Noticias*. *Contra Punto*, *El Faro*, *Revista Factum,* and *Revista Gato Encerrado* are online investigative news outlets who have won international prizes. *El Diario de Hoy* and *La Prensa Grafica* are the nation's oldest daily print papers and have investigative units.

None of the 16 girls – 44 percent – or 45 boys – 41 percent – affected by one or both parent's abandonment, disappearance or death listed this as a reason, although it undoubtedly and permanently altered their lives. Only two boys – from Sonsonate department – and no girls mentioned being abused or seeing others abused, despite "serious and widespread" child and domestic abuse in the country (BDHRL 2022).[11] Likewise, the nation was experiencing a second year of drought and a coffee parasite infestation (*roya*), but even the numerous boys who farmed did not mention this as a reason for their migration.

This dynamic also played out in children's responses about why their adult relatives had left the country. Seemingly, families did not discuss with each other, or at least not with children, why members left El Salvador. Only 28 percent of children interviewed from the five departments ventured an explanation of why their relatives had left, while the other 72 percent said they did not know, as shown in Table 7 below. Girls had more knowledge than boys, but even they did not know their relatives' reasons for going in Morazán department, for example.

Table 7 Children Venturing a Response about Why Relatives Migrated

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	3	33	12	41	15	39
Chalatenango	2	25	3	12	5	15
Cuscatlán	3	50	0	0	3	25
Morazán	0	0	8	29	8	24
Sonsonate	5	63	4	19	9	31
Total	13	36	27	25	40	28

[11] In my interviews with local and national officials, most believed child and domestic partner abuse were widespread but largely unreported (see, too: Human Rights Watch 2020). The limited surveys with a representative sample have consistently found high abuse rates. With data collected in 2017, DIGESTYC found that six of 10 women aged 15 or older had suffered some type of sexual violence in their lifetime (DIGESTYC 2019). Speizer et al. (2008) found in a nationally representative survey with women aged 15-49 and men aged 15-59 from 2002 to 2003 that 42 percent of women and 62 percent of men reported being beaten as punishment in childhood. 65.1 percent of women and 79.7 percent of men witnessed violence between their parents. Witnessing familial violence was associated with an increased risk of being beaten in childhood, and having experienced physical punishment as a child increased the chance of using it on children. Women who were beaten in childhood were significantly more likely to be in a violent romantic relationship as an adult. Interestingly, as number of live births increased, so did beatings.

The reasons that children gave for their relatives' emigration are shown below in Table 8.

Table 8 Reasons 40 Children Gave for Their Relatives' Migration

	Girls			Boys			Total[12]	
	Number	%		Number	%		Number	%
Poverty, better future or more opportunity	7	54		19	70		26	65
Violence, threats, crime or insecurity	4	31		6	22		10	25
Work	3	23		4	15		7	18
Family reunification	2	15		0	0		2	5

Unlike for children themselves, the most common reason that children gave for their relatives' departure was poverty. Twenty-six children – seven girls and 19 boys – believed this to lie behind the migration decisions of their parents, siblings, aunts and uncles and grandparents. They used different phrases to convey this besides just "get out of poverty," "economic crisis" or "earn more money," including: "look for a better future," "have better opportunities," "get ahead" and "succeed." In one instance, the mother of a five-year-old girl from Sonsonate thought her mother and sister left El Salvador to help her with the expenses of being a new parent. In another, one boy from Ahuachapán said that his parents wanted to afford him and his siblings "opportunities they [the parents] could not have," while another boy from the department said his parents wanted to give him and his siblings "a better life." A third boy from Ahuachapán said this about his mother as well and noted the concrete way in which his, his brother's and his father's life had improved as a result: "with the money she sends, we have already remodeled the house where we live [in El Salvador]." Another boy from Chalatenango department credited his family's improving economic situation to his mother's decision to migrate 15 years earlier; he also added that it had just begun to improve so had not been a quick

[12] The total adds up to more than 100, because children could – and occassionally did – give multiple responses to why their relatives had migrated.

process. One boy from Morazán department noted that his family specifically needed the money to pay for his father's medical care in El Salvador.

Among the 26 children who gave poverty as a reason for their relatives' migration, five also mentioned work, as did two others who only mentioned the work their relatives hoped to find. An adolescent boy from Morazán specified that his two brothers left to find work in the United States, because "there's no work here." Undoubtedly, poverty and better-paid work were part of their relatives' reason for going, but it also seemed to be the reason families felt most comfortable discussing. For example, the 15-year-old girl from Cuscatlán department explicitly said that her mother left for "a better life" but also knew she had survived domestic violence at her father's hands. The 10-year-old girl from Cuscatlán also thought that her father had left to better support them through the work he could get in the US. In Cuscatlán, he had only been able to work as a small-boat operator [*lanchero*] – and likely fisherman – which had not paid well, even though she knew that her older brother's father was in prison, he was being forcibly recruited into the gang and her mother was being extorted.

Ten children – four girls and six boys – knew their family members fled threats, crime or insecurity by various actors, some just a few months before and others 17 or 18 years prior. Two siblings from Ahuachapán knew that their father had threatened to kill their mother when she fled to the US eight years earlier. Four more children – one boy and three girls – understood that gang members had threatened to kill their fathers, uncle and older brother. Two added that the gang members extorted their fathers, with a 13-year-old girl from Sonsonate department further specifying that the gang beat him in the street and told him to leave when he failed to pay them (after they had raised the extortion amount to one he could not pay). The other four children did not say who had threatened their relatives, but one boy each noted that his uncle

and his father, respectively, had been in the military and police and implied that this line of work put them in harm's way. An additional boy from Ahuachapán noted that he himself had been kidnapped, and his cousin was beaten, leading his aunt to leave the country out of fear.

Then, two girls believed their relatives wanted to reunify with other family members. A 17-year-old girl from Sonsonate thought her cousin left because his father had finally gotten his documents for him. An adolescent girl from Chalatenango said that her mother had "followed her husband [the girl's father] there [to the US], just wanting to tour about [*pasear*] and visit him," but they separated. The mother stayed, and the father ended up back in El Salvador, at which point he was no longer involved in her or her siblings' lives. To their knowledge, he did not have other children, though. She did not know why he had originally left El Salvador or why or how he returned to El Salvador after being in the US for three or four years.

Undeniably, children's and adults' stated *and* unstated reasons for migration are critical for developing the policies and practice needed not just in El Salvador but also in transit and destination countries. To the latter, in many cases, children's non-stated reasons for migrating – especially being directly threatened or orphaned – were often those that would most entitle them to legal relief in the United States. I explore more the challenge this created for me as a researcher who cares deeply about children and adolescents' voices and agency in the next methodology chapter. Essentially, I had knowledge about different legal options in the United States that few – if any – of those we interviewed did, and so I had to determine whether or how to combine that knowledge with children's responses at the analyses and presentation phases of this study. What I decided was in Salvadorans' best interest had costs for fully displaying children's agency and framing.

1.3 Legal Status of Salvadorans in the United States

Despite an aforementioned estimate of 2,587,767 Salvadorans in the United States in 2011, according to the US Census Bureau, in 2014, some 1,370,000 persons living in the United States were born in El Salvador (Cohn, Passel and Gonzalez-Barrera 2017), in addition to approximately 935,000 persons who were born in the United States to at least one Salvadoran-born parent (MPI 2015).[13] As of 2017, only approximately 33 percent of foreign-born Salvadorans in the United States held citizenship or lawful permanent residency (Cohn, Passel and Gonzalez-Barrera 2017; Pew Research Center 2009, 2010, Dockterman 2011, Motel and Patten 2012, Brown and Patten 2013, Lopez and Rohal 2015). The others hold a temporary or precarious legal status or lack status altogether (Kennedy and Parker 2020). The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) found that Salvadorans' overwhelming lack of permanent status "poses legal and financial barriers to advancement in higher education and professional settings, ineligibility for public benefits, difficulty accessing health care, constraints on acquiring significant assets due to low income and limited access to credit" (MPI 2015).

As of 2021, more than 240,000 had Temporary Protected Status, TPS (Sacchetti 2022). A series of earthquakes struck El Salvador in 2001, and the US government extended the status to approximately 217,000 qualifying Salvadorans residing in the US at the time of the disasters. Renewed every two years, it can be extended as long as return is not safe. This has left the status, and those who hold it, in constant doubt every time renewal approaches. Likewise, while those who have this status can legally live and work in the US, they do not receive so-called derivative benefits, meaning that they cannot bring their children, partners or other immediate

[13] The Salvadoran population in the United States – composed of those born in El Salvador and born in the United States to at least one parent who was born in El Salvador – is one of the fastest growing immigrant groups. The percentage that are foreign-born is higher than for most other groups but has been steadily declining from 66.1 percent in 2007 to 57 percent in 2017, according to United States Census Bureau figures.

relatives to live with them. They are also more exposed to deportation if put into certain types of criminal or civil legal proceedings.

In 2012, the Obama Administration provided some 26,000 Salvadorans with "Deferred Action or Childhood Arrivals (DACA)" status (Kennedy and Parker 2020). This was for children who arrived to the US prior to the age of 16, completed their schooling in the US and remained in good "moral" standing. In 2014, the Obama administration created the Deferred Action for Parents (DAPA), meant for certain parents of US citizens and lawful permanent residents. As with TPS, DACA and DAPA grantees can legally live and work in the US but have no derivative benefits and are more exposed to deportation. Similarly, like TPS, Trump administration officials sought to end the programs, and challenges to all are still winding their way through the courts and Biden Administration.

Then, despite significant barriers to doing so, over 230,000 Salvadorans began seeking asylum in Mexico, the US and at least 35 other nations in this same period.[14] Between 2012 and 2017, the number of Salvadoran annual asylum applicants in the US grew by nearly 1,000 percent, from about 5,600 to over 60,000. By 2018, Salvadorans had the largest number (101,000) of any nationality of pending asylum applications in the US;[15] at the same time, approximately 129,500 more Salvadorans had pending asylum applications in numerous other countries throughout the world. Even with further barriers, an increasing number of Salvadorans received asylum. Yet, Salvadorans face among the highest rejection rates in their

[14] UNHCR's website, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers, has data by country of origin and destination for asylum seekers back to 1951. Since 2000, when it starts tracking, Salvadorans have sought asylum in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and Venezuela.

[15] Salvadorans also had the largest number of asylum applications in the United States throughout most of the 1980s and through the late-1990s, according to Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) annual yearbooks.

asylum proceedings, particularly in the United States to where most flee. For example, while Salvadorans have asylum recognition rates as high as 75 percent in other Central American nations, and 38 percent in Mexico, the US recognized just 18.2 percent of Salvadorans as qualifying for asylum from 2014 to 2018 – which was an improvement from rates between six and eight percent prior to this period and two and four percent in the 1980's. The reasons Salvadorans face such high rejection rates are numerous: geopolitical and historical biases, lower education levels, no right to legal representation, particularly when detained,[16] and lack of awareness that the legal process even matters,[17] among others. For those who receive asylum, though, they are granted lawful permanent residence, entitling them to derivative benefits. After five years, they can apply for citizenship. As examined in the penultimate chapter on poverty as a cause of children's migration, I have found that children's and families' economic situation vastly improves upon obtaining legal status in the US.

1.4 Poverty and Health As Causes

[16] Through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) at Syracuse University has determined representation rates of child immigrants in recent years (TRAC 2014, 2015, 2017). Presumably, they have the highest representation rates. In the period from Fiscal Year 2012 to 2014, only about 32 percent of children were represented by an attorney. TRAC determined this was the single most important factor in children's immigration proceeding outcomes. For children with representation, 73 percent were allowed to remain in the US, 15 percent received voluntary departure orders, and only 12 percent were ordered removed. For children without representation, though, only 15 percent were allowed to remain, five percent received voluntary departure orders and 80 percent were ordered removed. Thirty-six percent of Salvadoran children had representation in this period. TRAC also found that women with children had far greater likelihood of getting to stay legally in the US with representation than without it (TRAC 2015). Among women with children who had representation, 32.9 percent could stay, but only 2.3 percent of those without representation could. In all three papers, TRAC classified being able to stay with: a grant of relief, other closure, termination of proceedings and prosecutorial discretion.

[17] Baker-Cristales (2004), for example, found that Salvadoran migrants she interviewed defined themselves via "economic roles rather than their legal status in the United States" (Baker-Cristales 2004). Because they were doing honest work that society needed, they viewed themselves as good and productive members of society, even when they did not have legal status. Notably, many obtain social security cards in order to work, and while they will never access those benefits without legal status, they do pay into the system at higher rates than their children study in K-12 schools.

While deciding which of the data I analyzed for my dissertation, I waivered substantially but ultimately elected the data on poverty that everyone wanted centered back in 2014. … and still now, because I hope to fully unpack the various elements it entails. It was the widely accepted reason among officials and what authorities from El Salvador, the United States and even other nations wanted emphasized. I learned through experience that it was the short and easy response by child and adult migrants themselves. When I did my first interviews at the return center, and wrongly thought children and families would talk with me only a few minutes, the responses I most got for why children were leaving were: "a better future," "a better life" and "to get ahead."

Poverty is the safe and uncomplicated reason for everyone. Except, I choose to center poverty as a cause of children's migration for this dissertation, because it is a quite complex reason for migration and is part of many other reasons this study analyzes. Poverty as a cause of migration has not been appropriately discussed and contextualized historically or presently. Throughout the 1980s, Reagan and his administration sought to portray Central American refugees as economic migrants seeking work in the United States. Indeed, most people who migrate want to work upon arrival to the new country, but that admirable desire for the future is not necessarily the story of why they left home behind. At the same time, humans can live in poverty and have a dignified life and choose to stay. Humans can have many reasons for leaving behind home, with poverty being one of them, but other factors weighing equally or more heavily. It is unfair to portray them as economically motivated, when in fact, they often do the US's most laboriously intense and least paid jobs – indeed typically working two or more of them and remaining below the poverty line in the US, with limited or no access to social service programs.

And, in fact, poverty is not a safe reason at all, because it puts on display the many failures of neoliberal governance that rarely get addressed: the very abandonment of the State of the majority of its people. It also connects to the ways that poverty is part of the everyday violence and suffering for the vast majority of Salvadorans. It may even be the root of all the other reasons children gave. To this end, it also seemed important to include related demographic and health components.

I posit that children's expressions of wanting "more opportunity," "a better future," "a better life" and "to get ahead" most capture the revolutionary hope contained in their complex decisions to leave behind a country with limited options for the poor. Specifically, I tie it to Capabilities Approach scholars' urging to focus on what each person is able to do and be (Sen 1979, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1999; Nussbaum 2011), rather than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Income (GNI). Like such scholars, children focused on the critical importance of education, health and bodily integrity to their and their families' short- and long-term wellbeing.

1.5 Following Chapters

The next chapter presents the methodology used for this study. Beyond the interviews conducted with children and families, I sought different sources regarding reasons to migrate, in order to validate the data collected. The chapter briefly explains the process for each, discusses why research on migration must consider stated *and* unstated reasons for migration and then gives a synopsis of those who participated.

Subsequently, a chapter on El Salvador's political economy relates today's migration to El Salvador's pre-war period, when poor communities organized to demand that their rights be respected. They wanted their own land to farm, healthcare and education for themselves

and their children, a dignified life and so much more. They disproportionately fought in the war and lost their lives or became displaced. Yet, they were least served by the war, and in many ways today find themselves in similar or worse situations than in the pre-war and war periods today. Silber (2011) argues that for this reason, having seen that war did not serve their revolutionary goals, migration has become the home of revolutionary imagination and hope.

A chapter on El Salvador's demography follows. It begins with the three children who listed their health or a relative's health as a reason for their migration but then expands to examine more broadly El Salvador's health panorama and various demographic trends. Critically, it discusses that when mothers had more children than the average Salvadoran woman, children were more likely to have been abandoned or orphaned. This happened in conjunction with several other household and family dynamics.

The penultimate chapter reviews poverty as a cause of children's migration. It begins with the 37 boys and 12 girls who explicitly listed this but then shows that most – if not all – children we interviewed were living in poverty and seemed more likely than the general population to belong to the various sectors – the rural poor, informal and agricultural workers and households without adult males – especially worse off post-war than even before and during the war. From there, I inspect the contours of poverty in their lives to unpack them in light of the Capabilities Approach. I explore how their hopes to get out of poverty had even more to do with the desire to be able to become, if not fully themselves, at least more of themselves than El Salvador's lowest class structure permits.

Finally, to conclude, I bring this dissertation to the present day, summarizing events of the past few years that mark a serious regression of human rights in El Salvador. I close the

chapter and dissertation with several policy recommendations to the various actors with an obligation to heed them.

Chapter 2. Methodology: Many Factors Spoken and Unspoken

Figure 2 A family's belongings on a bench at the Migrant Return Center

In 2014, just over 3,000 Salvadoran children were deported from Mexico. Table 9 below shows the reported department of residence of those children. The largest number and percentage of children came from its most populous department: San Salvador.

Table 9 Children Deported from Mexico in 2014 by Department of Residence

Department	Number	Percentage
Ahuachapán	123	4.1
Cabañas	192	6.4
Chalatenango	137	4.6
Cuscatlán	78	2.6
La Libertad	239	8.0
La Paz	224	7.5
La Unión	244	8.1
Morazán	124	4.1
San Miguel	406	13.5
San Salvador	447	14.9
San Vicente	130	4.3
Santa Ana	173	5.8
Sonsonate	163	5.4
Usulután	322	10.7
NATION	3,002	100

In total, from January to September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted just short of 600 interviews with 232 girls, 417 boys and their adult relatives among them, as described in more detail below. While those interviewed had been deported from Mexico, rather than the United States, over 90 percent wanted to reach more than 20 states in the US to live with a parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, or uncle in most cases. In El Salvador, children's families lived in at least 411 neighborhoods of 155 municipalities in all 14 departments of the country.[18] From each department, we interviewed between 15 and 34 percent of the children who migrated in 2014, as displayed in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Salvadoran Children Deported from Mexico Who We Interviewed by Department of Residence

	Girls	Boys	Total	Percentage
Ahuachapán	9	30	39	32
Cabañas	18	29	47	25
Chalatenango	8	25	33	24
Cuscatlán	6	6	12	15
La Libertad	14	23	37	16
La Paz	17	23	40	18
La Unión	36	47	83	34
Morazán	5	28	33	26
San Miguel	26	52	78	67
San Salvador	33	46	79	18
San Vicente	16	18	34	26
Santa Ana	20	31	51	30
Sonsonate	8	21	29	18
Usulután	14	38	52	16
NATION	230	417	647	22

The methodology used obtained data on both the explicit reasons that children and adolescents gave for their migration, alongside the reasons that children and adolescents did not explicitly give that nonetheless seemed to play a role in their decisions – or would have entitled them to

[18] El Salvador has 262 municipalities and 14 departments. Departments are equivalent to states or provinces in other countries.

legal status, if they reached the United States. I elected to analyze the interviews by geographic department, and when possible, municipality and neighborhood as well. Likewise, I analyzed the interviews by stated reason for migrating and unstated reasons for migrating that might have entitled children to legal relief in the United States and other countries.

After doing so, in the years that followed, I created several databases to triangulate the interviews by department and theme. I reviewed DIGESTYC annual multi-household surveys and census data. I also compiled some information on Salvadorans in the United States from United States Census Bureau data. Inspired by the methodology used by the *Instituto Universitario en Democracia, Paz y Seguridad (IUDPAS),* University Institute of Democracy, Peace and Security in Honduras, to better understand children's neighborhood dynamics, for some municipalities and the entire department of Morazán, I conducted systematic news searches to the neighborhood-level in 15 of El Salvador's media outlets. I further conducted a systematic search of some municipalities in three sources: the Attorney General's twitter account (@FGR_SV), the National Civilian Police's account (@PNCSV) and the database of monthly press monitoring on gender- and sexual-based violence from January 2007 to present by the *Organización de Mujeres Salvadoreñas por la Paz* (ORMUSA), Organization of Salvadoran Women for Peace.[19] To better understand their municipalities, departments and crime, I requested, compiled and analyzed the following from Salvadoran government offices: homicide and rape by sex for all 262 municipalities of El Salvador from 2013 to 2018; child disappearance from 2013 to 2021; and municipal and departmental arrest, hearing and

[19] Salvadoran authorities most use Twitter to distribute information about their activities. The Salvadoran press closely monitor these accounts, and like the Salvadoran authorities themselves, the press and other researchers recommend systematic searches of the aforementioned Twitter accounts as the best way to capture the most thorough accounting of authorities' actions and reporting. Analyses of the results cannot be a complete accounting of conditions in the municipality, because neither of the sources recorded all crimes that occurred, but it can provide a fuller picture of these dynamics, particularly keeping in mind this is a minimum accounting of the crimes and actors there.

conviction rates by sex for both homicide and rape from 2013 to 2018. Upon compiling and analyzing the quantitative data, I then conducted additional qualitative interviews – during 12 research trips back to El Salvador starting in June 2016 and going through the COVID19 pandemic's start – with officials at DIGESTYC, medical forensic bodies, district attorney's offices, police stations, public hospitals and migrant offices; international diplomatic and non-profit workers; local and international reporters and researchers; and several former gang members. Among many topics, I spoke with them about the neighborhoods where children lived and visited dozens of them myself, in addition to talking about each major cause that children gave for their migration. As I did this, I was in frequent contact with Salvadorans seeking asylum in several countries, their attorneys, and through my role as an expert in their cases, government attorneys and immigration judges.

Additionally, I followed up with children and families interviewed in 2014, to the extent I had a working phone number for them. In June 2016, I followed up with children and families I could contact in the departments of San Vicente and Usulután and those who had made it to the US from them. In July 2017, I conducted follow-up interviews with those I could contact in the department of Morazán and those who had made it to the US from them. From October 2018 to January 2020, I conducted follow-up interviews with those I could contact in the other 11 departments and those who had made it to the US from them.

Undeniably, the amount of time and work this all took has been incredibly burdensome. Indeed, in hindsight, I think it should have been a team project from its very beginning so that everything could have been completed and published more quickly and regularly. But it has also yielded incredibly deep and wide insights. This study is the first of its kind in several ways: it interviewed a representative sample of Salvadoran child migrants, crossed those

interviews with quantitative and qualitative data sets and provides geographic and gendered insights to both children's and families' migration. As such, the proposed project is critical to better research on migration worldwide and creating holistic and informed policy and practice for child, adult and family migrants at local, national, regional and global levels.

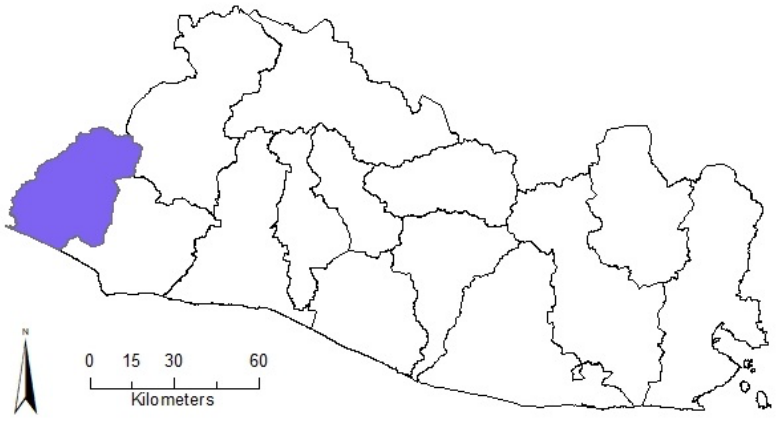
2.1 The Selected Departments and Themes

For this dissertation, I analyzed the combined results for five departments – Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate – on just two themes: children who explicitly stated that they left because of their poverty or health. In the introduction, I explained why I chose poverty as the focus, and having done so, I thought it was particularly important to also discuss demographic trends in the country, which linked well with the few children who had given health as a reason for their migration. When choosing departments for inclusion, I selected five at random, knowing that I will later analyze all departments. The five that returned have a good representation of factors I thought would be important. First, each region of the country is represented: Ahuachapán and Sonsonate in the Western Region, Chalatenango and Cuscatlán in the Central Region and Morazán in the Eastern Region. Second, areas heavily affected by the war are included – Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Morazán – as are areas least touched by the war – Ahuachapán and Sonsonate. Third, the departments with the lowest homicide rates – Chalatenango and Morazán – and the highest homicide rate – Cuscatlán – returned. Fourth, areas home to various crops are involved: indigo in Chalatenango and Morazán, coffee in Ahuachapán and Sonsonate and cotton and sugarcane in a few coastal areas of Ahuachapán and Sonsonate. Fifth, departments with the lowest and highest levels of emigration were included: in 2007, an estimated 27.2 percent of Morazán residents and 23.8 percent of Chalatenango residents had migrated, ranking them third and fifth, respectively,

while Ahuachapán and Sonsonate ranked ninth and 11th with just 13.1 and 11.9 percent of their residents having migrated (DIGESTYC 2008). Nonetheless, as discussed in subsequent chapters, these departments are unique in that their populations are primarily rural, possibly skewing the findings as a result. Future analyses of all departments, including those that have primarily urban populations, will clarify whether or not this is the case.

Many directions remain for exploration with this study. For a full geographic account of children's socioeconomic reasons for migrating, the other nine departments should be incorporated to compare and contrast how children's locations influenced these factors. Likewise, rather than just contextualizing the children's interviews with 2014 DIGESTYC data, it would be especially insightful to add multiple years before and after the 2014 interviews of DIGESTYC's data. In the same vein, it would be more powerful to consult US Census Bureau data on Salvadorans in the US for multiple years. Then, fully unpacking children's other reasons for migrating related to violence, family dynamics and the environment are absolutely critical.

The Department of Ahuachapán



The department of Ahuachapán is at El Salvador's western-most corner. To its north and west is the nation of Guatemala, to its south the Pacific Ocean, and the Salvadoran departments of

Santa Ana and Sonsonate to its east. As such, it – like Santa Ana and Sonsonate with whom they form the country's Western zone – is strategically located for international trade and migration *via* Guatemala and the sea. In its northwest, Ahuachapán has forested and mountainous areas, and near the sea, it has numerous small islands isolated by tributaries to the sea.

The department of Ahuachapán was the nation's seventh most populous department in 2007 with 164,344 females and 155,159 males for a total population of 319,503. These Ahuachapán residents lived in 12 municipalities. With a population over 110,511, Ahuachapán is the most populous municipality and the departmental capital. The department has four more municipalities with populations between 20,000 and 35,000,[20] two with populations between 10,000 and 19,999,[21] and four with populations of less than 9,999.[22] Across the department, most residents live in rural areas, as only 42 percent of its population lived in an urban center.

In 2014, El Salvador's migration agency (DGME) processed 123 children who resided in Ahuachapán department before their land deportation from Mexico.[23] Between February and September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted interviews with 39 of them (32%): nine girls, 30 boys and 12 of their adult relatives, including mothers, brothers, aunts, cousins, a grandmother, a stepmother and a sister from at least 25 neighborhoods of six municipalities. We also interviewed four young men between the ages of 19 and 26.

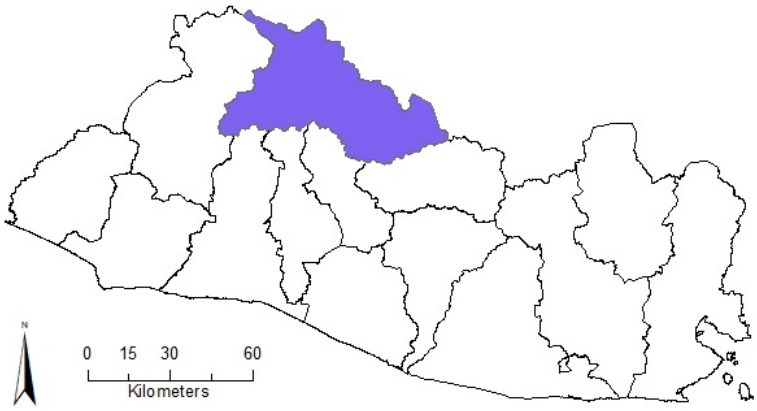
[20] The four municipalities are Atiquizaya, Jujutla, Tacuba and Turín.
[21] The two municipalities are Concepción de Ataco and Guaymango.
[22] The four municipalities are Apaneca, El Refugio, San Lorenzo, and San Pedro Puxtla.
[23] During the same period, DGME processed 1,041 adults (1,164 total) who lived there prior to their land deportation from Mexico, versus 134 children and 1,059 adults (1,193 total) born in the department who were deported that year by land from Mexico. DGME further processed 32 children and 1,338 adults (1,370 total) living there deported by air in 2014 and 39 children and 1,351 adults (1,390 total) born there deported by air in 2014.

In Ahuachapán department, most of those who worked in the households farmed and ranched.[24] Two single mothers sold vegetables, sweets and tortillas. Members of one's household had been threatened, just as a boy who sold at market the crops he harvested had been threatened and beaten. A few males worked at mechanic shops, in metal work or in carpentry. One male or female each worked at a nursing home, as a lawyer, in Customs at the El Salvador-Guatemala border, as a small store operator, cleaning a Mormon church and at a community radio station. Among the few children who reported their household income, it ranged from U$200.00 to U$700.00 a month.

Ahuachapán Interviews at a Glance	
Number interviewed	39
Age range	1 to 17
Regular church attendance	14
Number of municipalities	6
Number of neighborhoods	25
Number discussing daily gang presence	29
Number discussing daily authority presence	9
Number whose family already victim(s) of crime	11
Number who reported crime	2
Traveling with an adult	16
Headed to US	38
Had relatives in US	37
Orphaned or abandoned	15
Already internally displaced	3
Number planning to migrate again	4

The Department of Chalatenango

[24] One boy told us that he made the standard rate for his agricultural work in the Ahuachapán department, which was two installments of U$57.00 each month. Another told us he made U$6.00 per day.



The department of Chalatenango forms part of El Salvador's central region, with the departments of La Libertad, San Salvador and Cuscatlán immediately to its south. To its north, it shares an international border with Honduras, and to its southeast, it shares a border with Cabañas department. Much of its terrain is mountainous. The department is home to El Salvador's highest point: El Pital, right on the border with Honduras. It has often been referred to as the "*tierra olvidada* [forgotten land]" (Todd 2010).

In 2007, the department of Chalatenango was the nation's fourth least populous department with 100,613 females and 92,175 males for a total population of 192,788. These Chalatenango residents live in 33 municipalities. With a population of 29,271, Chalatenango is the department's capital and most populous municipality, closely followed by Nueva Concepción, with a population of 28,625. The three municipalities of Tejutla, La Palma, and El Paraíso have populations between 10,000 and 14,000. Then, 28 municipalities have a population of less than 10,000.[25] Across all municipalities, most residents live in rural areas: only 33 percent of the department lives in an urban center.

[25] These 28 are: Agua Caliente, Arcatao, Azacualapa, [San Jose] Cancasque, Citala, Comalapa, Concepcion Quezaltepeque, Dulce Nombre de Maria, El Carrizal, La Laguna, Las Flores, Las Vueltas, Nombre de Jesus, Nueva Trinidad, Ojos de Agua, Potonico, San Antonio de la Cruz, San Antonio Los Ranchos, San Fernando, San Francisco Lempa, San Francisco Morazan, San Ignacio, San Isidro Labrador, San Luis del Carmen, San Miguel de Mercedes, San Rafael and Santa Rita.

In 2014, El Salvador's migration agency (DGME) processed 137 children who resided in Chalatenango department before their land deportation from Mexico.[26] Between February and September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted interviews with 33 of them (24%): eight girls, 25 boys and 10 of their adult relatives, including a mother, two fathers, three brothers, three sisters (which one of the boys did not mention but the migration agency had recorded) and the sister-in-law of the boy's aunt from at least 23 neighborhoods of 14 municipalities.

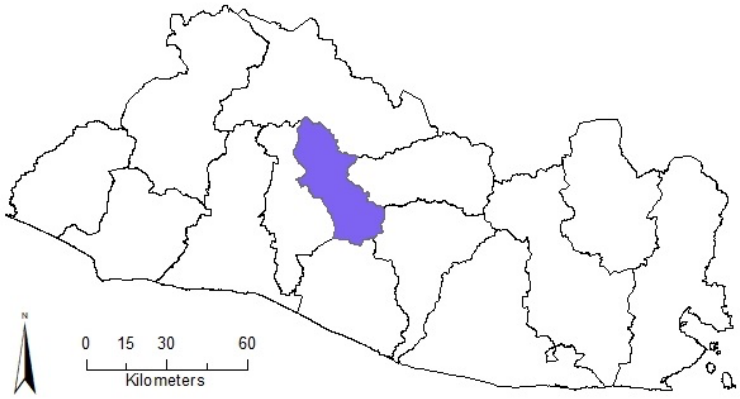
Throughout Chalatenango department, most males in the interviewed children's households worked in agriculture and construction. However, one was a teacher, one worked at a pizzeria and one worked at a laundromat. Before their murders, one father owned a cattle business, and one had been a gang member. Only four females acknowledged working outside their home. One provided childcare to others, one was a nurse (since murdered), one made pupusas and one cleaned and cooked in others' homes. Only two households reported their monthly income, with one solely relying on U$400 in remittances and the other receiving a combined total of U$300 from the grandmother's work and mother's remittances.

Chalatenango Interviews at a Glance	
Number interviewed	33
Age range	3 to 17
Regular church attendance	7
Number of municipalities	14
Number of neighborhoods	23
Number discussing daily gang presence	18
Number discussing daily authority presence	6
Number whose family already victim(s) of crime	12
Number who reported crime	0

[26] During the same period, 763 adults (900 total) who resided in Chalatenango department were deported by land from Mexico, versus 197 children and 868 adults (1,065 total) born there and deported by land. In contrast, 40 children and 1,979 adults (2,019 total) who were deported by air were born in Chalatenango, versus 35 children and 1,903 adults (1,938 total) living there before air deportation.

Traveling with an adult	9
Headed to US	32
Had relatives in US	32
Orphaned or abandoned	22
Already internally displaced	3
Number planning to migrate again	8

The Department of Cuscatlán



The department of Cuscatlán also forms part of El Salvador's central region, with the departments of Chalatenango to its north and San Salvador to its east.[27] To its west are the departments of Cabañas and San Vicente, and to its south is La Paz department. Portions of Cuscatlán's terrain are forested, mountainous and fertile for farming because of the Ilopango Lake at its southeast corner, Suchitlán Lake at its northwest corner and proximity to several volcanoes.

In 2007, the department of Cuscatlán had a population of 231,480. Females outnumbered males by approximately 13 to 12, as 120,384 were females, and 111,096 were males. It was therefore the fifth least populous department, ranking it tenth of 14. The department is divided into 16 municipalities, only three of which had populations greater than

[27] The La Libertad department is east of San Salvador and is also part of the central region.

20,000.[28] Five had populations between 10,000 and 19,999,[29] and eight had populations smaller than 10,000.[30] Across municipalities, Cuscatlán is mostly rural, with just 41.8 percent of the population living in urban areas.

In 2014, El Salvador's migration agency (DGME) processed 78 children after deportation from Mexico who resided in Cuscatlán department.[31] Between March and August 2014, Karla Castillo and I interviewed 12 of them (15%): six boys, six girls and four of their adult relatives, including two mothers, a father and a brother from at least eight neighborhoods of five municipalities. We also interviewed a single woman and a single man in their early-twenties.

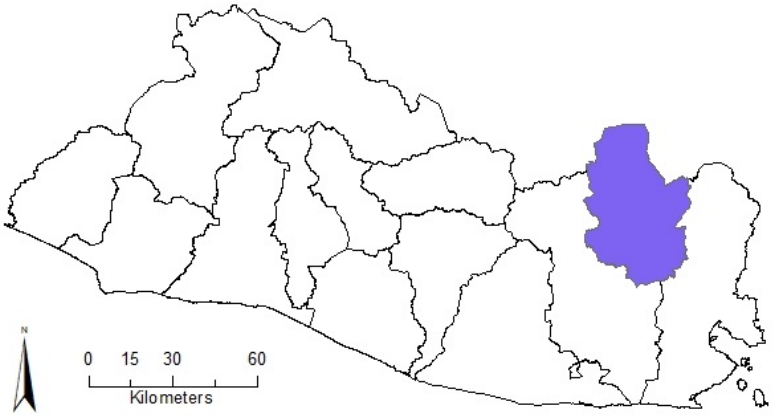
Throughout Cuscatlán department, most males in the children's households worked in agriculture, although one worked for a transport cooperative. Most females stayed in the home and relied upon remittances. One female was an in-home nurse, another a waitress, and another a saleswoman at the market. Only two households disclosed their monthly income, each of which solely received U$100 or U$200 in remittances.

Cuscatlán Interviews at a Glance	
Number interviewed	12
Age range	4 to 17
Regular church attendance	6
Number of municipalities	5
Number of neighborhoods	8
Number discussing daily gang presence	12
Number discussing daily authority presence	1

[28] Cojutepeque, San Pedro Perulapán and Suchitoto.
[29] Candelaria, El Carmen, Monte San Juan, San Rafael Cedros and Santa Cruz Michapa.
[30] El Rosario, Oratorio de Concepción, San Bartolomé Perulapia, San Cristóbal, San José Guayabal, San Ramón, Santa Cruz Analquito and Tenancingo.
[31] During the same period, it processed 589 adults, or 667 children *and* adults. 561 adults and 107 children who were deported by bus from Mexico in 2014 were born in the department, compared to 896 adults and 19 children who lived there prior to air deportation and 892 adults and 27 children born there.

Number whose family already victim(s) of crime	10
Number who reported crime	0
Traveling with an adult	7
Headed to US	11
Had relatives in US	11
Orphaned or abandoned	3
Already internally displaced	5
Number planning to migrate again	6

The Department of Morazán



The department of Morazán forms part of El Salvador's eastern region, with the departments of La Unión to its east and south and Usulután to its west and south.[32] To its north, it shares an international border with Honduras. Like Chalatenango, much of Morazán's terrain is forested and mountainous.

In 2007, the department of Morazán was El Salvador's third least populous with 91,953 females and 82,543 males for a total population of 174,406. Females outnumbered males by more than 10 to nine. Residents lived in 26 municipalities. With a population of 21,049, San Francisco Gotera is the department's capital and most populous. Six other municipalities have

[32] The eastern region also includes the department of San Miguel.

a population between 10,000 and 19,999.[33] Nineteen others have a population smaller than 10,000.[34] Across them, most residents live in rural areas: only 26 percent of the department lived in an urban center

In 2014, El Salvador's migration agency (DGME) processed 124 children who resided in Morazán department before their land deportation from Mexico.[35] Between February and September 2014, Karla Castillo and I conducted interviews with 33 of them (26%): five girls, 28 boys and 10 of their adult relatives, including mothers, fathers, stepfathers and sisters from at least 26 neighborhoods of 16 municipalities.

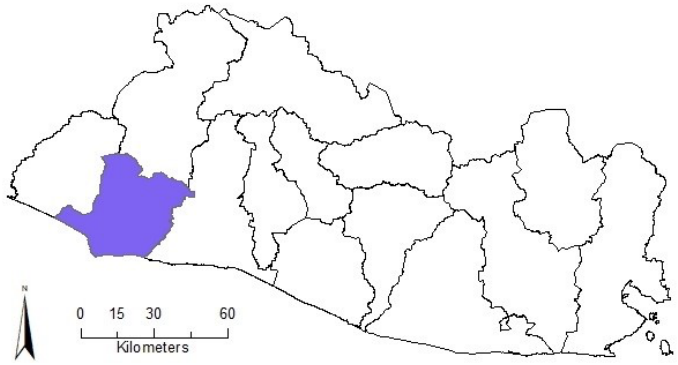
Throughout Morazán department, most males in the interviewed children's households worked in agriculture and construction. However, one each worked for the government's electric energy company, military, police and public transport. Only five females acknowledged working outside their home. One cleaned and cooked in others' homes, while at least two operated a small store from their homes, one made bread and another made food that she sold from her home. Only six households reported their monthly income, with all of these solely relying on remittances of between U$150 and U$400.

Morazán Interviews at a Glance	
Number interviewed	33
Age range	0.5 to 17
Regular church attendance	9
Number of municipalities	16
Number of neighborhoods	26

[33] These six are: Cacaopera, Corinto, Guatajiagua, Jocoro, San Simón and Sociedad.
[34] These 19 are: Arámbala, Chilanga, Delicias de Concepción, El Divisadero, El Rosario, Gualococti, Joateca, Jocoaitique, Lolotiquillo, Meanguera, Osicala, Perquín, San Carlos, San Fernando, San Isidro, Sensembra, Torola, Yamabal and Yoloaiqiun.
[35] During the same period, 629 adults (753 total) who resided in the department were deported by land from Mexico, versus 151 children and 722 adults (873 total) born there and deported by land. In contrast, 33 children and 1,510 adults (1,543 total) who were deported by air were born in Morazán, versus 24 children and 1,378 adults (1,402 total) living there before air deportation.

Number discussing daily gang presence	23
Number discussing daily authority presence	7
Number whose family already victim(s) of crime	16
Number who reported crime	2
Traveling with an adult	10
Headed to US	30
Had relatives in US	30
Orphaned or abandoned	7
Already internally displaced	8
Number planning to migrate again	10

The Department of Sonsonate



The department of Sonsonate additionally forms part of El Salvador's western region, with the departments of Ahuachapán to its west and Santa Ana to its north. To its south is the Pacific Ocean. For this reason, much of Sonsonate's terrain is coastal.

In 2007, the department of Sonsonate had a total population of 438,960, making it El Salvador's fourth most populous department. Females outnumbered males by more than 16 to 15, as 226,708 were female, and 212,252 were male. Sonsonate residents lived in 16 municipalities, three of which have populations over 50,000.[36] Four have populations between

[36] They are: Acajutla (52,359), Izalco (70,959) and Sonsonate (71,541).

25,000 and 49,999.[37] Six have populations between 10,000 and 24,999,[38] and three have populations of less than 9,999.[39] Across the 16, a total of 59.5 percent of the department lived in urban areas.

In 2014, El Salvador's migration agency (DGME) processed 163 children after deportation from Mexico who resided in Sonsonate department. Between February and September 2014, Karla Castillo and I interviewed 29 of them (18%): eight girls, 21 boys and 14 of their adult relatives, including mothers, fathers, brothers, aunts and cousins from at least 18 neighborhoods of 10 municipalities.

Throughout Sonsonate department, most males in children's households worked in agriculture or sold various goods and products in the streets or at market. Three worked in public transport on buses they drove or owned. One man each made bread,[40] collected debts or worked as a guard. It was less common for women to work outside the home, but among those who did, most sold various goods or products in the streets or at market or worked cleaning and cooking in the homes of others (and in one case a church). One woman each made dresses or worked in a hotel or restaurant.

Sonsonate Interviews at a Glance	
Number interviewed	29
Age range	1 to 17
Regular church attendance	11
Number of municipalities	10
Number of neighborhoods	18
Number discussing daily gang presence	21
Number discussing daily authority presence	12

[37] The four are: Armenia (34,912), Nahuizalco, San Antonio del Monte (26,902), and Sonzacate (25,005).
[38] The six are: Cuisnahuat (12,676), Juayua (24,465), Nahuilingo (10,417), San Julián (18,648), Santa Catarina Masahuat (10,076) and Santa Isabel Ishuatán (10,241).
[39] The three are: Caluco (9,139), Salcoatitán (5,484), and Santo Domingo de Guzmán (7,055).
[40] This boy said he was paid USD $10 a day, four days a week for his work at the bakery.

Number whose family already victim(s) of crime	14
Number who reported crime	2
Traveling with an adult	17
Headed to US	29
Had relatives in US	27
Orphaned or abandoned	15
Already internally displaced	5
Number planning to migrate again	11

2.2 Key Characteristics of the Children from the Five Departments

Ages

Table 11 Children's Age Range

	Girls	Boys
Range	1 to 17	0.5 to 17

As shown in Table 11 above, the children ranged in age from six months to 17 years old, with an average age of 13.4 and mode age of 17. Consistent with the child migrant population who arrives to the United States, most children – girls and boys – were adolescents. Table 12 below shows the average age of children by sex and department. On average, the girls were slightly younger than the boys. Children from Chalatenango department tended to be the oldest, while children from Sonsonate department tended to be the youngest.

Table 12 Average Age of Children by Department

	Girls	Boys
Ahuachapán	13	13
Chalatenango	15	15.5
Cuscatlán	14.5	12
Morazán	12	15
Sonsonate	10	13

Rural-Urban Breakdown

By the 2007 census, El Salvador's urban population had grown even larger, with 63 percent of the nation among it (DIGESTYC 2007). Table 13 below shows the rural-urban breakdown for

the nation and the five selected departments at the 2007 census. Notably, all five of the selected departments had a larger rural population than the national average. This remained consistent at the 2014 Multihousehold survey, when the rural population inched up to 37.7 percent at the national level (DIGESTYC 2014).

Table 13 Rural and Urban Population by Department (2007 Census)

	Rural	%		Urban	%		Total
Ahuachapán	184,578	58		134,925	42		319,503
Chalatenango	128,640	67		64,148	33		192,788
Cuscatlán	134,788	58		96,692	42		231,480
Morazán	128,845	74		45,561	26		174,406
Sonsonate	177,612	40		261,348	60		438,960
NATION	2,145,277	37		3,598,836	63		5,744,113

From the beginning, we regularly asked children and their relatives if they lived in a rural or urban area. Few knew what this meant and preferred not to provide a response as a result. Table 14 below shows the rural-urban breakdown among the 38 percent – 15 girls and 40 boys – who did respond, so they are values as reported by children themselves.

Table 14 Rural-Urban Breakdown among Children Interviewed by Department who Reported

	Rural							Urban					
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%		Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	2	50	7	50	9	50		2	50	7	50	9	50
Chalatenango	3	75	5	71	8	73		1	25	2	29	3	27
Cuscatlán	2	67	1	50	3	60		1	33	1	50	2	40
Morazán	1	100	10	91	11	92		0	0	1	9	1	8
Sonsonate	0	0	2	33	2	22		3	100	4	67	7	78
Total	8	53	25	63	33	60		7	47	15	38	22	40

Over the years from 2013 to present, I have visited and became familiar with the neighborhoods children gave as their places of residence, and in so doing, could determine if most of the others were rural or urban. Nonetheless, 17 children (12%) – three girls (8%) and 14 boys (13%) – gave us only the name of the municipality or department where they resided, such that I could not make a determination. I also realized that a few children had not correctly identified their

neighborhoods as rural or urban and corrected that. Table 15 below shows the more complete rural-urban breakdown resulting. It is remarkably consistent with the limited set of children's self-reported responses.

Table 15 Rural-Urban Breakdown among Children Interviewed by Department as Determined by Researcher

	Rural							Urban					
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%		Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	4	50	16	62	20	59		4	50	10	38	14	41
Chalatenango	6	86	15	68	21	72		1	14	7	32	8	28
Cuscatlán	3	50	3	50	6	50		3	50	3	50	6	50
Morazán	5	100	23	88	28	90		0	0	3	12	3	10
Sonsonate	0	0	5	33	5	23		7	100	10	67	17	77
Total	18	55	62	65	80	63		15	45	33	35	48	38

The latter table shows that across the five departments, 63 percent of children reported living in a rural area, while 38 percent reported living in an urban area, which indicated that child migrants were slightly more likely to live in rural areas than the general population, even controlling for the five selected departments' greater rurality.

There were gendered and departmental differences, though. Closer to an equal number of girls lived in rural areas as urban areas, but nearly double the number of boys lived in rural areas as in urban areas. Across sexes, children from Sonsonate department were the only ones to more frequently report living in an urban area, which was the case for girls and boys from the department but especially for girls, as none of them lived in a rural area. The 23 (percent rural) – 77 (percent urban) split of the children we interviewed was significantly different than the 40-60 split of the general Sonsonate population. The children from Cuscatlán department also skewed – less drastically – more urban than the general departmental population, with a 50-50 split among interviewees, versus a 58-42 split for the department. The 59-41 split among children interviewed from Ahuachapán department was almost identical to the 58-42 split of the general Ahuachapán population. Otherwise, the children we interviewed from

Chalatenango and Morazán departments were especially more likely to live in rural areas than the general departmental populations, of note since those were the two most rural-leaning departments. The respective split comparison of 72-28 versus 67-33 for Chalatenango was not large, but the comparison of 90-10 versus 74-26 for Morazán was substantial.

Parental Involvement

Nationwide in 2014, DIGESTYC found that 4.2 percent of children had been "abandoned" by their mothers, 28.2 percent by their fathers and 5.4 percent by both parents (DIGESTYC 2014). DIGESTYC tracked three causes of "abandonment": death, migration and abandonment while alive and in the country. Child migrants faced slightly lower rates of abandonment by their mothers than the national population but substantially higher rates of abandonment by their fathers. The one caveat is that I did not classify mothers or fathers who had migrated as having abandoned their children, as long as they were still in contact with each other.

Table 16 Children with Involved Mothers

	Mother					
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	9	100	26	90	35	92
Chalatenango	8	100	24	96	32	97
Cuscatlán	5	83	6	100	11	92
Morazán	5	100	26	93	31	94
Sonsonate	7	88	18	86	25	86
Total	34	94	100	92	134	92

As shown in Table 16 above, all but 11 children (8%) – two girls (6%) and nine boys (8%) – had a relationship with their mothers. The breakdown will be more fully explored in a future publication on the family as a cause of migration. Most children lived with their mothers, including some who were traveling with them and some who were still partnered with their fathers. Others were traveling to their mothers, who in at least some – if not all cases – regularly sent their households remittances for financial support. Among the 11 who did not have a

relationship with their mothers, five children reported that their mothers were dead, all of whom had lived with them until their deaths. The other six said their mothers had abandoned them or never been involved.

Table 17 Children with Involved Fathers

	Father					
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	5	56	18	62	23	61
Chalatenango	2	25	10	40	12	36
Cuscatlán	5	83	5	83	10	83
Morazán	5	100	22	79	27	82
Sonsonate	5	63	11	52	16	55
Total	22	61	66	61	88	61

In contrast, as shown in Table 17 above, only 88 children (61%) – 22 girls (61%) and 66 boys (61%) – had a relationship with their fathers. It was less common for children to live with their fathers, but among those who did, almost all of the fathers were still partnered with their mothers. Others were traveling to their fathers in the United States, who in most cases were still partnered with their mothers (who were often either already living there with them or were traveling with the child, although a few mothers of older children did plan to stay behind in El Salvador). A few children received emotional or financial support from their fathers, although they did not live together. In some of these cases, the father had another family, and in one case, the father lived elsewhere with his other sons to work. Among the 57 children who did not have a relationship with their fathers, 10 reported that their fathers were dead, some of whom had lived with them until their deaths. The other 47 said their fathers had abandoned them or never been involved.

Their Households

As of 2014, 79.5 percent of rural Salvadorans and 84.1 percent of urban Salvadorans lived in households with between two and six members, as shown in Table 18 below (DIGESTYC

2014). Rural areas had slightly more than twice the percentage of households with seven or more people in them (DIGESTYC 2014). A larger percentage of children we interviewed – 87 percent – lived in households with between two and six persons than the general population. A roughly comparable percentage of girls we interviewed lived in households with two to six members – 81 percent – as the general population, but an even larger percentage of boy we interviewed lived in households with two to six members – 89 percent – than the general population and girls we interviewed. This was not the whole story, however. Future publications on the family will more fully address children's family dynamics, but several components bear mentioning for this dissertation. Children migrating were more likely than the general population not to have an adult male in their households. Many child migrants did not live in nuclear families of a mother, father and siblings. Among children who had parents in the United States, many of the parents had children in both El Salvador and the United States.

Table 18 Household Number of Members in Rural and Urban Areas (2014 DIGESTYC)

	Rural			Urban	
	Total Households	%		Total Households	%
1	58,692	9.6		118,994	10.7
2-4	346,137	56.8		703,955	63.3
5-6	138,530	22.7		231,346	20.8
7-9	56,789	9.3		51,514	4.6
10-12	8,355	1.4		5,295	0.5
13+	807	0.1		1,661	0.2

All but eight children we interviewed reported the number of persons living in their household to us, as shown in Table 19 below. All girls did so, as did 103 boys (94 percent). While all boys from Cuscatlán and Morazán departments did so, several boys from the other three departments did not, including one boy from Chalatenango department, three boys from

Ahuachapán department and four boys from Sonsonate department. One of the boys from Ahuachapán department had lived in the United States the last six years and did not have a household in El Salvador anymore. One of the others from Ahuachapán department at least lived with his mother, and the other at least lived with his mother and father. The four boys from Sonsonate department named at least three members in their household and may have had additional members that they did not reference in our interviews.

Table 19 Reported Number of Persons Living in Interviewed Children's Households

	Girls				Boys		
	Range	Mode	Average		Range	Mode	Average
Ahuachapán	2-10	7	5.8		2-8	5	4.7
Chalatenango	2-6	3	3.9		2-14	5	4.5
Cuscatlán	4-10	4	6		2-5	4	3.8
Morazán	2-6	3	3.8		2-9	3	4.4
Sonsonate	3-6	3	4.4		2-7	3	4.2
Total	2-10	3	4.8		2-14	5	4.4

Consistent with the general population that year, three and four were the overall modes for household size among children, but this ranged from three to seven. The overall average was 4.5, which ranged between 3.8 and six across sexes and departments.

The overall mode for girls was three but ranged from that in Chalatenango, Morazán and Sonsonate departments, to four in Cuscatlán department, to seven in Ahuachapán department. The average for girls was 4.8 but ranged between 3.8 in Chalatenango department to six in Cuscatlán department. The largest range for girls was for Ahuachapán, and the smallest was for Sonsonate.

The overall mode for boys was five, but this ranged from three in Morazán and Sonsonate departments (same for girls), to four in Cuscatlán department, to five in Ahuachapán and Chalatenango departments. The boys' average was 4.4, which ranged between 3.8 and 4.7

across all five departments. The largest range was for Chalatenango, and the smallest was for Cuscatlán.

In Ahuachapán department, girls tended to live in larger households than boys, with the girls' average household size at six and boy's average household size at five. In Cuscatlán department, too, the girls' household-size range was larger than the boys'. That said, boys and girls had the same household mode (four), although girls household size average was six, versus boys' four. However, the girls' household-size range in Chalatenango department, average and mode were all smaller than the boys'. Likewise, in Sonsonate department, the girls' household-size range was slightly smaller than the boys'. That said, boys and girls had the same household size average (four) and mode (three). Then, on average, in Morazán department, boys and girls lived in similarly-sized households, but the girls lived in households with a smaller upper limit.

As displayed in Table 20 below, overall, children's household size ranged from two to 14 persons. Only boys from Chalatenango department reported the upper limit of 14, while boys from Cuscatlán department reported an upper limit of just five, and girls from Chalatenango, Morazán and Sonsonate departments reported an upper limit of just six. Although girls from Ahuachapán, Chalatenango and Morazán departments and boys from all departments reported a lower limit of two, girls from Sonsonate reported a lower limit of three, and girls from Cuscatlán department reported a lower limit of four. Most notably, a larger percentage of children we interviewed – 87 percent – lived in households with between two and six persons than the general population.

Table 20 Reported Household Size among Interviewed Children

	2	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*14*
Ahuachapán	3	6	8	7	1	6	3	-	1	-
Chalatenango	5	6	6	12	1	-	1	-	-	1

Cuscatlán	1	-	7	1	1	-	1	-	1	-
Morazán	5	11	6	5	6	-	1	1	-	-
Sonsonate	2	8	4	5	4	2	-	-	-	-
Total	16	31	31	30	13	8	6	1	2	1

As demonstrated in Table 21, girls' household size ranged from two to 10 persons. Only girls from Ahuachapán and Cuscatlán departments reported the upper limit of 10, while girls from the other three departments reported an upper limit of six. While girls from Ahuachapán, Chalatenango and Morazán departments reported a lower limit of two, girls from Sonsonate reported a lower limit of three, and girls from Cuscatlán department reported a lower limit of four. A roughly comparable percentage of girls we interviewed lived in households with two to six members – 81 percent – as the general population.

Table 21 Reported Household Size among Interviewed Girls

	2	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*
Ahuachapán	1	1	2	-	-	3	1	-	1
Chalatenango	1	3	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
Cuscatlán	-	-	3	-	1	-	1	-	1
Morazán	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Sonsonate	-	3	1	2	2	-	-	-	-
Total	3	9	7	5	5	3	2	-	2

As shown in Table 22 below, boys' household size ranged from two to 14 persons. Only boys from Chalatenango department reported the upper limit of 14, while boys from the other four departments reported upper limits of five, seven, eight and nine. Boys from all departments reported a lower limit of two. An even larger percentage of boy we interviewed lived in households with two to six members – 89 percent – than the general population and girls we interviewed.

Table 22 Reported Household Size among Interviewed Boys

	2	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*
Ahuachapán	2	5	6	7	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chalatenango	4	3	5	10	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1

Cuscatlán	1	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Morazán	4	9	6	4	5	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Sonsonate	2	5	3	3	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	13	22	24	25	8	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	1

Household Workers

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 38 children – 78 percent – mentioned who worked in their households. Table 23 below provides key household worker-related information on them.

Table 23 Number of Household Workers

	Girls	Boys	Total
Range	0 to 2	0 to 5	0 to 5
Mode	1	1	1
Average	0.9	1.2	

The average number of household workers was slightly lower for girls and higher for boys than those among all 145. More boys lived in households with a woman being the sole worker, meaning earnings were smaller because of pay disparities (DIGESTYC 2019). It also likely indicates that boys' households especially labored in poorly paid and precarious professions like those covered in the penultimate chapter on poverty. The most common work reported for males was farming and ranching, which several families did together. With the exception of one father who said he worked for the government energy company, the others also reported working in the informal economy as well in construction, transport and natural medicine. All women worked in the informal sector serving others. Six prepared food, two cooked and cleaned in the homes of others, and one each tailored, farmed and worked at a nursing home. The work that household members performed will be discussed in more detail in a future publication on work as a cause of children's migration.

Table 24 Number of Children Working Themselves

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%

Ahuachapán	1	11	9	31	10	26
Chalatenango	0	0	10	40	10	30
Cuscatlán	0	0	1	17	1	8
Morazán	0	0	9	32	9	27
Sonsonate	0	0	5	24	5	17
Total	1	3	34	31	35	24

As shown in Table 24 above, 35 children – 24 percent – explicitly stated that they were working. All but one of them were boys (31 percent). The girl worked 13-hour shifts at a restaurant. The 34 boys who reported working predominantly labored in agriculture, but others mentioned carpentry, transport, construction, a pizzeria and a wash-and-dry. Their work will be explored more in future writing on work as a cause of children's migration.

None of the girls acknowledged the household tasks most likely – cleaning, cooking, childcare, collecting firewood for wood-burning stoves and collecting water from nearby sources – expected of them as work, which will also be examined in future publications on work as a cause of children's migration.[41] A 17-year-old girl was the only one who reported having worked outside the home herself. Upon dropping out of school at sixth grade following the brutal attack on her friend, she went to work caring for two children and an elderly person. She became too afraid to work, though, and was thus not studying or working at the time we met.

Study

Officially, children aged four to 17 are considered school-aged in El Salvador. Pre-school exists for children aged four to six, but enrollments rates – while growing each year since 2000 – are still low. In 2014, 61.2 percent of boys and 60.9 percent of girls these ages were enrolled (DIGESTYC 2014). Overall rural enrollment was just 51.9 percent, though, compared to 67.8

[41] DIGESTYC (2019) found that females spent as much as triple the time as males doing household tasks.

percent urban enrollment. Likewise, enrollment by economic quintile varied considerably, with 48.2 percent of the lowest quintile enrolled but 81.8 percent of the highest quintile (DIGESTYC 2014). Among parents who had not enrolled their children, 44.8 percent said it was "because of their age," implying that more needs to be done to publicize the availability of education for these ages, especially in rural areas and among lower-income groups (DIGESTYC 2014).

In El Salvador, primary education goes through ninth grade, although grades seven through nine are referred to as the "*tercer ciclo*, third cycle." Enrollment in grades one through six is high, with 91.4 percent of boys and 91.3 percent of girls attending in 2014 (DIGESTYC 2014). There was little variation between rural and urban areas and economic quintiles (DIGESTYC 2014). The most common reason that parents gave for not enrolling their children in these age groups is that "it did not interest them" (DIGESTYC 2014). The next most common was that it was "very expensive" (DIGESTYC 2014). For boys, the next most common was the need to work outside the home, while for girls, it was "household tasks," so similarly the need to work – without pay – for their home (DIGESTYC 2014). Notably, enrollment dropped substantially for grades seven through nine: 61 percent of boys and 67.7 percent of girls were enrolled (DIGESTYC 2014). Differences returned, according to rurality and economic quintile: 56.9 percent of rural children were enrolled, compared to 69.7 percent of urban children. 53.2 percent of children in the lowest economic quintile were enrolled, versus 77.0 percent of children in the highest economic quintile (DIGESTYC 2014).

To attend university in El Salvador, students must then complete their "*bachillerato*." At a minimum, this involves two years of study that are roughly equivalent to tenth and eleventh grades in the US system. Most study a third year, choosing a technical focus that

could – at least in theory – result in a job or best preparation for university at conclusion. In this sense, it is more equivalent to a technical degree in the United States. For students who continue to the last two or three years of high school, they often have to leave their neighborhood, since most less populous municipalities have only one or two public Institutes [*Institutos Nacionales*] that they usually build near the municipal center. Enrollment is lowest for this in El Salvador (and low across all factors), with substantial differences between rural and urban areas and economic quintiles. 35.6 percent of boys and 40.2 percent of girls were enrolled nationwide in 2014 (DIGESTYC 2014). Only 27.7 percent of rural children, compared to 45.3 percent of urban children enrolled (DIGESTYC 2014). Just 22.6 percent of the lowest economic quintile but 50.1 percent of the highest enrolled (DIGESTYC 2014). The reasons were the same as above.

Table 25 Children Studying at Time of Interview

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	5	63	13	52	18	55
Chalatenango	7	88	16	67	23	72
Cuscatlán	4	67	2	40	6	50
Morazán	4	100	21	75	25	78
Sonsonate	6	86	15	75	21	78
Total	26	79	67	66	93	69

Thirty-three of 36 girls interviewed from the five selected departments were aged 6 to 17, excluding one from Ahuachapán, one from Morazán and one from Sonsonate department who were under the age of six. 102 of 109 boys were aged 6 to 17, excluding four from Ahuachapán, one from Chalatenango, one from Cuscatlán and one from Sonsonate who were under the age of six. Table 25 above shows the number of these children who were actively enrolled and studying; only one of those aged four to six was studying. Girls were noticeably more likely to be studying than boys, with a discrepancy even larger than for the general population. In the future, I will break down the age and grades of children we interviewed, so that they can be

better compared with the general population. Seemingly, with the exception of those aged four to six, child migrants studied at higher rates than the general population, especially taking into account that they were disproportionately rural and among the lowest economic quintile. Related to this, it is not surprising that they were far less likely to be studying in private schools than the general population. Nationwide in 2014, 94.3 percent of girls and 95.7 percent of boys in rural areas and 70 percent of girls and 67.1 percent of boys in urban areas studied in public schools (DIGESTYC 2014). Only four children we interviewed reported studying in private schools, all of whom reported living in urban areas.

Insecurity and Violence

As Table 26 below shows, 102 children (70%) – 26 girls (72 %) and 76 boys (70%) – reported gang members in their neighborhoods. As discussed in past publications and to be explored more in the future, the lowest-income neighborhoods are most likely to have a strong gang presence (Kennedy and Parker 2020). In neighborhoods with strong gang presence, officials, civilian death squads and private actors like parents, other relatives and romantic partners also commit crimes and carry out acts of violence (Kennedy and Parker 2020). The reporting difference between boys and girls merits further exploration, some of which will be examined in future work and education writings. It is likely of note that girls often confronted gangs at their schools, but more boys were no longer studying, because they were instead working.

Table 26 Reported Gang Presence

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	6	67	23	79	29	76
Chalatenango	3	38	15	60	18	55
Cuscatlán	6	100	5	83	11	92
Morazán	5	100	18	64	23	70
Sonsonate	6	75	15	71	21	72
Total	26	72	76	70	102	70

Sixty-two children (43%) – 19 girls (53%) and 43 boys (39%) – described past incidents of crime victimization that they themselves or their household members experienced, as displayed in Table 27 below. Girls reported higher victimization than boys.

Table 27 Reported Crime Victimization

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	3	33	8	28	11	29
Chalatenango	4	50	7	28	11	33
Cuscatlán	5	83	5	83	10	83
Morazán	3	60	13	46	16	48
Sonsonate	4	50	10	48	14	48
Total	19	53	43	39	62	43

Family in the United States

As shown in Table 28 below, 136 children (96%) – 35 girls (97%) and 101 boys (95%) – planned to live with family in the United States. This most often included one or both parents but also included (great) aunts and uncles, older siblings, cousins and grandparents. Several children planned to live with friends, and one adolescent boy whose father had long been in the US planned to live alone. Three children said they were headed to Mexico, rather than the US.

Table 28 Children Who Planned to Live with Family in the United States

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	9	100	28	97	37	97
Chalatenango	8	100	24	96	32	97
Cuscatlán	5	83	6	100	11	92
Morazán	5	100	24	96	29	88
Sonsonate	8	100	19	90	27	93
Total	35	97	101	95	136	96

2.3 Conducting the Interviews

In January 2014, when I began conducting interviews, children were deported two days a week: Tuesdays and Fridays. For two weeks, I simply observed everything happening on these days

and talked with the different migration, police and health officials present. They let me shadow them for part of their day. Then, every Tuesday and Friday, the routine was the same: I got to the center as early as I could – sometimes before 06:30 and other times around 08:30. Without fail, a few relatives were already there waiting for their children under several trees pictured below.[42] They had taken the first bus that left their far-away communities as early as 03:00.

Figure 3 The first adult relatives wait outside the Migrant Return Center for deportation buses from Mexico to arrive.

As the sun rose, and the smell of *leña* [firewood] and fog went with it, others trickled in, as pictured below. They brought no food and had no bags. Sometimes, migration officials loaned them some quarters to buy a snack from the vending machine or even gave them clothing from the stores they had. While there were some exceptions, generally, the children's relatives looked tired, hungry and humble. Spoke humbly. Lived humbly from what responses indicated. As we waited for the buses to arrive, I interviewed the relatives about their children and

[42] I have blurred the faces of everyone to protect their identities.

themselves, asking if they consented to me interviewing their children upon arrival. No one ever objected.

Figure 4 More relatives waiting for buses later in the morning.

Figure 5 Other relatives waiting for buses to arrive at the Migrant Return Center.

Then, when the buses arrived, I went inside and interviewed the children first in line as they waited to be processed.

Figure 6 Inside the Migrant Return Center before migrants arrived for processing.

Figure 7 Migrants awaiting processing inside the Migrant Return Center.

Once they had been released, I moved outside to interview children not yet interviewed as they left. These interviews were thus completed with their relatives present, whereas those completed inside were only done with the children. A section below addresses some of the challenges that arose when relatives were present. I remained at the migrant return center until the last child left. This sometimes meant being there until 21:00 or 22:00, and even a few times, past midnight. This gave me the chance to have some very long conversations with children, families and officials.

Figure 8 A family leaves the Migrant Return Center after processing, as police look on.

When I began going to the center in January 2014, between five and 20 children were returned on each day. Starting in April 2014, between 30 and 60 were returned. As the number of children being deported increased substantially, I additionally obtained authorization for up to three research assistants to accompany me to conduct interviews. In the end, I could only recruit and manage one, Karla Castillo. Karla, who was then in her third year of undergraduate studies in economics, began with me in May 2014. From May forward, Karla would join me once her class schedule and the bus schedule permitted. For the first two weeks, we conducted interviews together. She first observed me, I then observed her, and we then each did several interviews of the same family to make sure we collected the same information.

Figure 9 Karla interviewing a mother and child on the steps outside the Migrant Return Center.

From there, we met weekly to discuss our interviews and any questions either of us had. We had one day when no children arrived and one day when nearly 200 came. While the buses arrived for two weeks in April in the morning, they typically arrived in the afternoon, or once more started coming, in phases throughout the day. The later buses arrived, the less interviews we could complete, since migrants and their families were in a hurry to leave before dark.

Overall, I wanted to inspect how larger crime, economic and migration policies influenced children's decisions to migrate by asking questions in three areas: (1) What do children and youth report as motivation for going to the US? (2) What are the full circumstances of their lives prior to migrating to the US? and (3) What impacts of transnational youth migration on families and communities can be discovered at points of origin? Importantly, in my first interviews in January, pressed for time and unsure how long migrants would be willing to talk with me after a long bus ride ending — at least temporarily — a costly dream, I began with this question (why did you want to leave?) and got very short responses. They were typically: to be with my family, to have a better life, and to "*seguir adelante*." When I asked for elaboration, many stared and said they had to go. Based upon the responses of those

with whom I talked to for longer and the previous interviews done with IDHUCA clients,[43] I developed a more systematic survey that included closed questions on various socioeconomic aspects of their household dynamics, work, education, health and neighborhoods of residence that at least some children and their relatives had volunteered to us. Karla helped me further systematize and tailor in Salvadoran language this instrument (see Appendix I). Karla and I both memorized the instrument and administered it not so much as a set conversation in the same order every time but as a conversation that could flow in the direction those we interviewed wanted. If, at the end of our conversation, we still lacked responses on an area or two, we then asked them but otherwise filled in the instrument as the conversation went. In so doing, we obtained data on both the explicit reasons that children and adolescents gave for their migration, and often, other reasons that children and adolescents did not explicitly give that nonetheless seemed to play a role in their decisions – or would have entitled them to legal status, if they reached the United States.

By June, we typically began interviews with returned children and their family members with basic demographic information like: age, gender and with whom the child lives (and their age, relationship and job). We then asked where they lived and what living there was like, with follow up questions about gang, police and military presence, religious involvement, land ownership and remittances. Before transitioning to where their mom and dad were (which was always sensitive since many had a father who has been inactive or minimally active) and where and with whom they wanted to live in the US, we asked if they had ever lived anywhere else. Then, we asked if they were actively studying, with a number of follow up questions about public/private, grade, grades received, and if not studying, why not studying. We asked

[43] For two years, I had also worked with approximately 400 child migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico in two transitional shelters for them in San Diego County prior to arriving in El Salvador.

if they were actively working, and if they were, when they began, how much they earned, what they did with the earnings, if they were still able to study, and whether they'd like to be doing something else. After that, we explicitly asked them why they wanted to leave the country. We were at least 10 minutes into the interview at that point and sometimes over an hour into it. Depending on the reason, we then asked reason-specific follow up questions. Finally, we asked with whom they traveled (*coyote/guía*, family, friends, other or alone), whether they would try again, what they hoped to do in the US if they arrived and a few questions about their journey. They were least willing to answer questions about the journey (and about whether they had lived somewhere else). We also asked them why they decided to travel at this point in time (rather than a year or two ago or a year or two in the future) and what they knew about immigration reform, the system for seeking asylum in the US and Mexico, and the system for child migrants in each country.

Figure 10 A mother and son leave the Migrant Return Center on foot to catch a bus.

We conducted all but one of our interviews in Spanish. For the other, a 15-year-old boy from Chalatenango department answered my first question with: "we can speak in English. I've missed it." He and his father were on their way back to friends and family in the state

where they had lived for nearly a decade through late-2011. In 2011, his parents received removal orders and elected voluntary departure for themselves and their three children, including the boy (their oldest child). They had been living in El Salvador for the past 2.5 years but were then trying to reach the United States. One other adolescent boy had lived in the United States the past few years. He had followed his father, who learned he was dying, back to El Salvador to be with him until his death. At the time we met, he was trying to get back to his life, family and school in the US.

We obtained verbal consent from adult relatives and assent from children and adolescents. We provided written documents to those who wanted them, but only a handful did. While I had obtained ethics approval to record our conversations, neither adult relatives nor children wanted to be recorded, and we thus handwrote our notes. For certain phrases, we repeated them back to interviewees to make sure we had recorded them correctly. For the most part, the children and their relatives asked few questions about the study, after we explained it. A few exceptions did arise, all of whom were vested in helping others with their participation. For example, before deciding if he would participate, and again toward the end of the interview, a 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango department asked to hear again what the purpose of the study was. After I told him both times, he wanted to know if the study would create change. A few other children and relatives asked the same question before deciding to participate. Another few mentioned that they hoped sharing their story would in some way help other Salvadorans.

2.4 A Minefield of Ethical Considerations

Study Cite, Focus and Scope

Originally, I planned to interview children classified as "Unaccompanied Alien Children" in the United States who were deported to El Salvador's international airport. In previous years, around 200 such children were deported, as displayed in Table 29 below, and I hoped to interview at least 30 of them at the return center in 2014. I then wanted to follow up with them in their home communities to observe, interview and conduct participatory action research with (a) them, (b) other children and youth in their neighborhoods who had not migrated, and (c) these children's and youths' family members.

Table 29 Children Deported from the United States, 2008 to 2012 (DGME) [44]

	Unaccompanied	Accompanied	Total
2008	179	28	207
2009	152	68	220
2010	177	31	209
2011	170	24	194
2012	-	-	164

However, this design proved impossible. The three organizations who had sponsored my Fulbright application could not, in the end, work with me. The director of one had fled the country. Another had to end its youth programming, because too many of their workers had been assaulted, not to mention the harms the youth who participated in them faced. The third could not get me access to the airport return center. Luckily, though, all three organizations and its individuals brainstormed with me to create an alternative plan and connected me to many other individuals and organizations to explore options.

From September 2013 to January 2014, I met with approximately 100 governmental, non-governmental and academic organizations and individuals, sometimes providing presentations to them on different aspects of the United States migration system, especially for

[44] In February 2014, DGME provided this data to me in a personal meeting and without my making a formal data request to them. 2009-2010 Fulbright awardee Anne Schaufele did make a Freedom of Information request to them and received the same numbers.

children.[45] I also asked them what they saw as the research gaps around child, family and adult migration and what prior studies they recommended I consult. In November 2013, the Human Rights Institute (IDHUCA) at the Central American University (UCA) agreed to let me interview their clients who were planning to seek asylum in the neighboring nations of Belize, Costa Rica, Panama and others further abroad, like Sweden. I interviewed approximately 20 Salvadoran families still in the country, doing multiple interview sessions with them, often with multiple members of the family and even authorities. I would then discuss the cases with the IDHUCA staff, especially its attorney. Then, in January 2014, I obtained access to conduct interviews at El Salvador's government-run migrant return center for children (and adults) deported by bus from Mexico. To determine if it would work for me to conduct interviews there with children deported from Mexico, I wanted to assure that most children were actually headed to the United States. Upon doing so, I agreed to shift the cite and focus, but doing so meant a much larger total population than originally intended. Add to that the complication that child deportations substantially increased as I was conducting interviews. In hindsight, I can see that doing fewer interviews would have permitted me to more easily and quickly analyze all interviews, but I also don't think the study would have been as rich or representative of all 14 departments and various themes of children's migration. Ultimately, I took a calculated risk that I may never again get access to a government-run return center that permitted such a study and should thus take advantage of the opportunity, even if it meant a longer time to completion.

Limitations and Cultural, Emotional and Psychological Considerations

[45] None of these meetings were with child or youth migrants, nor were they with families who had migrated.

As described above, we interviewed all children and their relatives at the Salvadoran Migrant Return Center, right after they got off the deportation bus that had left one of two Mexican states some 10 to 15 hours earlier.[46] While this facilitated the first study with a representative sample of migrating children, this also created limitations because of the location, emotions and timing. I include them below and note that it took distance and time from the field to fully realize them all. I participated in a lengthy ethics review process with two universities and consulted all recent researchers on migration in El Salvador to design the study and the questionnaire. Yet, I see risks now having lived the experience that I could not have foreseen. While it was standard practice – and arguably necessary – to ask the questions we did, given the setting, we may have put children and their families at risk, despite all of our attempts to get what privacy we could and talk in the lowest voices possible. I did not learn of any examples of persons being harmed for their participation, but even if we did not actually put them at risk with our questions, we very likely made them feel at risk given the sensitive nature and uncommonness of such direct discussion of complex and risky topics.

Figure 11 Two adolescent boys worry about what they will do next as they await processing at the Migrant Return Center.

[46] When the study began, all children were being deported from Tapachula, but beginning around July, children were deported from both Tapachula and Acayucan.

Emotionally, the deportation itself was incredibly difficult. The mother of a 12-year-old boy from Morazán department explained that this was in part why she participated in the interview: "On the night of our return, we had no one and nothing, so … I was very bad and sad and did the interview with Karla. I asked her what to do." Several others acknowledged having suffered on the route and in detention, although none of the boys or girls from Sonsonate or Chalatenango departments explained what exactly had happened. One boy from Cuscatlán department did explain what had been particularly difficult about detention in Chiapas, saying that "the food in Chiapas was unhealthy, because when we did not eat all the food on one day and dropped it in the garbage, we saw the same food on our plates again. Thus, we had to totally destroy the food, so that it would not be reused." A 17-year-old girl from Morazán department also told us that the food had been "disgusting." A boy from Ahuachapán department also alluded to the bad food but expanded his criticism to the whole detention experience: "one suffers so much when they grab you, because to sleep, they only give you a thin pad. The food has no flavor, and if you don't eat it, they won't deport you." An additional boy from Ahuachapán department commented that detention was the worst part of migrating: "being imprisoned is ugly. It's even uglier than the route." Another boy from Ahuachapán department indicated that Mexican federal police had stolen all of his and his family's money.

Among the questions we asked children were whether they planned to migrate again. From the selected departments, 40 children (28%) – thirteen girls and 27 boys – already knew they would migrate again and thus have to start all over. We likewise asked children about the presence of various actors in the neighborhoods where they lived and whether they or someone else in their households had been victims of crime. At least 101 children (70%) – 24 girls and 77 boys – left behind neighborhoods with gang presence, including 63 (43%) who had already

been victims of crime, and thus returned to varying degrees of threat and possibly harm. Some undoubtedly preferred to push these factors to the back of their minds, so that they could continue functioning, but that meant we got incomplete responses to our questions.

The Center: Monitored and Observed

The Center is located in a heavily gang-controlled neighborhood, "La Chacra" at San Salvador municipality's border with Soyapango municipality, with one road in and one road out. Almost catty-corner to the center is a basketball court where multiple gang members often sat or stood, watching who was coming and going. At the same time, the center is right next to the main police station for San Salvador department, and police officers were always present inside and outside the center (although not regularly at the basketball court, neighborhood's exit or entrance or along the roads taken to reach the center). During the course of our interviews from February to September 2014, the press reported on at least two murders in this neighborhood and later reported on police committing extrajudicial executions in the neighborhood. For staff, families, and ourselves, we felt monitored as a result, which undoubtedly led to self-censoring in responses about – at the very least – gangs and authorities. Indeed, the mother of a 12-year-old from Morazán department, with whom we followed up in 2017, told us about our interview in 2014 at the center: "I didn't say much [at the center,] because so many people were listening."

The police could also prevent us from interviewing even those who wanted to speak with us. In April, I briefly spoke with a 17-year-old, as four police took him away.[47] No one had arrived for him, and he was with another youth wearing baggy black pants and a New York Yankees cap (the type of clothing associated with gang members). Before police blocked him

[47] I am withholding his department of residence, since revealing it may make him identifiable.

from me, he said he lived with his mother and father and was leaving out of "economic necessity." He provided me with a cell phone number, but it never worked when I subsequently called it.

Rushed: More Questions Than Answers

The most children either of us interviewed in one day was 22. On a few occasions, Karla and I completed 40 together. Our goal was to complete interviews with at least 25 percent of those returned in a day to guarantee geographic diversity, which we achieved on all but three days; on a few days, we interviewed 100 percent. All interviews felt rushed and frequently constrained, except for the few times that we got to spend several hours with an adolescent whose relatives had not yet arrived to retrieve him. For example, our interview with one 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango department lasted less than five minutes; the limited information obtained meant we did not use the data in our analyses (or interview count). In an interview with a 16-year-old boy from Morazán department and a 15-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department, they would give only very short answers, and despite follow-up questions or requests, would not elaborate more. For these, though, where they answered most questions, we did count them in our analyses and counts. Likewise, two sisters, aged 14 and 18, from Chalatenango department first accepted doing the interview but then looked very uncomfortable when the man with whom they had been living since their mother migrated to the US seven years earlier appeared. They rushed the interview, gave curt responses and were gone in less than 10 minutes. Similarly, in an interview with a 17-year-old boy and his aunt from Chalatenango department and a 17-year-old boy and his biological mother from Ahuachapán department, the women would not let the boys talk at all. I kept saying the boy's

name to indicate that I wanted to hear from him, not her, and told each woman as much, but to no end.

In contrast, interviews sometimes started poorly but improved. I saw two adolescent brothers, aged 16 and 19, from Chalatenango department and asked the older one – tall, thin and wearing a rosary – first if he'd like to participate in the study. He did not wish to do so, but his younger brother then asked me directly about participating. He participated enthusiastically, and the older one – who had initially refused – also started jumping in after his brother to give his own responses or further explanation. They both said a friendly goodbye as they left.

Regardless, most interviews lasted between just 15 and 45 minutes. This and other limitations outlined below often resulted in far more questions than answers. Even in the best of cases when we got to talk an hour or more with someone more open to sharing details, we obtained only an incomplete picture of the entirety of their lives and reasons for leaving El Salvador. As an example of the vagueness most common in responses, when explicitly answering why they had decided to migrate, two 17-year-old girls from Cuscatlán department said "our situation" or "security reasons" to refer to the complex and dangerous situations they were trying to escape. For the first, who was traveling with her brothers, aged eight and 15, the gang in her neighborhood and outside her school had demanded that she and her younger siblings pay extortion to continue attending school. When her family refused, they robbed her brother's phone and used it to better intimidate and threaten the whole family. The family decided to withdraw the three children from school, and they fled to an uncle's home but could not go out or enroll there, because it was controlled by a rival gang. The second 17-year-old girl lived in a neighborhood and attended a school with a gang presence. Her brother, who

worked for a transport cooperative, was being threatened and had to pay the gang extortion in order not to be killed. She no longer felt safe studying and constantly feared "something bad" could happen to her. Likewise, the mothers of two boys from Morazán department referred to their "situation" in order not to discuss escalating threats and assaults that had accumulated to the boy and his family over a year or more, including after seeking protection from authorities.

Further to this, certain phrases were very common but provided little information, because they could apply to poverty, abandonment, violence or other circumstances. A 17-year-old boy from a rural area of Chalatenango said that he, his mother and younger brothers were "very poor," and this made life "very difficult" for them. Two other boys in Morazán department made these statements as well. In their context, it seemed the extreme poverty was "very difficult," but others used this phrase to refer to the extreme violence they were confronting daily.

Presence and Impact of Adult Relatives

Per ethics and child development guidelines, we interviewed all children under the age of 12 with their parent or guardian present. We strove to interview as many children over the age of 12 separately from their parents or guardians as possible, by arriving several hours before the deportation buses to first interview the parents or guardians alone and then interview the arriving child before their parents or guardians got to them. However, as the number of children deported increased, we had to interview larger and larger percentages of the children in the presence of their parent or guardian. While this worked best logistically, and respected desired ethical guidelines, it substantially decreased the likelihood that children would disclose: sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), abuse within the household or other

more sensitive family dynamics, like work in endangered professions, such as the military or police, or a relative's gang membership.[48]

Abuse

For example, regarding abuse, despite known widespread child abuse in El Salvador (BDHRL 2022, HRW 2020), from the five departments that are the focus of this dissertation, only five children (3%) – two girls and three boys – reported being abused. No children did so from Chalatenango or Morazán department. Similarly, despite known widespread sexual violence against girls and women (DIGESTYC 2019, Speizer et al. 2008), none reported having experienced it in Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán or Sonsonate departments. Such a low abuse rate for children or girls and women is highly unlikely. It is likely that more children were being abused at home and witnessing others be abused based upon known abuse rates. For example, the mother of a 10-year-old girl and four-year-old boy from Cuscatlán department mentioned that when she was pregnant with her 15-year-old son, she separated from his father, and he was then in prison. This raised flags for the father of her oldest son – and the girl's brother – possibly being gang-involved and thus able to still target the mother and her children.

Sensitive Family Dynamics

Specifically to sensitive family dynamics, a holdover from El Salvador's civil war (1979-1992) is selective sharing of information on a need-to-know basis even within families and households in an effort to protect or not worry each other (McCracken and Simon 2012, Silber 2011, MUPI 2012). During the war, if authorities detained a family member they suspected of

[48] In follow-up interviews, children or relatives always shared additional information in at least one of these three areas that they had elected to withhold for security and trust reasons in our first interview.

guerrilla involvement – or, if as was much less common, guerrillas detained a family member they suspected of supporting authorities – the person was invariably interrogated and often tortured to obtain information not only about their direct involvement in various activities but also the involvement of others they knew, particularly relatives. Limiting the information any one person knew about other members in a household meant those other members would less likely be incriminated during such sessions. The result today, though, is that people can be under the same roof, constantly sharing space and not know what is happening to the others, particularly if one or multiple members are being targeted, monitored, threatened or harmed. Indeed, such situations are the very situations families do not want to share with each other. For example, two 17-year-old boys in Sonsonate department had quit their studies several years earlier and told their families they did so to get work. With some prodding, though, both boys acknowledged that gang members had threatened to kill or beat them, if they returned to school. Similarly, a 15-year-old boy from Cuscatlán department had quit school the year before and told his mother it was because he constantly had headaches after a "bad car accident," but he, too, accepted with minimal prodding that he had run away from his school in the middle of class multiple times before the accident, because he feared the gang members present. Likewise, a 16-year-old girl from Chalatenango department acknowledged that both gangs, Mara Salvatrucha 13 and 18th Street, were in her neighborhood and school but did not want to speak to whether either had directly threatened her. Her father believed that a gang member and his gang had threatened to kill her, if she would not be their girlfriend, but lamented: "she does not tell me anything." The mother to a 16-year-old boy in Morazán department also said that "children do not tell you everything," in trying to pinpoint when gang members had started forcibly recruiting her son. She knew only that he came home badly beaten two years earlier,

and they as a family decided to report the assault to the authorities then. When four gang members beat a nine-year-old from Ahuachapán department outside his school and then yelled threats at him as he ran away, the boy did not tell his mother or older sisters about the incident. Somehow, they pieced together what had happened on their own. It was not only children that did not share with adults, though, that we uncovered. Most follow-up interviews I did unveiled threats and even serious harm, like rape, that adult relatives were confronting and trying to keep hidden from their children.

Child Labor

Somewhat surprisingly, whether children worked outside the home was sometimes tense as well. When I asked the father of a 16-year-old boy from Morazán department if he worked, it was clear the father did not want to answer me. As I did in other instances and on other topics, I reminded him that I was not affiliated with any government, and he opened up that his son had been assisting him in the fields for 10 years. In Ahuachapán department, however, boys and girls discussed very openly their work, even when they had quit school at third grade. I asked child protection officials about whether they policed child labor in El Salvador in interviews with them. They responded that they did not, emphatically noting that it was no longer a problem for the country. This will be explored in future writings on labor and migration.

Withholding of Emotion

Likely related to this and their age, the children themselves rarely expressed their fears, worries and feelings more generally. While speaking with a 16-year-old boy and his great grandmother from Chalatenango department, with whom he had lived most of his life, I asked

them several times how they felt about him taking the dangerous trip. They said they did not want to discuss their emotions at that time. The implication was that he would keep trying until he arrived, because it was in his long-term best interests, and it served them no purpose to dwell on how much it worried or hurt them in the short-term. In the same vein, a 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango gave a fairly full list of the dangers he ran while migrating but said he was "not worried about the dangers at all," no doubt because he planned to keep trying until he arrived.

Nonetheless, some children and their relatives did speak to the constant state of fear and worry that they felt in their departments. A lone adolescent boy from Sonsonate department talked about his feelings, saying that "it seems like someone dies every week." This particularly bothered him as he got older, because more and more, he knew "a few of the younger males by face, if not by name." A 16-year-old boy from Morazán department also said that he "never felt safe," because "people were always dying." A 17-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department, whose 16-year-old friend gang members brutally assaulted, said that after the incident several years earlier: "I am always afraid something bad might happen." A lone adolescent girl from Chalatenango department said that she feared "something bad would happen" to her, and she knew she was threatened "but not to what extent." I asked if she had any way to know the extent to which her life was then at risk, and she said that in the past few days, a youth had been murdered in her area, adding "so the threats are not empty." She paused and then told me what had "completely destroyed" her: her cousin, who studied nursing and lived in the same neighborhood as she, was threatened the year before and then murdered. The girl noted that her family "hadn't shared everything with her," likely meaning her cousin was raped, tortured or mutilated before being killed. Three other boys from Morazán department

expressed their fears: a 17-year-old said that he and his 20-year-old brother were "very afraid" since gang members started forcibly recruiting him, continuing that "we do not want to be killed." A 14-year-old said that the violence in his community and throughout El Salvador made "concentrating very difficult and thus performing well at school very difficult." A 17-year-old who gang members recruited said he was afraid to stay and stopped studying for that reason. "Here there is no security." Two boys from Ahuachapán department, aged 13 and 16, expressed their fears: the 13-year-old said he no longer felt safe at home or school and felt very afraid when he went to school, since gang members had started threatening him; the 16-year-old said he feared MS13, who was forcibly recruiting him.

Otherwise, the children's relatives spoke to their fears and worries. The night of their deportation, two young parents of a one-year-old girl from Sonsonate department were going back to their home but were very worried, because they said in desperation: "we do not know what could happen." Similarly, the grandmother of a 15-year-old boy and 10-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department said they were afraid to return home that night and would thus go elsewhere. A boy's grandmother from Sonsonate department told us that she felt "it was a crime to be young in El Salvador today," because of the persecution her two grandsons faced from gangs and others, if out in public. Similarly, the uncle of a 15-year-old boy from Morazán department who was being forcibly recruited into a gang said that "in this country, there is no life for young people." Then, one boy, who lived with his grandmother in a neighborhood with "abundant" gang presence in Sonsonate department, discussed how gang control affected his grandmother but not him. He said she was always "very worried," and he did not want her to "suffer" anymore. The mother of a three-year-old boy from Chalatenango department spoke for him, herself and her partner in saying that gang members' threats to riddle his body with

bullets were their "main reason for leaving." The mother of a 14-year-old boy from Chalatenango department said she was "afraid for his life as a result" of her son refusing MS13 members' demands that he join them. The aunt of a 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango department said that his grades had suffered and opined that he could likely do better in school, "if he was not always worried" about the 18th Street members inside and outside of his school, who were threatening him and had already beaten him once. The parents of a 15-year-old from Morazán department, who lived in a gang-controlled neighborhood, were afraid that gangs would hurt him, because "nowadays, too many young people are killed." The 15-year-old himself, though, said he had "no problems" with the gang members in his neighborhood. Likewise, the father of a 13-year-old girl from Morazán department said that he worried about her going to and from school, because "drivers and riders on the buses are commonly killed." The father of a 14-year-old girl and 13-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department feared that gang members in their neighborhood were "brainwashing them." Undoubtedly, most – if not all – of the other children and their relatives felt these things as well but either did not feel comfortable expressing them to us or did not know how to name them.

In contrast, children from Cuscatlán department did discuss their fears for themselves quite openly, with three girls and two boys saying they were afraid, scared or did not feel safe. A 14-year-old girl who stopped attending church and school said that she and her family "were afraid to go outside [their home]" because of the gang members. A 17-year-old girl said that she "did not feel safe studying eighth grade" because of the gang members there. The other 14-year-old girl, who had clarified that she had "never had problems" with gangs in her neighborhood did want known that she was always scared "something bad would happen to her." One of the 15-year-old boys made the same stipulation about gangs in his neighborhood

and likewise feared "something bad" happening to him. Another 15-year-old boy said his neighborhood with two gangs present was "really dangerous," acknowledged that he'd been so afraid at school that "several times" he ran away in the middle of class and was then afraid to study, work or even go outside his home. He summarized that "fear [had] overcome his life."

Boys from Chalatenango department also more openly discussed their fears, as six of them explicitly mentioned their worries and concerns. A 17-year-old boy's neighborhood had been "ruined" by the arrival of gang members from a different municipality to it in the past year. He had been refusing their demands that he join them, but he also stopped leaving the house except to "go to school and church" and noted that "more and more" he feared even those trips. He added that his mother "could not stand to watch" him worry. A 16-year-old boy said that, "I fear living here. My town is being lost to crime, and many people have vices." The "many gang members" outside his school and "seven-year-old boys who smoke a lot" inside also made him afraid, he said. A different 17-year-old boy lamented that it was "better to go, because I am afraid to stay and think the gang will kill me." A 15-year-old who had to walk past MS13 members, who were insulting and threatening him, to reach his school said that he did not feel safe. A 17-year-old living in an area with two gangs present said gang members' threats that he join them or be killed "worried him," because "some people had been killed, because they would not join." He concluded that "it was better to remove himself" because he "could be killed," if he stayed. A 16-year-old and his 19-year-old brother said "they were both afraid to stay" and added that their mother "always worried" about them, so besides avoiding gang members' harm, they wanted "to help put her mind at ease. In the worst case I learned about, though, a father in Chalatenango department, who MS13 was extorting, said he still felt

safe despite it. His 15-year-old son, however, said that he feared for their lives. The boy proved right, as his father was murdered roughly two weeks after our interview.

Gangs

Children we interviewed tried to downplay their fears, seemingly wanting to appear strong or not disapproving of the gang(s) in their neighborhood. A 15-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department told us that "others think there are [gangs present in my neighborhood,] but I have not seen any." Six boys in Ahuachapán department, who lived in notoriously gang-controlled neighborhoods – where other children we interviewed reported both gang presence and crime victimization by them – denied the presence of gangs. Two boys from Morazán department did not directly respond to our question of whether a gang was present in the neighborhood and instead said they had "no gang problems." Another boy from Morazán said that neither his neighborhood nor school had a gang presence, but he also said later in the interview that his mother, father and younger sister had fled the country a few months earlier after receiving threats at the home they had all shared. Two boys from Sonsonate department would not comment on gangs to us, even with directed follow-up questions. Another two boys from San Julian municipality of Sonsonate department reported that no gangs were present. One said that he and his family had "no problems" as a result, and the other said they faced no danger and lived in a "very healthy [*muy sano*]" area. While this could have been possible then, when only three or four homicides a year were registered from 2012 to 2014, it undoubtedly changed, as between 20 and 50 homicides a year were registered there from 2015 to 2018. Two other boys from Sonsonate department did not directly answer the question about whether gangs were present but instead said they had no "issues" or "trouble" with gangs or violence. In these six boys' cases, they did not provide us the name of their

neighborhood, which may have been an indicator that they did not trust us and which limited us from being able to verify the lack of gang presence in governmental or press data.

Even among the 15 boys from Sonsonate department who did discuss gang presence in their neighborhoods or schools, four wanted to make clear that they had "never had any problems" with them. One 17-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department said the same, and a 16-year-old from the department said that his neighborhood had "thieves, drunks and drug addicts" but no gangs. Likewise, one 14-year-old girl and one 15-year-old boy from Cuscatlán department stated they had "never had any problems" with the gang members in their neighborhood. A 19-year-old woman from Chalatenango department also reported that the neighborhood where she lived did have gangs, but she noted that her family "has never had problems with them." The 18-year-old woman from Chalatenango department likewise said that she "has not had problems" with gangs in her area but added that she was still "a little afraid" because of them. Among the 14 boys in Chalatenango department who acknowledged gang members were regularly in their neighborhoods, four made sure to acknowledge that such members had not "threatened" them or "caused them problems." Similarly, among boys who reported a gang presence in Morazán department,

- One boy in this group sought to downplay how often gang members were present, saying "a few gang members from other places occasionally enter." He said, that otherwise, where he lived was "incredibly healthy."
- Two boys, after acknowledging gangs were present in their neighborhoods, added, "but I've never had problems with them." Interestingly, it later emerged in the interview that one was being forcibly recruited into the gang and was fleeing El Salvador for this reason.

- One boy, after responding affirmatively that MS13 was in his neighborhood, jumped to add, “but the gang members never talked to me or threatened me.”

A 16-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department, who acknowledged MS13 was present throughout her neighborhood followed that acknowledgement with “but I never received threats from them.” Another boy from Sonsonate department, when asked to describe gangs’ activities, would only say: “they do what they do,” refusing to say more when prompted. This seeming desire not to offend the gang(s) present where they lived, possibly because they thought they were being monitored by members of the same gang, even if a different *clica*, during the interview may have come out in other ways. For example, by staying in touch with some of the children over time, I learned that both children and their relatives had experienced repeated harm, including kidnapping and rape, and withheld information, like being internally displaced, part of a military family or having a relative who had joined a gang, in our first, quick interviews at the return center in 2014. This desire or need to downplay gang’s threats and presence appeared even in the interviews of children who had been victimized by gang members. A 17-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department, who gang members had already beaten twice, told me that he nonetheless “could still walk with tranquility.”

Some adult relatives – through fear or lack of knowledge – also seemed to downplay the risks their children faced from gangs. In May 2014, I interviewed a 17-year-old boy from Morazán department who said that MS13, who was inside and outside his school and neighborhood, had started forcibly recruiting him two months earlier and had already threatened to kill him twice. I followed up with his father in person in mid-2017. Part of my follow-up sessions included reviewing the original interviews, and so when I asked the father about the threats his son had faced, his father said back to me: “yes, he had just had a small

problem with a guy who wanted him to do something." Similarly, the father of a 15-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department told me that he "doubted the ability" of MS13 members to "actually harm" his son and classified their ongoing stalking of the boy at school and home to get him to join as "just a small threat." The mother of a teenage boy from Ahuachapán department said, after her son acknowledged a gang presence in their neighborhood, "anywhere you go in El Salvador, there are gangs, but the gangs ae not so powerful in [neighborhood name withheld]."

Authorities

As was the case nationwide, few children – only 37 (26%) – from the five selected departments commented on the authorities in their neighborhood, school and daily life. Of these, 29 (78%) expressed negative opinions, ranging from a lack of confidence in the police, to corruption by police, to willful blindness or failure to enforce laws or do anything effective against gangs and others who commit crimes. Beyond these failures and corruption, several children reported abuses by the authorities. One boy from Sonsonate department reported that police and soldiers "sometimes open fire on gang members, or vice versa" in his neighborhood. One boy from Chalatenango department reported that the navy had earlier monitored his area, but they stopped doing so after an altercation between a known gang member and soldier. The boy's understanding was this: "he [the soldier] shot the gang member, and the gang member reported him. The military punished the soldier, because 'he abused his authority,' and since then, the military has not monitored [our area]." One adolescent boy from Morazán department reported that authorities "bothered him," he believed because they presumed him to be a gang member, since he lived in a heavily gang-controlled neighborhood. The mother of a 2.5-year-old from Ahuachapán department also explained her distrust of the police, because "they are involved

[in the crime(s) being committed]." This is concerning because another boy from Sonsonate department understood that "the military is helping the police in all urban areas per order of the government." Undeniably, part of why children commented less on the authorities is that they were not often present or noticeable in their lives, but as evidence grew in subsequent years of authorities' abuses against young people, particularly in the economically depressed neighborhoods where nearly all children we interviewed lived (Kennedy and Parker 2020), I've further suspected that children and their families might have especially feared talking about authorities' abuses, particularly in the presence of authorities at the return center.

Many Explicit and Unspoken Factors

All of the aforementioned factors likely contextualized why at least 97 children (67%) – 22 (61%) girls and 75 boys (69%) – from the selected departments seemed to have other factors that contributed to their decisions to migrate than just those they explicitly stated. Violence indicators and parental abandonment, neglect or abuse were the most often excluded reasons. While only 62 children (43%) gave violence, insecurity or threats as a reason for their migration in the selected departments, at least 93 (64%) lived in a neighborhood, attended a school or otherwise daily interacted with gang members present, who in some cases had already victimized them or their relatives. None of the 61 children (42%) affected by their parent's abandonment, disappearance or death listed this as a reason, although it undoubtedly and permanently altered their lives.

A major gap in research this project wanted to address was asking children themselves why they decided to migrate. Children have agency, and their responses definitely demonstrated this. Some did say their parents or other relatives made the decision for them, but many owned their decisions and provided their reasons with confidence. Some had even

gone without consulting their families, although that was rare. In this sense, a major finding is that children's migration decisions are often ongoing family discussions in which the children are critical actors and deciders, especially around when they go (see also Heidbrink 2014). Their families, however, are critical deciders of how they go.

This acknowledged, in almost all cases, neither children nor their families knew of the various legal statuses available to Salvadorans in the United States or other countries. This created a dilemma for me. I was aware of the various legal options and wanted my research to speak to them, while also centering children's and family's voices. In the field, I had to reflect deeply on what the role of the interviewer or researcher is in this type of study that seeks to inform policy and practice. In so doing, I acknowledged that I did feel an obligation for the research to speak to policy and practice, which likewise led me to reflect deeply on how research about migrants' reasons for leaving – whether adults or children – should be done, specifically because children's non-stated reasons for migrating were often those that would most entitled them to legal relief in the United States. If the goal of such research is to develop policy and practice, then researchers must collect information both on why migrants say they leave and all the additional factors contributing to their decision. Unless policy and practice create solutions taking into account children's places of residence within a country and their stated and unstated reasons for migrating, children will continue to be at risk in El Salvador, because their needs cannot be met. That means they will continue to migrate, both putting their lives at further risk and meaning El Salvador loses motivated youth it needs. Numerous children and youth expressed that they wished they could have stayed, and most would likely return, if the reasons they left were addressed. Having such motivated youth stay – or return –

is critical to national (and regional) progress and stability but requires serious improvement to security (in all its meanings, including economic), belonging and education.

I struggled greatly with how to thus triangulate and present this research, for the weeks and months doing the interviews and then the months and years following them. Several people interviewed were murdered (Kennedy and Parker 2020), so without any exaggeration, I knew the presentation of my research could be the difference between life and death for Salvadorans who arrived to other countries. I also deeply valued and searched for further insights the words and perspectives those interviewed shared. Ultimately, I have decided to present children and family's responses in their entirety but also caveat them, when necessary, and supplement them with the aforementioned sources to provide context, depth and detail that they – for structural reasons addressed in the next two chapters – could frequently not access, but nevertheless, would have very much served them once outside El Salvador. ... and even would help to design the policy and practice needed to be able to live with dignity in El Salvador.

The chapters that follow are my attempt to do this process, and more importantly, the children's lives justice. The next chapter examines the history of El Salvador's political economy, situating in place and time the children and families we met. The chapter that follows inspects various health and demographic components of children's lives. Then, the penultimate chapter unpacks the complexity of poverty as a cause of migration.

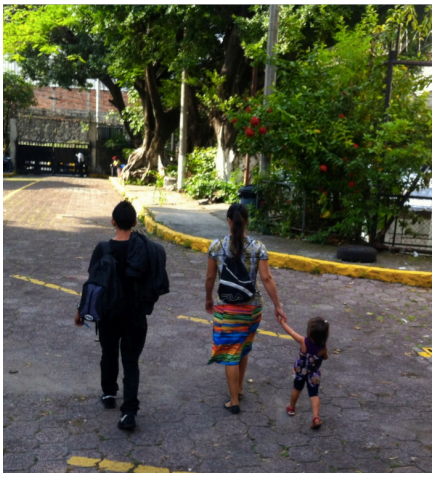


Figure 12 A mother and her two children leave the Migrant Return Center after completing processing.

Chapter 3. A History of El Salvador's Political Economy

> *En El Salvador, los campesinos viven peor que los perros de los ricos*
> *[In El Salvador, the peasants live worse than the dogs of the rich].*
> – Obispo Pedro Arnoldo Aparicio talking with the Vatican (in Rubio and Balsebre 2009)

> *la violencia originaria es la injusticia estructural, la cual mantiene violentamente – a través de estructuras económicas, sociales, políticas y culturales – a la mayor parte de la población en situación de permanente violación de sus derechos humanos. … es simplemente la subordinación impuesta de la mayoría de la población a los intereses económicos, políticos y sociales de una minoría …*
> *[the original violence is structural injustice, which violently maintains – through economic, social, political and cultural structures – the majority of the population in a permanent violation of its human rights. … it is simply the imposed subordination of the majority of the population to economic, political and social interests of a minority …]*
> – 1986, Ignacio Ellacuria

For most of the last 4,000 years, El Salvador has been a primarily agricultural society. Until the 1500s, although there was some stratification, communities farmed land together. The Spaniards' arrival marked the beginning of the privatization of communal lands, and slowly, a landed elite emerged, as did more substantial inequality. As rumblings against this among indigenous residents mounted, the foreign elite introduced the neighborhood Commissioner model in order to surveil and repress. By the late-1800s, the elite shifted the agricultural model from one focused on subsistence to one focused on large-scale export of indigo, then coffee and then cotton. Land concentrated in fewer hands, and the increasing landless population worked long, difficult hours for little pay and no benefits. Along the way, with the elite's backing, military dictatorships took control of the nation from the 1930s to the 1970s, repressing the ever-growing demands for change and justice. This clash culminated in El Salvador's civil war from 1979 to 1992, funded in large part by the United States government and during which the military conducted numerous scorched earth campaigns, massacres and

war crimes. The revolutionary forces at times destroyed infrastructure projects that had displaced the poor in prior years. Only in the last three decades have El Salvador's national leaders been elected in free and fair democratic elections, but these elections coincided with accelerated neoliberal reforms that left unaddressed the root causes of El Salvador's civil war, especially the struggle for economic justice among the rural and agricultural poor.[49] El Salvador is clearly a nation with high levels of interpersonal and structural violence. This dissertation is focused on the latter, although past work (Human Rights Watch 2020; Kennedy 2013, 2014; Kennedy and Parker 2020; Linton et al. 2018) centered the former. The rest of this chapter provides greater detail, and in so doing, sets up the chapters to follow on health and demography and poverty. Importantly, some details included are taken from my notes on multiple exhibits at the Museum of Anthropology in San Salvador that are otherwise not available for citation. To assist the reader, Appendix II provides an abbreviated timeline for events highlighted in this chapter through 2001, and Appendix III provides a list of El Salvador's presidents and heads of state since its independence in 1821.

3.1 From Hunter-Gatherers to Sedentary Farmers

Since at least 13,000 years ago, humans have inhabited El Salvador (Cooke 1998 and Fiedel 1999) – at first, nomadic hunter-gatherers who had "minor and transient impacts on the flora …" and little stratification among themselves (Dull 2008). By around 4,000 years ago, sedentary agriculture became established, with resulting high population densities (Butzer 1993, Sluyter 2001 and Whitmore and Turner 2001). Social stratification came in time (Dalton 1963, Fowler 1989). Through their subsistence farming of maize (and cacao in some areas)

[49] Silber (2011) recommends Seligson (1995) for a discussion/debate on landlessness versus land poor.

and fuelwood harvesting, farmers "played a central role in shaping the ecology of El Salvador" (Dull 2008). Primarily, "[s]mall-scale subsistence farmers clear forests to plant crops, … cut trees for building material and fuelwood, … caus[ing] erosion, and … pollut[ing] rivers and streams" (Dull 2008, 321). Since it began in El Salvador, the intensive land clearing and cultivation use was interrupted only twice: around 430 with the Ilopango Volcano eruption and in the 16th century with the arrival of Europeans and their diseases. Dull (2008) notes that "[a]fter each contraction, populations recovered and surpassed their former levels within two to three centuries, and intensive agriculture resumed" (326).

3.2 Arrival of European Disease and Repression

Across the country, indigenous populations treated land as community property and farmed it together on what were called "*ejidos*" (Acosta 2013). They grew various grains and sugarcane and had animals, like cattle, that grazed the land (Acosta 2013, Dull 2008). By 1500, a Pipil male named Atlacatl was a leader of the nation, and Cuscatlán was the Pipil capital, although most settlements were in western El Salvador.

The first European arrived to El Salvador in 1522, but he came and went. The next, Pedro de Alvarado, sent by Hernan Cortes to conquer Guatemala and El Salvador arrived to Guatemala in December 1523 and crossed into Ahuachapán in 1524. The Pipil confronted him and his men and forced them back to Guatemala. They returned in 1525 but avoided the Pipil settlements of Yopicalco (today's San Juan Opico), Xilopango (today's Ilopango) and Atehuán, setting up a new settlement in what is today San Salvador instead. There, too, the Pipil confronted them, and they had to retreat. De Alvarado returned again in 1528 and created a community in the Bermuda Valley of Cuscatlán. In these first trips, the Spaniards estimated that El Salvador's population was around 130,000, thus making it the most densely populated

country of Central America (Barón Castro 1978).[50] The landscape was "intensively cultivated" (Dull 2008), including dense concentrations of villages around what is today Apaneca municipality of Ahuachapán department (Browning 1971). While the Spaniards had come in search of gold, silver and precious stones, they quickly realized that El Salvador's wealth was its fertile land and began enriching themselves from it.

The next chapter presents that within just 27 years, over half of the population died from the illnesses the Spaniards brought with them and the destruction of cultural, economic and political ways of life went with them (Morales Velado 1990). It took two centuries for the population to recuperate, but as it did so, the indigenous population steadily declined, as displayed in Table 30 below.

Table 30 Percentage of the Population Observed to be Indigenous, 1600 to 1930 (Barón Castro 1978) [51]

	Indigenous	Total	Percentage
1600	77,000	86,200	89.3
1650	83,010	100,000	83
1700	83,010	115,000	72.2
1750	83,010	130,000	63.9
1800	84,000	165,000	50.9
1821	107,750	250,000	43.1
1930	110,459	1,434,361	7.7

Spaniards brought slaves to the port city they founded, La Trinidad de Sonsonate, to work on indigo farms – the Spaniards' first cash crop for exportation – from the 1600s to the late-1800s. The Afro-descendent population concentrated in Ereguayquín, Usulután, San Vicente, San Miguel, Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, Nejapa and San Alejo and mixed with the indigenous and

[50] It remains so today.
[51] The 1930 number comes from the census. It was the only one to ask about ethnicity (Tobar 2020).

Spanish populations. Figure 13 below, taken from Barón Castro (1978), shows indigo farming areas of El Salvador.

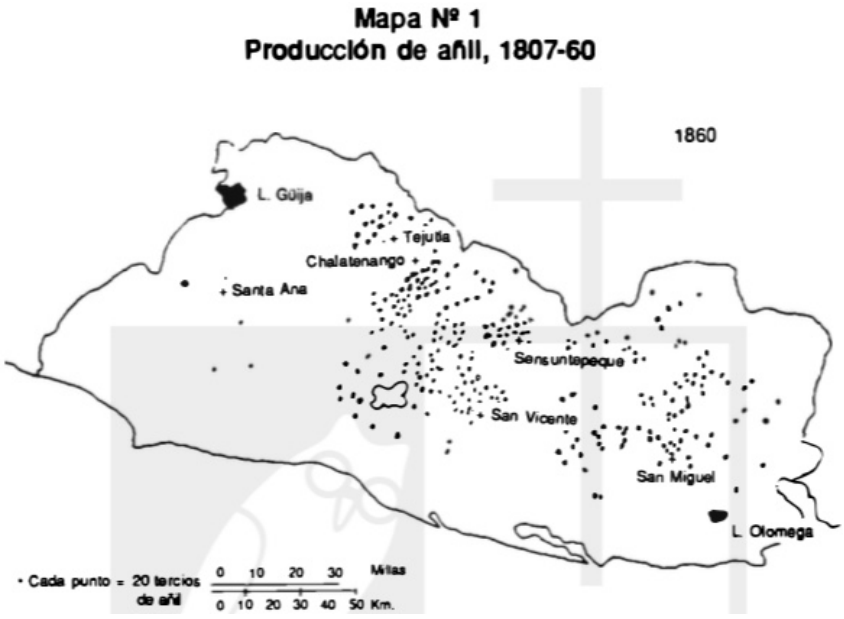


Figure 13 Map of Indigo-Producing Areas in El Salvador from 1807 to 1860 (Barón Castro 1978)

As their percentage of the population decreased, so too did their cultural, economic and political contributions (Morales Velado 1990). The Spanish imposed a strict caste system based on skin color as early as 1550. Spaniards lived in urban centers, and the indigenous residents lived in settlements on the outskirts where they could be monitored and controlled. Into 1770, less than 30 percent of the population lived in established municipal centers, with others living on farms and in the valleys outside of the center (Acosta 2013). For example, in Suchitoto municipality of Cuscatlán department, an estimated 51 families lived in the municipal center while 185 families lived outside it (Acosta 2013). The Spanish instituted a Commissioner in each neighborhood [*aldea*], who "maintained order" and informed the municipality about "problems or irregularities" that were occurring (Acosta 2013). The Spaniards held church and governmental positions. Children of Spaniards born in El Salvador became businesspersons and traders. Indigenous and black persons were exploited in agriculture and mines. The

Spaniards also charged indigenous residents taxes “for protection” to be sent to the Spanish crown.

3.3 Seeds of Organizing

Soon enough, these “problems” included organizing for independence from the colonizers. Central American countries, including El Salvador, won their independence in 1821, but the colonial-style military – through Spanish-instituted, *aldea*-level Commissioners who were by then primarily landed Spanish-origin settlers – remained entrenched in communities (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). In 1833, indigenous inhabitants rose up against the military in areas of Chalatenango department, like Tejutla municipality, and the Nonualco area of La Paz department, including Zacatecoluca, and defeated them, such that the military head of State had to flee La Paz and San Vicente departments (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). However, the military returned afterward and executed the revolutionary leader, Anastasio Aquino, leaving his head on a tree, so that he could be an example to others who wanted to rebel (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

3.4 From Subsistence to Cash Crop Agriculture

From 1876 to 1885, Rafael Zaldívar was president and reoriented the nation’s agriculture from subsistence to cash crops. In 1882, he permitted the privatization of communal land and required that owners plan to export their crops (Acosta 2013). Indigo bushes were ripped up and replaced with coffee, the new cash crop (Clements 1984). While a limited number of families took large quantities of land for their *fincas* and *haciendas*, most others could acquire nothing or only small parcels. Land became concentrated in just a few hands (Acosta 2013, Rubio and Balsebre 2009) of a small oligarchy who gained so much wealth that they sent their children to study in the United States and Europe, while the rest of the nation grew ever poorer.

Those who had no proof of their land possession or ability to export or had to sell their land to pay their debts were forced to work for the new *hacienda* owners to subsist (Acosta 2013, Arias 1988, Lauria-Santiago 1999, Paige 1997, Williams 1994, Wisner 2001). The *hacienda* owners "paid" them just one or two *colones* ($0.30 to $0.60) and two tortillas and two scoops of beans at the beginning and end of each day (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). Government officials forced the unemployed to work at them, saying that it was delinquency prevention. Figure 14 below, taken from Barón Castro (1978), shows coffee farming areas of El Salvador.

Figure 15 Map of Coffee-Producing Areas in El Salvador (Barón Castro 1978)

Labor migration became an important strategy to survive year-round, especially from departments like Chalatenango: men and women, including in nuclear and extended families, migrated to work on coffee and sugar plantations in other regions of the country and in neighboring Honduras (Silber 2011). Likewise, the coffee fincas radically transformed the highlands ecology (Daugherty 1969, Dull 2008). Dull (2008) wrote that "[t]he rise of commercial agriculture [first for coffee and later for cotton and sugarcane] since the middle

19th century … exacerbated an already dire environmental situation" (326). By 1900, coffee production constituted 83 percent of the nation's exports.

3.5 Military Expansion

Then, the military expanded, as did a "civilian auxiliary" to patrol and surveil neighborhoods, particularly rumblings of organizing (Acosta 2013). The Great Depression meant that *hacienda* owners could sell less, and they further reduced wages, so that the masses' protests increased (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

On 12 August 1912, the National Guard was created to exercise control over the farming [*campesina*] population, especially in coffee areas (Acosta 2013). It expanded throughout the nation, and by 1929, had some 1,000 guards (Acosta 2013). During the 1920s, the State put the military and National Guard at the service of the political and economic elite, such that *hacienda* owners ordered soldiers and guards to beat and seize the belongings of campesinos who used a *hacienda* route to arrive somewhere more quickly (Acosta 2013). Abuse, beatings, rights violations and even torture by soldiers and guards, particularly in rural farming areas, "were seen as acceptable and recommended" in order to control the population (Acosta 2013). Labor migration to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Mexico increased, as workers would go to complete their contract and then return home.

3.6 La Matanza[52]

In 1930, El Salvador's communist party, the *Partido Comunista Salvadoreña* (PCS), was founded. In December 1931, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez took power as the first of a

[52] Silber (2011) recommends Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2008)'s account as "a call for historicizing the categories of communist and Indian … blurring of categories and to the diversity of movement actors, and the recollections of their agency" (33). She further suggests Anderson (1992)'s as the "first synthesizing account," Zamosc (1989)'s "for a class analysis of the massacre," and Perez-Brignoli (1995)'s "for a more complex reading that looks to the relationship between Indian peasants (i.e., the role of *cofradías*) and communist leaders" (205).

string of military leaders who would prioritize repression in the face of the population's demands for justice (Acosta 2013) and the military as the determiner of rules in politics (Rubio and Balsebre 2009); concomitantly, the oligarchy left the political sphere (Robinson 2003).[53] Amidst the refusal to recognize seats the PCS won in the January 1932 elections and protests of poor living conditions in Western El Salvador, on 22 January 1932, a popular insurrection began against him and the military, especially in the areas with the most indigenous persons: Ahuachapán and Tlacopan/Tacuba municipalities of Ahuachapán department; Colon, Juayua and Santa Tecla municipalities of La Libertad department; and Armenia, Izalco and Nahuizalco municipalities of Sonsonate department (Anderson 1992, Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, Murray et al. 1994, Perez-Brignoli 1995, Rubio and Balsebre 2009, Zamosc 1989). They took over military barracks in Izalco, Juayua, Nahuizalco and Tlacopan/Tacuba (Anderson 1992), but Hernández Martínez ordered the army to put down the revolt.

The Communist leader, Augusto Farabundo Martí, was shot dead on 1 February 1932, and over the next year, the military massacred between 10,000 and 40,000 indigenous persons, actual and alleged communists and peasant coffee farmers throughout the western region (Anderson 1992, Beverley 1982, Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008, Murray et al. 1994, Perez-Brignoli 1995, Rubio and Balsebre 2009), frequently requiring them to dig their own graves and then face the firing squad (Anderson 1992). Nahuatl leader and farmer Feliciano de Jesús Ama Trampa was publicly hung in the Saldaña Central Park of the La Asunción neighborhood

[53] This oligarchy in El Salvador has often been referred to as the "14 families," even though more than 14 families were likely always involved. A later section discusses 184 families, for example. Whether 14 or 184, the group of elites is very small. Baloyra (1982) named just three families: the Araujo's, Meléndez's and Quiñonez Molina's. In addition to the Quiñonez's, the *New York Times* named in its reporting throughout the 1980s the de Sola's, Llach's, Hill's, Dueñas', Dalton's, Regalado's and Salaverra's. In 1998, María Dolores Albiac Blanco wrote *Los ricos más ricos de El Salvador* for the Fundación Heinrich Böll about the nation's elite families. It is nearly impossible to find a copy, although several physical copies are available for use on site at El Salvador's university libraries.

of Izalco municipality in January 1932. The elites justified their murders as saving the nation from communism (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). On 11 July 1932, El Salvador's Legislative Assembly granted unconditional amnesty to anyone who committed crimes to "restore order, repress, persecute, punish and capture those accused of the crime of rebellion of this year." Many indigenous people in the West sought to become invisible, changed their style of dress and both their own names and the names of their towns (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2008).

3.7 Repression and Resistance beyond El Salvador's West[54]

> *it was also a crime to let his children starve. …it was no sin to defend his family from starvation*
> – in Clements (1984, 170): One peasant recounted how he worried that getting involved
> was "agitating," and the priest – a proponent of liberation theology – responded with the above.

In 1944, Hernández Martínez had been forced to resign, but within four years another military leader took power, where he remained until 1956. By the early-1950s, the agroexport diversification – large-scale coffee, cotton and sugarcane fields and grazing – and "modernization" expelled rural populations without land or livelihood to the cities (Browning 1971, Clements 1984, Dunkerley 1988, FUNDASAL 1997), especially to industrializing areas in and around the AMSS (Lungo 1980, Barba 1998). Likewise, as presented more fully in the next chapter on health and demography, population growth exploded due to decreased mortality rates and increased fertility rates (Arriaga 1970). Land overuse, seasonal labor migration, mass underemployment and the landless population rapidly grew. Ultimately, many moved into the *Área Metropolitana de San Salvador*, AMSS [San Salvador Metropolitan Area] hoping for jobs in the expanding industrial sector and over to Honduras where land was still

[54] Silber (2011) recommends Almeida (2008) "for a comprehensive analysis of political environment in El Salvador in the 1960s" (205).

available (Clements 1984), or in the case of women from Chalatenango, went to San Salvador to work in the private homes as *domesticas* [domestic employees] (Silber 2011). As early as the 1940s, women went to California and the DC-Maryland-Virginia area to work as domestic cleaners and babysitters. By 1960, between 250,000 and 300,000 Salvadorans worked for United Fruit Company on banana plantations or on empty land in Honduras. Those who stayed in their communities increasingly began organizing to fight for their survival, as did those forced into emerging slums on the outskirts of cities (Dunkerley 1988; Montgomery 1995; Pearce 1986). In 1961, the community radio station YSAX began and provided teaching on farming, ranching, the home economy, health, religion and literacy (Acosta 2013).

Coreas-Bonilla (2019) describes the period between 1950 and 1979 as the

> *consolidation of a State with a nationalization-industrialization. ... legitimating the role of soldiers in the government as mediators between three major interests: a) the traditional oligarchy (14 families), whose accumulation was in agricultural export, b) other factions of the oligarchy who allied themselves with US industry to industrialize, and c) certain working-class sectors in the public and private sector, like urban popular classes that grew intensively in this period. (16)*

The state invested in road and communications infrastructure to expand agriculture oriented toward exportation (Lungo 1996). Industrialization was coupled with electric energy generation in urban areas (López Bernal 2015), although it was highly concentrated geographically: López Pérez (1986) found that 55 percent of national investment in urban infrastructure in the 1960s took place in the AMSS, even though San Salvador accounted for only about 25 percent of the total urban population at the time.

In 1961, the Kennedy Administration of the United States began the Alliance for Progress and included El Salvador among its recipients to develop and democratize Latin America (Clements 1984, Silber 2011). A major development recommendation was land

reform to redistribute at least some land to those who had become landless (Almeida 2008, Pearce 1986, Silber 2011).[55] After Kennedy's assassination, his successors "abandoned the use of economic aid as a stimulus for social change and chose to emphasize the security provisions of the Alliance" (Clements 1984, xi). The United States sent police and military officers abroad for counterinsurgency training and sent weapons and airplanes to the police and military in El Salvador for their fights. The Nixon Doctrine encouraged the development of military capacity to fight communism, and in 1965, the *Agencia Nacional de Seguridad*, ANESAL [National Security Agency] was finalized to bring together all of El Salvador's military, paramilitary and auxiliary forces to this end (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). In 1966, the *Organización Democrática Nacionalista*, ORDEN [Democratic Nationalist Organization] was created as one auxiliary force to collect intelligence at the community level. Drawing upon the neighborhood Commissioner networks and the few salaried agricultural workers, ORDEN had mobilized an estimated 100,000 persons as informants within a year (Rubio and Balsebre 2009), sewing division, doubts and distrust in rural farming communities.

Nevertheless, from 1962 to 1972, historically clandestine and repressed organizations could legally organize and did so (Almeida 2008).[56] This looked different according to the area's characteristics. For example, in 1965, the *Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños*, FECCAS [Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants] and *Federación Unitaria Sindical Salvadoreña*, FUSS [United Federation of Salvadoran Unions] developed an intense workers' fight that continued to strengthen throughout the late-1960s (Rubio and Balsebre 2009), such that workers got an eight-hour work day in 1966. In 1968, teachers

[55] This land reform recommendation would not be heeded until 1980, and even then, it was very incompletely addressed.
[56] Salvadoran Communist Party co-founder Miguel Marmol survived being shot on 24 January 1932 and escaped to Usulután department four months later, where he reorganized the communist party with Antonio Palacios.

organized by the *Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños*, ANDES 21 de junio [National Association of Salvadoran Educators] led a 56-day strike, getting almost all they demanded by the end. The Rural Workers Union (UTC) also played an integral role for peasants. On the margins of cities in low-income communities where many displaced peasants arrived after becoming landless, the *Unión de Pobladores de Tugurios*, UPT [Union of Slum Residents] began in the 1970s (Acosta 2013). Left-wing groups prioritized the nation's East, because it had the highest poverty levels and was thus seen as an area ripe for organizing.[57]

Shortly after taking power in 1972, military leader Arturo Armando Molina announced the construction of a dam between Potonico municipality of Chalatenango department and Jutiapa municipality of Cabañas department. He justified the project saying that it would provide the country's energy needs and bring residents wellbeing, even though over 10,000 small-scale landowners would be displaced by the flooding (Acosta 2013). In 1975, the Cerrón Grande Reservoir and Hydroelectric Dam flooded 135 kilometers^2, forcing residents from the rural areas of Cabañas, Chalatenango and Cuscatlán, where they had owned small plots of land, into municipal centers of El Paisnal, Aguilares, Guazapa, Suchitoto, Cinquera and San Martín (Acosta 2013). There, with organizing assistance from the Catholic church,[58] they demanded land, improved work conditions, leave/rest, medical attention, nearby schools, potable water, electricity and better treatment by security forces (Acosta 2013).

Liberation theology as the practice of a preference for the poor had emerged from the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin in 1968 (Acosta 2013, Berryman 1984, Binford 1996, 1998, Peterson 1997, Rubio and Balsebre 2009). Within just a year, the first

[57] For a study focused on Morazán, see Binford (1996). For a study focused on Usulután, see Wood (2003).
[58] For studies focused on Chalatenango, see Acosta (2013), Lara Martinez (2005) and Silber (2011). Acosta (2013) also discusses Suchitoto municipality and its surrounding areas in depth.

comunidades eclesiales de base, CEB [Christian base communities] were established in El Salvador.[59] In them, communities worked together to create "heaven on earth" based on justice, freedom, love, equality and peace (Rubio and Balsebre 2009): together, they farmed, built and repaired infrastructure and homes, supported each other and raised consciousness about the processes of exploitation under way. Using the *Bible*, they demanded better wages, working conditions and land reform, alongside providing education and training activities, preaching that injustice was sin (Acosta 2013, Clements 1984), and people must "see, judge and act" to "be the voice for those who do not have voice" (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

Even as organizing increased, "the landless population increased from 12 percent of the rural population in 1961 to about 30 percent in 1971 and then over 40 percent by 1975, while peonage and share cropping under seignorial relations prevailed in the countryside" (Robinson 2003, 92, citing to Brocket 1998). This, and the fall of coffee prices, played a role in the so-called "football war" between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969 that left 5,000 dead, many more injured and displaced and El Salvador's main oil refinery destroyed in just 100 hours of fighting during the third round of the World Cup classification (Clements 1984, Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

By the 1970s, El Salvador's small elite owned 80 percent of the nation's arable land (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). Those who remained in rural areas lived in economic and social precarity economically by the 1970s, as a result (Acosta 2013).

[59] From the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, Father José Alas introduced liberation theology to parishes in Guazapa municipality and areas north and northeast of it, including in Chalatenango and other areas on the Lempa River (Acosta 2013, Clements 1984). Death squads repeatedly threatened him and beat him nearly to death. In 1977, he was driven from the region. In 1970, Father Bernardo Boulang created the *Juventud Agraria Cristiana* to teach agricultural techniques in the San Sebastián municipality parish of San Vicente department (Acosta 2013). The same year, the *Carmelitas* nuns founded the Escuela de Corte y Confección to help around 50 women in Suchitoto (Acosta 2013). Father Alvarenga did similar work in rural areas of northern Morazán from 1973 on (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

The University of Texas Inequality Project has data on El Salvador's Gini coefficient – the most common measure of inequality – back to 1963.[60] That year, its coefficient was 52.2, indicating a very high level of inequality. The coefficient fell very gradually year-after-year through 1974 in the period when demands for better work conditions and equality built, as the Figure 15 below shows.

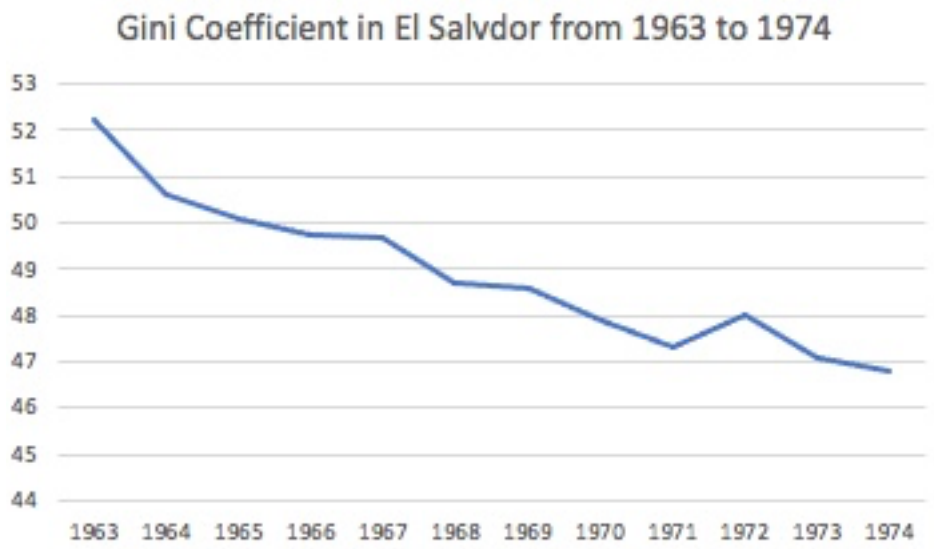


Figure 16 Inequality in El Salvador, 1963 to 1974

The World Bank has data on El Salvador's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita back to 1967. That year, it was $300 ($25/month) – not even $1.00 a day. Even though inequality decreased very gradually in this period, GNI per capita increased substantially year-after-year through 1974, indicating that the wealthy especially increased their income, even as the poor saw few economic gains.

3.8 Further Polarization of Salvadoran Society

> *... les suplico, les ruego, les ordeno: cese la represión [I petition you, I beg you, I order you: stop the repression].*

[60] The University of Texas Inequality website can be accessed at this link: https://utip.gov.utexas.edu.

> – Oscar Romero in his last broadcast homily on 23 March 1980 before being assassinated, asking that soldiers lay down their arms in the unjust war under way.

El Salvador's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita had risen to $780 ($65/month) by 1979 (World Bank), but inequality had risen from 1974 (46.8) to 1975 (47.4) and stalled between 45.1 and 46.5 through 1980, as shown in the Figure 16 below.

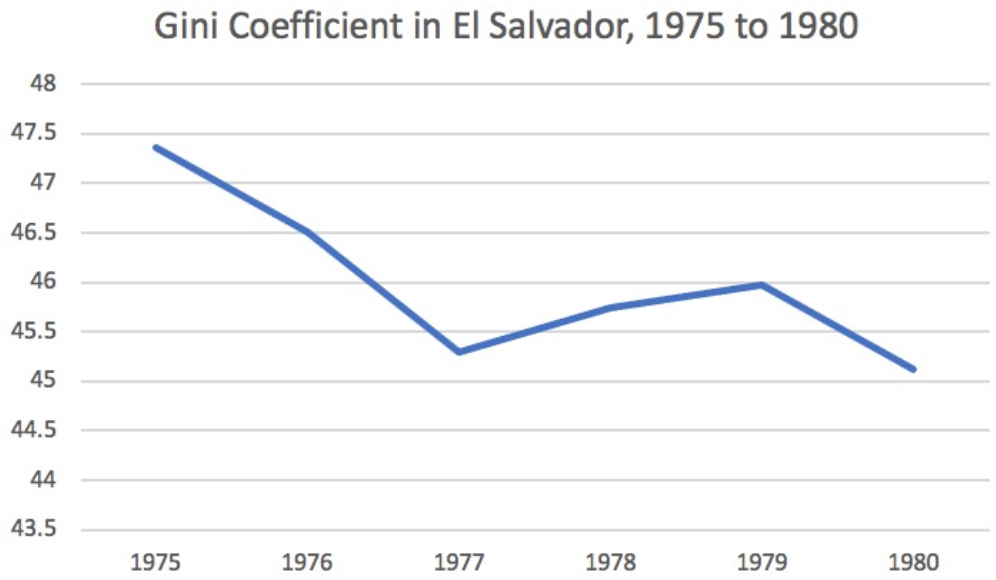


Figure 17 Inequality in El Salvador, 1975 to 1980

The 1970s can be characterized as the strong polarization of Salvadoran society (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). The country held elections in 1972 and 1977, but fraud occurred in both, with the left-wing candidates not being able to take power either year, and a military dictatorship instead continuing to rule.[61] Following the 1977 fraud, a large crowd protested in the Plaza Libertad on 28 February 1977. The military opened fire on them, killing dozens (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). Terror increased from there, especially against Catholic clergy and

[61] In 1972, José Napoleón Duarte, a Christian democrat and former mayor of San Salvador, and Guillermo Manuel Ungo, a Social Democrat and attorney, headed a center-left coalition of three political parties that won. The army, however, rigged the ballots and declared its candidate the winner. Again in 1977, the left-wing party *Unión Nacional Opositora*, UNO won, but a military general was imposed upon the people instead.

laypersons,[62] human rights defenders[63] and leftist political organizations.[64] By 1979, military "operations" and disappearances and murders by State forces and ORDEN were happening daily, especially in Cabañas, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Morazán departments (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). These forces also infiltrated student, labor, peasant and human rights organizations, posing as members to obtain information, further sewing division, doubts and distrust within the movement.

Despite increasing threats, torture and killings, peasant, student and labor organizing strengthened even further. Existing organizations grew their membership and created political and armed wings. New organizations came to life, finding collaborations. By 1979, five major Marxist and social democratic parties or "tendencies" existed: the Revolutionary Army of the People (ERP), the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL), the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL), the National Resistance (RN), and the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers (PRTC). Within each of them were many more sub-factions and collaborators (McClintock

[62] Although numerous laypersons had already been disappeared and murdered, two priests were killed during the Molina administration from 1972 to 1976. On 12 March 1977, Jesuit priest Rutilio Grande and two catechists with him were murdered in El Paisnal municipality of San Salvador department. They were driving to evening mass when they were ambushed and strafed. Grande had spent 20 years in San Miguel and been named the head of the Aguilares Parish in 1972. He began a base community once there. Oscar Romero did the mass and spent hours talking with the mourning peasants to better understand their lives (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). The next day, he informed the government that he would no longer attend their functions, until the crimes were investigated. In the three years before Romero was assassinated, he never attended a State ceremony. In 1978, Priest Ernesto Barrera was murdered. On 24 March 1980, special forces murdered Oscar Romero while he performed mass in San Salvador. At his funeral on 30 March 1980, the military opened fire on those in attendance, killing 40 and injuring another 200. On 5 December 1980, the military kidnapped, raped and murdered four Maryknoll nuns from the United States. The Central American University and Museum of Anthropology in El Salvador have exhibits dedicated to the priests and nuns who were assassinated in the war.

[63] On 7 October 1979, María Magdalena Henríquez appeared dead after being kidnapped on 3 September 1979. She had been the Secretary of Information for the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos* (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

[64] On 29 October 1979, 70 were killed and many more were injured at a LP-28 manifestation in front of the San Salvador Cathedral. In November 1979, six *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR) members – formed in April of over 80 social organizations – were captured, tortured and assassinated (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). On 22 January 1980, the *Coordinación Revolucionaria de Masas (CRM)* coordinated around 100,000 persons protesting in San Salvador to end repression, which was thought to be the highest point of the mass political fight in the open. They were massacred (Rubio and Balsebre 2009).

1998).[65] In the face of the coup, they decided to unite to hopefully strengthen their ability to achieve economic and political reform through armed revolution (Clements 1984). On 10 October 1980, the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) was born, even though it would remain "fractious" throughout and after the war (McClintock 1998).

3.9 The Civil War (1979-1992)

> *It doesn't take a communist to tell a peasant that he or she is hungry or a Marxist agitator to stir protest against home grown misery. (*ix)
>
> *Revolting conditions create revolutions. … I called it a "necessary struggle for human dignity."* (181)
>
> *… death in some ways has more meaning than life. We have lived as slaves here. Now we have awakened to know that this was not the law of God; only other men determine that we should live as second-class people. One more day of that life is impossible for me. Even the old ones, like me, who won't see the victory are impatient for their children and the unborn generation.* (172)
>
> – In Clements, Charles. 1984. *Witness to War: An American Doctor in El Salvador*. New York: Bantam Books.

[65] Clements (1984) mentioned, for example, the Association of Slum Dwellers, the Popular Social Christian Movement, and a professional association of doctors, engineers, and lawyers known as the Independent Movement of Salvadoran Professionals and Technicians. Rubio and Balsebre (2009) wrote that on 11 January 1980, the *Unidad Revolucionaria* that would later be named the *Coordinación Revolucionaria de Masas (CRM)* brought together the *Bloque Popular Revolucionario (BPR)*, *Frente Popular de Acción Unificada* (FAPU), *Unión Democrática Nacional* (UDN) and the *Ligas Populares 28 de Febrero* (LP-28). In April 1980, the FDR formed, and on 22 May 1980, the *Dirección Revolucionaria Unificada (DRU)* was announced, bringing together the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación* (FPL), *Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP), *Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional* (FARN) and *Partido Comunista Salvadoreña* (PCS). Prior to this, two organizations – the *Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT)* and the *Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios (AGEUS)* – led a strong social confrontation, thought to be the determining factor in Lemus' fall in 1960 (Rubio and Balsebre 2009). Silber (2011) provides detail on the *BPR*, who formed in 1975; it was the political wing of the clandestine guerrilla group known as the *Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL)*. The FPL traces its history to 1970 when it split from the Salvadoran Communist Party. It soon dominated Chalatenango and operated clandestinely, as by the late 1970s, confrontations between popular organizations, the military and paramilitary forces such as ORDEN (Democratic Nationalist Organization) increased. Other groups included the LP-28, which was urban-based and student-controlled; *Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños (*ANDES); *Unión de Pobladores de Tugurios* (UPT); *Movimiento Estudiantil Revolucionario de Secundaria* (MERS); and FAPU. These groups joined to coordinate under the CRM. FECCAS had strong relationships with Christian base communities and the BPR.

Prior and subsequent work of mine focuses on the violence and terror of the war. This section and dissertation, though, focuses on its economic and political (dis)contents, to the extent they can be separated from the former. An attempt to put a more progressive government in place to avoid full-blown war failed when it was co-opted, and the civilian members renounced in January 1980 (Silber 2011). The country thus marched into war as part of the long-brewing struggle for economic justice (Silber 2011).

Throughout the country, from 1980 to 1983, civilian organizing was brutally repressed, and ORDEN and other death squads kidnapped, disappeared, killed and tortured at will (Acosta 2013). Rural areas were hit especially hard by the Salvadoran Armed Forces, who employed a Scorched Earth campaign to "terminate [*acabar*] the population considered to be the support base," which they painted as "subversives," "communists" and "terrorists" (Rubio and Balsebre 2009; see also Acosta 2013, Clements 1984, Silber 2011). After a FMLN offensive in 1981 that showed greater strength than the US and Salvadoran Armed Forces realized, the military began a "take the water from the fish [*quitarle el agua del pez*]" strategy as well. In areas known for their organizing, military and paramilitary forces destroyed the homes and crops, ripped trees and plants from the ground, slaughtered the livestock and set fire to everything as they exited. Some survivors fled their destroyed communities but stayed in El Salvador to fight; by 1983, the FMLN controlled such communities in much of the north and east of the country outside cities, in that death squads did not operate in them, and soldiers only entered during invasions or operations (Clements 1984, Silber 2011). The FMLN had strengthened further by 1984, holding between 20 and 30 percent of the county and having almost 10,000 armed soldiers (Silber 2011). Figure 17 below shows those areas; it is a photograph of the original map kept in the war museum in Morazán.

Figure 18 FMLN-controlled areas of El Salvador during the Civil War (Morazàn's War Museum)

Likewise, international solidarity networks deepened and attempted to contest the US-funded war. During invasions, residents fled on long marches called *guindas* or hid in caves and dug-out holes. When settled, they created *Poderes Populares Locales* to oversee education and health in the absence of an official government (Silber 2011). Despite this, children, who tended to be the majority in such communities, especially suffered. Clements (1984), a medical doctor, wrote of distended bellies, malnutrition, anemia, miscarriage, fever and diarrhea, malaria, dengue and other illness that should have been treatable but often resulted in death.

Many other survivors from inland fled to Cabañas, Chalatenango and Morazán at the border with Honduras, and then those in and from these communities fled across the border into Honduras and formed what eventually became refugee camps. Thousands came to be in the area of La Virtud municipality of Lempira department in Honduras, but in 1981, around 30,000 of them were forced further inland to the Mesa Grande Refugee Camp in Ocotepeque department of Honduras. Those displaced from ended up in Colomoncagua municipality of Intibuca department of Honduras, where UNHCR and Caritas created a refugee camp that

housed them until January 1990. Others fled to Costa Rica, Mexico, the United States and elsewhere, although many from Chalatenango department remained in refugee camps in Honduras (Silber 2011). In camps, life was divided by the same ideological factions and sectarianism within the FMLN, and those who lived there described them as a "safe haven that felt imprisoning" (Silber 2011, 64). Silber (2011) continued that "[w]hile benefits such as education, clothing and food were available, the separation from kin and partners was devastating and destroyed families" (64).[66] Indeed, Clements (1984) also noted that "the *campesino* families … were continually shuffled and mended … [after deaths and forced displacement]. … intact nuclear families were almost unknown …" (Clements 1984, 106).[67]

The number of deaths deceased in the second part of the decade, but the repression, violence and terror continued, especially in rural areas. Still, refugees in the camps began returning in the late-1980s. In 1989, the FMLN launched a major offensive, taking the predominantly rural-based violence to the urban and elite streets of the capital in San Salvador. After it was over, the Armed Forces and the FMLN realized neither could win by force. Behind closed doors on both sides, efforts began to end the war. This finally culminated in the signing of the Peace Accords on 16 January 1992 in a castle in Chapultepec, Mexico between the ARENA President Alfredo Cristiani and representatives of the five branches of the FMLN, as facilitated by the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, without United States financing and training, the war would not have continued as long as it did. With over $6 billion sent from 1981 to 1992, the average daily US expenditure exceeded $1 million for more than a decade. For the 17-year period from 1963 to 1979, the US provided $150 million in aid – an average of just $8.8 million per year (Robinson

[66] People were kidnapped and disappeared or murdered from the camps.
[67] Acosta (2013) referred to the consequences of this as "social rupture" and "social wounds that still persist.

2003). The US sent $25 million in 1980, which went up to approximately $63 million in 1983, but those amounts then increased to between $500 and $600 million per year by the mid-1980s (Lungo 1996).[68] The US also mobilized at least another $1 billion from international financial institutions (IFIs) (Robinson 2003). A substantial portion of the aid went to increasing the size of the armed forces by nearly 600 percent, training and advice and the provision of air, land and sea weaponry (Robinson 2003). The Reagan Administration wanted to prevent the left's victory and "communists" arriving to the Rio Grande River bordering Texas and Mexico (Clements 1984, Silber 2011). Following the FMLN's "Final Offensive" in 1981, it believed it necessary to ratchet up military assistance to do so. Incomprehensibly, the Reagan Administration believed it could guide and train the Salvadoran military to a quick, decisive victory through "low intensity warfare" (Barry et al. 1989, Klare and Kornbluh 1988, McClintock 1985, Robinson and Norsworthy 1987, Siegel and Hackel 1988).[69] Although US troops were not sent, and US advisors with experience largely obtained in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were supposed to remain in only training and advisory capacities, numerous reports placed the leaders within a few kilometers of the worst massacres (Clements 1984), implying that they had played planning and executive roles.

US strategy in El Salvador sought also to restructure the Salvadoran state's economy and politics (Robinson 2003). Part of this restructuring supposedly involved land reform with explicit desires to "modernize" the market in land and "transition to full capitalist agriculture"

[68] In January 1984, Hedrick Smith reported for the *New York Times* that: "The Presidential commission on Central America, headed by former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, submitted a report to Mr. Reagan on Wednesday for substantial immediate increases to military and economic aid to the region including a five-year economic aid commitment of $8 billion. The report said increased aid was necessary to counter Soviet and Cuban involvement in the region …" Robinson (2003) recommends Lungo (1996) for a year-by-year breakdown of US aid between 1980 and 1989 in table 13 on page 101.

[69] As will be discussed in the chapters on violence, nothing about the war was "low intensity," especially for those living in poor and rural areas disproportionately impacted by it.

(Robinson 2003). USAID used a three-phase program introduced in South Vietnam in the 1960s as the model (Robinson 2003). During the first phase, begun in March 1980, all estates over 1,235 acres were supposed to be purchased, expropriated and transformed into cooperatives. Only 25 percent of the country's agricultural lands were included, though (Lungo 1996, Pearce 1986, Pelupessy 1993) – in Suchitoto, for example, only three *haciendas* were affected (Acosta 2013). Furthermore, the *Los Angeles Times* reported in March 1983 that the $25 million loaned to the program had disappeared (UPI 1983). During the second phase, estates over 618 acres were supposed to be redistributed, but this was never implemented (Lungo 1996, Pearce 1986, Pelupessy 1993). The Phase III "Land to the Tiller" program was supposed to provide legal title through state financing and technical training to peasant farmers. In December 1983, Lydia Chavez reported for the *New York Times* that "only about 72,000 acres instead of the original 173,000 acres would be available for redistribution to farm workers under this phase" (Chavez 1983). Much of it had poor soil quality (Pearce 1986). Sam Dillon for the *Knight-Ridder Newspapers* had reported that even among beneficiaries who managed to access land through the program, between 11 and 14.5 percent of them were thrown off their land, with evictions continuing at the same level (Dillon 1983). Furthermore, only 50 to 60 percent of the cooperatives received technical assistance (Lungo 1996, Pearce 1986, Pelupessy 1993). Essentially, the land reform had been poorly designed from the beginning, even more poorly executed and left hundreds of thousands still landless (Silber 2011).

The broadest objective of US assistance – "sweeping neo-liberal transformation" – though, was perhaps the least visible: the US hoped "to integrate the country into the global economy … on the basis of … neoliberal reform … [and the] hegemony of [capital] and the private sector" (Robinson 2003, 89). In the first half of the war, US superintendents did not

push privatization and permitted the Duarte government to run huge budget and trade deficits, but from 1985 on, USAID withdrew "its support for the earlier reforms and [began] to push privatization, lifting of state price controls, fiscal austerity, raising tariffs, and so on" (Robinson 2003, 94; see also Rosa 1992). By the late-1980s, the international marketing and financial systems were re-privatized, and the Central Bank could sign agreements directly with USAID (Cuenca 1992).

To achieve the neoliberal transformation, USAID – and the IFIs it recruited – created trade liberalization and economic development programs in new external activities like non-traditional exports, the first *maquiladora* [factory] plants and banking and international commerce. The US government disbursed this aid through "highly conditional Economic Support Funds (ESF), a program designed to expedite an imperious US political influence in receiver countries" (Robinson 2003, 89; see also Cuenca 1992 and Barry and Preusch 1988). In so doing, the US could "influence the entire structure of state allocations in social services, the operations of distinct ministries, military spending, investment and infrastructure, and so on" (Robinson 2003, 89). As a result, the US had "inordinate influence over agricultural policy" and social services, which it required to be administered by the private sector (Robinson 2003, 89). It also encouraged wealthy Salvadoran businesspeople to create a think-tank of sorts, which launched as the Salvadoran Foundation for Social and Economic Development (FUSADES) in 1983. That year, they received a USAID contract of $185,000, and over the next 10 yeas, they received another $150 million, making them the main outlet for USAID money for civil society (Robinson 2003).

Concomitant to this, as the 1980s passed, the US came to see the Duarte administration and his Christian Democratic project as an obstacle and so strengthened its ties to the emerging

New Right (Robinson 2003). When ARENA was founded in 1981 by right-wing oligarchy, military officers and paramilitary operatives led by Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, a former military intelligence officer and death squad organizer, many in Washington, DC did not support it. In the 1984 elections, Washington provided support to Duarte to defeat ARENA candidate D'Aubuisson (Stanley 1996). In 1988 in preparation for the 1989 elections, though, USAID and FUSADES contracted 25 international advisors, including the "Chicago Boy" Arnold Harberger,[70] to draft an Economic and Social Program (Rosa 1992, Cuenca 1992, Segovia 1996). When ARENA candidate Cristiani won, he named the Program's coordinator, economist Mirna Lievano de Marquez, as his Minister of Planning, and the Program was adopted in its entirety. As Robinson (2003) wrote, "[w]hat followed was sweeping neoliberal reform including trade liberalization, devaluation of the currency, privatizations, the lifting of subsidies, the promotion of non-traditional exports, and the expansion of free trade zones and maquiladora activities" (96).

The 1992 Chapultepec Peace Accords widened a split within ARENA. The traditionalists who had founded the party fiercely wanted to keep fighting, while Cristiani and the technocrats in his administration wanted to conclude the transformation of El Salvador's state and class structure and accelerate its integration into global capitalism, which could not be done while a war still raged (Robinson 2003). Ultimately, the latter won out. In 1990, the Cristiani administration negotiated quickly with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and post-war reconstruction financing from other IFIs flooded in. From 1990 to 1992, over $1 billion came from them, replacing US assistance as the top aid (Robinson 2003).

[70] The "Chicago Boys" were a team of free market economists primarily based at the University of Chicago who worked in the 1970s on the ideological and programmatic bases of neoliberalism.

Administration officials and USAID collaborated to draft the National Reconstruction Plan, designing it to further neoliberal reforms (Murray and Barry 1995, Foley 1996).

During the war, El Salvador's GNI per capita stagnated between $740 ($61.67/month) and $930 ($77.50/month), according to the World Bank. In October 1983, Christopher Dickey for the *Washington Post* reported that the "small upper class has retained its dominant role in the economic life of the country despite widely publicized reforms," continuing that the wealthy were sending their money and their children outside of the country (Dickey 1983). He asked the Planning Minister Manuel Antonio Robles about criticism that "the war is essentially being fought to protect the interests of the 6 percent of the population who earn more than $240.00 a month," and the Minister replied: "Really, it is true …" As the war dragged on, fewer and fewer common people could work to earn income, such that by 1987, 50 percent of the urban sector and 71 percent of the rural sector was unemployed (Barry 1990).

In 1980, the bottom 20 percent of El Salvador's population controlled just two percent of national income, whereas the top 20 percent controlled 65 percent (Silber 2011). At the very top, the oligarchy in the 1980s numbered 184 family groupings with 1,309 members (Baloyra 1982, Dunkerley 1988, Lungo 1996, Montgomery 1995, Zamora 1997). Despite alleged land reform, in 1987, 41 percent of farms were small-scale plots of land covering only 10 percent of arable land, and 70 percent of farmland was distributed among only one percent of the population (Silber 2011). Inequality was not measured from 1987 to 1990, but in 1991, it had risen to 54 – higher than it had been before the war, as shown in Figure 18 below. This is consistent with what happened in other countries with a coup: "inequality would decline sharply in the two years immediately beforehand. In the year of the coup itself, the decline in inequality would stop. And in the five repressive years that followed (coups, as distinct from

revolutions, are almost invariably right-wing), rising inequality would occur systematically in each year, until overall inequality stood far higher than in the period before the coup" (Galbraith 2002). Add to this the fact that inequality had been rising worldwide since 1980, largely driven by neoliberal changes to the global market in response to the debt crisis (Galbraith 2012).

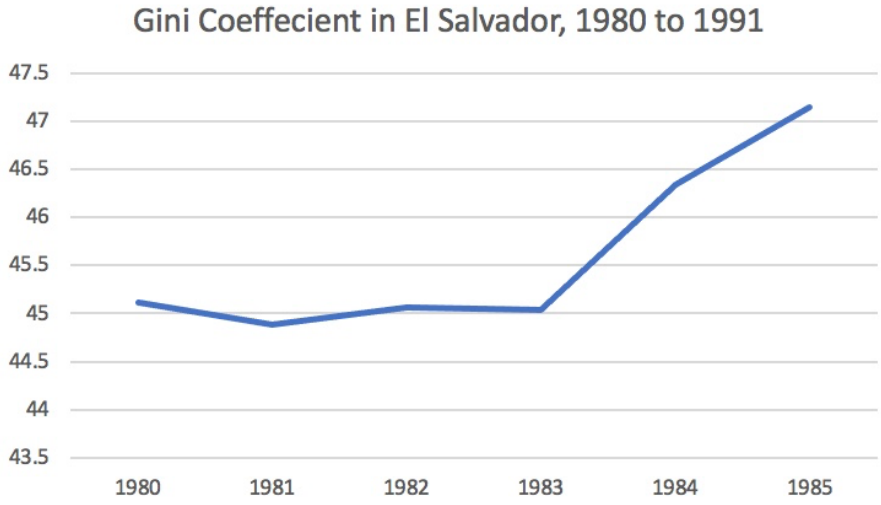


Figure 19 Inequality in El Salvador, 1980 to 1991

In sum, Silber (2011) found that the "1980s typif[ied] a history of extreme disparities of wealth, of landlessness and land-poor sectors, of under- and unemployment, and of weak state social services such as education and health," adding that it was "also a decade marked by a growing national debt which reached U$1.825 billion in 1989" (36).

3.10 "Tears that Thunder:" The Post-War Period under ARENA Leadership

> *... We had no choice but to study the situation and say, 'Yes, we are in agreement [with the Peace Accords],' although we had tears in our eyes that streamed down our face and fell as if they were thundering balls. (193)*
> – Former revolutionary from rural Chalatenango, "Aquilino," to Silber (2011) about the frustrations felt at war's end

The Peace Accords had multiple objectives. Most immediately, they ended the armed conflict and permitted the revolutionary forces to transition into being a legal political party. Further efforts to create and strengthen democratic institutions and to reform the judicial system were included. The military was reduced in size and mandate – to the defense of national sovereignty and territorial integrity – and agreed to civilian control. Likewise, a new civilian police force was created while units previously operating in that capacity were eliminated,[71] and a new security academy was created for training such officials. A human rights ombudsperson was created, as was a Truth Commission. Additionally, various reinsertion programs for ex-combatants – agricultural and business training, scholarships, homes, assistance to the injured, land transfer, long-term, low-interest loans for land purchases, etc. – were included. Sweeping in reach, the Accords were held up as an example for the world, and even its critics recognized them as transformational political reform (Acosta 2013).

Notwithstanding, the Peace Accords were ultimately "a series of bargains," principally that "[right-wing] elites conceded political democracy[,] and the [left-wing elites at the table for the] FMLN conceded a liberalized market economy" (Silber 2011, 38; see also Wood 2000). These bargains fell short in many ways. The Truth Commission was given less than a year to investigate 13 years of war crimes, and when its report was near publication in March 1993, the Legislative Assembly passed a blanket amnesty law for all human rights abuses committed by guerilla and military forces during the war.[72] An effective, reliable and

[71] Among the units eliminated were the *Batallones de Infantería de Reacción Inmediata* (BIRI), *Policía de Hacienda* (PH) and *Guardia Nacional*.

[72] In July 2016, El Salvador's Supreme Court overturned the 1993 amnesty law for crimes against humanity. Investigations into five cases, including the El Mozote massacre, killing of six Jesuit priests and assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, have been opened, but no convictions have been obtained to date. In September 2020, with President Nayib Bukele's backing, the military refused to comply with a court order to allow a judge to review military records related to the El Mozote massacre. In September 2021, the judge investigating the massacre, Jorge Guzmán, was removed, allegedly because of his age (he turned 60 years old).

independent justice system seemed incredibly distant, and neither it nor the new police force were equipped to address rising crime (Popkin 2000). The poor and landless had little faith in them, believing that they would soon experience the same repression (Acosta 2013). Most critically, they left unaddressed the underlying socioeconomic causes of the war, even as the socioeconomic situation of most people in the country was as bad or worse as it had been before the war (Acosta 2013, Gammage 2006, Popkin 2000, Silber 2011, Stephen et al. 2001). The poor and landless had wanted "to overthrow institutionalized power and put in place a socialist project" (Silber 2011, 61), but they instead got thrown into a neoliberal world market with more demands and less protections.

At war's end, El Salvador's geographic population distribution had changed because of "the military's wartime depopulation strategies and the subsequent resettlement patterns dictated by war conditions" (Silber 2011, 20). Displaced communities returned to nearby areas and resettled them together – clearing the shrubs and trees, building rustic homes and schools of what wood and fronds they could find – realizing along the way that they were often not suited for the agricultural activities in which they had previously worked (Acosta 2013, Silber 2011). They negotiated with property owners to buy the land using international assistance, with most but not all ultimately agreeing to sell where the residents had settled on less arable land (Acosta 2013). In 1993 and 1994, many smaller and isolated communities still had homes with dirt floors and no electricity (Silber 2011), alongside little to no food, medical attention or infrastructure (Acosta 2013). The little that got done for the few was insufficient and answered to political interests, rather than actually helping people (Acosta 2013).[73] Regardless, it was still a time of hope, great activity and substantial organizing (Silber 2011).

[73] The original Spanish text is: "*Sin embargo, estas acciones eran totalmente insuficientes y respondían a intereses políticos y no a un interés real de ayudar a la gente*."

From 1992 to 1997, El Salvador had a six-year *Plan Nacional de Reconstrucción*, PNR [National Reconstruction Plan] funded with more than $1 billion promised from USAID, the European Union and IFIs.[74] It sought to focus on the 115 most damaged municipalities and some 22,500 ex-combatants, the displaced and refugees (Acosta 2013, Silber 2011). For communities, it sought to rebuild and repair damaged or destroyed infrastructure – roads, bridges, electrification and buildings like schools, clinics, churches and homes (often cement-block housing projects). For ex-combatants, the displaced and refugees, it offered the aforementioned land transfer program to some 25,000 it termed "*tenedores*" and opportunities for them – and especially women who lost their male kin in the war through death, separation or abandonment – to join the "productive economy and development process" (Silber 2011, 23). Likewise, the program sought to (re)introduce official municipal government politics, including in areas that had been operating under *Poderes Populares Locales* during the war – a challenge referenced as overcoming "*doble institucionalidad*" that was particularly strong in FMLN strongholds like those of rural Cabañas, Chalatenango, La Unión, Morazán, San Vicente and Usulután (Silber 2011).

Like the Peace Accords, the PNR had many shortcomings, which scholars have exhaustively described (Acosta 2013, Foley 1996, Murray et al. 1994, Rubio and Balsebre 2009, Silber 2011, UNDP 2005). The funding was inadequate: the Salvadoran government estimated reconstruction costs at $20.8 billion, even though the PNR itself estimated costs at $1.528 billion (Silber 2011).[75] It lacked a "cogent, long-term development plan" (Silber 2011,

[74] According to Silber (2011), USAID pledged $302 million, while other international donors' pledged $800 million for the plan. Pledging $207 million, Japan was the second largest donor, followed by the Inter-American Development Bank at $145 million, the European Economic Community at $90 million and Germany at $29 million. Many international NGOs (such as Catholic Relief Services, CARE) and more than 120 Salvadoran NGOs were also involved.

[75] This is a huge difference, and in the future, I will review additional sources and possibly conduct interviews with official from that period about the discrepancy. From my experience in the region for a decade now, two

16). Some who fought hard for most of the war received no benefits, and others who did not fight at all did (Silber 2011). USAID oversaw it, which meant, as a USAID Director told Silber (2011) in 1997, that it "emphasized income generation as a way to promote social progress" (206), with the idea that social programs and progress would follow, instead of the European regional approach to development that incorporated various actors' perspectives and emphasized social programming as a method of promoting income generation (Foley 1996).[76] USAID continued to prioritize social spending reduction and privatization of state enterprises, external trade liberalization and free trade zones, and even decentralization of the reconstruction process to the local level through a Municipalities in Action (MEA) program that it had begun in 1987 (Silber and Viterna 2009). As the years passed, community micro-enterprise projects that had only erratically employed handfuls of residents at best became unused, closed and even "covered with bat feces" (Silber 2011, 23). In fact, at least in the Chalatenango communities that Silber (2011) observed over more than a decade, "all the projects failed" (104), in addition to having been unequally distributed between "municipal head towns and smaller, more rural *cantones*" and having in the process divided political organizing (104).

Silber thus refers to the post-war period as a time of "lowered expectations for the state" because of privatization and neoliberal reform but also "higher expectations of rights" because of the end to the war and Peace Accords (2011, 94). At the national level, another ARENA candidate, Armando Calderon Sol, won and took control in 1995. He again relaxed regulations

dynamics were at play. Local communities often provide true estimates of what repairs and projects would cost to do them well, and international organizations without local experience then arrive and cut the costs in ways to make the project more manageable or measurable but also – most of the time – ineffective even for a short period. At the same time, corruption and graft are rampant, such that Salvadoran politicians may have substantially overestimated costs to line their pockets.

[76] Whereas USAID's contacts leaned right among the elite, European contacts leaned left among the most historically marginalized.

for free trade zones, saying that he wanted to turn El Salvador into "one big free zone" (Robinson 2003, 97). As a result, urban industry grew while the agricultural economy shriveled (World Bank 1998), and a "rural exodus" ensued, during which agriculture's percentage of GDP dropped substantially (Gammage 2006). Fifty-seven percent of Salvadorans lived in urban areas by 1996, and at least 60 percent of them worked in informal, unregulated sectors with no basic services (PAHO 1998, Stephen et al. 2001). Completely opposite from the highly organized labor movement before the war, a 1996 World Bank survey ranked El Salvador as the "most congenial country in Latin America for business," because only 14 percent of its work force was unionized, strikes had plummeted, and firing could be done in three days (Robinson 2003, 98). Not surprisingly, then, a 1997 Hemispheric Initiatives report summarized El Salvador at the end of alleged reconstruction as follows:

> *A small elite continues to dominate economic and political life … a middle[-]class sector of white[-]collar management and technical employees has grown in numbers … urban workers, and particularly unionized workers, have lost influence as a result of privatization of state enterprises and the rise of maquiladora industry; and the mass of peasants, in whose name the armed struggle was waged, are in a more desperate condition than before the civil war began (Spence et al. 1997).*

The increased despair of *campesinos* by 1997 was both economic and psychological. Silber (2011) noted of her time in Chalatenango from 1997 on that "it is not rare to hear discussions on how they have received nothing but sadness and loss from their wartime participation" or that they are "worse off than before" (60-61).[77] While many felt this way, a few did not, and this created additional divisions. For example, one man, "Francisco," critiqued another man, "Rolando," to Silber, saying that it was not true that he had gained nothing from the war, because instead of putting on "shoes made of twine" and living in a "shack made of

[77] The original Spanish text is: "*estamos peor que antes*."

wood slats," he was then living in a "tile-roofed house" and not being beaten by the National Guard (61). Another former revolutionary, "Chico," ascribed the lack of gratitude to a lack of obedience; he– like others – told Silber longingly that before, "people were obedient" during the war but not after it (57).[78] Silber (2011) concluded that NGOs and former and current FMLN leaders wanted poor rural residents to remember and mythologize "an organized, heroic fighter and supporter" who gladly sacrificed, while leaving unaddressed the "political economy of the present[, …] unfolding economic injustices[, …] the inconsistencies of the peace process and the elusive violence of neoliberal politics that penetrate El Salvador" (61-62).

In some ways, El Salvador fell off the political map when the PNR ended in 1997, as international funding, workers and projects left for other places with "a sense that El Salvador's issues …were resolved" (Silber 2011, 27). Without their funding, human rights organizations' work shifted dramatically (Sprenkels 2005). In rural and poor communities, former activists – especially women "who had previously been the backbone of social movements" – had stopped meeting, organizing, demonstrating, volunteering (Silber 2011, 94). Silber determined they did so because they "were exhausted by both the war and the postwar. They were tired in body and spirit from a series of large and small violences and disappointments" (94). They had moved from feeling hope to feeling despair.

They did show up to vote, and an official political changing of the guard began. In 1997, the FMLN took 27 legislative seats,[79] and the mayorships of 52 new municipalities, including San Salvador, where 45 percent of the population lived (Silber 2011). ARENA's military and landowning segments from the eastern and western agricultural regions split off to the National Conciliation Party (PCN) and took 11 seats (Robinson 2003). ARENA saw a

[78] The original Spanish text is: "*la gente era obediente*."
[79] The Salvadoran Legislative Assembly had 84 seats.

35 percent drop in votes compared to the 1994 elections to hold onto only 28 seats. In March 1999, the majority of Salvadorans lived in FMLN-led municipalities, although ARENA held onto a majority of seats in the Legislative Assembly and the presidency (Silber 2011). El Salvador's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita rose from $1,060 ($88.33/month) to $2,820 ($235/month), according to the World Bank, but inequality stood at a higher level than before the war and decreased only slightly from 50 in 1992 to 45.8 in 2009, as shown in Figure 19 below.

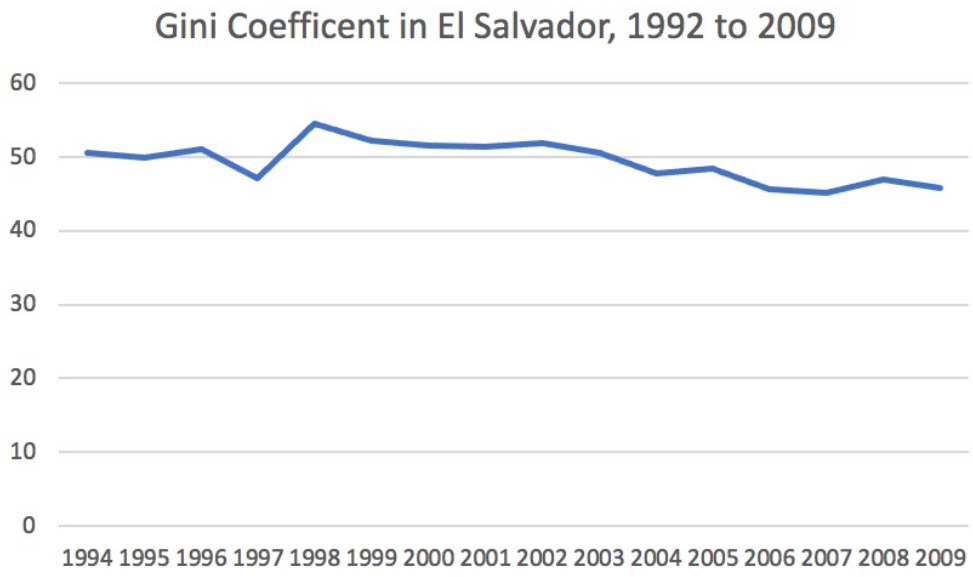


Figure 20 Inequality in El Salvador, 1992 to 2009

While El Salvador's war, alongside ARENA's neoliberal reforms, played a role in rising inequality in the country, economic inequality rose around the world "in roughly similar ways" from 1980 on amidst "the rise of neoliberal ideology, … breakdown of national sovereignties, and … end of Keynesian policies" (Galbraith 2002; see also Galbraith 2012).[80] Galbraith

[80] Keynesians believe that markets are imperfect, and government fiscal policy can influence them. Thus, unlike classicists who focus on supply and demand, Keynesians focus on set government prices. Similarly, unlike classicists who focus on inflation, Keynesians focus on unemployment. While classicists prioritize an unfettered market, Keynesians seek interventions to promote a healthy and robust economy and society.

(2012) notes that wealthy nations have "enormous control" over this economy, whereas small countries like El Salvador are left very vulnerable to the financial forces determined by them, leaving them limited options. It is for this reason that Robinson (2003) concluded about El Salvador: "[p]aradoxically, the success of the revolutionary forces does not show that popular change is possible under globalization. It demonstrates to the contrary how constraints imposed by the global system severely limit the effectiveness of popular struggles and local power. … 'national' liberation is not possible" (101-102) … at least not in a small or poor nation.

In her outstanding ethnography, Silber (2011) asks: "What [then] are the avenues of socioeconomic and political justice for the everyday revolutionaries" (167) in the post-war and globalized period? She answers that amidst "the broken promises and bankrupt dreams of revolution" (5), it seemed to be migration, in that for migrants who left behind their homes and families, "the waiting [for revolution in El Salvador] has stopped" (168). Mass migration to the United States from cities stalled until the late-1990s and from rural areas until the early-2000s (Silber 2011, UNDP 2005). By 2005, though, 22 percent of households received remittances (in some municipalities of Cabañas, Chalatenango, La Union and Morazán departments heaviest hit by the war, this was even higher), and between 20 and 25 percent of Salvadorans lived outside the nation (Coutin 2007, UNDP 2005). The nation's two oldest and largest newspapers began running a section on El Salvador's "15th department," the United States. Beth Baker-Cristales (2004) commented that the Salvadoran economy switched from relying on agricultural exports to the export of cheap labor (see also Gammage 2006). Silber (2011) argues that these migrants embody "a failure of democracy in El Salvador," because their "labor [and remittances] keep the nation afloat," even as those they leave behind "are

stuck … cannot move and rely on the economic remittances and capital of their migrating kin in order to survive" (11; see also Coutin 2007, Gregory 2006).

3.11 Closing

Although El Salvador is a sovereign nation, its sovereignty has been disrespected repeatedly in recent centuries. In the 1500s, Spaniards arrived, introducing disease, land privatization and a vigilante neighborhood Commissioner model to repress indigenous ways of life, including community organizing. As land concentrated in the hands of few, that oligarchy heavily steered the economy toward an agricultural export model that left more and more people landless and in extreme poverty. During the war, the United States government funded and trained years of abuse and terror, alongside requiring extreme neoliberalization and privatization of all sectors. During and after the war, such financial strategies left the masses and the national economy incredibly vulnerable to international market trends outside of El Salvador's control.

In 1969, Johan Galtung theorized an extended definition of violence to include both personal and structural violence – that with and without an identifiable subject committing it. He noted that traditional focus had been on the former but argued that to achieve peace, we must give equal or greater weight to structural violence, which he also called "social injustice." He identified two interrelated root components to structural violence: its objectively avoidable nature and its link to uneven power to decide over resource distribution. Despite the first, because of the second, he noted that structural violence might not be perceived at all, in that it is often stable and can be seen "as about as natural as the air around us" (Galtung 1969; 173). To this end, Galtung provided numerous examples of structural violence, including unequal power and life chances; unevenly distributed resources like education, literacy, income and medical services; and avoidable or preventable disaster damage, hunger, illness or early death,

adding that the combined situation of these "is aggravated further if the persons low on income are also low in education, … health, and … power – as is frequently the case … due to the way they are tied together in the social structure" (Galtung 1969; 171). He followed that this "aggravation of inequality" ensured that "in some structures … the lowest-ranking actors are deprived not only relative to the potential, but indeed below subsistence minimum." (Galtung 1969; 177).

This chapter has described a nation with substantial structural violence before, during and after its civil war (1979-1992), with most deprived of their potential and many living below a subsistence minimum. The following chapters unpack how children living in these conditions decide to migrate away from El Salvador in search of something closer to dignity, as it relates to health and poverty.

Chapter 4. Health and Demography among Salvadoran Child Migrants

> *The main reason we left is to have a better future, which means having better health, because the boy has already had two operations – one on his intestines and one on his appendix. I believe the US healthcare system is much better.*
> – 24-year-old mother of four-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department

> *There are three reasons why we are leaving. … Third, for health, as [my 10-year-old daughter] needs treatment on her teeth that costs $1,000.00. It is very difficult to get that money here.*
> – 40-year-old mother, a cleaner at a hotel, of 10-year-old daughter from Sonsonate department

> *I did not want to leave this country, but I had to do it. I had to accompany my older [21-year-old] sister who wanted to leave the country. She has a heart problem, and my family did not want her to go. … My other [24-year-old] sister left the country to earn more money to pay the expenses for my father's illness, but he still died [four years ago of an 'illness']. She could not see him before he died.*
> – 16-year-old boy from Morazán department

Above are the words of the only three children – or their mothers – who explicitly listed health as a reason for their migration. Two of them had additional explicit reasons, including poverty in one case and poverty and gang members' threats in the other case. I open this chapter examining these three children's fuller quantitative and qualitative responses. Even though so few gave it as an explicit reason for their migration, I then present that most – if not all – children and their relatives had limited access to quality healthcare, particularly around family planning and chronic diseases that affected their parents and other household members. From there, I turn to several demographic components of children's lives that undoubtedly impacted their and their families' wellbeing, and likely their decision to migrate, even though none of them explicitly mentioned one or some of them. Specific to fertility, children's mothers had significantly more children than the national average, some of whom may not be captured in Salvadoran statistics, because they were born or live in the United States. Their mothers had

their first child between the ages of 14 and 24, and most had their children over the course of 10 or more years. Related to mortality, 10 percent of children had been orphaned, with the parents' causes of death pointing to greater exposure to risk and less or no access to treatment for chronic disease. On household and family dynamics, 39 percent of children did not live with an adult male, and children lived in broader family structures than a nuclear family of mother, father and siblings. Although these topics are regularly discussed among demographers, they have rarely been part of the public discussion of children's, families' and Salvadorans' migration.

4.1 The Children Who Listed Health

Even though most – if not all – 145 children we interviewed from the five selected departments had limited or no access to quality healthcare, as discussed below, only three of them explicitly listed health as a reason for their migration, as displayed Table 31 below. For boys and girls, this made it the least common explicit reason. No children from Chalatenango or Cuscatlán department listed it, and only one child from the other three departments provided it. It was the least common reason in each department.

Table 31 Health as a Reason for Migration among Children from Five Departments

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	1	11		0	0		1	3
Chalatenango	0	0		0	0		0	0
Cuscatlán	0	0		0	0		0	0
Morazán	0	0		1	4		1	3
Sonsonate	0	0		1	5		1	3
TOTAL	1	3		2	2		3	2

The adolescent boy from Morazán department gave only his sister's health as his reason for going, explicitly saying that he did not want to go but felt he needed to accompany her. He did not disclose the illness from which his father died four years earlier, but given that his older

sister left the country to try to help pay for his treatment, his condition may have been similar to the heart condition his 21-year-old sister was then confronting. The four-year-old boy's mother from Ahuachapán had two reasons for their migration: a better future (covered in the next chapter on poverty) and better health. She was frustrated that the four-year-old had already undergone two operations and believed the United States healthcare system would better serve him. She likely referred to both diagnosis and treatment. The 10-year-old girl's mother from Sonsonate department gave three reasons for their migration. Besides the girl's dental health, their poverty and gang members' threats were motivating them. While the sample is very small, the most common accompanying reason was poverty, given by both younger children's mothers. This is interesting, because as immediately addressed below, a number of factors pointed to less hardship in these children's lives than in the overall 145 children's. The next chapter highlights, though, that it seemed most – if not all – children we interviewed lived in poverty, such that less hardship among the interviewed population could still mean substantial and chronic hardship.

4.2 The Fuller Picture

In the methodology chapter, I posited the need for children's and adults' explanations of their decisions to migrate to be contextualized with other available data, including details they themselves provide in the course of an interview. Before providing information from other data sources, I now include the additional relevant interview details for the three children who gave health as a reason, so that they can be compared with all 145 children and children who gave each of several other reasons for their migration. This background further demonstrates that much more was going on in children's lives to drive them from home than just health concerns,

any other one factor, or even the multiple factors that two of the three children explicitly gave for their migration.

It also sheds light on how these three children differed from the full 145. The three were younger on average than the 145. Several factors indicated possibly less hardship. Their household size averaged smaller than for the 145, meaning less expenses. All three children were studying and were at an age-appropriate level – both at rates higher than for the 145 – indicating greater ability to pay education costs year-in and year-out. All three lived with their mothers, who remained partnered with their fathers (although the adolescent boy's father had died a few years earlier) at higher rates, meaning greater resources. Two factors, though, pointed to greater possible hardship. Despite all of their mothers being partnered with their fathers, none of them was then living with their fathers – a higher rate than for the 145. All three were traveling with an adult relative – also a higher rate than for the 145.

Destinations

All girls and boys who reported health as a motivator for their migration hoped to reach the United States. None were headed to the same city or even same state.

Ages

The two children whose actual health was motivating migration were not yet adolescents. Aged four and 10, their mothers who were traveling with them listed their health as a reason for going. In this sense, they were younger than most children we interviewed. The adolescent boy who listed his sister's health as a reason for going had the same mode age as all boys interviewed. He, too, was traveling with an adult relative: his 21-year-old sister.

Rural-Urban Breakdown

The adolescent boy resided in Morazán department and did not provide the name of the neighborhood or municipality where he lived. As a result, I do not know if he lived in a rural or urban area. Morazán is primarily rural, and 92 percent of children we interviewed from the department reported living in a rural area. Furthermore, his uncle worked in agriculture, which is primarily a rural profession. Thus, it is most likely that he lived in a rural area. The 10-year-old girl lived in a rural community of Ahuachapán, while the four-year-old boy lived in an urban area of Sonsonate.

Parental Involvement

All three children lived with their mothers, and the two youngest were traveling with them, too. All three mothers were partnered with the children's father, although the adolescent boy's father had died four years earlier, and the 10-year-old girl's father disappeared eight months earlier when he set out to migrate (discussed more in the next chapter on poverty as a cause).[81] The four-year-old boy was headed to his father in the United States. These rates of maternal and paternal involvement were higher than for all 145 children.

Their Households

All three children reported the number of persons living in their households. It ranged from two to five, with no mode and an average of 3.7. This was lower than for all 145 children. None of the three lived with an adult male. This was higher than the 39 percent for all 145 children interviewed (and 41 percent for all boys). Notably, though, all three children had lived with their fathers prior to their migration, disappearance or death.

[81] In Latin America, the term "disappearance" tends to be used if someone witnessed the now "disappeared" person being taken. It also gets used when a person is presumed to be dead, but the relatives have no body to bury. The *ReVista Harvard Review of Latin America* has written extensively about this. Its website is the following: https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu. For a fuller and historical understanding, I particularly recommend: https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/export/html/192576.

Household Workers

Two children mentioned who worked in their households. The adolescent boy was not himself working, and neither were the other three persons in his household. They instead survived off of his sister's remittances and a nearby uncle's help. The 10-year-old girl's mother was the only one working in their household, and she did so in the services sector.

Remittances

Only the adolescent boy explicitly stated that his household received remittances. His 24-year-old sister sent between $150 and $200 each month. The four-year-old boy was headed to his father in the United States and may have also gotten them, especially likely since his mother did not report working, and only the two of them lived together. The 10-year-old girl's family had likely hoped to get remittances, but her father disappeared migrating to the United States and thus never sent any.

Study

All three children were studying. This is a higher rate than the 145 children interviewed. Notably, too, they were at appropriate grade level. The four-year-old was in pre-kindergarten – the only one under age six among those interviewed who was. The 10-year-old was in fifth grade. The 16-year-old was in the first year of *bachillerato*. All were in public school.

Insecurity and Violence

All three children reported the presence of gangs in their daily lives. While they were present in the neighborhoods where the four-year-old boy and 10-year-old girl lived, they were only present in the high school the 16-year-old boy attended. The 10-year-old and her family were already displaced after they fled their previous neighborhood, because gang members had arrived to their home, robbed them and forcibly recruited her brother. Her mother confronted

the gang members afterward and forcefully told them not to bother her child. Her father had already fled El Salvador eight months earlier, but they had not heard from him since then, and this left them without his wages and thus unable to pay their expenses. Related to this, she urgently needed dental treatment that they thought would be free in the US.

Family

All children had relatives with whom they planned to live in the United States, including a father, a sister and four aunts, respectively. Two children reported that their relatives had been in the United States for three years, while the other did not specify the length of time. One thought their relative had no legal status, one thought they had a work permit, and one thought they had legal permanent residency.

4.3 Healthcare in the United States

Two of the children's parents hoped that healthcare would be better and more affordable in the United States. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Bailey et al. (2002) specifically discussed how health emergencies could put Salvadoran migrants in financial ruin. According to United States Census Bureau data, displayed in Table 32 below, many Salvadorans do not have health insurance, which means paying exorbitant amounts for emergencies and often not having access to preventative care.

Table 32 Percentage of Salvadorans in the United States without Health Insurance (Pew Research Center)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013
All	38.9	41	41	39	37
Under 18	21.7	20	15	15	14

Notably, while fairly large portions of Salvadoran children had healthcare coverage during the Obama administration, the Trump administration threatened to deport families who accessed

government benefits for their children, meaning that coverage rates likely fell. At the same time, it is likely that Salvadoran child migrants who were not born in the United States are significantly overrepresented among uninsured children.

4.4 El Salvador's Health Panorama in 2014

Now, I turn to the broader healthcare situation in El Salvador in 2014 to contextualize why, even among a population who had little access to quality healthcare, only three mentioned health as a motivator for migration. According to El Salvador's Ministry of Health, the 10-19 age group experiences the second least health problems, after only the 5-9 age group; if you remove violence-related incidents, the 10-19 age group experiences the least health problems.[82] The physical difficulty of the journey naturally excludes persons with disabilities and other serious illnesses. For these reasons, the child and adolescent migrant population is one that likely has the lowest rates of health problems, which likely means most of them had not yet confronted the structural barriers to care. Notwithstanding, the following chapter on poverty as a cause of migration presents that most children lived in households where members who worked did so in the informal economy. This means having little income, and often no disposable income, to cover unforeseen costs, like healthcare. It also means having no access to insurance. The Table 33 below shows the incredibly low medical insurance coverage in El Salvador in 2014 by various factors.

Table 33 Percentage of Population with Medical Insurance in 2014 (DIGESTYC 2014)

Urban	Rural	National	Male	Female	1st Quintile	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
32.4	9.7	23.8	24.7	23.0	3.4	11.9	21.7	32.2	49.8

[82] The leading causes of hospital deaths among 10-19-year-olds were various head, chest and multi-point traumas likely caused by either shootings or beatings.

Among the 23.8 percent of the national population who does have insurance, most – 91.4 percent – have government insurance (DIGESTYC 2014). Despite these low insurance rates, El Salvador's constitution has recognized healthcare as a right for its citizens since at least its 1983 revisions. Nonetheless, because of the push for neoliberalization covered in the previous chapter, the healthcare system allocation went from 10 percent of the national budget in the 1970s to just six percent in 1985 (CELADE 1991). Because of this and fighting-related damages, by war's end only 11 of 18 public hospitals were operating (CELADE 1991). To see patients, the facilities required a "voluntary donation," meaning that even those who lived near enough to access one physically often could not afford to be treated. In 2009, the Funes Administration (FMLN) undertook major reforms to the healthcare system to increase access for the entire population. The voluntary donation was outlawed, and hospitals and clinics or units operated by the Ministry of Health became available to all citizens free of charge. Hoping to reach the largest audience, they emphasized primary care. However, these facilities are under-resourced. Wait times to be seen, even for urgent procedures, can be very long. Some medicines are not kept in stock, or among those in stock, they have expired. This means patients must pay out-of-pocket for their medicine, which most cannot afford. As examined below, the Salvadoran government continued to fail to develop family planning policies and also failed to adapt to the reality that chronic diseases like diabetes and chronic kidney disease had become leading causes of death (WHO 2016).

Fertility

Through at least 1971, regardless of life expectancy, El Salvador's crude birth rate has "always been very high" (Arriaga 1970). While an imperfect measure, Table 34 below shows the

average number of births per female by year. The United Nations Population Division recorded the rate as 1.78 by 2022.[83]

Table 34 Average Number of Births per Female by Census Year (DIGESTYC 2008)

1950	6.1
1961	6.7
1971	6.0
1992	4.0
2007	2.2

Notably, these figures varied widely according to geography and education (CELADE 1991). For example, in 1988, women in the Salvadoran Metropolitan Area (AMSS) had three less children than women in rural areas and two less children than in other urban areas (CELADE 1991). Women with the highest education levels (10 or more years) only had an average of 2.3 children, while those without formal education had an average of seven children (CELADE 1991). From 1992 to 2007, the fertility rate fell from four to three in rural areas (Tobar 2020).

Across all age groups, fertility has steadily declined (DIGESTYC 2008). While the 20-24 and 25-29 groups have remained the most and second most fertile over time, respectively, the 15-19 group became the third most fertile group from 1995 to 2000, replacing the 30-34 group. Until 1975, the 15-19 group was less fertile than the 35-39 group as well but overtook them while staying behind the 30-34 group until 1995 (DIGESTYC 2008). From 1950 to 1955, women in the 45-49 group most reduced their fertility (to approximately one-seventh of what it used to be), followed by the 40-44 group (to approximately one-fourth of what it used to be), then the 35-39 group and then the 30-34 group (each to roughly one-third what it used to be). Women in the 20-24 and 25-29 groups have rates less than half of what they were. Still, in the

[83] United Nations Population Division statistics are available at this link: https://population.un.org/dataportal/data/indicators/19,68,17/locations/222/start/1960/end/2022/table/pivotbylocation.

1990s, women aged 20-24 had 29 percent of children in the country, versus just 21 percent in the 1950s (DIGESTYC 2008). The fertility rate among the 15-19 group, though, has decreased the least of all age groups (DIGESTYC 2008).[84] Adolescents' share of pregnancies reached an historical high in 2007 at 17 percent (DIGESTYC 2008).[85] While not presented in this dissertation, my research over the past decade has documented that sexual abuse by multiple actors, including relatives, and forced sexual slavery to gangs play a role. It would likewise yield further insight to examine how many girls who become pregnant during adolescence received little or no formal schooling.

A major finding of this study is that the child migrants we interviewed had mothers with a greater number of children than the average recorded in Salvadoran statistics. Among the children we interviewed from the five selected departments, 103 (71%) – 25 girls (69%) and 78 boys (72%) – reported how many total children their mothers had, as shown in Table 35 below. The number ranged from one to 10, with three as the mode and 3.7 as the average. Notably, all three mothers who only had one child were 25 years old or younger and would likely go onto have more children. Sonsonate was the only department where two children was the mode, which is likely related to the higher number of children who lived in urban areas there.

Table 35 Total Number of Mother's Children

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Girls	2	5	10	2	2	2	-	2	-	-
Boys	1	17	27	16	5	6	-	3	2	1
Total	3	22	37	18	7	8	-	5	2	1

[84] DIGESTYC (2008) notes that this is a common trend throughout Latin America.
[85] This is not unique to El Salvador and is common throughout Latin America.

CELADE predicted in 1991 that the average number of children women had would fall to four by 2000 (CELADE 1991). However, at least in Salvadoran statistics, it fell much more substantially. My interviews with child migrants and their families yielded the possibility that Salvadoran women are still having more than two children on average, but they are not captured in Salvadoran statistics, because some of the children are born in the United States. Table 36 below shows the number of children who reported having siblings in the US, which was especially prominent for girls.

Table 36 Children with Additional Siblings in the United States

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Ahuachapán	3	33	5	17	8	21
Chalatenango	5	63	5	20	10	30
Cuscatlán	2	33	1	17	3	25
Morazán	1	20	7	25	8	24
Sonsonate	1	13	1	5	2	7
Total	12	33	19	17	31	21

Among girls from Ahuachapán, one 14-year-old girl had a 31-year-old brother in the United States. Her other six siblings lived with her and her mother. A different 14-year-old had a 28-year-old brother in the US. Her other three siblings lived with her and her mother. Both parents of a 15-year-old girl lived in the US; they were separated, and each had additional children. Among boys from the department, two 17-year-old boys had up to three additional siblings living with their mothers in the US. Three other boys one or two additional siblings living with both parents in the US. Among children from Chalatenango department, five girls had additional siblings in the US. Two 16-year-old girls had two or three older siblings there. Three other girls' mothers were there with one or two US-born children. Five boys also had additional siblings in the US. Four of the boys' mothers were in the US with between one and four US-born children. The mother and father of a 17-year-old boy were in the US; the father

had one US-born daughter, and the mother had three US-born children. Among children from Cuscatlán, three had additional siblings in the US. One boy and one girl had one or two siblings living with their mothers there, while a 17-year-old girl had a 38-year-old sister there. Among children from Morazán, one 17-year-old girl had two US-born siblings living with both of her parents in the US. Seven boys had additional siblings in the US. One boy's brother lived with only his father, while two boys' two or three US-born siblings lived with only their mothers. Both parents of four boys lived in the US with between one and six additional children. Among children from Sonsonate, only one boy and one girl reported having additional siblings in the US. The boy's mother was there with two US-born children. Both of the 15-year-old girl's parents were there with their 21-year-old son who had joined them eight years earlier at the age of 13.

Between 1985 and 1988, Salvadoran women first partnered on average at 20 years old, and in rural areas, it was 19 years old (CELADE 1991).[86] CELADE (1991) found that Salvadoran women begin family planning quite late: on average, women in rural areas do so at 32 years old when they already have four children, and even nationally, women do so after eight years of marriage when they have 2.6 children. Anticonception measures are most common in the AMSS and among educated women (CELADE 1991), which was also the case more recently in neighboring nations (Grace 2010, Grace and Sweeney 2014). We did not ask children about the age at which their parents partnered or if they used family planning. We did obtain information on birth spacing from 82 children – 20 girls and 62 boys. At either extreme, two women had their two children one year apart, whereas another woman had her eight children 25 years apart. Sixteen women (20%) had their two or three children within a one-to-

[86] Legal marriage is often cost prohibitive, but the Salvadoran constitution recognizes common law marriage. Prior to and during the war, the Catholic Church sometimes performed free mass marriages.

five-year period. Twenty-six women (32%) had their two to four children between a six-and-nine-year period. Twenty women (24%) had their two to six children between a 10-and-14-year period. Seventeen women (21%) had their three to eight children between a 15-and-19-year-period. Finally, three women had their eight or nine children over the course of a 21-to-25-year period. We also obtained information on the mother's age at first childbirth from 31 children – six girls and 25 boys. The youngest was 14, and the oldest two were 24. Sixteen (52%) were aged 14 to 19 at first childbirth, all but four of whom were under the age of 18. Taken together, it seems that child migrants' mothers had less access – or less likely, desire – to family plan, leading them to have more children at earlier ages and over longer periods of time. As covered in the next chapter, it also reflects that children's families were likely among the poorest economic quintile, whose fertility rates have stalled at least in neighboring nations (Grace 2010).

Mortality

Likewise, it seems that children's parents faced greater risks that led to early mortality. Besides the three children who explicitly gave health as a reason for their migration, 15 more (10%) – three girls (8%) and 12 boys (11%) – reported the death of a mother or father, as shown in Table 37 below.

Table 37 Children Whose Mother or Father Had Already Died from Five Departments

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	1	11		1	3		2	5
Chalatenango	1	13		5	20		6	18
Cuscatlán	0	0		0	0		0	0
Morazán	0	0		3	11		3	9
Sonsonate	1	13		3	14		4	14
TOTAL	3	8		12	11		15	10

None of them linked this to their decision to migrate, but it bears mention and further inspection. It was over double the national percentage – 3.7 percent – of orphaned children (DIGESTYC 2014). With the exception of the six-year-old among the 15 orphans, all of them were working. Except for one, none of them were studying. This was likely related to the loss of emotional and financial support when the parent died. Only two immediately quit studying when their parents died, while the others quit a few years later.

Five children lost their mothers, and 10 lost their fathers. Seven did not know the causes of death, usually saying only that s/he died of an "*enfermedad* [sickness or illness]." However, four named homicide, one named kidney disease (father), one named cancer (mother), one named a heart attack (mother) and one named diabetes (or "sugar in the blood," as colloquially expressed in El Salvador) as causes of death. Furthermore, three children in Ahuachapán mentioned the deaths of other household members. The female died of diabetes, and the two males died of kidney disease or failure. Likewise, a 17-year-old boy from Morazán department who reported that his mother died when he was young indicated that he then lived with his grandmother. She recently had died, too.

Table 38 Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex in El Salvador (DIGESTYC)[87]

	Males	Females	Difference
1930	28.8	28.5	0.3
1950	41.4	44.4	3
1961	49.6	54.4	4.8
1971	53.7	60.5	6.8
1983	50.6	64.2	13.6
1992	63	72.7	9.7
2006	66	75.5	9.5

[87] The 1930 figure comes from DIGESTYC's 1930 census, while the rest come from DIGESTYC's 2008 publication.

Table 38 above shows life expectancy by sex from 1930 to 2006 using Salvadoran census bureau data. Data is not available by economic quintile, but it would likely show major discrepancies typical of the structural inequalities and violence examined in the political economy chapter across time. Mortality levels in El Salvador remained worse than those in 18th century industrialized nations through 1930, when they started to rapidly decline (Arriaga and Davis 1969).[88] Arriaga and Davis (1969) examined how different this trend was from those in "advanced countries," which had "gradual and amazingly constant [mortality declines] throughout their modern history" as their economies improved. In them, the improving economy permitted greater support of public health. For El Salvador and countries like it, though, mortality only came to decline because of "the importation of public health techniques, [preventive medicine,] personnel, and funds from the industrialized countries, regardless of local economic development or non-development" (Arriaga and Davis 1969). They discussed several measures: "eradication of disease vectors, chlorination of drinking water, and good sewage systems, as well as individual health practices such as vaccination, dietary supplements, use of new drugs and better personal hygiene" (Arriaga and Davis 1969; see also Narro and Moctezuma 2000, Nodarse 1962 and Primante 1991).[89] Decreasing extremely high infant mortality played an important role (CELADE 1991; DIGESTYC 2008), as did decreasing infectious disease rates (Arriaga 1970). Decreasing maternal mortality also substantially helped females' numbers. Indeed, females' numbers have steadily increased, even throughout the war, but males' numbers dipped in 1983, after the heaviest years of casualties. Interestingly, too, the difference between females and males grew steadily, especially

[88] Mortality had started declining rapidly before this in more developed Latin American countries, even though they lagged substantially behind Western European nations (Arriaga and Davis 1969).
[89] Notably, El Salvador even today does not have good sewage systems.

throughout the war. CELADE (1991) predicted right before war's end that the sex gap would close to 4.9 and five years by 1995 and 2000, but this failed to occur. Males' life expectancy did reach the numbers they projected, but females' numbers exceeded them by over four years. As a partial explanation, DIGESTYC (2008) found that males aged 15 to 40 in 2006 faced the same life expectancy as males in 1950. Behind this was an unexpected trend that I will explore in a future publication: following the signing of the Peace Accords and to present day, males' homicide rates for the same age groups remained almost steady with those during the war years (DIGESTYC 2008). While they did dip slightly at the 1992 census, they were almost fully parallel to war rates at the 2007 census (DIGESTYC 2008).

The leading cause of death for males and females is homicide. Anecdotally, this disproportionately affects the poor with most homicides reported in the Salvadoran press occurring in low-income neighborhoods. It was the most common cause of death that children gave for their parents' death. Four children from two departments reported that their fathers had been murdered. One girl and two boys, aged 15 and 16 and both living in rural areas, from Chalatenango department said that their fathers were killed. The girl's father was murdered the year before. The 16-year-old boy's father was killed eight years earlier by opposing gang members when he tried to leave the country. The 15-year-old boy's father was killed approximately two weeks after our interview, presumably because he had failed to pay the extortion they demanded and attempted to flee them with his family. Likewise, an 11-year-old boy from Sonsonate stated that his father was shot dead in the street in 2012. He and his mother said they could not be sure who had done it.

Various chronic diseases have become increasingly common causes of death as well (MINSAL). They, too, likely have a disproportionate effect on the poor who depend upon the

limited public healthcare system and experience greater limitations to healthy practices. Specifically, insecurity and crime levels in the country have limited most people's mobility to just a few blocks in attempts to avoid violence. Alongside this, 93.8 percent of the population in 2015 had low consumption of fruits and vegetables, and 81 percent had high consumption of sugary drinks (ENECA-ELS 2015). The WHO estimated in 2014 that 49.2 percent of males and 57.4 percent of females were overweight, and 14.2 percent of males and 25.3 percent of females were clinically obese (WHO 2016). The WHO also found that "El Salvador does not have an operational policy, strategy or action plans for … reducing overweight and obesity or reducing physical inactivity" (WHO 2016). This written, at least by physical appearance, nearly all children we interviewed were at or slightly under a healthy body weight.

The Salvadoran Ministry of Health publishes the top ten hospital causes of death by sex and age group each year. From 2013 to 2019, the most common cause of males' deaths was genitourinary system illnesses.[90] In a nationally representative survey in 2015, 12.6 percent reported having chronic kidney disease, with some departments reporting rates as high as 17.7 percent (ENECA-ELS 2015). The same survey found that 65.9 percent of the population consumed insufficient water, and 12.6 percent of them were exposed to agrochemicals (ENECA-ELS 2015). Agrochemical exposure rates were higher for males (23%), persons over 60 years old (16.8%)[91] and residents of certain departments (ENECA-ELS 2015). Chronic kidney disease of unknown origin (CKDu) – sometimes called Mesoamerican nephropathy – has mortality rates nine times higher than in other countries

[90] Genitourinary system illnesses were between the second and ninth cause of death among females in the same period.

[91] One research team found that older farmers turned to agrochemicals as they became less able to handle the hard physical labor. One farmer told the team about how his grandfather began using them around the age of 70 and tolerated a leaky pump on his back, because it felt cool beneath the sun, but he died within a few years (Anastario *et al.* 2020).

(Orduñez et al. 2018), is linked to agricultural working environments across El Salvador and its neighbors (Anastario et al. 2020; Correa-Rotter et al. 2014; Johnson and Garcia-Trabanino 2015; Ramirez Rubio et al. 2013; Orantes Navarro et al. 2015) and disproportionately affects young, healthy men (Bronwen Horton 2016). Besides repeated exposure to agrochemicals over long periods of time, increasing temperatures alongside reduced cloud and tree cover,[92] dehydration and over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) use are thought to play roles (Anastario et al. 2020; Athuraliya et al. 2011; Peraza et al. 2012). A research team who conducted interviews and participant observation with agricultural workers in rural Chalatenango, for example, found that farmers regularly talked with each other about farmers dying young of kidney failure, and every now and then, a farmer actually died of this during their 40 months of fieldwork (Anastario et al. 2020). The farmers interviewed believed the agrochemicals were to blame for their increased kidney disease and failure (Anastario et al. 2020).[93] Some in only their early-forties were so debilitated they could no longer work, and others reported relatives dying before the age of 40 (Anastario et al. 2020). Among the 15 children who reported the death of a parent, one 14-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department living in an urban area said that her father died the year before of "kidney disease." Two siblings, aged 10 and 15, from the department had the same father, but their older three siblings, aged 18 to 25, had a different father. He had died seven or eight years prior of kidney disease. In 2018, we followed up with a 19-year-old mother and three-year-old son from Ahuachapán originally interviewed in 2014. She reported that her father died of kidney failure in 2018 at

[92] They observed that farmers in Chalatenango worked in rubber boots, long-sleeved shirts and pants to avoid insect bites and sunburn, which had the undesirable effect of increasing heat stress (Anastario et al. 2020).
[93] They mentioned being exposed to ammonium sulphate, dichloro-diphenly-trichloroethane (DDT), glyphosate, monarca and paraquat, which they mixed by hand and administered with often leaky backpacks under high temperatures (Anastario et al. 2020). Paraquat was the most commonly reported in 2019. It has been associated with kidney injury in humans (Kim et al. 2009) and can cause fatal poisoning by dermal absorption, even in small amounts (Solukides et al. 2007 and Wesseling et al. 1997).

age 58. She knew that he had other problems with his "sugar" and passing out. She was also certain that he had never received dialysis and did not know where he could have gone to get it.

The most common cause of females' deaths from 2013 to 2015 was diabetes, which remained the third or fourth cause of death through 2019.[94] Pneumonia or septicemia were the most common causes of females' deaths from 2016 to 2019. The WHO found in 2014, that just over 10 percent of females and just under 10 percent of males in the country had diabetes (WHO 2016). Notably, the Central America Diabetes Initiative (CAMDI) found in 2012 that over 40 percent of persons with laboratory levels indicating diabetes were undiagnosed, though (CAMDI 2012). Interestingly, 21.8 percent of respondents in a nationally representative survey in 2015 reported having relatives with diabetes (ENECA-ELS 2015). The WHO found that "El Salvador does not have an operational policy, strategy or action plans for diabetes" (WHO 2016). While Metformin and Sulphyonylurea are available at primary care facilities, insulin is not, nor are more complex tests or dialysis outside of the capital (WHO 2016; Anastario et al. 2020). Among the 15 orphaned children, one boy from rural Chalatenango specified that his mother died five years earlier of "sugar in the blood." Additionally, a 16-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department traveled and lived with her 22-year-old aunt. The aunt's mother had died of "sugar in the blood."

4.5 Household and Family Dynamics

The above section on fertility addressed that nuclear family size is not always captured in Salvadoran statistics, because some women have children in both El Salvador and the United States. This last section addresses two other household and family dynamics that arose upon

[94] Diabetes was the ninth or tenth cause of death among males in the same period.

analyzing our interviews. Both will be more fully explored in a future publication on family as a cause of migration.

Absence of Adult Males in Households

Thirty-nine percent of children did not live with an adult male, as shown in Table 39 below.[95] This affected boys more than girls, with 31 percent of girls and 41 percent of boys not living with an adult male. Notably, in Ahuachapán department, girls were slightly less likely to have an adult male present in their households than boys. However, in Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate departments, girls were more likely to live with an adult male than boys. This also particularly affected boys in Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Sonsonate departments, with over 50 percent of them not living with an adult male. Economically, this probably negatively impacted households, because as will be presented in a future paper on work in El Salvador, males work outside the home for pay at roughly double the rates as females, and in general, males have higher earnings (DIGESTYC 2014).

Table 39 Number and Percentage of Children Not Living with an Adult Male

	Girls			Boys			Total	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Ahuachapán	3	33		8	28		11	29
Chalatenango	2	25		13	52		15	45
Cuscatlán	2	33		3	50		5	42
Morazán	1	20		9	32		10	30
Sonsonate	3	38		12	57		15	52
Total	11	31		45	41		56	39

A Broader Conception of Family

Although many children did not live with adult males, nearly all of them lived with adult females. These women were not always their mothers, who were instead living in the United

[95] With which adult males and females children lived will be discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter on family.

States and remitting money to them and their households. Table 40 below shows the number of children not living with either parent, which particularly impacted girls, and was astonishingly higher than for the national child population. DIGESTYC found in 2014 that 6.3 percent of children had one or both parents abroad.

Table 40 Number and Percentage of Children Not Living with a Parent

	Girls			Boys			Total	
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Ahuachapán	4	44		11	38		15	39
Chalatenango	6	75		6	24		12	36
Cuscatlán	2	33		1	17		3	25
Morazán	1	20		7	33		8	24
Sonsonate	3	38		9	32		12	41
Total	16	44		34	31		50	34

Taking just the girls as an example, while they did not live with one or both parents, they did live in extended families most often headed by a grandmother or aunt. In Ahuachapán department, all four girls who did not live with a parent did live with their grandmothers. Two additionally lived with an aunt and uncle, and in at least one case, their children. The mothers of three of these girls were in the United States, as was the father of one of them. Among the six girls from Chalatenango department who did not live with a parent, three lived with their grandmothers, one lived with her grandfather, one with her 18-year-old sister and another with her aunt, uncle and their son. Notably, the other two girls lived with their mother and father. Among the two girls from Cuscatlán department who did not live with a parent, one lived with her aunt, uncle, their children and her siblings. The other lived with her 70-year-old grandmother, 12-year-old sister and 38-year-old aunt. The 17-year-old girl not living with her parents in Morazán lived with her grandmother, and an uncle lived near them. Both of her

parents were in the United States. All three of the girls from Sonsonate department not living with their parents lived with a grandmother. All of them also lived with an aunt.

Even among children living with one or both parents, 41 – seven girls and 34 boys – lived with additional adult relatives, including grandfathers, grandmothers, stepmothers, adult siblings, aunts, uncles, in-laws, alongside other children like cousins, nieces and nephews who were not their siblings. All of this is to point out that Salvadorans' in general had a broader conception of family and raised children across this broader conception.

Even Salvadoran authorities do not grasp this broader conception. The Salvadoran census bureau classified children not living with one or both parents because of their migration as abandoned, even though mothers especially remained very involved in their children's lives. They spoke with them regularly and sent financial support that facilitated education, better nutrition and home improvements. Furthermore, nearly all children who had mothers in the US were headed to them to live with them.

4.6 Closing

This chapter has examined various health and demographic components of the lives of child migrants we interviewed from the five selected departments. They especially highlight the need for further improvement in the Salvadoran healthcare system, especially around family planning and treatment of chronic disease. Recommendations related to this are presented in the conclusion. Before it, in the next, penultimate chapter, I delve into poverty as a cause of children's migration, likewise weaving in Salvadoran and US census data to fully contextualize it.

Chapter 5. "Life is Very Difficult." … "Life is Fucked." Poverty among Salvadoran Child Migrants

> *"…life is very difficult here. My mom is very sad."*[96]
> 17-year-old boy from rural Chalatenango
>
> *"We are very poor, and life is difficult for us."*[97]
> 16-year-old boy from rural Morazán
>
> *"The situation related to poverty is difficult. Here [in El Salvador], we are fucked [estamos fregados]."*[98]
> 15-year-old boy from rural Chalatenango
>
> *"My family has several economic problems. … the situation is very hard."*[99]
> 16-year-old boy from rural Morazán

Immediately above are the words of just four of the 37 boys and 12 girls who explicitly listed poverty as a reason for their migration. Even though only these few reported it as an explicit reason for their migration, this chapter begins by showing that most – if not all – children we interviewed were living in poverty. In particular, incorporating 2014 Salvadoran Multi-Household survey data, the children we interviewed seemed more likely than the general population to belong to the various sectors – the rural poor, informal and agricultural workers and households without adult males – especially worse off post-war than even before and during the war. The chapter then presents the quantitative and qualitative responses of the 49 children who explicitly listed poverty as a reason for their migration. Notably, they constituted

[96] 17-year-old boy from rural Chalatenango department who lived with his mother and three younger brothers, aged 14, 13 and 16 months. Although his father had long been in the United States, he did not plan to live with him and wanted to send his mother and brothers money, seemingly implying that his father had not done this. He said of his life in El Salvador

[97] Another 16-year-old boy from rural Morazán who lived with his mother, father and five siblings. An additional sibling had recently arrived to the United States but was in detention there.

[98] A 15-year-old boy from rural Chalatenango who lived with his 38-year-old mother and four-year-old sister. His grandfather supported them. His father lived in the department and worked in agriculture but provided no assistance. He was headed to an uncle who had lived in the United States approximately 17 years.

[99] A 16-year-old boy from Morazán, his father farmed their small plot, while his mother cared for their home, him and his three siblings, aged 18, 14 and 10. He had studied until sixth grade but then went to work with his father and brother. He wanted to work and to earn more money. He wanted, too, to become a better person.

right at one-third of the 145 children from the five selected departments, and most of them had additional explicit reasons for migrating that included factors related to work, education, health, family reunification and violence. I present all the information collected in these areas for the 49 children. From there, I delve into children's and parents' explanations of their poverty and these other factors to unpack them in light of the Capabilities Approach. In essence, they wanted to at least be rights holders entitled to dignity in work conditions, housing and access to food, education and health. In this regard, I explore how their hopes to get out of poverty had even more to do with the desire to be able to be and become, if not fully themselves, at least more of themselves than El Salvador's lowest class structure permits. To conclude, I weave in United States Census Bureau data on whether this is more or less feasible for Salvadorans in the United States, who at least initially often find themselves in places and spaces with relatively limited possibilities.

5.1 The Socioeconomic Situation of the Children Interviewed in 2014

The preceding chapter presented the general demographic characteristics of the children we interviewed, and this section combines those data with their socioeconomic situation. As the chapter on El Salvador's political economy previewed, El Salvador's GNI per capita had been steadily increasing from the 1992 Peace Accords through 2014 when we conducted interviews, just as El Salvador's inequality had been slowly but mostly steadily decreasing. Nonetheless, the country has long had an incredibly unequal income distribution, and the political economy chapter also illustrated how substantial inequality still remained, with the rural poor, informal and agricultural workers and households without adult males especially worse off in the post-war period than even before and during the war. This section illuminates how the children we interviewed from five selected departments disproportionately fell into these worst off groups.

Indeed, most – if not all – of the children we interviewed were poor. Children's and families' responses to our questions on various socioeconomic aspects of their household dynamics, work, education, health and neighborhoods of residence made clear that the children we interviewed differed from the general population in ways that indicated higher levels of extreme and relative poverty. These responses are explained below and contextualized alongside relevant 2014 Multi-Household Survey data compiled by El Salvador's now-defunct census bureau, DIGESTYC. In sum, most children lived in households with only one earner, and among all household earners, they disproportionately labored in agriculture and other professions largely in the informal economy with high levels of poverty, sub-employment and no benefits. Over one-third of children did not have an adult male in their household, particularly difficult because males more often work outside the home for pay and earn more than females. With some exceptions, children were more likely to live in rural areas, with higher levels of extreme and relative poverty, than urban areas. No children had a computer in their home, and few seemed to have a private vehicle. At least among those I could visit in later years, who likely were among the better off economically since I could only contact them because their telephone number still worked, their homes were less stable and always in low-income areas. Finally, only four of the 145 children from the selected five departments attended private school.

Sources of Income

Future writing on work will fully explore household sources of income, but three points are worth taking into account as they relate to children's poverty. First, as presented in the previous health and demography chapter, 39 percent of children did not live with an adult male,[100] which

[100] With which adult males and females children lived will be discussed in the future in publications about the family.

is of note because males work outside the home for pay at roughly double the rates as females, and in general, males have higher earnings (DIGESTYC 2014). Second, and regardless of size, it seemed that the majority of all children from the five selected departments lived in households where only one member worked. The mode of reported household workers in children's homes was one for girls, which 61 percent reported, and for boys, which 71 percent reported. The average for girls was 0.9, and for boys, it was 1.2.

Third, only one girl and five boys reported their household members working in a job that could have been part of the formal economy. These jobs included a customs worker, debt collector, teacher, small business owner and government energy company employee, and all five persons who held them were males. As displayed in Table 41 below, DIGESTYC (2014) reported that these jobs garnered monthly salaries of between $275.63 (financial services in a rural area) and $533.58 (teaching in an urban area) for males in 2014. Among household members likely working in the informal economy, their jobs included: agriculture, construction, transport, informal salespersons, hotel workers, restaurant staff and cleaning the homes of others. Constituting over half of the reported jobs for males, the most common work among male household members was in agriculture and construction. Likewise constituting over half of the reported jobs for females, the most common work among female household members was as informal salespersons, at hotels and restaurants and in the homes of others. Likewise shown in the below table, DIGESTYC (2014) reported that these jobs garnered monthly salaries of between $134.65 (agriculture in a rural area) and $354.66 (transport in an urban area) for males and between $124.54 (agriculture in a rural area) and $263.89 (salesperson in an urban area) for females in 2014.

Table 41 2014 Monthly Salaries in U$ by Profession (DIGESTYC 2014)

	Urban	Rural	Total

	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	167.43	149.27	165.37	134.65	124.54	133.76	143.10	132.30	142.10
Construction	312.78	626.18	320.88	249.56	437.86	250.58	290.10	606.70	296.00
Hotels, restaurants and such businesses	367.27	263.72	307.52	266.53	193.45	219.17	348.60	247.20	288.50
Transport	354.66	381.99	358.54	289.10	346.27	292.62	341.00	378.60	345.80
Teaching	533.58	534.35	534.07	491.31	522.49	509.24	527.10	532.90	530.80
Domestic Service	192.76	137.05	140.83	154.31	133.58	134.88	178.80	135.70	138.60
Health and communal services	390.84	332.93	354.30	262.48	141.21	181.87	365.30	290.10	317.30
Financial services	425.42	406.85	419.13	275.63	312.40	279.00	398.10	402.90	399.60
Utilities	472.34	903.89	545.82	355.63	230.70	341.89	450.80	823.00	510.20
Salespersons	351.61	263.89	295.45	291.35	192.47	231.15	335.50	246.60	279.30
All	364.96	300.17	334.12	225.47	179.84	207.90	320.70	271.00	298.30

More specifically, the children we interviewed were much more likely than the general population to have household members working in agriculture: over half of children from the five selected departments reported this for household workers' jobs, whereas only 17.9 percent of all workers – 4.0 percent female and 28.1 percent male – nationwide performed this labor (DIGESTYC 2014). DIGESTYC (2014) found that those working in agriculture, construction, hotels, restaurants and as domestic employees are more likely to be in the informal economy, so it also seemed that children's household members were more likely to work in the informal economy. DIGESTYC (2014) found that those working in agriculture are more likely to be sub-employed than fully employed – unlike any other sector except domestic employees. The agricultural sector also has the largest number of workers in poverty, followed by those working at hotels, restaurants and as domestic employees (DIGESTYC 2014).

The previous chapter on health and demography discussed that children interviewed were more likely than the general population to live in rural areas than in urban areas, even when controlling for the fact that the selected departments' populations were more

concentrated in rural areas.[101] The 2014 Multi-Household Survey included average monthly household income by department and nation, including for rural and urban areas, as displayed in Table 42 below. All five selected departments had averages below the national amount, with Morazán department's the most below it (DIGESTYC 2014). Similarly, the rural average – where most children we interviewed lived – was only 56 percent of the urban average (DIGESTYC 2014).

Table 42 Average Monthly Income of Households (DIGESTYC 2014)

	Total	Year Projection
Ahuachapán	$446.22	$5,354.64
Chalatenango	$473.48	$5,681.76
Cuscatlán	$443.51	$5,322.12
Morazán	$396.11	$4,753.32
Sonsonate	$490.51	$5,886.12
Nation	$539.74	$6,476.88
• Urban	$639.89	$7,678.68
• Rural	$356.85	$4,282.20

At the national level in 2014, extreme and relative poverty were more common in rural areas than in urban areas (DIGESTYC 2014). However, extreme and relative poverty were less common in rural areas of Ahuachapán and Chalatenango departments that year, with relative poverty less common in rural areas of Cuscatlán and Sonsonate departments as well (DIGESTYC 2014). These values are shown below in Table 43.

Table 43 Rural and Urban Salvadoran Households in Extreme and Relative Poverty by Department (2014 DIGESTYC)

	Rural				Urban		
	% in Extreme Poverty	% in Relative Poverty	% in Combined Poverty		% in Extreme Poverty	% in Relative Poverty	% in Combined Poverty
Ahuachapán	9.1	27.7	36.8		11.9	28.7	40.7
Chalatenango	9.2	25.1	34.3		9.4	28.6	37.9
Cuscatlán	9.5	21.3	30.8		2.8	27.3	30.1

[101] This was not the case in Cuscatlán and Sonsonate departments but was in the other three departments, especially Morazán.

Morazán	13.9	30.9	44.8		11.3	29.4	40.7
Sonsonate	6.6	26.0	32.5		4.8	27.1	31.9
NATION	10.9	27	33.7		4.3	20.3	24.6

Multi-household survey data for 2014 documented that extreme and relative poverty was more common in rural areas than urban areas, even when controlling for household size (DIGESTYC 2014), as shown in Table 44 below. There were exceptions at either extreme: extreme poverty was less common among both single-person and 13+ person households in rural areas than urban areas (DIGESTYC 2014). The latter likely had to do with such large household sizes being on ranches that were farmed together, whereas the former likely had to do with the lower cost of living. Notably, for the most common household sizes (between two and six), extreme poverty was nearly double in rural areas as in urban areas (DIGESTYC 2014).

Table 44 Household Poverty by Number of Members in Rural and Urban Areas (2014 DIGESTYC)

	Rural				Urban		
	% in Extreme Poverty	% in Relative Poverty	% in Combined Poverty		% in Extreme Poverty	% in Relative Poverty	% in Combined Poverty
1	1.9	11.8	13.7		3	8.3	11.3
2-4	9.0	25.1	34.1		4.8	21.5	26.3
5-6	16.3	34.7	51.0		8.4	31.6	40.0
7-9	16.3	34.3	50.7		10.8	31.0	41.8
10-12	26.5	35.6	62.1		22.2	51.6	73.8
13+	17.7	31.2	49.0		31.3	22.1	53.3
All	10.9	27.0	37.9		5.7	22.8	28.5

Their Neighborhoods and Homes

The 2014 Multi-Household Survey recorded household details related to quality of life. Table 45 below shows those results for eight indicators I selected. The previous chapter discussed reconstruction projects in the post-war period that brought cement block homes to many poor and rural areas (Silber 2011), but even still, as of 2014, hundreds of thousands lived in homes

with dirt floors, adobe walls and no running water (DIGESTYC 2014). While over half had refrigerators in their homes, less than a quarter had computers, internet or a personal vehicle (DIGESTYC 2014).

Table 45 Percentage of Homes with Selected Characteristics (2014 DIGESTYC)

	Dirt Floors	Adobe Walls	Running Water	Electricity	Refrigerator	Vehicle	Computer	Internet
Ahuachapán	37.5	28.9	68.1	89.4	50.1	8.6	9.7	3.7
Chalatenango	18.1	45.4	86.1	97.3	72.8	14.0	13.5	5.9
Cuscatlán	23.7	25.0	78.7	94.8	54.2	8.5	11.5	5.1
Morazán	36.7	38.4	68.9	94.0	58.4	10.0	10.0	5.0
Sonsonate	25.5	9.5	72.6	91.3	53.1	11.1	15.7	9.7
NATION	17.4	15.1	76.8	95.1	66.8	14.9	22.1	13.9
• Urban	8.7	7.6	86.3	97.8	75.4	18.6	30.6	20.8
• Rural	33.1	28.6	59.6	90.3	51.3	8.0	6.5	1.4

We did not ask children about all of these details, although we did ask them about computer ownership. No children from the selected five departments reported having a computer in their home. Across children from all departments, I only remember a handful of times that children went home with relatives in a personal vehicle, as nearly all instead relied on public transportation. Furthermore, from 2014 to 2020, I spoke with officials and non-profit workers about the neighborhoods where children lived and visited dozens of them myself. All of the neighborhoods were economically depressed, with limited or no electricity, potable water or safe housing (Kennedy and Parker 2020). The families I visited in rural areas often lived in homes with dirt floors, thatched roofs and adobe walls. In urban areas, they lived in slums with homes stacked upon each other, predominately with concrete or tin walls and shared, tin roofs, services limited and winding, narrow alleyways off the official city grid. In rural and urban areas, those who had windows often had bars to cover them but no glass. Gang presence was noticeable in varying ways, including members themselves controlling entries and exits, being present elsewhere in the community and graffiti (Linton *et al.* 2018). In contrast, few are the times that I encountered authorities in the same communities.

Education and Work

Among the 145 children from these five departments, 135 of whom were school-aged (defined as ages 6 to 17), only four (3%) – one girl (3%) and three boys (3%) – had studied in private school. All of them reported living in urban areas. This rate is lower than among children nationwide, as Table 46 below shows.

Table 46 Children's Nationwide School Enrollment by Public or Private (2014 DIGESTYC)

	Rural					Urban			
	Public	%	Private	%		Public	%	Private	%
Boys	315,115	96	14,308	4		378,258	67	185,310	33
Girls	288,744	94	17,428	6		397,775	70	170,782	30
All	603,859	95	31,736	5		776,033	69	356,092	31

Some of the other children were in public school, and as will be analyzed in more detail in future publications on education, numerous families commented on the struggle to pay related fees each month. Table 47 below shows those costs. For all schools, they included a yearly enrollment fee, supplies, school uniform and shoes, texts, a required parental contribution (schools usually put this toward private security), transport and snacks. For private school, they also included the monthly fee (DIGESTYC 2014). Approximately $25 could be saved by walking to school instead of using transport, but distance, security and weather had to permit this.

Table 47 Monthly School Costs by Households (2014 DIGESTYC)

Rural			Urban	
Public	Private		Public	Private
$49.28	$153.10		$62.42	$182.97

In some cases, they also struggled to pay extortion to gangs who would not let children attend without doing so (Kennedy 2014). At least two girls and numerous boys were no longer

studying, some of the time in order to work, as will be analyzed in a future publication on work as a cause of children's migration.[102]

5.2 The Children Who Listed Poverty

Even though most – if not all – 145 children we interviewed from the five selected departments were in poverty, only 49 of them – right at one-third – explicitly listed poverty as a reason for their migration, as displayed in Table 48 below.[103] Among all children (boys and girls), this made it the third most common explicit reason. Overall for girls, it was the fourth most common explicit reason, but it was the tied-for-second most common for girls from Ahuachapán department and third most common for girls from Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Morazán departments. Only girls from Sonsonate department listed it as the fourth most common reason; notably, they were the only ones more likely to be living in urban areas than rural areas. For boys, it was the most common explicit reason among those from Ahuachapán and Chalatenango departments, second most common among those from Morazán department, third most common among those from Cuscatlán department and fourth most common among those from Sonsonate department. Geographically, girls from Morazán and Sonsonate departments were more likely to list poverty, as were boys from Ahuachapán and Chalatenango departments. As shown in the previous section, Morazán, Ahuachapán and Chalatenango departments had the first, second and third highest rates of extreme and relative poverty in rural and urban areas in 2014, respectively, and this likely contributes in part to the explanation (DIGESTYC 2014).

[102] Only two girls reported working outside the home themselves. Both lived in Ahuachapán department. One was no longer working, while the other had been working for years.

[103] As a reminder, El Salvador has 14 departments. We conducted interviews with a representative sample of children migrating in 2014 from all 14 departments. The five departments analyzed for this dissertation are: Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán, Morazán and Sonsonate.

Table 48 Poverty as a Reason for Migration among Children from Five Departments

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	3	33		13	45		16	42
Chalatenango	2	25		10	40		12	36
Cuscatlán	2	33		1	17		3	25
Morazán	2	40		10	36		12	36
Sonsonate	3	38		3	14		6	21
TOTAL	12	33		37	34		49	34

As displayed in Table 49 below, three girls and 14 boys of the 49 children listed only their poverty as a motivator for their migration. None of the girls from Ahuachapán or Sonsonate departments gave only this reason. It factored most substantially among the explicit lone reason for children from Chalatenango and Cuscatlán departments, girls from Morazán departments and boys from Ahuachapán department.

Table 49 Poverty as Only Reason for Migration among Children from Five Departments[104]

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	-	-		6	46		6	38
Chalatenango	1	50		4	40		5	42
Cuscatlán	1	50		1	100		2	67
Morazán	1	50		2	20		3	25
Sonsonate	-	-		1	33		1	17
TOTAL	3	25		14	38		17	35

Poverty as One of Multiple Reasons

Critically, children listing poverty as a reason for their migration were more than twice as likely to have multiple explicit reasons. Nine girls (75 percent) and 23 boys (62 percent) had additional explicit reasons for going, which Table 50 below shows. In this sense, even among the small subset of 49 children naming poverty as a contributing factor to their decision to migrate, again, much more was going on in their lives to drive them from home. Girls listed

[104] The percentages in this graph and subsequent graphs of this section are calculated among the 49 children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, not all 145 children from the five selected departments.

factors related to their health, family reunification, work, study and violence. Boys mentioned the same factors, in addition to one boy listing adventure. Notably, violence was the most common accompanying reason for girls, followed by study – not surprising given that 11 of 12 girls reported a gang presence where they lived, and seven of them reported that they or their household members had already been victims of crime. Work, though, was the most common accompanying reason for boys, followed by family reunification – also not surprising, since 18 of them were already working. Yet, for both girls and boys, as will be shortly discussed, they did not always list both of the reasons and other reasons for their decision to migrate.

Table 50 Explicit Reasons Besides Poverty for Migrating

	Girls						Boys				
	Health	Reun.	Work	Study	Violence		Health	Reun	Work	Study	Vio
Ahuachapán	-	-	1	2	2		1	3	5	2	-
Chalatenango	-	1	-	-	-		-	-	6	1	-
Cuscatlán	-	-	-	-	1		-	-	-	-	-
Morazán	-	-	-	1	1		-	3	3	3	3
Sonsonate	1	-	-	2	2		-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	1	1	1	5	6		1	6	14	6	4

Four girls and 16 boys listed poverty and one other reason for their migration, as displayed in Table 51 below. None of the girls from Morazán department provided this combination, nor did the boy from Cuscatlán department. Children from Chalatenango department, girls from Cuscatlán department and boys from Morazán and Sonsonate departments were most likely to do so. Their additional reasons included work, violence, study and family reunification.

Table 51 Poverty as One of Two Reasons for Migration among Children from Five Departments

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	1	33		4	31		5	31
Chalatenango	1	50		5	50		6	50

Cuscatlán	1	50		-	-		1	33
Morazán	-	-		5	50		5	42
Sonsonate	1	33		2	67		3	50
TOTAL	4	33		16	43		20	41

Nine boys, all from Ahuachapán, Chalatenango or Morazán, paired poverty with their desire to work. At least three of the boys from Ahuachapán were already working. The 16-year-old boy from Morazán cited at the beginning of this chapter explained that his family had "several economic problems" and that in El Salvador, "the situation is very hard." He wanted to work to earn more money, and in so doing, become a better person. Likewise, the words of the 17-year-old from Chalatenango who wanted to work and get himself and his family out of poverty by sending his mother and three younger brothers money said of his life in El Salvador to open this chapter: "life is very difficult here. My mom is very sad." After he said them, his mother told us that she did not want him to go but added: "I feel limited, though, because we are very poor. I think I must let him go."

Two girls, from Ahuachapán and Cuscatlán, and four boys, three from Morazán and one from Sonsonate, paired poverty with their desire to escape violence. The mother of the two-year-old girl from Ahuachapán said they were "first" going because "of the violence where we live," followed by their poverty (and the mother's desire to work to earn more money). The mother of an 11-year-old boy from Morazán mentioned their lack of home ownership alongside drugs being in his school and the gang, MS13, being in their neighborhood and school as their reasons. The mother of a six-month-old from Morazán explained with urgency, "I cannot stay here. I have three children studying [in addition to the six-month-old with her] and a sick husband." Gang members had been demanding items from her small store, and she could no longer cover the costs of her household as a result of the losses, particularly because she expected the gang's demands to grow. The 16-year-old boy from Sonsonate and his brothers

were worried that the 18th Street gang had started talking to him, his uncle had been threatened, and their neighborhood had "all the crime."

The 17-year-old girl from Sonsonate paired poverty with her desire to study in the United States, while a 16-year-old boy from Sonsonate said he was both on an "adventure" with his older friends and in search of the "American dream." Then, one girl from Chalatenango and two boys paired the desire to escape poverty with the desire to reunify with family. Among them, a 17-year-old boy from Morazán was living with his father, but his mother had been in the United States for four years, and he missed her. He was already working and wanted to better help her with the wages he could earn in the US. A mother traveling with her three-year-old son from Ahuachapán department wanted to additionally be together as a family with her son's father. Although he was paying the cost of the coyote for them to migrate, he had not helped with their son's costs to date.

Table 52 Poverty as One of Three Reasons for Migration among Children from Five Departments

	Girls	%		Boys	%		Total	%
Ahuachapán	2	67		2	15		4	25
Chalatenango	-	-		1	10		1	8
Cuscatlán	-	-		-	-		-	-
Morazán	1	50		2	20		3	25
Sonsonate	2	67		-	-		2	17
TOTAL	5	42		5	14		10	20

Five girls and five boys listed poverty and two other reasons for their migration, as displayed in Table 52 above. No children from Cuscatlán department, girls from Chalatenango department or boys from Sonsonate department had three explicit reasons for their migration, including poverty. It factored most substantially for girls from Ahuachapán and Morazán departments. Their additional reasons included violence and study, violence and family

reunification, violence and health, family reunification and study, family reunification and work, family reunification and health and study and work.

Three girls from Ahuachapán, Morazán and Sonsonate explicitly stated poverty, violence and study were motivating them. A 12-year-old girl from Morazán department traveling with her mother first said that she wanted a "better future" and would get this through studying. As our interview was concluding, though, they added that gang members had threatened them, and this was also motivating their decision to leave El Salvador. The 13-year-old girl from Sonsonate department linked the better opportunities she would have in the United States to the studies that she could complete free of charge and without violence. The 17-year-old girl from Ahuachapán, who had quit school after gang members brutally attacked her friend, said her "main reason" for going was the "crime" in her neighborhood, but she also wanted to go in order to "study without fear" and in so doing, "overcome [*superarse*]."

Poverty and violence were also among three reasons for a 10-year-old girl and her family from Sonsonate, but her third reason was health, as covered in the previous chapter on health and demography.

One 17-year-old girl from Ahuachapán department and three boys – one each from Ahuachapán, Chalatenango and Morazán – listed poverty, study and work as their reasons. The girl was the lone one to mention work. The 15-year-old boy from Chalatenango, whose words appear at the beginning of this chapter explained, "the situation related to poverty is difficult. Here [in El Salvador], we are fucked." This was an expression one other person we interviewed used. Rather than saying it to us in 2014, she began our follow-up interview – highlighted in the preceding chapter on health and demography – with us in 2019 in this way.

A 16-year-old boy from Morazán wanted a better future, to reunify with his mom and to study. The mother of the four-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department told us that they hoped to reunify with the boy's father and then give the boy a better future through better health. As a reminder from the previous chapter on health and demography, she explained that despite his young age, he had already required two operations – one on his appendix and one on his intestines. She believed that the United States healthcare system would be better for him.

Two 17-year-old boys, one from Ahuachapán and the other from Morazán gave four reasons: their poverty in El Salvador and their hopes to reunify with a parent, study and work. The boy from Morazán wanted to reunify with his father first and foremost, but he also wanted to study and work in the US to have a better future both by being in the US and being able to obtain better pay through his US presence and US education. The mother of the boy from Ahuachapán had three other children with her in the United States and wanted her son to help her economically. She told him that he would be able to study and work – a not uncommon assertion by parents in the United States that will be explored more in future writings on work and education as causes of children's migration.

5.3 The Fuller Picture

I now include the fuller details that children provided us in their interviews for the 49 children who gave poverty as a reason, so that they can be compared with all 145 children, and in future publications, with children who gave work, education, violence or family reunification as a reason for their migration. As a reminder, even though this dissertation does not dissect all of these reasons for migrating, I do include the most relevant details on them, too. This background again further demonstrates that much more was going on in children's lives to

drive them from home than just poverty, any other one factor, or even the multiple factors that children explicitly gave for their migration. It also sheds light on how these 49 children differed from the 145.

All five of the boys who did not have relatives with whom to live in the United States listed poverty among their reasons for going – which was not a reason for any of their migration – but otherwise, no characteristic uniformly correlated. Girls and boys who explicitly named poverty as a reason for their migration were more likely to be living in a rural area than urban area. Their households' workers seemed even more likely to labor in the informal economy, especially in agriculture and the service sector. Interestingly, they were more likely to have relationships with their mothers and fathers. Beyond these elements, gendered differences existed.

Girls were especially less likely to live with an adult male, which was in part because several of their fathers had recently fled the country after gang members threatened and extorted them. Related to this, girls had a lower average number of household workers. They were less likely to be receiving remittances. Among those that were receiving them, their households were being extorted – possibly in connection to them. Girls were much more likely to report gang presence in their daily lives and also more likely to report crime victimization. Taken together, what emerged is that girls' poverty in part related to the gang presence and related crime, including extortion, they confronted, even though few made this link to us.

In contrast, boys had a higher average number of household workers. They also received remittances at a slightly higher rate. They were themselves more likely to be working and less likely to be studying. This may be why they were much less likely to report gang presence and crime victimization, since so many children being victimized faced gang

members' threats at school. For them, it emerged that boys' poverty related to their membership in families performing the lowest-paid and most precarious work, work which they themselves started doing at early ages.

Destinations

Table 53 Where They Hoped to Live in the US

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Houston	3	25	5	14	8	16
Los Angeles	2	17	2	5	4	8
New York	2	17	9	24	11	22
Boston	1	8	-	-	1	2
Miami	-	-	1	3	1	2
Santa Fe, NM	-	-	1	3	1	2
Tampa	1	8	-	-	1	2
Washington, DC	1	8	-	-	1	2
Indiana	-	-	3	8	3	6
Kansas	-	-	1	3	1	2
Kentucky	1	8	-	-	-	-
Maryland	-	-	4	11	4	8
Minnesota	-	-	2	5	2	4
New Jersey	-	-	1	3	1	2
Pennsylvania	-	-	1	3	2	4
Texas	-	-	1	3	1	2
Virginia	-	-	3	8	3	6
Other	1	8	-	-	1	2
Did not know	-	-	3	8	3	6

All girls and boys who reported poverty as a motivator for their migration from the five selected departments hoped to reach the United States. This was slightly higher than the total population of 145 children interviewed. Table 53 above shows where in the US they hoped to live. New York and Houston were the most common destinations. It is likely that those who reported Maryland and Virginia lived near Washington, DC, and so that metroplex was mentioned as frequently as Houston. Among girls, one named the state where she hoped to arrive: Kentucky. The rest named the city where they hoped to arrive: Houston (3), Los Angeles (2), New York

(2), Boston, Tampa and Washington, DC.[105] For girls, there was no concentration of destinations in the US by department in El Salvador.

Among boys, three did not know where in the United States they would live. Sixteen named the state where they desired to live: Maryland (4), Indiana (3), Virginia (3), Minnesota (2), Kansas (1), New Jersey (1), Pennsylvania (1) and Texas (1). The other 18 named the city where they planned to live: New York (9), Houston (5), Los Angeles (2), Miami (1) and Santa Fe (1). There was a concentration of destinations in the US for children from two departments. Seven of 10 boys from Morazán department headed to Houston or New York, as did one of the girls. Three unrelated boys from Ahuachapán department headed to Indiana, just as did two other unrelated boys from the department headed to Minnesota.

Ages

Table 54 Range, Mode and Average Age

	Girls	Boys	Total
Range	2 to 17	0.5 to 17	0.5 to 17
Mode	17	16 and 17	17
Average	12.5	13.7	13.4

Table 54 above provides key age-related information on children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration. They ranged in age from six months to 17 years old, with an average age of 13.4 and mode age of 17. The girls ranged in age from two to 17 years old, with an average age of 12.5 and mode age of 17. The boys ranged in age from six months to 17 years old, with an average age of 13.7 and mode ages of 16 and 17. On average, the girls were slightly younger than the boys. They were twice as likely to be traveling with adult relatives as boys were. This

[105] Out of extreme caution, because there are far fewer Salvadorans in it, I am not naming the rural town in the South given by one girl.

was largely consistent with the whole population of 145 children from the five selected departments.

Rural-Urban Breakdown

Table 55 Rural-Urban Divide

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Rural	7	58	25	71	32	68
Urban	5	42	10	29	15	32

Two boys who gave poverty as a reason for their migration did not provide their neighborhood, and they lived in cities, so I could not determine if they lived in rural or urban areas; otherwise, though, I could determine from my own knowledge or children's and family's responses if where they lived was rural or urban, and those results are shown in Table 55 above. Overall, among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 32 – 68 percent – lived in rural areas, and 15 lived in urban areas. This rural share was a higher proportion than for all 145 children, including for boys and girls. Specifically, seven girls – 58 percent – lived in rural areas, while five lived in urban areas. Twenty-five boys – 71 percent – lived in rural areas, while 10 lived in urban areas.

Parental Involvement

Table 56 Involvement of Children's Mothers

Mother						
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
No relationship	0	0	1	3	1	2
Living together	11	92	28	76	39	80
Traveling together	6*	50	10*	27	16*	33
Traveling to her	1	8	7	19	8	16
Dead	-	-	1	3	1	2

* These are included in those living together.

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, all but two children had a relationship with their mothers, including all girls, which is shown in Table 56. This was a

slightly higher rate than for all 145 children. Eleven girls lived with their mothers, some of whom were still partnered with their fathers. Six of these 11 girls were traveling with their mothers. The twelfth girl was headed to her mother in the United States, and she had been sending the girl and her siblings monthly remittances for years.

Twenty-eight boys lived with their mothers, including at least seven who were still partnered with their fathers. Ten of these 18 boys were traveling with their mothers. Seven boys were headed to their mothers in the United States. Another boy said that his mother was in the United States, but he instead wanted to live with his father who was separated from her. Then, a 17-year-old boy from a rural area reported that his mother had died five years earlier of "sugar in the blood." As discussed in the health and demography chapter, this tended to be how Salvadorans referred to Diabetes.

Table 57 Involvement of Children's Fathers

Father						
	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
No relationship	2	17	15	41	17	35
Living together	5	42	12	32	17	35
Traveling together	-	-	2*	5	2*	4
Traveling to him	4	33	6	16	10	20
Dead or disappeared	1	8	3	8	4	8
In contact	-	-	1	3	1	2

* These are included in those living together.

In contrast, as shown in Table 57, only 28 children – 57 percent – had a relationship with their father, including nine girls – 75 percent – but only 19 boys – 51 percent. Although this was lower involvement than for mothers, it was higher father involvement for girls and lower father involvement for boys than for all 145 children. Five of the girls were living with their fathers. Notably, in all five cases, their fathers and mothers were still together. The other

four – three of them accompanied by their mothers – were traveling to their fathers in the United States and planned to live with him there.

Two girls did not have a relationship with their father. One 17-year-old girl said he had never been involved, and a different 17-year-old girl's father stopped being involved in her and her siblings' life when he separated from their mother nine years earlier. The father of a 10-year-old girl from Sonsonate disappeared eight months earlier when he set out to migrate. His *coyote* informed the family that he ran upon seeing Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents and then never re-appeared. It is possible that he was in migrant detention without having been able to notify his family, but it is sadly more likely that he died in the harsh conditions where he attempted to hide.

Nineteen boys – 51 percent – had a relationship with their father. Twelve of them were living with him. In all but four cases, their parents were still partnered. Six of them, including three traveling with their mothers, were headed to their fathers in the United States. Then, one boy's father lived in a different part of the country with his brothers to work, and it seemed like they were in regular contact, alongside the boy and his household receiving their financial support. All of them – males and females – worked in farming. Fifteen boys did not have a relationship with their fathers. Three additional boys' fathers had died of "illness," which was further examined in the health and demography chapter.

Their Households

Table 58 Household Size Range, Mode and Average

	Girls	Boys	Total
Household size range	3 to 10	2 to 14	2 to 14
Household size mode	4	5	5
Household size average	5.4	4.7	4.9

All children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration reported the number of persons living in their household. Table 58 above provides key household-related information on them. Household size ranged from two to 14 persons, with an average of 4.9 and mode of five. While girls' mode was four, their average was larger at 5.4. Conversely, boys' mode was five, but their average was smaller at 4.7. Across all three, the average was between 0.3 and 0.6 larger than for all 145 children. Likewise, both girls living in households with 10 and one of the two in households of eight – the only ones in households with more than six members among all girls interviewed – did explicitly name poverty as a reason for their migration. Not so for boys, though. The one boy living in a household with 14 members did report poverty as a reason, as did one of the four boys in a household of eight, but the one in a household of nine, other three in households of eight and three in households of seven did not.

As explored in the previous chapter on health and demography, household size often did not capture family size. This was the case for two girls and 11 boys who gave poverty as a reason for their migration. Most of them had one or both parents and additional siblings in the US, but a few had siblings or a parent living apart from them. Both girls were from Chalatenango department and had additional siblings in the United States. One 16-year-old who was living with her parents and two younger siblings, aged 10 and 12, had three older siblings, aged 22 to 26, in the US. A 17-year-old living with her parents and siblings traveled with her 31-year-old brother to their 38-year-old sister in the US. Five boys were from Ahuachapán department. A 17-year-old living with his parents and younger sister also had four older siblings no longer living with them. A different 17-year-old living with his aunt, mother and grandmother had two older brothers who lived elsewhere with his father. An 11-year-old traveling with his 20-year-old sister had two younger siblings in the US. A different 17-year-

old living with his grandparents had three sisters in the US living with his mother there. Still a different 17-year-old living with his mother, grandmother and five siblings had a brother in the US. Two boys were from Chalatenango department. A 15-year-old boy lived with his father, but two of his siblings instead lived with his grandmother. A 17-year-old living with his parents and eight siblings was traveling with an older brother to their adult brother in the US. Three boys were from Morazán department. Two brothers, aged 15 and 16, lived with their father, but their mother and seven-year-old sister were in the US. A 17-year-old living with his grandparent was headed to his mother in the US who had three US-born children there with her. A different 17-year-old lived with his mother and four siblings but had an older brother in the US. One boy was from Sonsonate department. The 16-year-old was traveling with two of his older siblings to their mother in the US, who had two more children with her there.

Table 59 Number of Children Not Living with An Adult Male

Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
5	42	16	43	21	43

As shown in Table 59 above, 21 children – 43 percent – did not live with an adult male. This included five girls – 42 percent – and sixteen boys – 43 percent. This was slightly higher than the 39 percent for all 145 children interviewed (and 41 percent for all boys). Notably, girls who listed poverty were 11 percent more likely not to live with an adult male than all girls interviewed, but as mentioned previously, this was likely because several of the girls' fathers had recently fled the country after gang members extorted and threatened them with death.

Among the seven girls who did live with an adult male, these males included five fathers and three older brothers. Among the 21 boys who did live with an adult male, these included 14 fathers, five grandfathers, four uncles, three brothers and one stepfather. Some girls and boys did live with multiple adult males in their households.

Household Workers

Table 60 Number of Household Workers

	Girls	Boys	Total
Range	0 to 2	0 to 5	0 to 5
Mode	1	1	1
Average	0.7	1.4	1.2

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 38 children – 78 percent – mentioned who worked in their households. Table 60 above provides key household worker-related information on them. The average number of household workers was slightly lower for girls and higher for boys than those among all 145. More boys lived in households with a woman being the sole worker, meaning earnings were smaller because of pay disparities. It also likely indicates that boys' households especially labored in poorly paid and precarious professions like those mentioned in the previous section. The most common work reported for males was farming and ranching, which several families did together. With the exception of one father who said he worked for the government energy company, the others also reported working in the informal economy as well in construction, transport and natural medicine. All women worked in the informal sector serving others. Six prepared food, two cooked and cleaned in the homes of others, and one each tailored, farmed and worked at a nursing home. The work that household members performed will be discussed in more detail in a future publication on work as a cause of children's migration.

Table 61 Reported Number of Household Workers

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
0	3	25	3	8	6	12
1	5	42	14	38	19	39
At least 1	1	8	3	8	4	8
2	1	8	5	14	6	12
3	-	-	1	3	1	2
4	-	-	1	3	1	2
5	-	-	1	3	1	2

As shown in Table 61 above, 10 of 12 girls mentioned who worked in their households. Three girls' households only received remittances. In five girls' households, only one person worked: the mother in four and the father in a fifth. An additional girl mentioned that her brother worked in their household but did not specify if others did as well. Then, one girl reported that both of her parents worked.

Twenty-five of 37 boys mentioned who worked in their households. Besides two boys' households who only received remittances, one other boy's household relied on someone – his grandfather who lived nearby – who did not live with them to cover their expenses. In 14 boys' households, only one person worked: the mother in six, the father in five, the boy himself in three and an aunt in one. Three boys mentioned that at least they themselves worked, although they did not specify if others also worked, too. Five boys reported that two members worked. In two households, this was the boy and his father, and in the other three households, this was both boys' parents. One boy explained that he, his mother and his sister worked, each at a different place. Another boy said that he and his three grandparents farmed together. Similarly, another boy from Ahuachapán said that he and his four relatives with whom he lived farmed together; they had three other relatives living elsewhere in the country and farming, too.

Table 62 Number of Children Working Themselves

Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
0	0	18	49	18	37

As shown in Table 62 above, 18 children – 37 percent – explicitly stated that they were working. All of them were boys (49 percent), and they were much more likely to be working than all boys among the 145 interviewed. The 18 boys who reported working predominantly labored in agriculture, with 11 – 61 percent – of them listing this. The other work mentioned

was in carpentry, transport, construction, a pizzeria and a wash-and-dry. Their work, too, will be explored more in future writing on work as a cause of children's migration.

None of the 12 girls acknowledged the household tasks most likely – cleaning, cooking, childcare, collecting firewood for wood-burning stoves and collecting water from nearby sources – expected of them as work, which will also be examined in future publications on work as a cause of children's migration. A 17-year-old girl was the only one who reported having worked outside the home herself. Upon dropping out of school at sixth grade following the brutal attack on her friend, she went to work caring for two children and an elderly person. She became too afraid to work, though, and was thus not studying or working at the time we met.

Remittances

Table 63 Children Receiving Remittances

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Number receiving remittances	3	25	8	22	11	22

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 11 children – 22 percent – explicitly stated that their households received remittances, as shown in Table 63 above.[106] This was slightly less common than for all 145 children, although it was much less likely for girls and slightly more likely for boys. Other comments in interviews with 13 more children pointed toward their households also receiving remittances. Possibly, the relatives they named – in almost all cases, one or both parents – sent them remittances, but it's also possible that rather than send remittances, the relatives saved to pay the cost of the route for the children.

[106] We did not originally ask if children and their families received remittances and then did not consistently ask the amount once we began.

Additionally, it's possible that in at least some cases, remittances went toward paying extortion demanded by gang members.

Three girls – 25 percent – reported that their households received remittances from a mother or father in the United States that ranged from U$200.00 to U$400.00 a month. For the three households that provided these amounts, the remittances were the only source of income. Notably, two girls who were migrating to their fathers in the United States made no comment about whether their households received remittances, although both were being extorted. Interestingly, all three girls who reported receiving remittances were being extorted, as was one more girl who was headed to her father in the United States. No adult male lived in three of these four households.

Eight boys – 22 percent – explicitly reported that their households received remittances from a father, grandmother, aunt(s) or a brother in the United States that ranged from $200.00 to $300.00 a month. Two of the eight said that they only "sometimes" got them instead of regularly getting them like the other six. For two of the households that got them, it was the only source of income. Seventeen boys explicitly indicated that their households did not receive remittances. Twelve boys did not comment to us on remittances, although 11 of them had a relative with whom they planned to live in the US. For nine of these 11, the relative was one or both parents, while the other two listed older siblings and a grandfather, respectively. Unlike girls' households, none of the boys receiving remittances were being extorted. Five of them lived with at least one adult male. Among the other three, two were brothers, and they had moved many times "due to financial problems." The other boy's household only sometimes got remittances from an older brother, and it was obvious that he, his mother, grandmother and five siblings were very poor.

Study

Table 64 Children Studying

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Number studying	8	67	19	51	27	55
Number in private school	1	8	0	0	1	2

Table 64 above provides key study-related information for children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration. At least 27 children were studying when we interviewed them, which when controlling for those who were school-aged, amounted to 63 percent of them. Both girls and boys were less notably likely to be studying than the total 145 we interviewed, likely meaning that poverty made studying more difficult or even impossible. At least eight of 10 school-aged girls (80 percent), aged 10 to 17, were studying in grades five through ten.[107] Among them, only one – in her penultimate year of the last two or three years of high school – was studying at a private school. The reasoning behind that will be covered in a future publication on education as a cause of children's migration.

Nineteen of 33 school-aged boys (58 percent), aged eight to 17, were studying in grades three through 12. One was even in university. All of them were enrolled in public schools. Notably, some of them were substantially behind – like a 17-year-old in sixth grade, for example – even though they said their schooling had not been interrupted.

Among the 22 children who were not studying, two girls and four boys were four years old or younger and were thus not yet enrolled. Another girl, aged 17, did not talk to us about

[107] In El Salvador, primary education goes through ninth grade. To attend university, students must then complete their "*bachillerato*." At a minimum, this involves two years of study that are roughly equivalent to tenth and eleventh grades in the US system. Most study a third year, choosing a technical focus that could – at least in theory – result in a job or best preparation for university at conclusion. In this sense, it is more equivalent to a technical degree in the United States. For students who continue to the last two or three years of high school, they often have to leave their neighborhood, since most less populous municipalities have only one or two public Institutes [*Institutos Nacionales*] that they usually build near the municipal center.

her schooling. Then, the aforementioned 17-year-old told us that she had dropped out of school years earlier to, as she said, "prevent my friend's story from ever happening to me." She initially tried to work, as described in the previous section, but stopped that, too, because she was "always afraid something bad might happen."

Similarly, a nine-year-old boy had just quit his studies, because the gang in his neighborhood was harassing and stalking him. Following the beating of his classmate, his mother feared that the gang would soon beat him, too, and withdrew him before ultimately deciding that they had to flee for their lives. A different boy quit his studies in seventh grade, when his father died a few years earlier. The other 16 boys quit their studies between third and ninth grades. One of them did say that he wished to continue, but he could not afford to reach an *Instituto* that gave instruction for the last two or three years. These incidents and others related to children no longer studying will be discussed in a future publication on education as a cause of children's migration.

Insecurity and Violence

Table 65 Gangs and Crime

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Number who reported gang in neighborhood	11	92	22	59	33	67
Number victimized by crime	7	58	10	27	17	35

Table 65 above provides key information on insecurity and violence among children who listed poverty as a reason for their migration.

Gangs

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 33 of 49 children – 67 percent – reported gang members in their neighborhoods. This included eleven of 12 girls – 92

percent[108] – and 22 of 37 boys – 59 percent. Girls were much more likely to report gang presence in their daily lives, while boys were much less likely than all of the 145 children interviewed. As discussed in past publications and to be explored more in the future, the lowest-income neighborhoods are most likely to have a strong gang presence (Kennedy and Parker 2020). In neighborhoods with strong gang presence, officials, civilian death squads and private actors like parents, other relatives and romantic partners also commit crimes and carry out acts of violence (Kennedy and Parker 2020). The reporting difference between boys and girls merits further exploration, some of which will be examined in future work and education writings. It is likely of note that girls often confronted gangs at their schools, and nearly half of boys were no longer studying, because they were instead working.

Crime Victimization

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 17 children – 35 percent – described past incidents of crime victimization that they themselves or their household members experienced. This included seven girls – 58 percent – and 10 boys – 27 percent. In this sense, girls were slightly more likely to report crime victimization and boys substantially less likely than all 145 children. Nonetheless, boys were more likely than girls to be the direct target, as only one girl (eight percent) reported this, but five boys (14 percent) did.

[108] The one girl who did not report a gang presence lived in a rural municipality with a population of less than 3,000. A search of it in the Salvadoran press did not return results that indicated a gang presence. However, it did register murders in multiple years: one in 2012, three men's in 2013, one man's in 2015 and two men's in 2016, according to governmental statistics. The press additionally reported the shooting death of a man in the town in 2014, a woman left murdered in a barrel in 2019 and a woman killed by her romantic partner in 2022. We interviewed all five children – the girl and four boys – who migrated from this town in 2014. None of them lived in the same neighborhood. One reported that MS13 had operated in his high school. Another indicated that 18th Street operated in his school and neighborhood, as did another boy no longer in school. The other boy reported no gang presence but also said his uncle fled the town 17 years earlier because the gang threatened to kill him. It thus seems likely that the girl did, in fact, have to interact with gang members in and around her home. The methodology chapter discusses some reasons why children and families may not have felt able, comfortable or safe to discuss this.

The only girl who reported being directly threatened herself was a 12-year-old from Morazán department traveling with her mother. Several months earlier, 18th Street members and the girl's teacher started forcibly recruiting her at school, which will be discussed more in a future publication on education as a cause of migration. She and her mom felt desperate about what to do, they explained, because they knew she needed an education to be successful at anything in the future. Yet, the girl worried because, "they said they would kill me, if I do not [join] …" She did not see a way of avoiding them, if she continued attending school, or of adequately preparing herself, if she quit school to avoid them. The 17-year-old girl not studying or working mentioned above may have witnessed gang members kidnap and brutalize her 16-year-old friend years earlier and subsequently received threats that she feared disclosing. She did not, however, report this to us.

Gangs were likewise forcibly recruiting three of the five boys. This impacted two boys, aged 11 and 16, in Morazán department, where gang members targeted both at school. The 11-year-old was targeted at his school, and gang members wanted him to sell drugs for them there. It had quickly gotten to the point that they were "always waiting for him." The other two boys faced gang members' threats and harm without being recruited. The aforementioned nine-year-old from Ahuachapán department who had to quit school because of gang harassment and threats found himself in their crosshairs simply because he was classmates with a gang member's girlfriend. When the gang members threatened him, he ran from them, and when they stalked him, he failed to say anything to them as he passed, both of which they took as disrespect. A 17-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department lived in a neighborhood notorious for its gang presence and crime levels. He did not mention the gang members in his neighborhood targeting him to date, but on two occasions, when he went into another

neighborhood, MS13 members beat him. The second time left him so injured that he needed to stay in bed for a month to recover.[109]

Six other girls reported that other household members had been victims of crime. For all of them – in Ahuachapán, Chalatenango, Cuscatlán and Sonsonate departments – this included gang members demanding that they pay extortion or be killed, such that what money their households made or received could not be put toward other expenses. In Ahuachapán department, the same gang had been demanding weekly extortion from the girl's mother since her father fled gang demands the year before, possibly because they knew she received remittances from him. In Chalatenango department, MS13 demanded extortion by phone from the girl's family the year before. In Cuscatlán department, the 17-year-old's brother worked for a transport cooperative and had to pay the gang in order to operate.[110] Gang members demanded extortion from the 10-year-old girl's mother, and while she paid it once, she could not "keep doing so," she told us. Similarly, in Sonsonate department, a 13-year-old girl's father sold juices in the street, until MS13 members beat him and told him to leave. Even when he did, they demanded money from him that he could not pay without an income. He fled El Salvador to the US. At that point, MS13 started demanding money from the girl, her mother and her 18-year-old sister who remained, always also asking them where the father had gone. Originally, the gang wanted $150 a month but had recently raised the price to one they could not pay. For the other girl from Sonsonate, gang members had come to their house demanding food and toiletries from them (the mother worked at a hotel), rather than money.

[109] Gangs prohibit the reporting of crime and often also warn their victims against seeking medical treatment. They do so both because hospitals are mandatory reporters (even though they rarely report), and police frequently congregate at hospitals wanting to catch injured gang members. This boy lived in poverty in an isolated area and faced barriers for these reasons as well.

[110] Transport workers are among the most targeted for extortion in El Salvador. Drivers and fare collectors on taxis and buses are regularly killed for failure to pay, as reported by the Salvadoran press.

Two of the six aforementioned girls also had brothers who gangs were threatening to kill, if they would not join, including the 15-year-old brother of one in Cuscatlán department and the 17-year-old brother of another in Sonsonate department. In the latter, gang members had come to their house when no one but him was home and demanded that he join the gang. Afterward, the girl's mother confronted the gang members and told them, forcefully, to stay away from the home and her children. For fear of the situation, though, they fled within El Salvador, and then still feeling unsafe, fled the country. This was the only girl who reported being internally displaced among girls who explicitly listed their poverty as a reason for migration (and the only other child besides the two brothers above who said they had moved frequently because of financial problems).

Among the five boys who were themselves targeted, one's mother was also being targeted. Gang members demanded that she store weapons for them or be killed. They had already killed one cousin and many friends of hers, and another of her cousins had recently fled after gang members threatened to do the same to him. Otherwise, five other boys reported other household members that had been victims of crime. Two boys specified that gang members had threatened their uncles. One, threatened 17 years earlier in Chalatenango department, fled the country and had been living in the United States since then. The other worked as a security guard and lived near the boy and his older brothers in Sonsonate department. Two boys from Cuscatlán and Morazán departments specified that gang members were forcibly recruiting their 15-year-old brothers. Then, the mother of one boy told us that both gangs in their neighborhood were threatening her with death, if she did not give them the items they demanded from her small, home-based store. This made her family's economic situation impossible, because it added to other hardships recently faced.

Family

Among children who gave poverty as a reason for their migration, 44 of 49 children – 90 percent – had relatives with whom they planned to live in the United States, including all girls and 32 boys (86 percent). Still high, this was slightly lower than for all 145 children and did notably – as mentioned earlier – include all five of those among them who did not have a relative with whom to live in the US. Tables 66 through 70 below show with whom children hoped to live in the US.

Table 66 With Whom Children Hoped to Live in the US – Parents

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Father	4	33	8	22	12	25
Mother	1	8	7	19	8	16

Twenty children hoped to live with one or both parents, most of whom – and perhaps all of whom – did not have legal status. Four girls, including three traveling with their mothers, planned to live with their fathers. The girls' fathers had been in the US for between one and three years. Only one girl thought that her father had legal status, and she indicated that he had a "work permit." Another girl planned to live with her mother, who had been in the United States for approximately 12 years. The girl thought she was "beginning the residency process."

Eight boys, including three traveling with their mothers, planned to live with their fathers. The boys' fathers had been in the US for between two and 11 years. None of the boys thought their fathers had legal status. Five boys, including one traveling with his father, planned to live with their mothers. The boys' mothers had been in the US for between 1.5 month and 14 years. Three boys thought that their mothers had no legal status, while two though that their mothers were "applying for" or "in the process of" obtaining legal status. Two boys planned to live with both of their parents, who they estimated had been in the US eight years and a "long time," respectively. Neither boy thought either of his parents had legal status.

Table 67 With Whom Children Hoped to Live in the US – (Great) Aunts and Uncles

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
(Great) aunts and uncles	4	33	12	32	16	33

Sixteen children planned to live with aunt(s), uncle(s) or a great aunt or uncle. On average, these relatives had been in the US for longer than children's parents, and at least according to children, seemed more likely to have some type of legal status than parents. This included four girls. Two girls did not say how long these relatives had been in the US, but the other two mentioned eight and 10 years, respectively. One did not say if she thought her great uncle had legal status, but the other three did. One thought some of her maternal aunts were residents. One thought that her maternal uncle had a "work permit," and another thought that her paternal uncle did not have status.

Twelve boys fell into this category. One said he wanted to live with his "aunts and uncles," who he estimated had been in the US "a long time" and thus were residents. Three boys wanted to live with only their aunt or great aunt, including one who also lived with his older brother. He thought his aunt was a legal resident. The other two boys thought their aunts had work permits. One had been in the US for 12 years, while the other had been there since she was 13 years old. Eight boys wanted to live with only their uncles, including one who was also living with an older brother. The uncles had lived in the US for between 10 and 22 years. Three boys thought their uncles were legal residents, one thought his uncle had no legal status, and the other four boys did not opine on what, if any, legal status their uncle had.

Table 68 With Whom Children Hoped to Live in the US – Older Siblings

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Older sibling(s)	2	17	3	8	5	10

Five children planned to live with their older siblings. They tended to have arrived more recently and not to have legal status. This included two girls. One girl estimated that her 38-year-old sister had been in the US for around five years and did not have legal status. The other girl had three "recently arrived" siblings, and she believed one of them had residency. It also included three boys who planned to live with their brothers. None of the boys thought their brothers had legal status. One did not tell us how long he had resided in the US, but the other two approximated four and 16 years, respectively.

Table 69 With Whom Children Hoped to Live in the US – Cousins

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Male cousin	1	8	-	-	1	2
Mother's cousin	-	-	2	5	2	4

Three children – one girl and two boys – planned to live with familial cousins. They tended to have been in the United States for a longer period, and according to the children, all had permanent legal status. The 17-year-old girl planned to live with her male cousin who had been in the United States for approximately 10 years. She believed that his father got him residency before he went. Two other boys, both traveling with their mothers, hoped to live with their mother's cousin. One did not say how long the cousin had lived in the US but did think she had legal residence. The other said that the cousin had been in the United States for 40 years and was a citizen. Three boys likewise planned to live with grandparents.

Table 70 With Whom Children Hoped to Live in the US – Others

	Girls	%	Boys	%	Total	%
Grandmother's friend	-	-	2	5	2	4
Friend	-	-	2	5	2	4
Alone	-	-	1	3	1	2

This left five boys who did not plan to live with relatives. Notably, the 17-year-old who planned to live alone was in contact with his father who had lived in the United States "a long

time." Two others planned to live with male friends. One was migrating with them, and the other said his friend had reached the US five years earlier and had no legal status. Then, two adolescent brothers traveling with their mother planned to live with a grandmother's friend. They did not say how long she had been in the US or whether she had legal status.

5.4 In Search of Dignity and a Better Life

Capabilities Approach scholar, Martha Nussbaum (2011) writes that inherent to determining what a life worthy of human dignity requires is "that some living conditions deliver to people a life that is worthy of the human dignity that they possess, and others do not" (30). Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) determined that the minimal areas that a society must nurture and support to be just and provide dignity are: health, bodily integrity and education, although he also emphasized plurality and non-reducibility.[111] Nussbaum expanded beyond these three to outline as well: life, which she defined as "being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living" (33); emotions, senses and imagination; thought and practical reason; affiliation; play or leisure; and control over one's environment, political and material. As just described in the previous section by children and their relatives, their poverty had multiple dimensions for their current and future lives that left them without dignity or justice. For those in the previous chapter on health and demography, it meant inadequate access to the healthcare they and their relatives needed. For others, it meant inadequate housing and food, unpayable debts and many difficulties. As will be explored in a future publication on work as a cause of children's migration, it meant not being able to find sufficient or well-paid work, and in some cases for

[111] Nussbaum (2011) expanded beyond these three to outline as well: life; emotions, senses and imagination; thought and practical reason; affiliation; play or leisure; and control over one's environment, political and material. In future publications on interpersonal violence, I will explore these more.

agricultural workers, being indebted either because of natural events or extortion demands. For two mothers of three children migrating with them, it meant having no hope of finding work where they lived that could finance the futures they wanted for their children. Likewise to be further explored in a future publication on education as a cause of migration, it meant living in neighborhoods with high levels of violence, studying in violent schools and not being able to afford to study, access courses one wanted, like English, or attend the last three years of high school. Similarly to be explored in future publications on the family, it meant not being able to help their families in the ways they wished, or for at least two boys, buy a home for a future family; one boy even seemed to think his economic status in El Salvador would limit his ability to "find a wife."

Most of the 12 girls and 37 boys who gave poverty as one of their reasons for migrating did explicitly mention the word "poverty."[112] However, six girls and 13 boys used different phrases: wanting "more opportunity," "a better future," "a better life," and "to get ahead [*seguir adelante*]" or "overcome [*superarse*]." Three children also told us that their parents had migrated earlier to give them "a better life" or "afford them opportunities they could not have," and this seemed to motivate two teenagers' mothers to migrate within weeks of their births, too. Arguably, these phrases best encapsulated the revolutionary hope contained in the complex decisions children and their families made to exercise limited agency amidst many powerful structures keeping them stuck in the country of their birth. They essentially expressed their desire to be able to plan their own life, a capability that Nussbaum (2011) argues is the most urgent capability threshold any government can seek to guarantee.

[112] See Methodology chapter for more detail. We did not explicitly ask children and their families if they considered themselves to be living in poverty, although some did mention it.

Three girls – two from Ahuachapán department and one from Sonsonate department – hoped for "more opportunity" in the United States. The 17-year-old from Ahuachapán was the oldest of her parents' eight children. Her uncle had been offering to host her in the United States for years, but she only started seriously considering it and wanting to "seize it" when she turned 15.[113] For two years, her father had been telling her no, because he thought she was too young and too small, but he said to me: "in the end, I cannot stop her, and she has become more and more restless." The 13-year-old girl from Sonsonate department linked the better opportunities she would have to the studies that she could complete free of charge and without violence in the United States.

Two girls and six boys elaborated that they wanted a "better future," which beyond education and bodily integrity included for a number of them better paid work. The mother of a two-year-old girl from Morazán said that she wanted to give her daughter a "better future." Similarly, a 12-year-old girl from Morazán traveling with her mother first said that she wanted a "better future" and would get this through studying in the United States. As our interview was concluding, though, they added that gang members had threatened them (the girl in her school), and this was also motivating their decision to leave El Salvador. Two of the boys were from Sonsonate department. The 16-year-old simply said that he wanted a better future and was pursuing the "American dream," which his mother told us was "kids' stuff nowadays." He additionally wanted to improve his future by learning English. He did not acknowledge that he was already working and thus likely wanted to be paid better as well. The 17-year-old explained that his parents were in the United States, and he hoped to achieve a better future

[113] In Latin America and Latin American communities outside Latin America, the 15th birthday is a major milestone for girls. Families who are able typically throw a large party, which marks the girl's public transition from girl to woman in the community.

with them by finishing high school. The third boy, a 17-year-old from Morazán wanted to reunify with his father first and foremost, but also wanted to study in the US and have a "better future" both by being in the United States and being able to obtain better pay through his United States presence and education. Two brothers from Morazán, aged 15 and 16, also wanted "a better future" and "to overcome [*superarse*]" their poverty.[114] Additionally, a 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango said that he wanted "a better future" and "to get ahead [*seguir adelante*]." For him, this meant that he would "find a wife" and get "a house."

One girl and one boy alternatively said that they wanted a "better life." The aforementioned 16-year-old girl from Chalatenango department explained that she could achieve this for herself and her family in the United States by working and studying there. She lived with her mother, father and two younger sisters, but three older siblings had already "left [to the US] because of their poverty." Likewise, a 16-year-old boy from Sonsonate department said he wanted "a better life" and planned to finish studying in the United States, because his area did not have a free school for the last two or three years of high school.

Seven adolescent boys expressed that they wanted "to get ahead [*seguir adelante*]," including the aforementioned 17-year-old boy from Chalatenango who also wanted "a better future." Like him, this meant buying a house for a 16-year-old boy from Ahuachapán department, who also continued that it would mean working and helping his family pay off their debts. A 17-year-old boy from Morazán similarly explained that he wanted to help his family by sending money. His father had died nine years earlier, his oldest brother migrated some years afterward, and he was already working in agriculture to provide what support he

[114] These two brothers and a 17-year-old girl from Ahuachapán were the only three children among the 145 from these five departments that used the phrase "to overcome [*superarse*]." Bailey et al. (2002) discussed this phrase in their article as well.

could, but it was often less than $5.00 a day. A 15-year-old from Morazán said that he wanted "to get ahead" and "obtain more economic resources." After a 16-year-old boy from Ahuachapán said this, his father jumped in exclaiming: "he is going to be happy. He is going with an illusion." He then paused, shook his head and added, as if predicting his son's defeat, "We are humble [agricultural] workers." He seemed to know that in El Salvador, if born to humble agricultural workers, one's future generations had to also be humble agricultural workers, because as the previous chapter described, that's how the Salvadoran economy and society ran since Europeans' arrival.

In this regard, the United Nations Development Program posited in 2005 that migration should be understood as an "opportunity for human development" – the very development children, adolescents and their relatives articulated wanting to be able to achieve through education and increased resources. For them, they saw no availability of such in El Salvador but could see it coming to fruition through struggle in the United States.

As early as 1979, Amartya Sen advocated a paradigm shift in how development is viewed that today has become the Capabilities Approach. Development should be focused on the person instead of the economy, and the basic question to ask for each person is what each is able to do and be (Sen 1979, 1985, 1987, 1989). Capabilities Approach[115] scholars criticize a focus solely on economic growth through Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Income (GNI) as a single number that cannot tell us all we need to know about quality of life, especially for the poorest. They do hold that such growth is forward progress, in that the attendant increased wealth could allow governments to adopt difference-making policies

[115] The Capabilities Approach is historically associated with the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which annually publishes with Oxford University Press the Human Development Report. The first such reports were published in 1990. In the forging of the Human Development Reports, special attention was given to health and education.

(Nussbaum 2011). However, numerous studies document that increased wealth first goes to elites (Drèze and Sen 1989, 1990, 1995, 1996, 2002 and Sen 1992, 1999). Likewise, it does not "deliver improvements" in quality of life – through health, education, longevity, bodily security, political rights and access, environmental quality, employment opportunities, leisure time and others – unless the State directly intervenes with actions toward those ends (Nussbaum 2011).[116] It has further not correlated with the appearance and durability of political liberty in some countries (Nussbaum 2011). It likewise fails to examine distribution, both if certain groups – ethnic, gender, racial, religious, etc. – are "particularly marginalized or deprived" and if "enormous inequalities" exist (Nussbaum 2011, 49). These are the numerous factors – the multiple dimensions, as the United Nations Development Program ended up naming them – that Capabilities Approach scholars hold need to be taken into account. They especially discuss the critical importance of education, health and bodily integrity.

The political economy chapter examined how all of the above applies to El Salvador. Increases in wealth concentrated among a small oligarchy, that while larger today, still holds substantial wealth and power. Rather than focus on improving quality of life for the poorest at war's end, elites focused on neoliberal reforms that left them in even more precarious conditions. Although El Salvador enjoyed democratic multi-party rule for almost three decades post-war, the poorest often could exercise only limited liberties, and the emergence of an authoritarian state under one man and one party has only gained force since Nayib Bukele took

[116] See also: Sen, Amartya. 1992. *Inequality Reexamined*. New York and Cambridge, MA: Russel Sage and Harvard University Press; Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf; Drèze, Jean and Sen, Amartya. 1989. *Hunger and Public Action*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Drèze, Jean and Sen, Amartya (eds.). 1990. *The Political Economy of Hunger, 3 vols*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Drèze, Jean and Sen, Amartya. 1995. *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press; Drèze, Jean and Sen, Amartya (eds.). 1996. *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives*. Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press; and Drèze, Jean and Sen, Amartya. 2002. *India: Development and Participation*. Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press.

office in 2019. Women, what remains of indigenous groups and the rural and urban poor are especially marginalized. The child and adolescent migrants we interviewed thus illustrate that, more than GNI or Gini coefficients, a substantial portion of the Salvadoran population remains not just left behind but completely left out of the greater rights supposedly granted to them at war's end. To this point, though, economic and social rights were largely abandoned, and child migrants' socioeconomic mobility in multiple ways was and remains extremely constrained in El Salvador, even as increasing numbers embark on an international odyssey to a faraway land hoping for more. Put simply, what the children and families we interviewed in 2014 wanted is what Capabilities Scholars and human development proponents within United Nations agencies have been promoting instead of neoliberalism and a sole focus on GDP since 1990. The problem is that they were born in a country not heeding the shift, in part because of its own elites and in part because of international actors heavily influencing their countries' finances and governmental programming.

5.5 Life in the United States for Salvadorans: The Real Possibility of Upward Mobility

What to make of the 16-year-old boy from Sonsonate searching for the "American dream" and all these other children who dare to envision better futures for themselves and their loved ones? Of note, they are in good company. In a 2013 Pew Research Center survey of Salvadorans, 64 percent responded affirmatively that people who move to the United States have a better life than those in El Salvador (Kohut and Wike 2013). Undeniably, El Salvador offers them few options beyond the poverty into which they were born for reasons discussed in the preceding chapters. The least bad option is often migration. This is exemplified by the mother of the 17-year-old boy quoted at the chapter's start – with tears in her eyes and despite not wanting it –

telling us that she felt she must let him go because of how "very poor" they were. … and him knowing this made her "very sad." It probably made him very sad, too. Their dilemma, that plays out for so many, is what Nussbaum (2011) and Capabilities scholars call a "tragic choice," in that two central capabilities collide and cannot co-exist. He cannot stay with his family and get out of poverty for himself and them to have a better life. Nussbaum (2011) posits that "it is a cost of a distinctive sort, one that in a fully just society no person has to bear" (37). And yet, hundreds of thousands in El Salvador bear it year in and year out. Not only this, but they are vilified in El Salvador for "abandoning" their families and in the United States for "stealing jobs" or being "illegal." For the poor inside and outside El Salvador, they often have nothing but such tragic choices to make, just some of which have been described above and in previous chapters. The quality of life for Salvadorans in the United States is nuanced, but it does offer a path out of poverty for those who can get legal status and the second generation.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, 67 percent of Salvadorans in the United States have precarious legal status, and only one-third have citizenship or lawful permanent residency (Cohn, Passel and Gonzalez-Barrera 2017; Kennedy and Parker 2020), which in and of itself creates numerous financial barriers (MPI 2015), as do low education levels achieved in El Salvador. Most notably for this chapter, it limits their access to credit and higher-paying jobs (MPI 2015). Both median annual personal earnings and median annual household income among Salvadorans in the United States is less than 85 percent of those for the general population in the US.

Table 71 Median Annual Personal Earnings for Salvadorans in the United States (US Census Bureau)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013
$20,238	$20,368	$20,000	$20,000	$20,000	$20,800

Table 71 above shows the median annual personal earnings for Salvadorans in the US from 2007 to 2013. In 2013, the median annual household income was $41,000 for Salvadorans, just 82 percent of the general population's median (MPI 2015). At the same time, average Salvadoran household size – at 4.0 – is larger than the general population's, meaning that relatively smaller income must cover the costs of relatively more persons (Lopez and Rohal 2015). This combination of factors means that even though Salvadorans have higher rates of employment than the general population (Singer 2007, MPI 2015), they nonetheless have higher poverty rates, as displayed in Table 72 below.

Table 72 Percentage of Salvadorans in Poverty in the United States, 2007-2017 (US Census Bureau)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013	2017
14.6	15.4	19	20	23	20	17

Likewise, Salvadorans have little economic wealth. According to the US Census Bureau in 2021, Salvadorans' median net worth[117] was just $30,600 compared to $52,190 for all Hispanics and $195,600 for the non-Hispanic population (Scherer and Mayol-Garcia 2022). Related to this, Salvadorans own their homes at far lower rates than the general population, as displayed in Table 73 below.

Table 73 Percentage of Salvadorans Who Own Their Homes (US Census Bureau)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2013	2017
48.1	46	45	42	41	39	43

This means that Salvadorans face hardship during downturns, like the Great Recession (2007-2009) when home ownership began dropping, and more recently, the COVID19 Pandemic (2020-present). For example, during the COVID19 pandemic, the US Census Bureau found

[117] This is defined as the value of assets owned minus liabilities or debt owed.

that in 2021, 49.2 percent of Salvadorans in the United States experienced material hardship (Scherer and Mayol-Garcia 2022).[118]

Despite all of the above, Salvadorans, especially those from low-income backgrounds, do – in real and objective terms – earn substantially more money in the United States than in El Salvador. In 2005, the United Nations Development Program noted that total combined earnings of Salvadorans in the United States were equivalent to 127 percent of El Salvador's total Gross Domestic Product that year (UNDP 2005). Using Pew Research Center figures for median personal annual income and Salvadoran Foreign-Born population, this went up to 143 percent in 2007, 134 percent in 2008, 140 percent in 2009, 136 percent in 2010, 128 percent in 2011 and 126 percent in 2013. What does this money get them, though? Previous sections allude to remittances to those who remain in El Salvador, but this will be explored much more fully in a future publication on the family as a cause of children's migration. Below, I quickly reflect on justice and equality it does not get them, at least in their first weeks, months and years. Additionally, averages contain those making far below and far above them, and those we interviewed may find themselves disproportionately in the former in the United States, just as they did in El Salvador.

Since 2014, I have visited a number of children we interviewed in El Salvador in their new homes of various communities of California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Texas, Virginia and Washington, DC. Across locations, in their first months and years, they often lived in poverty or extreme poverty. They tended to live in neighborhoods with the fewest

[118] In its 2021 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the US Census Bureau included three areas of material hardship: food hardship, housing hardship and bill-paying hardship. 28.1 percent of Salvadorans experienced food hardship, compared to 14.3 percent of all Hispanics and 7.5 percent of non-Hispanics. 20.1 percent of Salvadorans experienced housing hardship, compared to 19.6 percent of Hispanics and 15.8 percent of non-Hispanics. 23.9 percent of Salvadorans experienced bill-paying hardship, compared to 15.6 percent of Hispanics and 9.0 percent of non-Hispanics (Scherer and Mayol-Garcia 2022).

resources and somewhat similar dynamics to those they fled: gang presence, high violence levels and distrust of authorities who are documented to have committed abuses, particularly against black and brown people. They tended first to be living in very crowded, rundown apartments with other undocumented migrants, such that as many as 15 to 20 people were in one small room. They often stayed in these places until they paid off their debt related to the route to the United States and then moved into similarly rundown apartments, homes or trailers with a smaller number of people who were often related to them. Those who attended school often enrolled in United States schools with the fewest resources and faced resistance the older they were or longer they had not been studying in El Salvador from administration officials. The adults and older adolescents worked in exploitative industries for long hours and little pay and frequently faced at least one employer who did not pay them. Without legal status, they did not report it. They also faced workplace accidents that created crisis most of the time, because their employers refused to pay for their medical costs, and they had no healthcare.

This situation did improve for those who obtained legal status, but cultural, economic and justice barriers abound in that process (MPI 2015), and not all got such status, although most of those who remained in contact with me did.[119] Among regular Salvadorans not in contact with a researcher who regularly works with attorneys on immigration proceedings, they rarely get status.[120] Determining whether the quality of life for such first-generation Salvadorans who could not get status truly improved is an open question for me. Nonetheless, it seems less unclear for Salvadorans and Salvadoran migrants themselves. Prior research has

[119] When I started this study, I knew I could provide very little for interviewees' participation, even as I also knew they were often in dire straits. While I did not publicize it, I did resolve to connect any child or family who remained in contact with me to a pro or low bono attorney when they arrived to another country. In addition, I provided free of charge a tailored report, and when required, "expert" testimony in their immigration proceedings.
[120] See the introductory chapter for exact figures.

found that most in the United States still believe the US "provides more opportunity and healthcare access and is a better place to raise kids than their country of origin … despite the hardships acutely experienced" (Scherer and Mayol-Garcia 2022). To the latter, United States Census Bureau data does make clear that second-generation Salvadorans (those born in the United States to at least one Salvadoran-born parent) nearly match even with various outcomes of the general US population: completion of high school, university and graduate studies; home ownership; and earnings. For them, there is an upward mobility available in the United States that only rarely exists in El Salvador, but again, averages fail to tell us how the worst-off are doing.

In the next, final chapter, I bring us to the present day and conclude by advocating for governments' responsibilities to help realize what individuals, especially children, can be and do, suggesting specific policies for doing so. These policies are geared to the various reasons children gave for migrating and to both the Salvadoran and United States governments.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In the months, and unexpectedly, years that followed the start of my research in El Salvador, I ultimately determined that three major factors were at play behind the desire to only discuss poverty as a cause of children's migration. First, the Sánchez Cerén administration – in only its first weeks of office and facing rising crime and homicide rates related to a then-fast unraveling truce between gangs[121] – legitimately wanted to be able to address the agenda ignored or abandoned since the civil war's end: that of providing better and more social programming to the poor in the country. Their thinking seemed to be that if violence was the center of conversation, as it almost always is in El Salvador, the extreme poverty and need at its root could not also be centered. A deeply politically divided country where the same small elite owned most media outlets, the right did seem to monopolize conversations around violence to narrow them to more militarization being the only appropriate response, even though militarization had failed repeatedly.

Second, United States officials did not then, nor do they now, nor have they ever, wanted to discuss that many Salvadorans flee a government receiving millions of dollars of their aid and training each year yet remains largely unable and unwilling to effectively protect or serve them. That sometimes even persecutes its citizens. Such reality is detrimental to the US image and to the overburdened immigration system with hundreds of thousands of backlogged asylum cases of Salvadorans.

Third, the Salvadoran government – and at that time, a new administration hoping to make substantial changes – did not want to acknowledge that it was failing to protect its citizens, because what country does want to acknowledge that? To this, though, for some reason, poverty could be an issue that past administrations failed to address, while violence could not be. It had to be a measure of whatever current administration was in power. … Or perhaps, it had finally become a measure most important to the government, unlike administrations past?

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[121] In 2012, former revolutionary leader and Legislative Assembly Deputy, Raúl Mijango, and Monseñor Fabio Colindres of the Catholic Church publicly negotiated a gang truce between MS-13 and 18th Street, with behind-the-scenes participation and support from then-Security Minister, David Munguía Payes. The truce immediately led to a drastic 41-percent-reduction in homicides. However, many seriously doubted these supposed gains. Specifically, while homicide rates were nearly cut in half, citizens speculated that this dip counted for murders of gang members by gang members and that murders of citizens continued unabated. Likewise, citizens believed that while murder rates went down, extortion, disappearance and robbery increased (TAGSPPES 2012). Indeed, clandestine, mass graves continued to be found throughout the country during and following the truce (Arias 2015, Hernández 2014, Portillo 2013), so that many speculated the gangs simply became better at hiding the bodies. Nevertheless, with the removal of Munguía Payes (Silva Avalos and Dudley 2013), truce talks significantly deteriorated in May 2013, and homicide rates rose for the second half of 2013. Homicide rates stayed at those levels through the first months of 2014 but then escalated again when then-President Salvador Sánchez Cerén took office in June 2014 and almost immediately announced that he would not negotiate with gang members. To the extent it still existed, this completely ended the gang truce. At the beginning of 2015, gang leaders who had been moved to lower security prisons as part of the truce were transferred back to the country's only maximum-security facility at the time in Zacatecoluca municipality of La Paz department (Valencia 2015). Homicide rates went up further in response, and 2015 was the deadliest year on record in El Salvador, including nearly all the civil war years. Compiling governmental statistics showed that most municipalities became deadlier in the following years. The departments with the lowest homicide rates saw them double and triple.

In writing this dissertation, I reflected a great deal on how problematic its findings would have been in 2014. Much as the FMLN did not want violence discussed, I am almost certain that they would have found even more offense with the damning data presented in this document. Those most excluded and exploited prior to the war, who most sacrificed their lives during the war, are today still excluded and exploited, despite growing FMLN legislative presence from war's end to 2009 and the FMLN's executive power in El Salvador from 2009 to 2019. The very party composed of and for them had also abandoned them. … Or, at least, that's how they felt. … and continue to feel.

As I did in the introduction, I open this conclusion with a field note. Into the milieu described entered a young, rising politician, Nayib Bukele, whose family wealth and contacts ensured his ability to spend on social programming in the municipalities he governed as mayor under the FMLN party in the 2000s and 2010s. Ambitious and able to build broad popular following through international and internationally-experienced consultants and a sophisticated online media strategy, the FMLN removed him from their party when he wanted to run for president before the party wanted to have him as their candidate. The same consultants helped him chart the path to create his own party, and he and they seized on the despair and animus most Salvadorans felt with both mainstream political parties, ARENA and FMLN. He came into power with the largest margin of victory since the signing of the Peace Accords and is the world's most popular president according to repeated local and international polling.

The human rights situation in El Salvador has not improved under him. In fact, in key ways, it is regressing, even though the Bukele Administration has invested substantial money in advertising El Salvador's improvements since he took office (Portillo 2021).[122] Bukele's *Nuevas Ideas* party took control of the legislative branch in the February 2021 elections but

[122] The Bukele Administration has contracted at least three lobbying firms, including Invest El Salvador (Executive Director Brian Dean), to improve its image in the United States. On 5 November 2020, it paid Invest El Salvador U$780,000 and has invested to date around U$1.6 million to these ends. See, for example: Portillo, Denni. 2021. Ulloa usa lobista para protestar por articulo [Ulloa used lobbyist to protest by article]. *La Prensa Grafica* 4 March <https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Ulloa-usa-lobista-para-protestar-por-articulo-20210303-0166.html>.

only took office at the beginning of May 2021. Among the party's first acts were to – unconstitutionally – remove five constitutional judges and the nation's attorney general, claiming that they were not accomplishing Bukele's desired goals. National and international human rights bodies and numerous nations have expressed condemnation and grave concerns about Bukele's continued move towards dictatorship. President Bukele's newly appointed Attorney General, Rodolfo Delgado Montes, posted photos of himself surrounded by police and soldiers, raising concerns about the further militarization of El Salvador. The photos also raised alarm about the involvement of police and armed forces linked to death squads and other crimes, as in the past. Delgado himself was linked to permitting torture multiple times, when he headed the Attorney General's kidnapping unit in the early-2000s (Rauda 2021). One of his first actions as the attorney general was to end El Salvador's Commission against Crime and Impunity, which had notably just prepared 12 corruption charges of Bukele administration officials.

In February 2020, President Bukele orchestrated a military and police takeover of the Legislative Assembly, attempting to force congresspersons to vote on a US$109 million loan for further militarization. In the first eight months of his administration, Bukele increased the numbers of police and soldiers on El Salvador's streets at the same time that documentation of their abuses and extrajudicial killings had increased. On 16 February 2021, the government announced inducting 1,042 soldiers to its force to bring the total number of active Armed Forces members in El Salvador to 9,000. As a result, there is now one soldier for every two police on the streets, according to Roberto Valencia of *El Faro*, and despite the 1992 Peace Accord prohibition of soldiers in domestic security. On 19 July 2021, Bukele announced via tweet that he aimed for El Salvador to have 40,000 soldiers on the streets by 2025 (despite his

term ending before then). Likewise, Bukele has increased the Armed Forces by 90 percent to its highest level since the signing of the Peace Accords. When he took office, the Armed Forces had a budget of $145.1 million, which he raised to $220.3 million in 2020 and $256.6 million in 2022 (Benítez 2022).

As past administrations have done, the Bukele administration is negotiating with gangs. On September 3, 2020, El Salvador's investigative news outlet, *El Faro*, published its findings that the Bukele Administration had been negotiating with MS-13 members for over a year (he took office on 1 June 2019). The findings were based upon reviewing hundreds of pages of prison intelligence and speaking with a gang leader and two prison officials. According to these sources, negotiations began as early as June 2019, and, between October 2019 and August 2020, included at least 12 visits in El Salvador's two maximum security prisons between Bukele's appointed prison director, Osiris Luna, other Bukele Administration officials, and national-level and street-level leaders of MS-13. Bukele's Director of Social Fabric attended at least three of these meetings. Between June 2019 and August 2020, a meeting also took place between "an anonymous committee" and 18th Street Sureños leaders at the Zacatecoluca maximum security prison. In its report, *El Faro* posits that gang members have, so far, received three principle benefits from these negotiations, all related to prison-life: (1) outside food may again be sold within the prison; (2) guards who gang members identified as very aggressive were transferred out of MS-13-dominated prisons; and (3) gangs would not be mixed in prison cells.[123] It is unclear what the gangs promised in return; in the past, they promised to lower

[123] On 26 April 2020, following a spike in homicides in April 2020 (at least 50 persons were killed in just three days), Prison Director Osiris Luna announced that he would return to mixing different gang members in the same cells. The Bukele administration then circulated photos of different gang members densely crowded together into one cell. Despite the publicity around mixing gang members in single cells, there has been no publicity around the 8 August 2020 reversal of this decision.

homicide rates, which immediately resulted in a significant drop in homicides. *El Faro* reported that additional benefits, both inside and outside prison, were expected in 2021, if Bukele's *Nuevas Ideas* party gained control of the legislative branch in February 2021 elections. In the past, additional benefits included access to social programming for gang members' relatives and loved ones, jobs in municipal and national government for gang members and both prison transfers from maximum to minimum security for truce negotiators and early release from prison.

At the same time that it negotiates with gangs behind closed doors, the Bukele administration has – publicly – repeatedly authorized police and military to attack and shoot alleged gang members, such that multiple homicides pointing to state actors committing extrajudicial killings remain high. For example, in early-August 2021, around midnight on a Thursday, a recently-graduated, 30-year-old engineer returned in a car to the home he shared with his parents in the Cumbres de Santa Tecla neighborhood of Santa Tecla municipality of San Salvador department. Less than 200 meters from his home, four soldiers of the Apolo Task Force of the military, involved in public security efforts with police, shot him dead (Beltrán Luna 2021). They alleged afterward that he had fired at him, but prosecutors, the police and the military agreed that he had no gun or ammunition on him or in his vehicle. The soldiers were detained, but rather than being sent to police barracks, were sent to the Special Brigade of Military Security (the former National Guard headquarters).

At 20:00 on 26 March 2022, when 57 homicides had been registered, Nayib Bukele tweeted that he wanted the Legislative Assembly to declare a "Regimen of Exception," essentially permitting martial law (Rauda et al. 2022). Congress met just before midnight, and at 03:45, approved the "Regimen of Exception." In the days that followed, Bukele's Twitter

account became filled with police photos of detained, beaten and dead youth, who he and police alleged were gang members (Rauda et al. 2022). He also tweeted that they would not increase food in prisons (where families most often provide those imprisoned with food), and the increased number of prisoners would have to share the limited food meant for fewer through stricter rationing. Massive arrests ensued, and immediately, journalists began reporting that boys and young men were taken into custody without explanation or warrant. Their relatives could not locate them or communicate with them. When national and international human rights groups demanded transparency and rule of law, and national journalists reported on this, Nayib Bukele tweeted on 4 April 2022 that they were the "*socios de los pandilleros* [gang members' associates]." He directed more personalized attacks and defamatory language at investigative journalists, like Juan Martinez, such that he had to temporarily flee the country.

In May 2022, human rights groups published that they had documented arbitrary detentions, no-warrant police raids, enforced disappearances and in-custody deaths. For example, non-profit Cristosal attended to 140 cases, most of which involved illegal searches of homes and arrests without warrants. Then, on 27 May 2022, the Human Rights Ombudsman for the country, Apolonio Tobar, told *Revista Gato Encerrado* that his offices had received more than 700 reports of arbitrary arrest. This has particularly impacted adolescent boys, young men and residents of low-income neighborhoods, including undoubtedly some of the children – now young adults – that we interviewed. For example, one woman with whom I have maintained contact since 2018 recently told me of her 17-year-old son being arrested, allegedly for gang membership, and then commented that "there are no more [male] youth in the neighborhood" because of the massive arrests.

El Salvador has long been known for its horrid prison conditions. Every report on the prisons has determined them to be inhumane. There is a lack of access to water, significant overcrowding leading to quick spread of communicable diseases, like tuberculosis,[124] and a host of other problems. Most recently, Amnesty International documented rotting food, rationed meals, lack of hygiene products such as soap and toilet paper and non-existent or extremely limited access to medicine and doctors (Brigida 2022). Furthermore, gangs continue to control the prisons, deciding "when people eat, when people use the bathrooms, when people shower, … and violence over prisoners who have been arbitrarily detained …" (Brigida 2022). For example, a 16-year-old boy recently detained said that gang members regularly beat him, and one day, threw a bag of urine at him; prison guards saw it all but did nothing (Brigida 2022). Most seriously, those imprisoned are regularly killed. In 2015, 50 inmates were killed in Salvadoran correctional facilities, compared to 32 in 2014, and 20 in 2012, according to *Instituto de Medicina Legal (IML)*, Institute of Legal Medicine statistics. Investigative outlets, like *El Faro* and *Revista Factum*, alongside a March 2017 report in *The Washington Post* by *Economist* correspondent, Sarah Esther Maslin, have further documented that some held without charge are innocent and end up dead. In Maslin's article, she documented how a man with the same name, but without tattoos, gang membership or the same age, was imprisoned for several charges, including the illegal possession and carry of weapons, and then died (Maslin 2017).

As of March 2021, the nation had 36,663 inmates in 24 adult prisons and a secure hospital ward, over 1,000 in juvenile facilities and over 5,500 in police holding cells.[125] Less

[124] The government did not allow reports to be published on COVID19 outbreaks in El Salvador's prisons.

[125] The World Prison Brief and Institute for Criminal Policy Research maintains this website: http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/el-salvador. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security [*Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Publica*] is responsible for adult prisons, which are administered by the General Directorate

than 10 percent (7.4) are females. This compares to 37,800 inmates in 22 adult prisons in March 2017 (Calderón 2017) and 32,608 persons in 22 adult prisons and secure hospital ward, alongside approximately 500 in juvenile facilities and 3,000 in police holding cells, at the end of 2016, according to the World Prison Brief and Institute for Criminal Policy Research. By the last week of April 2022, Nayib Bukele tweeted that 60,000 persons were imprisoned – roughly one percent of El Salvador's population – because of his administration's arrest of some 20,000 individuals in just the month of April 2022.

As early as late-April 2022, relatives and press began tweeting about persons arrested during raids being beaten to death in prison. On 21 April 2022, it was reported that 21-year-old Elvis Josue Sanchez Rivera was beaten to death in the Izalco Prison, where he was forced to mix with gang members. His family described him as an exemplary youth and hard worker, who authorities arrested with a friend on his way to watch a football game, never providing explanation to relatives about his whereabouts or reasons for arrest (Lemus 2022). Authorities gave his body to the family, saying they suspected he had died of COVID19, but when the family inspected his body, he had clearly been beaten. On 29 April 2022, Andreu Oliva of the UCA tweeted that they had the names of six people who had died while detained. On 13 May 2022, the death of 36-year-old William Galeas in the "La Esperanza" Prison was announced; his 55-year-old mother and 33-year-old sister remained detained (Beltrán Luna and Hompanera 2022). They'd been arrested because an alleged soldier reported them for collaborating with gangs, but family and friends said they were simply the owners of a pizzeria and pupuseria.

of Prisons [*Dirección General de Centros Penales*] (DGCP) and Directorate of Intermediate Centers [*Dirección de Centros Intermedios*] (DGCI – for young adults originally sentences as minors). The Ministry of Education [*Ministerio de Educación*] (MINED) is responsible for juvenile centers and is administered by one of the nation's two child protection agencies, the Salvadoran Institute of Childhood and Adolescence [*Instituto Salvadoreño de la Niñez y Adolescencia*] (ISNA).

On 26 May, Cristosal tweeted that it and the press had identified at least 18 persons who were killed while in custody during the State of Exception. On 1 June 2022, Amnesty International held a press conference to say that 23 deaths had been reported. As of 21 June 2022, 40 persons had died in State custody since 27 March (Brigida 2022). Among them are Walter Vladimir Sandoval Peñate, who witnesses said police beat when he denied being a gang member.

In every way, these actions and directions are the opposite of what El Salvador, and especially its poor, who have been most targeted presently and historically, need. Although Bukele's popularity remains high in official polling, Salvadorans are demonstrating other opinions with their feet. In 2021 and 2022, they have left in record numbers, even compared to the elevated numbers of earlier years in the mid-2010s (and perhaps even the civil war years). Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apprehended 98,690 Salvadorans in the United States in Fiscal Year 2021, 15.7 percent of whom were unaccompanied children and 38 percent of whom were family units.[126] It recorded 97,030 apprehensions of Salvadorans in the United States in Fiscal Year 2022, 16.9 percent of whom were unaccompanied children and 29.7 percent of whom were family units. If they are to be able to stay, the below recommendations instead need to be heeded.

Recommendations

> *The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives.*
>
> – Late Mahbub ul Haq, the Pakistani economist who inaugurated the Human Development Reports of the UNDP in 1990

[126] For the past few years, CBP operates an interactive website on apprehensions by country of origin at this site: https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters .

The children, adolescents and families we interviewed repeatedly expressed wanting better lives than what being poor in El Salvador permits. They deserve this, and the nation will prosper, if they have it. They are, quite literally, the wealth of El Salvador, even as El Salvador does not invest in their ability to have long, healthy and creative lives at the individual, family or community level. Until they do so, Salvadorans will bravely set out in search of such elsewhere.

While those we interviewed described their conditions as "difficult" and "fucked," rather than chronically unjust, inhumane or a complete abandonment by the state responsible for serving them, as the human rights community might, the conditions described constitute ongoing structural violence – in work, education, health, daily life and numerous other areas that do not fall under this dissertation's purview. Overall, poverty is a violence considered a "corrosive disadvantage" (Wolff and De Shalit 2007) and complete "capability failure,"[127] in that it leads to failures in all areas of life. Nussbaum (2011) and other Capabilities Approach scholars advocate that wealth be redistributed, especially in societies – like El Salvador – built on colonial exploitation and continuing global inequalities. To do so, they recommend that nations themselves prioritize wealth redistribution, reparations at times and that wealthy nations provide two percent of their GDP to poorer nations.

The health and demography chapter examined that beginning in the 1940s, external public health programs managed to substantially decrease mortality rates in El Salvador. They offered mass vaccination sites and went house to house in rural areas for both shots and DDT, alongside providing popular education talks on disease prevention (Arriaga 1970). However, the same programs failed to consider impacts on fertility rates and population structure

[127] Amartya Sen repeatedly uses this phrase in his works.

imbalances (Arriaga 1970). Neither they nor the Salvadoran government realized the full scope of these until seeing increases from the 1950 census to the 1961 census and thus having to confront the "extremely high fertility" (Arriaga 1970). In El Salvador, the *Asociación Demográfica Salvadoreña* (ADS), Salvadoran Demographic Society[128] was created in 1962 to establish family planning in the country (Tobar 2020). National average fertility rates have fallen substantially and are now officially below replacement level, but this dissertation showed that child migrants' mothers had double and even triple the average number of children, some of whom were not captured in Salvadoran statistics, because they had been born in the United States instead of El Salvador. It would seem that in the present, as in the past, girls and women in rural and poor areas continue to have less access to family planning and birth control, which is true in neighboring nations (Grace 2010). For them, the same public health campaigns that worked for vaccination and mosquito prevention in easily accessible mass sites and door-to-door visits should be endeavored for free birth control access and holistic sex education and family planning. Likewise, abortion should be depenalized and widely available free of charge, especially in cases of incest, rape and danger to the mother's life. Arriaga (1970) expressed the urgency of this in 1970, and today over 50 years later, its urgency remains for rural and poor communities. Similarly, El Salvador needs to develop operational policy, strategy and action plans for reducing diabetes, chronic kidney disease and other ailments that disproportionately result in early death among the poor.

The political economy chapter mentioned that, apart from USAID- and ARENA-led neoliberal reforms in El Salvador, economic inequality rose around the world from 1980 on because of movement away from Keynesian policies and toward neoliberal ones (Galbraith

[128] Today, it is known as Pro-Familia and continues to operate through clinics and community workers throughout the country.

2002, 2012). What has resulted according to Galbraith (2002) is an "appalling disorder of the past twenty years" (25). Small nations like El Salvador were and are especially vulnerable, because to receive international aid – on which they often rely – they must accept aid stipulations and restrictions (Nussbaum 2011; Galbraith 2002; see also Cuenca 1992). Concomitantly, though, they have little control over the international market and setting of World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other international financial institution (IFI) preferences, stipulations and restrictions, unlike the countries that set such neoliberal priorities at least in part because they are in a different phase of their development trajectory. For example, the United States, European nations, Australia and Japan have achieved near-100 percent enrollment in truly universal and free basic education (through 12th grade), whereas many low- and middle-income nations of the world have not. Likewise, such nations have longer life expectancies because of better healthcare systems in part fortified by Keynesian policies before the 1980s turn to neoliberalism (Galbraith 2012). Even in such nations, though, in part because of universally higher education levels, better pay, more leisure and the robust social services available to the majority of their citizens, substantial lobbying exists to ensure ongoing access to social services (Galbraith 2002). Their citizens thus participate in and drive global market decisions, even as they also get to have a robust social safety net alongside greater earnings and rights. Not so in El Salvador and similarly situated countries. For this reason, Galbraith (2002) surmised that from the 1980s on: "Neocolonial patterns of center-periphery dependence, and of debt peonage, were reestablished, but without the slightest assumption of responsibility by the rich countries for the fate of the poor" (25).

In El Salvador, neoliberal reforms have ensured that substantial segments of the population remain poor at the same time that they have less services that could help them out

of current and generational poverty. Education levels remain low, as does healthcare coverage, and both the security and leisure needed to advocate for more is limited to very few who are often among the upper classes that have not lived – or even seen – the reality of the poor. In this regard, little has changed for the majority who are poor in El Salvador. The same poor fought a war wanting better work conditions, education and healthcare for themselves, and even more so, their future generations, but these were the elements left unaddressed at war's end. ... perhaps in large part because the poor are not who got to be at the negotiating table. The alleged thinking of FMLN elites – and United Nations brokers – who were present at the Peace Accords was that if they could obtain political legitimacy and power, they could then reform the economy and social service sectors once in office, but despite the former from 2009 to 2019, the latter occurred in only limited ways that reached too few. Since 2019, the Bukele administration has marched backward in time toward greater authoritarianism and neoliberalism.

While it was not the focus of this dissertation, El Salvador's high violence levels came through in every section of every chapter. My research has documented that they are the leading cause of migration from El Salvador (Kennedy 2013, Kennedy 2014, Kennedy and Parker 2020), just as other scholars have documented that the death rate from accidents and violence among men aged 20 to 34 was the single most important predictor of migration propensity (Weeks, Stoler and Jankowski 2009). They are related to poor economic infrastructure, and because of this, part of addressing them – indeed, I would argue the most important part – is addressing poverty, infrastructure and the social safety net. Future publications will examine how these components, and the absence of the State, left a vacuum for organized crime like gangs to fill, in that they provide protection, community, employment

and respect otherwise not available. El Salvador's youth bulge – the disproportionately large share of the population that was under age 18 through the early-1990s – also played a role (Weeks and Fugate 2012), but with fertility rates and the youth population decreasing, the deeper roots must be addressed, if violence is to decrease. Part of this is ensuring dignified work for men and women, so that they can stay and earn a living rather than have to migrate (Weeks and Weeks 2012).

Most broadly, what for citizens of El Salvador and other nations like it? Nussbaum (2011) observed that:

> *today's world contains inequalities in basic life chances that seem unconscionable from the standpoint of justice. Just as it seems intolerable that a person's basic opportunities in life should be circumscribed by that person's race or gender or class, so too does it seem insupportable that basic opportunities should be grossly affected by the luck of being born in one nation rather than another. And yet such is the case. Life expectancy, educational and employment opportunities and health ... vary greatly across national boundaries, and these inequalities are rapidly increasing. Moreover, the influences that generate them are presented from the very start of human life – and even earlier, since maternal nutrition and health care are a major source of unequal life opportunities. If basic justice requires that a person's entitlements not be curtailed by arbitrary features, then justice is ubiquitously violated in the current world order ... (115)*

She continues that we may have broad agreement to the above but then confront the question of whose duty it is to ensure "the capability entitlements we may think all world citizens have" (116). The response varies for different countries, but for El Salvador, the duty falls to El Salvador's government, to Spain and the United States who must make reparations for past harms and to international financial institutions and aid agencies who must desist from their insistence on neoliberalism for low- and middle-income nations and – at a minimum – reorient themselves to improving access to education, healthcare and fair, dignified work.

El Salvador's government has a duty, that to date, it has largely not assumed to its poor, leaving them instead in constant precarity and insecurity of various types. Martha Nussbaum wrote in 2011, that "by failing to make salient the issue of distribution, the importance of political freedom, the possible subordination of minorities and the separate aspects of lives that deserve attention [especially health and education], the [so-called] GDP approach distracts attention from these urgent matters, suggesting that when a nation has improved its average GDP, it is 'developing' well." (Nussbaum 2011, 50). El Salvador, though, has not been developing well or creating the "enabling environments" that Mahbub ul Haq advocated. With one of the highest population densities in the world, particular vulnerability to climate change, and the worst work conditions for those in agriculture, land redistribution should not be the focus at this point (although it should have been one focus in the past). Income redistribution through the higher taxation of the wealthiest should be immediately prioritized. Likewise, military spending should be decreased – a constant recommendation by Mahbub ul Haq and other Capabilities Approach scholars – and reoriented toward education and health. With the increased coffers from taxes on the wealthy and defunct military expenditure, the minimum wage should be raised for all sectors, and a guaranteed living wage should be provided to those who still do not earn enough to support their household costs of living. This is especially critical in households with children, because economic stress of adults leads to higher abuse and abandonment the world over. Thus, additional programs like childcare stipends, food stipends and others should be piloted to offset the costs, alongside holistic sex education and family planning education from the earliest ages. The latter and universal and free education and healthcare will be discussed more in future publications but are absolutely necessary for a dignified life. All of this is documented to work. A 1993 World Bank study on China, Japan,

Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand found that increased primary schooling and redistribution were preconditions for industrial success (Galbraith 2002). Likewise, raised minimum wages and increased benefits decreased inequality in Brazil, and at least in Europe, unemployment (Galbraith 2012).

While El Salvador's elites are certainly responsible for today's abysmal situation, Spain and the United States played definitive roles as well. The Spaniards' arrival destroyed indigenous ways of life and resulted in the death of over half of the population in just 25 years (Barón Castro 1978).[129] The United States almost single-handedly financed a 13-year war that took tens of thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands inside and outside of El Salvador, similarly destroying ways of life. Even beyond these incalculable losses, it insisted – and insists – on a neoliberal economy. This is not only because of El Salvador's national elites who want it but also because of ongoing United States insistence – against all evidence – that capitalism can solve all problems. It has never solved the problems of the poor, and it never will. Only bold and vigorous State interventions, particularly away from the military and into education and health, can do that. Both Spain and the United States have debts to pay, and while it's received no major attention in the region, both Spain and the United States should be made to pay reparations that could additionally fund social services and a wider safety net for the neediest and youngest in El Salvador. The United States, home to over one million Salvadorans today, and Spain should further ensure the equal, just and dignified treatment of Salvadorans in the US, including access to healthcare, fair work conditions, education and social programming.

[129] As discussed in a previous chapter, Barón Castro (1978) reviewed historical records kept by Spaniards in El Salvador that estimated the population to be 130,000 in 1524 and only 60,000 by 1551.

Particularly in a small, lower-middle-income nation like El Salvador, national policies alone cannot completely address inequality and poverty. International financial institutions and aid agencies must reorient themselves to improving access to education, healthcare and fair work for low- and middle-income nations. Their doing so incentivizes these countries to develop the same in their domestic policies that serve the poorest and neediest who have been further excluded by neoliberal approaches that additionally make them feel they are to blame for their failure to raise themselves up out of poverty (Galbraith 2002). To actually raise all citizens to the quality of life that is merited in a just world in this era, individuals must have the opportunity to develop themselves and their capabilities and to be justly compensated when they enter the workforce having realized this.

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APPENDICES

I. Final Survey Instrument Used

Fecha: _____ *Entrevistadora:* _____

Nombre del NNA:_____ Edad: _____ Teléfono: _____

Dirección del NAA:_____
Ciudad/colonia/barrio/caserío/lotificación Municipio Departamento

Por cuanto tiempo ha vivido aquí? _____
La zona donde vive el NNA es: ☐ Rural ☐ Urbana
Donde nascio? _____
Ciudad/colonia/barrio/caserío/lotificación Municipio Departamento

¿En la zona donde vive hay…? ¿Qué hacen? ¿Tiene confianza?
Actores sociales:
Actores religiosos:
Actores politicos:
Maras :
Otro tipo de delincuentes:
Policía:
Militares:

Si la persona que llegó a recogerlo Sí es el responsable	Nombre y relación:
Si la persona que llegó a recogerlo NO es el responsable	Relación: ¿por qué llegó?
Nivel de educacion?	

¿Con quién vive el NNA y cuál es la relación con cada uno?

Relación	Edad	Ocupación	Relación	Edad	Ocupación
Total en casa:					

Otros datos

¿Son dueños de la casa donde viven?	¿Tienen otros terrenos?	¿Tienen computadora?
¿Ha vivido en otro lugar?	¿Por cuánto tiempo?	
¿Por qué razón se cambió de casa?		
¿Asisten a la iglesia?	¿Cuántas veces por semana?	¿Qué tipo de iglesia?
¿De qué se mantiene la familia económicamente?	¿Quiénes trabajan?	¿De qué trabajan?
¿Recibe remesas?	¿De quién?	¿Cuánto por mes?

Sus padres están: ☐ Juntos ☐ Separados ¿Lo quito o lo dejo?

Si uno ó ambos padres del NNA están en el país pero NO viven con él:

Mamá	Edad	Ocupación	¿Donde se encuentra?	¿Está pendiente del NNA?
Papá	Edad	Ocupación	¿Donde se encuentra?	¿Está pendiente del NNA?

Si uno ó ambos padres del NNA murió:

Mamá	Nombre completo:	Edad:	Fecha:
	Motivo:		
Papá	Nombre completo:	Edad:	Fecha:
	Motivo:		

Si uno ó ambos padres del NNA están en EEUU:

Mamá	Edad	Tiempo en EEUU	¿En qué Estado está?	Estatus
	Ocupación			
	¿Por que salió?			
	¿Tiene otros hijos? ¿Qué edades?			
Papá	Edad	Tiempo en EEUU	¿En qué Estado está?	Estatus
	Ocupación			
	¿Por que salió?			
	¿Tiene otros hijos? ¿Qué edades?			

¿Con quién quería vivir en los Estados Unidos? ☐ Mamá ☐ Papá ☐ Otro (complete la siguiente tabla)

¿Con quién?	Edad	Estatus
Tiempo en EEUU	¿En qué Estado está?	Ocupación
¿Por qué con esa persona?		
¿Por que salió?		
¿Tiene otros hijos? ¿Qué edades?		

Estudios del NNA

El NNA estudia en: Escuela Pública

Escuela Privada ¿Porqué privada? _____ ¿Quién la paga? _____

¿Qué grado estudia?	¿Cómo son sus notas?	
¿Hay presencia de…?	Dentro de la escuela	Fuera de la escuela
Actores sociales o religiosas Maras Otro tipo de delincuentes Policía ¿tiene confianza en ellos? Militares		
Si no está estudiando, Se repite. ¿La dejo o la quito? ¿Cuándo dejó sus estudios? ¿Hasta qué grado estudió? ¿Por qué dejó sus estudios?		

Si el NNA trabaja, nota donde el/la trabaja:

¿En qué trabaja?
¿Desde hace cuánto tiempo, o cuantos anos tenia cuando empezo?
¿Cuánto gana? ¿Qué hace con el dinero?
¿Cuántas horas a la semana, o a que hora entra y sale y por cuantos dias?

¿Cómo es su vida aquí en El Salvador?

Donde come? Que come? Cuantas veces al dia come? Es suficiente?

Duerme bien? Si no, que le mantiene dispiert@? O, que le despiert@ en la noche?

Como es su relación con su familia?

Alguien en la casa se enoja con frecuencia? Por que y que hace cuando esta enojad@?

¿Por qué quería salir del país?

Inseguridad	¿Puede salir con tranquilidad? ¿Escucha tiroteos? ¿Cuántas veces por semana? ¿Hay asesinatos? ¿Con qué frecuencia? ¿Se ha mudado alguna vez por este motivo?

	¿Alguna vez, ha recibido alguna amenaza directa el NNA? ¿Por qué? ¿Denunciaron? ¿Cuándo comenzó? ¿Cuántas veces paso? ¿Qué paso después? ¿Fue golpeado alguna vez? ¿Dónde ocurrió? (Casa, calle, escuela)
	¿Alguna vez, ha recibido alguna amenaza, renta o extorsión **la familia del NNA**? ¿Cuánto? ¿Fue pagada? ¿Denunciaron? ¿Conoce de alguien asesinado? Nombre, edad y fecha
Reunificación familiar	¿Por cuánto tiempo penso en irse para reunificarse? ¿Con cuales hablo para decidir? ¿Por qué decidio ahora? ¿Cómo cree que se sentian ellos?
Educación	¿Sabe leer y escribir? ¿Sabe usar la computadora? ¿Habla inglés? ¿Qué le gustaría estudiar? ¿Clase favorita? ¿Clase mas dificil?
Aventura	¿Por qué ahora? ¿Cuáles países les gustaría conocer?
Pobreza	
Otros	
¿Qué quiere hacer al llegar? Si es estudiar, ¿qué le gustaría estudiar? Si es trabajar, ¿qué tipo de trabajo?	

SOBRE LA RUTA

☐ *Primer Intento* ☐ *Segundo* ☐ *Tercero*

¿Cuándo salió?	¿Cuántos días estuvo en la ruta?
¿Cómo viajó? ¿Hasta dónde llegó?	
¿Con quién viajaba?	¿Conocía al coyote o al guía?
¿Cómo obtuvo el dinero para pagar el viaje? ¿Se endeudó? ¿Ha recibido amenazas por la deuda?	
Al llegar, ¿pensaba entregarse o pasar de una vez? ¿Por qué? ¿Qué ha escuchado sobre: Leyes migratorias? ¿Dónde y cuándo? Sistema para NNA migrantes? ¿Dónde y cuándo? Asilo? ¿Dónde y cuándo?	

DE SU REGRESO

¿Regresará a la escuela y/o al trabajo?	¿Cuándo?	¿Por qué?
¿Dónde dormirá ahora?		
¿Lo volverá intentar?	¿Cuándo?	¿Por qué?

II. Abbreviated Timeline of Events in Salvadoran History through 2001

13,000 years ago	First human inhabitants documented
4,000 years ago	Documentation of sedentary agricultural society: the Pipil, Chorti and Pokoman in the West and Lencas and Cacaoperas in the East
430	Ilopango volcano eruption, which covered thousands of square kilometers, killed many and affected the world's climate
1522	First Spaniard's arrival to El Salvador, followed by others who promote privatization of communal land and bring disease and death to over half the indigenous population by 1550
1553	Founding of La Trinidad de Sonsonate, which would become center of El Salvador's slave trade
1600s to 1800s	Indigo the main crop for export to Europe; coffee introduced to Ahuachapán and Sonsonate around 1751 and Santa Ana around 1837
1811	*Criollos* begin the campaign for independence from Spain
1821	Independence from Spain won
1833	Indigenous uprising against Spanish-instituted military in Chalatenango, La Paz and San Vicente departments; military had to flee those departments but executed revolutionary indigenous leader Anastario Aquino
1876 to 1885	Dr. Rafael Zaldívar (see below) as president reorients the nation's agriculture system from subsistence to cash crops
1879	Coffee replaces indigo as the main export, marking a nationwide shift from subsistence farming to large-scale coffee export agriculture, coinciding the further concentration of land into a few elite families' ownership
1912	National Guard created to control the farming population
1929	Beginning of the worldwide Great Depression
1930	El Salvador's Communist Party, the *Partido Comunista Salvadoreña* (PCS), founded
December 1931	General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez took power (see below) and

	in January 1932 refused to recognize the legislative seats that the PCS won
22 January 1932	Popular insurrection in protest begins in Western El Salvador; in the next weeks and months, military massacres between 10,000 and 40,000 primarily indigenous persons, actual and alleged communists and peasant coffee farmers, including leader Augusto Farabundo Martí on 1 February 1932 and Feliciano Ama
11 July 1932	Legislative Assembly grants unconditional amnesty to military for its crimes and killings in *La Matanza*
1933	Palestinian Arab immigrants from Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey prohibited from entering the country and series of laws against them buying land and having small communal shops promulgated (not derogated until 1958)
1940s	Salvadoran women recruited by Embassies and international organizations to California and Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia areas to work in domestic sector, cleaning, babysitting and clerkships
1944	General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez forced to resign but another General takes over from him
Early-1950s	Agro-export diversification, "modernization" and growing excess population resulting from falling mortality rates and increasing fertility rates expels rural population to urban areas and Honduras in increasing numbers – between 250,000 and 300,000 Salvadorans working at United Fruit Company plantations or on empty land between 1950 and 1960
1955	Meeting of the *Conferencia General de Episcopado Latinoamericano* (CELAM) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil discussing authentic social commitment to the poor and farmers in the region
1950s to 1970s	State investment in roads and communications infrastructure to expand agriculture toward exportation, couple with industrialization and electric energy generation in urban areas, especially the *Área Metropolitana de San Salvador*, AMSS [San Salvador Metropolitan Area]
1961	US president Kennedy's Alliance for Progress to develop and democratize Latin America begun; after his assassination, economic aid abandoned to emphasize security provisions
1965	*Agencia Nacional de Seguridad*, ANESAL [National Security Agency]

	finalized *Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños*, FECCAS [Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants] and *Federación Unitaria Sindical Salvadoreña*, FUSS [United Federation of Salvadoran Unions] founded
1966	*Organización Democrática Nacionalista*, ORDEN [Democratic Nationalist Organization] created Eight-hour work day instituted
1968	*Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños*, ANDES 21 de junio [National Association of Salvadoran Educators] leads 56-day strike that ends with demands being met Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, where liberation theology and the preference for the poor were made explicit
1969	First *comunidades eclesiales de base*, CEBs [Christian base communities] established in El Salvador Football war between El Salvador and Honduras
1970s	Strong polarization of Salvadoran society
1972	Electoral fraud
1975	Cerrón Grande Dam floods 135 kilometers, displacing thousands from Cabañas, Chalatenango and Cuscatlán departments
1976	Electoral fraud
1977	Plaza Libertad massacre by the military on 28 February
1979	Military "operations" and disappearances now happening daily, marking the beginning of the civil war
10 October 1980	Five Marxist and socialist democratic parties unite into the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN)
1981	FMLN's "Final Offensive," which did not take over the country as desired but did provoke hundreds of millions of dollars in US military aid Around 30,000 Salvadoran refugees transferred from La Virtud of Lempira, Honduras to Mesa Grande refugee camp in Ocotepeque, Honduras – some 5,000 returned to El Salvador instead of transfer, but others remained in the camp until 1987

	For the thousands displaced from Morazán, transferred to Colomoncagua, Intibucá, where Caritas and UNHCR ran a camp; most stayed until being repatriated in January 1990
1984	Ing. José Napoleón Duarte (Christian Democrats) wins in elections and takes office (see below)
Late-1980s	Refugees begin returning to El Salvador, including most at Mesa Grande in 1987 (Santa Marta, Cabañas was one of the first resettlements)
1989	Lic. Alfredo Cristiani (ARENA) wins in elections and takes office (see below)
1989	FMLN's "Major Offensive" in the AMSS forced both sides to the table to negotiate
1990	Cristiani negotiates with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and international financial institutions (IFIs) for post-war reconstruction funds Salvadoran refugees in Colomoncagua repatriated to Morazán in January
16 January 1992	Signing of the Peace Accords in Chapultepec, Mexico, marking the end of the civil war
1992 to 1997	*Plan Nacional de Reconstrucción*, PNR [National Reconstruction Plan]; many rural communities without electricity and little food
1994	Dr. Armando Calderón Sol (ARENA) wins in elections and takes office (see below)
1997	Most international workers and projects leave El Salvador
1998	Hurricane Mitch
2001	Major earthquakes on 13 January and 13 February *Ley de Integración Monetaria "Dolarización"* dollarizes the econom

III. Salvadoran Presidents (Equipo Maíz)

September to November 1821	Dr. Pedro Barriere
November 1821 to February 1823	Dr. José Matías Delgado
February to May 1823	Brigadier Vicente Filísola
May 1823	General Felipe Codallos
June 1823 to April 1824 1826 to 1829 July 1832 to February 1833	Mariano Prado
April to October 1824	Juan Manuel Rodríguez
December 1824 to November 1826	Juan Vicente Villacorta
January 1829 to February 1830 December 1830 to April 1832	José María Cornejo
February to December 1830	Licenciado José Damián Villacorta
April to May 1832 July 1839 to February 1840	General Francisco Morazán
May to July 1832 February 1833 to June 1834	Coronel Joaquín de San Martín
June to July 1834	General Carlos Salazar
July to September 1834	José Gregorio Salazar
September to October 1834 March 1835	Joaquín Escolán y Balibrera
October 1834 to March 1835 February to April 1840	Licenciado José María Silva
April to November 1835	General Nicolás Espinoza
November 1835 to February 1836	Coronel Francisco Gómez
February 1836 to May 1837 June 1837 to January 1838	Diego Vigil

May to June 1837 January 1838 to May 1839	Timoteo Menéndez
May to July 1839 April to September 1840	Coronel Antonio José Cañas
September 1840 to January 1841	Licenciado Norberto Ramírez
January to June 1841 June 1841 to February 1842	Licenciado Juan de Lindo y Zelaya
June 1841 January to March 1843	Pedro Arce y Fagoagua
February to April 1842 July to September 1842	General Escolástico Marín
April to June 1842 September 1842 to January 1843 March 1843 to January 1844	Licenciado Juan José Guzmán
June to July 1842	Dionicio Villacorta
1843 to 1844	Licenciado Cayetano Molina Lara
February 1844 February to April 1845 February 1846	General Fermín Palacios
February to May 1844 July to October 1844	General Francisco Malespín
May to July 1844 October 1844 to February 1845 April 1845 to February 1846 January to February 1859	General Joaquín Eufrasio Guzmán
February 1846 July 1846 to February 1848	Dr. Eugenio Aguilar
February 1848	Tomás Medina
February 1848 February 1850 March to May 1851	Licenciado José Felix Quiroz

February 1848 to January 1850 March 1850 to January 1851	Dr. Doroteo Vasconcelos
January to February 1850	Ramón Rodríguez
January to March 1851 May 1851 to February 1854 May to July 1856 October 1863 to April 1871	Francisco Dueñas
January to February 1852 February 1854 to February 1856	Coronel José María San Martín
February 1854	Vicente Gómez
September to November 1854	General José Mariano Hernández
February to May 1856 July 1856 to February 1858	Rafael Campo
February 1858	Lorenzo Zepeda
February to June 1858 September 1858 to January 1859	General Miguel Santín del Castillo
June to September 1858 March 1859 to February 1860 December 1860 February 1861 to February 1863	Capitán General Gerardio Barrios
February to March 1859 December 1860 to February 1861	José María Peralta
April 1871 to May 1872 June 1872 to February 1876	Mariscal Santiago González
May to June 1872	Licenciado Manuel Menéndez
February to May 1876	Andrés Valle
May 1876 to April 1884 August 1884 to May 1885	Dr. Rafael Zaldívar
April to August 1884	Ángel Guirola

May to June 1885 March 1907 to March 1911	General Fernando Figueroa
June 1885	José Rosales
June 1885 to June 1890	General Francisco Menéndez
June 1890 to June 1894	General Carlos Ezeta
June 1894 to November 1898	General Rafael Antonio Gutiérrez
November 1898 to March 1903	General Tomás Regalado
March 1903 to March 1907	Pedro José Escalón
March 1911 to February 1913	Dr. Manuel Enríque Aráujo
February 1913 to August 1914 March 1915 to December 1918	Carlos Meléndez
March 1919 to March 1923	Jorge Meléndez
August 1914 to March 1915 December 1918 to March 1919 March 1923 to March 1927	Dr. Alfonzo Quiñonez Molina
March 1927 to March 1931	Dr. Pío Romero Bosque
March to December 1931	Ing. Arturo Aráujo
December 1931	Military directorship: Coronel Joaquín Valdez, Coronel Juan Vicente Vidal, Coronel Osmín Aguirre y Salinas, Capitán Manuel Urbina, Capitán Visitación Antonio Pacheco, Teniente Carlos Rodríguez, Teniente Joaquín Castro, Sub Teniente José Alfonso Huezo, Sub Teniente Miguel Hernández, Sub Teniente Julio Cañas and Sub Teniente Juan Ramón Munés
December 1931 to August 1934 March 1935 to May 1944	General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez
August 1934 to March 1935 May 1944 to October 1944	General Andrés Ignacio Menéndez
October 1944 to March 1945	Coronel Osmín Aguirre y Salinas

March 1945 to December 1948	General Salvador Castañeda Castro
December 1948 to September 1950	Council of Revolutionary Government: Dr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, Major Óscar A. Bolaños, Dr. Humberto Costa, Teniente Coronel Óscar Osorio and Teniente Coronel Manuel de J. Córdova
September 1950 to September 1956	Teniente Coronel Oscar Osorio
September 1956 to October 1960	Teniente Coronel José María Lemus
26 October 1960 to January 1961	Government junta: Teniente Coronel Miguel Ángel Castillo, Dr. Ricardo Falla Cáceres, Coronel César Yánes Urías, Dr. René Fortín Magaña, Mayor Rubén Alonso Rosales and Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa
January 1961 to January 1962	Civic Military Directorship: Coronel Aníbal Portillo, Coronel Julio Adalberto Rivera, Dr. Feliciano Avelar, José Francisco Valiente, Teberto Rivera and Dr. Antonio Rodríguez Porth
January to July 1962	Dr. Eusebio Rodolfo Cordón
July 1962 to May 1967	Teniente Coronel Julio Adalberto Rivera
June 1967 to May 1972	General Fidel Sánchez Hernández
June 1972 to May 1977	Coronel Arturo Armando Molina
June 1977 to October 1979	General Carlos Humberto Romero
October 1979 to January 1980	First Government Junta: Ing. Mario Andino, General Jaime Abdul Gutíerrez, Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo, Coronel Adolfo Arnoldo Majano, Ing. Román Mayorga Quiroz
January 1980 to March 1980	Second Government Junta: Dr. Héctor Dada Hirezi, Dr. José Antonio Morales Erlich, Dr. Ramón Ávalos Navarrete, General Jaime Abdul Gutíerrez and Coronel Adolfo Arnoldo Majano
March 1980 to May 1982	Third Revolutionary Government Junta: Dr. Ramón Ávalos Navarrete, General Jaime Abdul Gutíerrez, Ing. José Napoleón Duarte, Dr. José Antonio Morales Erlich
May 1982 to May 1984	Dr. Álvaro Magaña

June 1984 to May 1989	Ing. José Napoleón Duarte
June 1989 to May 1994	Lic. Alfredo Cristiani
June 1994 to May 1999	Dr. Armando Calderón Sol
June 1999 to May 2004	Lic. Francisco Flores
June 200 to May 2009	Sr. Elías Antonio Saca
June 2009 to May 2014	Mauricio Funes
June 2014 to May 2019	Salvador Sánchez Cerén
June 2019 to present	Nayib Bukele