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Santa Barbara

Navigating a Climate of Fear: Adolescent Arrivals and the Trump Era

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Sociology

by

Liliana V Rodriguez

Committee in charge:

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June 2019

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June 2019

Navigating a Climate of Fear: Adolescent Arrivals and the Trump Era

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by

Liliana V Rodriguez

DEDICATION

With love to Jacey and Gianna
Because of you I know there is hope for a better future

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work could have not been completed without the gracious participation of the adolescent arrivals whose narratives form the life and breath of this study. I am forever grateful to each one of them for allowing me into their worlds and I hope my work does justice to their lived experiences.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Edward Telles, Victor Rios, George Lipsitz, Néstor Rodríguez, and Roberto Gonzales for believing in me. Your mentorship and guidance every step of the way made my academic journey possible. Thank you for all of your invaluable feedback, suggestions, and most importantly your faith in my work.

A special thank you to all of my colleagues and friends for all of your encouragement and support. It has been an honor training with you and I look forward to our future collaborations, amazing work, and countless adventures.

I would also like to thank my family for all of their support throughout my graduate studies. To my parents, my warriors, your hard work, sacrifice, and dedication are an admiration to follow.

To my other half, Juan Carlos, thank you for always being there for me to motivate me when I want to give up, for your willingness to read all of my rough drafts, and for showing me that family comes first. I love you. Thank you to my girls who inspire me to always do my best.

And to the one who makes it all happen, my Creator, thank you for all of your blessings.

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ABSTRACT

Navigating a Climate of Fear: Adolescent Arrivals and the Trump Era

by

Liliana V Rodriguez

This study explores the incorporation processes of adolescent arrivlas who migrated to the United States prior to the presidential election of 2016, the majority from Mexico. Adolescent arrivals are immigrant youth between the ages of 13 and 18 referred to in the literature as members of the 1.25-generation. I conducted ethnographic work with 30 adolescent arrivals both documented and undocumented in a community in California's central coast region. This study interrogates notions of belonging by examining how the current political and social contexts of white supremacy, anti-immigrant discourses and policies, and nativist rhetoric, influence the integration of adolescent arrivals in the United States. As immigrants and as English Language Learners, these students confront many obstacles both in their academic and personal journeys in the host society, particularly today. The election of Donald Trump brought upon a climate of trepidation and anxiety among these students, who constantly express fears of deportation, racism, and hate crimes. Through the concept I term *negotiating liminality*—the meaning-making process by which adolescent arrivals adhere to as they make sense, understand, and ultimately respond to political tactics aimed directly at dismantling their communities, I examine their experiences. My analysis reveals adolescent arrivals are not passive individuals that see themselves as victims but instead are active agents negotiating the consequences of being

immigrants, English Language Learners, and people with precarious citizenship status, among many other factors that limit their opportunities in the United States.

Research Questions:

How do the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? How do language practices influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? What are the strategies adolescent arrivals develop and resort to as they learn to survive amidst the hostile climate of animosity against immigrants in America, particularly Mexican immigrants?

Keywords: *Immigration; Adolescent arrivals; Anti-immigrant politics; English Language Learners; Immigrant youth; Negotiating liminality*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Porque las fronteras no necesariamente son geograficas pero tambien suelen ser retos que enfrentamos diariamente en los Estados Unidos.

Because not all borders are geographical but can also be challenges we face daily in the United States.

-Luciana, age 16

Today was the big event. Students classified as English Language Learners from El Valle High School[1] would be presenting projects they had worked on for months to their loved ones during the first ever Parents' Night event honoring their accomplishments.[2] Together with a team of volunteers, we arrived early at a local library branch, which served as the venue for the event. We placed huge flags in the back of the room, which covered up the entire wall. We made sure to have each from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and the United States. From the ceiling we hung *papel picado*, or perforated paper, which is a type of craft made by cutting elaborate designs on paper or tissue. We placed chairs in rows facing the front of the room where the students would be presenting and even placed little chairs designed for children so their younger siblings could enjoy front row seats. We made sure all the technical equipment was working and ready to go. The food which consisted of *enchilades verdes* and *rojas*, *chiles relleños*, *taquitos*, *arroz*,

[1] Name of school is a pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality of participants.
[2] The event was part of the culmination activities of an education program from my university. I served as lead instructor of the English Language Development (ELD) level one class for the 2016-2017 academic school year. This was the first year that the program delved into an ELD classroom upon my request to work with ELL.

frijoles, and *guacamole* was catered from a local Mexican restaurant and arrived a little after 5 p.m. just in time for the doors to open letting out a delicious breezy aroma.

As students began to arrive, their excitement and joy were evident. Most usually dress in casual clothing such as jeans and t-shirts, but not today. Today, most of the female students showed up in either colorful summer dresses or evening gowns. They fixed their hair in stylish hairdos and their makeup was impeccable. The male students were also dressed to impress with button up long sleeve shirts and dress pants. Soon the delicious smells of the Mexican cuisine were covered by a wave of teenage cologne and perfume. As they were arriving, I motioned the students to grab a bite to eat. One of the male students who showed up alone told me his mother stayed home doing laundry. Upon seeing all the food, he excused himself to make a phone call and I overheard him say, "*andale vente hay bastante comida*" [hurry up, come, there is a lot of food]. Meanwhile, others in attendance formed a line along the food table or visited with friends taking selfies and posting them online while catching up on the latest gossip. Excitement filled the room as the students and their families ate, mingled, and just had fun being themselves.

Once the presentations began, everyone took a sit and became attentive. Unlike their classes or other school related events, this gathering was conducted exclusively in Spanish. When the first group of female students presented their work, a video they titled *Testimonios: Traspasando Fronteras* (Testimonies: Overcoming Borders), I noticed many of the parents recording them with their cell phones. They were smiling, laughing, and cheering them on. When asked why they had chosen that title, one of the students replied "*porque las fronteras no necesariamente son geograficas pero tambien suelen ser retos que enfrentamos diariamente en los Estados Unidos*" [because not all borders are geographical but can also be challenges we face daily in the United States]. Her response sparked loud

cheers and a standing ovation. And this was just the beginning of an amazing display of talent that night.

This event is important to highlight because most of the students in attendance are adolescent arrivals. They are immigrant youth who arrived in the United States prior to the beginning of the 2016-2017 academic school year. As immigrants from Latin America, in particular from Mexico, their native language is Spanish. In the United States, they are classified as English Language Learners. Even though they spent all year in school trying to learn English, not many were successful. Their experiences as adolescent arrivals are marked by their age and life stage at migration (Rumbaut 2004). Although most of them are undocumented, some are not. Those who were born in the United States were not raised here, but instead grew up in their parents' country of origin and just recently came back. They form part of this immigrant population based on shared experiences and commonalities.

Unfamiliar with U.S. customs, the educational system, or even the dominant language of instruction, adolescent arrivals constantly struggle to belong in a place they hardly know. Moreover, their experiences are marked by the social and political contexts that welcomed them to the United States. Most of them immigrated only months prior to the presidential election of 2016. Without knowing it, these immigrant youth arrived in the United States in the midst of a harsh political climate that criminalizes immigrants, especially those of Mexican descent. The election of 2016 did not produce the hostile anti-immigrant environment, it simply exacerbated what had been years in the making.

During the course of this event, it dawned on me that this was the first time since their arrival that these students were being recognized for being them, for their expertise, for their language and culture. The event was not only a celebration of their work, but a

validation of their lived experiences. It was also a first for many of the parents in attendance who with their presence contradicted the cultural deficit models that allege that Mexican parents are not invested in their children's education. This was an event celebrating the efforts put forth by adolescent arrivals as they learned to navigate institutions that do not cater to them. They are the excluded ones, the marginalized, and the undesirable ones. But today, they shined.

Adolescent Arrivals

About one-third of the Latina/o population in the U.S. (17.9 million) is younger than 18 years old (Patten 2016). The diversity among this population has created what Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway (2008) call a historical moment in time where children are coming of age as they "rub shoulders with recently arrived immigrants their own age in the streets, classrooms, and workplaces" (p. 4). As many as 2.5 million, 23 percent of the overall undocumented population in the United States is under the age of 24 (Migration Policy Institute 2016).

Existing literature conflates all immigrants arriving in the United States under the age of 18 as childhood arrivals. However, most of the literature focuses, and importantly so, on the experiences of those that migrated under the age of 12, those known as the 1.5 generation, many times referred to as DREAMers. This literature centers the experiences of undocumented youth as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and the obstacles they encounter based on their lack of citizenship status. (Abrego 2006, Flores and Chapa 2009; Gonzales 2016; Perez 2009, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017). Because of this emphasis, little is known about the particular experiences of adolescent arrivals that immigrate between the ages of 13 and 18. The obstacles adolescent arrivals encounter differ in many respects from those of the 1.5-generation based on their life-stage

of migration. Unlike members of the 1.5 generation, who as undocumented immigrants were brought to the U.S. as children under the age of 12 and who had no say in the decision to migrate, adolescent arrivals participated in the decision-making process of migrating to the United States.

Gonzales (2016) contends that because of the time lived in the United States, members of the 1.5-generation eventually develop valuable forms of social membership regardless of their citizenship status. However this is not the case for those that immigrate during their adolescent years. As Rumbaut (2004) argues, age and life stage at arrival significantly affect modes of incorporation. Adolescent arrivals, between the ages of 13 and 18 at the time of migration, face a different set of challenges that depart in many respects from those of other immigrant populations. Caught in an in-between stage between the categories of child and adult, adolescents encounter a different set of experiences, hardships, and obstacles.

When we hear 'childhood arrivals' we tend to automatically think of young children. The word *childhood* conveys the perception of defenseless children who are marked by innocence and purity. Because of this, one may be swayed to feel empathy and compassion towards this population. In contrast the word *adolescent* does not transmit the same feelings. In general, adolescence is associated more as a rite of passage, a coming of age category, and to some extent even denoted as a problematic stage governed by hormones, impulsive reactions, and irrationality. Adolescents are not seen as children yet they are not adults either. They are technically in the cusp of being adults and being seen as responsible. As research shows, adolescence is in itself a transformation period crucial to the process of identity formation (Sherif & Sherif 1972). It is during this period in a person's life that identity begins to influence actions. Adolescent arrivals are therefore not automatically

associated with being childhood arrivals even though they technically are. Adolescents are placed in a separate category and do not invoke the same reaction as do children. Perhaps this is why we know so little about their experiences.

Although the existing literature identifies important evidence in the conflicting experiences of members of the 1.5-generation as they constantly navigate notions of inclusion and exclusion due to their citizenship status, much less is known about the experiences of adolescent arrivals, members of the 1.25-generation (Rumbaut 2004). They have no pre-existing social, cultural, or political attachments to the United States. Scholars have largely left unexamined the impact of the political climate on their incorporation processes. As immigrants and as English Language Learners in an unfamiliar country, adolescent arrivals find themselves in a conundrum as they navigate systems both in school and in their communities in order to survive during highly contested political times.

Some childhood arrivals are also known as Unaccompanied Alien Children or UAC. Statistics gathered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) indicate that over 340,000 children have been apprehended and placed under state supervision since 2003. The majority of UAC's are nationals from Honduras, EL Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico. It is important to highlight that UAC's from Mexico rose significantly in 2009 and since then the numbers have fluctuated. In contrast, UAC's from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador experienced a substantial increase after 2011 (Kandel 2017).

Data shows that most UAC's consist of males. Since fiscal year 2012 the ratio of male to female UAC's under the care of ORR is approximately 3:1. Contrary to popular belief, there are more childhood arrivals between the ages of 15-18 who are considered to be working age in contrast to younger children. Data shows that since 2012 children under the age of 12 that are classified as UAC's make up an average of 16 percent of the entire UAC

population. The rest is made up of UAC's over the age of 13. The number of UAC apprehensions reached an all-time peak in fiscal year 2014. In fiscal year 2015 these numbers dropped by 42 percent and picked up again in fiscal year 2016 by roughly 20,000 when the number of apprehensions registered at 59,692. The high number of UAC apprehensions registered in the last few years prompted governmental leaders such as former President Barak Obama to classify this situation as a humanitarian crisis (Kandel 2017).

The largest pool of childhood arrivals consist of those classified in this study as adolescent arrivals. Amidst a recent wave of punitive immigration measures to control unauthorized immigration under the current administration, the number of UAC's apprehended at the southern border was higher than in the previous two years. In just the first two months of fiscal year 2017, UAC apprehension numbers stood at 14,128. In the same months of October and November of 2015 there were a total of 5,143 apprehensions registered and in 2016 there were 10,588 (Kandel 2017). Massey and Pren (2012) contend that immigration continues even during highly politically hostile and harsh times because even though policies aimed at curtailing immigrant flows in particular from Mexico are created and implemented, conditions on the ground do not change nor does the demand for labor decrease. Adolescent arrivals are an integral part of the immigrant population and as the numbers indicate, they too continue to embark on international journeys regardless of draconian laws that target them. This phenomenon is further analyzed in chapter 2.

Why is it important to examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals and why now during this particular time period? What is at stake? The simple and straightforward answer is simply because a study focusing on this population illustrates nuances in immigrant experiences. But the reality of the matter is that the answer is much more complex than this.

Immigration in itself is a highly contested and debated area of study and has been for decades. Gonzales (2016) argues that immigrants today represent a more sizable percentage of the entire U.S. population than ever before in the last century. Immigration scholars have established numerous distinctions among immigrant groups and their diverse populations (Hirschman and Massey 2008; Jiménez 2010; Molina 2014; Ngai 2004; Park 1950; Passel 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut 2004). As immigrants, adolescent arrivals are incorporated in the study of immigration but the increased focus on younger and older immigrant populations obscures the intricate complexities of migrating to the U.S. during a critical stage in life, as is adolescence.

As adolescents, they do not share in the same experience of those who migrate as children, or members of the 1.5 generation, of being sheltered by an educational system that provides them with what Gonzales and Burciaga (2018) contend is a sense of belonging. They state, “by maintaining ongoing participation with the legal world of citizen and American-born peers and unrestricted adult pursuits, undocumented young people can maintain a positive sense of belonging while preserving mental and emotional well-being” (183). Because of their age of migration, by law adolescent arrivals must enroll in U.S. schools. However because they are older and unfamiliar with the U.S. educational system and language of instruction, they are sometimes perceived as not capable of graduating from high school. Pressure to maintain academic performance and graduation rates, lead to school administrators diverting adolescent arrivals to adult education programs. This practice allows school districts to avoid dealing with low graduation rates that negatively impact their performance numbers (Coleman and Avrushin 2017). Encouraged to withdraw from high school and attend alternative educational programs that are not under the supervision of school districts, there is no telling if adolescent arrivals will continue their education or not.

Without an education, most adolescent arrivals are set up to fail in a system that greatly values a formal education. Those that stay and are able to graduate from high school are trying to play catch up with their peers and as this study exemplifies, most leave school without the confidence, ability, or knowledge to properly integrate into the workforce let alone seek a higher education.

Unlike adult immigrants who join the workforce upon arriving in the United States, adolescent arrivals do not have this option for by law they are restricted from working. Studies indicate that adult immigrants who are undocumented cannot legally participate in the formal economy. It is therefore as day laborers, domestic workers, and gardeners among other jobs in the informal economy that undocumented immigrants experience economic opportunities (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009; Rosales 2013). As workers, adult immigrants experience economic mobility that is not easily achieved by adolescent arrivals that face restrictions in the workforce.

Examining the modes of incorporation of adolescent arrivals is critical because of their overall social and economic implications. Portes and Zhou (1993) contend being an immigrant is difficult "as individuals are torn by conflicting social and cultural demands while they face the challenge of entry into an unfamiliar and frequently hostile world" (75). Theories of incorporation have long been debated (Alba and Nee 1997; Gordon 1964; Park 1950). Through the concept of segmented assimilation, Portes and Zhou (1993) present an alternative to historically straight-line models of assimilation. Their model argues that there are three different outcomes among second-generation immigrants: upward assimilation, downward assimilation, and upward mobility combined with persistent biculturalism (consonant, dissonant, and selective acculturation). Segmented assimilation theory states that non-white poor immigrants fair better when they maintain ties with their ethnic

communities. Although Portes and Zhou examine the incorporation processes of second-generation immigrants, their work illuminates the need to understand incorporation processes of all immigrant populations for so much is at stake. Failure to understand adolescent arrivals as an immigrant population can result in detrimental consequences for society as a whole. If adolescent arrivals were a small percentage of the immigrant population then it would just be unfortunate for those few youths who migrate to the United States. But the data reveals that this is not the case. Adolescent arrivals form the largest percentage of childhood arrivals and the numbers are not ceasing (Kandel 2017). A permanent underclass is in the making if we continue to render this population invisible and divert our attention elsewhere. The political climate complicates matters for adolescent arrivals as well as other immigrant populations, but it also highlights the need to better understand the dynamics at stake in order to devise systems of support for a vulnerable population that we know little about.

Using ethnographic research, I examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals in their quest to belong and integrate themselves into the United States amidst a hostile anti-immigrant political climate. The guiding research questions are: 1) How do the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? 2) How do language practices influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? and 3) What are the strategies adolescent arrivals develop and resort to as they learn to survive amidst the hostile climate of animosity against immigrants in America, particularly Mexican immigrants?

In this chapter, I outline my project. I begin by presenting the background to this study and explain how this project came to be. I then provide a discussion of the current political climate under the Trump administration and the changes this climate brought about. During this section, I provide a review of immigration, racialization, and linguistic practices.

I also discuss the theoretical frameworks that guide this research and present a discussion on my own theoretical interventions, especially the concept I call *negotiating liminality,* which is a central contribution of this study. I then provide a methods section where I elaborate on particular elements fundamental to an ethnographic study. Finally I present brief descriptions of the following five chapters.

Background to the Study

This study originally began as an exploration of intraethnic relations between native-born and foreign-born youth of Mexican descent. In the beginning of the academic school year of 2016-2017, I found myself in a classroom of English Language Learners in a high school where I taught one class a week as part of a joint program with my university. At the same time, I volunteered every day of the week after the head English Language Development (ELD) teacher asked me for help. As a volunteer, I assisted students with their daily assignments, which consisted of workbook exercises designed to teach them the English language. The students I was working with had been in the United Sates for less than a year. Because the ELD program in their school grouped students by time in the United States and not by ability, the students ranged from 13 to 18 years of age. All of them were lumped into a single classroom with the mission of having them learn English as quickly as possible. By the end of the year, most still did not speak English but that is a whole different story.

One day in the month of November, after Donald Trump had been elected president of the United States, I sat with a group of students who were whispering amongst themselves. Based on the looks on their faces, I figured they must have been discussing a serious matter. As I sat there, I tried to get their attention so we could begin working on the day’s lesson. Before I could say anything, a female student looked at me and asked,

"Liliana, usted tiene papeles?" (Liliana, do you have papers?). I stayed quiet, frozen in time. Her question took me by surprise. I just sat there paralyzed not knowing how to respond to her inquiry. Although her question required a simple yes or no answer, I could not get myself to respond. Part of me wanted to just say yes and move on to the lesson. But I could not. Her simple question required a full examination of the current political context that was creeping into the lives of these students who just days before were blissfully unaware of the consequences of being immigrants. It was in this moment, that I realized that there was something bigger in front of me. As I looked around the room, something felt different. I saw anguish, concern, and despair. The usual teenage conversations of dating, clothes, and weekend plans slowly turned into talks about "*la migra,*" Trump, and deportations. I was aware of these changes but they had not hit me fully until this one moment. I had been told many times during my graduate career that the field molds your research. And that was exactly what was happening in that instance. It was then I decided to step out of the classroom and into the community to explore the experiences of adolescent arrivals whose age and life stage of migration coupled with a hostile political context of reception heavily impacts their incorporation processes. My study changed from a school study to a community ethnography centering the lives of adolescent arrivals during the Trump era. Moreover, because the data for this study was collected before, during, and after Trump was elected president its timeliness is significant for it allows us to examine the changes this particular population had to endure.

My study began with informal interviews and observations of adolescent arrivals both in school and in the community. However, focus group discussions held in early 2017 with college-age students who immigrated to the United States during their k-12 education also shaped the research questions examined in this study. As immigrant students, focus

group participants addressed concerns that they once faced upon migrating to the United States. All 17 participants, with the exception of two, had immigrated to the United States as children under the age of 12. Because of their age of migration they do not fit into the adolescent arrivals category, nonetheless, their experiences inform the questions that guided this research. Their retrospective view of migrating to the United States, enrolling in U.S. schools and navigating spaces of belonging and not belonging provide this research with a sociological lens by which to examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals. In essence, their contributions in the focus group discussions from adaptation, to language practices, to political context, allowed me to formulate the interview questionnaires, which guided the semi-structured interviews with adolescent arrivals.

During the five focus group sessions conducted, we discussed a variety of topics such as migration experiences, school, family life, dating, race and ethnic relations, colorism, language, and politics to name a few. Prevalent themes that resulted from the focus group sessions were language, intraethnic relations, and politics. Politics was always a delicate subject area that because of their lived experiences, participants got very emotional talking about. In between tears, one participant had the following to say when the topic of Trump was in the table:

> Whenever this *pelos de elote* [corn hair] got elected, my nephew was like, 'they were talking about him in school and they said that he is a monster and this and that,' and I was like 'how do I tell you everything you need to know without scaring you off.'

This participant expressed concern not only for her future but also for that of her family members under Trump and his administration. She fears their futures are in jeopardy given their precarious citizenship status. The current administration, she strongly believes, not

only criminalizes immigrants but also sees them as less than human. Applying Foucault's concept of biopower to immigration, Inda (2007) argues that immigrants are in fact seen as malignant and not human. He contends:

> Contemporary U.S. repudiation of the immigrant, particularly of the undocumented Mexican immigrant, can be situated on the underside of biopower. In order to fortify the well-being of the population, the state and its apparatuses, often strive to eliminate those influences deemed harmful to the biological growth of the nation, with certain governmental agents and institutions, as well members of the general populace, codifying the exclusion of the undocumented immigrant as an essential and noble pursuit necessary to ensure the survival of the social body (135).

Aware of their position within the United Sates political structure, another participant added, "I think about these things on a daily basis. Like where would I really be if my mom didn't take that step you know, of 'hey everyone we are going to the United Sates because we need change'." With this statement she acknowledges that the family made the decision to migrate based on necessity. If her mother had not risked immigrating to the United States when she did, the participant might not have had the opportunity to attend a university and be the student she is today. This of course she recognizes comes with a high price, but one that the family is willing to pay for a better and brighter future.

Another topic that participants highlighted was intraethnic relations between foreign-born and native-born youth. In her work, Ochoa (2004) examines how Mexican Americans negotiate their relations with the foreign-born. Similar to her findings that she placed on a conflict-solidarity continuum, participants in this study talked about instances of conflict and instances of solidarity. Conflict however, sparked emotional responses such as the following:

> That people try to make it seem like because 'I have been here I am better than you because I was here first.' And that is the same thing that goes with some of the people who are Latino and were born here, It's kind of like 'I was born here you weren't. I am better than you.'

Responses similar to this address the much needed study of intraethnic relations in particular during harsh political times when immigrants are associated with negative ascriptions that stigmatize them. In his historical account on the relations between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, Gutierrez (2005) explains that Mexican schools in the U.S. heavily influenced intraethnic relations in the mid-20th century. He argues that schooling created conditions and attitudes by which U.S-born Mexican American students developed a sense of difference from their foreign-born counterparts.

In terms of language, participants who arrived as children acknowledged that even though they faced difficulties upon first arriving in the United States, their experiences cannot compare to that of adolescent arrivals who encounter harsher obstacles having migrated as teenagers. One participant said, "When you are younger, English, you learn it really fast and I know as you grow older to learn a new language is like ten times harder." Adolescent arrivals, in their opinion, have it harder as they try to navigate a country without being familiar with the dominant language spoken. Focus group participants, who upon reflecting on their experiences thought they had it bad, later sympathized with adolescent arrivals. One participant said,

> We were just kids, we still had the time to adapt to the system and to try to get ahead so we had that head start but they don't and they might feel very vulnerable with the situation now and just with the pressure that they might be dealing with.

Although participants were able to relate to adolescent arrivals, they were aware that their experiences are very different based on their age of migration and political context of reception. Their discussions and contributions to this research are invaluable for they set the framework from which to begin to examine the experiences of a particular immigrant population that face a new set of challenges setting them apart from other immigrant populations.

Political Climate: Trump Era

In November 2016, Donald J. Trump became the 45th president of the United States. Since the beginning, his political campaign did little to shy away from utilizing the politics of fear to advance a nationalist narrative that ultimately won him the presidency. When he delivered his now infamous presidential announcement speech in June 2015, he declared that Mexico sends the worst of their population. He declared,

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

The rhetoric presented by Trump in his hate speech sparked controversy not only along color lines but also within ethnoracial groups. Through his nativist discourse, he empowered an anti-immigrant movement that has been years in the making. The discourse used within Trump's nativist allegations promotes a racist ideology upholding a hierarchy of racial dominance where whiteness is deemed superior in the realms of power and prestige. The narrative of fear used against Mexicans and Mexican Americans advanced what Chavez (2008) calls the *Latino Threat* or the perceived threat posed by the increasing numbers in the Latino/a population of the United States. The Latino threat narrative predates the events of 9/11 but took on a new sense of urgency soon after. The national security of the U.S. was at stake and immigrants became the scapegoats of political pundits.

Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric reverberates with the Latino threat narrative. However, he is far from being the first to declare a vicious war against immigrants. Like him, others have engaged in public discourse criminalizing immigrants and attacking their existence. In 2004, Samuel P. Huntington, a professor at Harvard University argued that the influx of Hispanic immigrants posed a threat to the United States. Their presence, he argued,

was dividing the country into "two peoples, two cultures, and two languages" (30). Although Huntington's allegations are geared toward all Latina/o communities, his nativist sentiments are a direct attack on people of Mexican descent. He warns Americans that "foreigners" are coming into this country with a particular purpose in mind, to take back their land. These people, he cautions, jeopardize the future of America for they "no longer think of themselves as members of a small minority who must accommodate the dominant group and adopt its culture. As their numbers increase, they become more committed to their own ethnic identity and culture" (44). Allegations such as this only serve to intensify the Latino threat narrative.

The politics of fear embedded within the Latino threat narrative have intensified with the election of Trump to the presidency. He not only speaks negatively about immigrants in particular from Mexico, but has also allotted more power to federal agents at the southern border and in the interior of the country to arrest, detain, and deport undocumented immigrants. This in turn has had negative repercussions on the lives of those who live at the margins of society. The election brought upon a climate of trepidation and anxiety among adolescent arrivals for fear of deportation either of themselves or a family member, and acts of racism including hate crimes among other things.

Trump's mission of removing "bad hombres" set in motion what De Genova (2010) calls a "deportation regime" that feeds off the vulnerability of immigrants. A press release from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security states:

> President Trump has been clear in affirming the critical mission of DHS in protecting the nation and directed our Department to focus on removing illegal aliens who have violated our immigration laws, with a specific focus on those who pose a threat to public safety, have been charged with criminal offenses, have committed immigration violations or have been deported and re-entered the country illegally (DHS 2017a).

Under Trump, the Department of Homeland Security launched a serious of raids aimed at detaining undocumented immigrants who had committed criminal offenses. Soon after the implementation of these sweeps, concerns arose that agents were not only targeting immigrants with criminal records but also individuals who did not fit the criminal profiles previously cited to be a priority. In a 2017 memorandum then Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly argued that under Trump all undocumented immigrants are a priority (DHS 2017b). The arrest of undocumented immigrants whom agents came in contact with while looking for someone else in their list became known as collateral arrests. Although under President Obama's administration deportations reached an all-time high averaging almost 400,000 in 2009, earning him the title of 'Deporter-in-Chief', collateral arrests were not made. With the removal of the 'shackles' that restricted their work, according to former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, ICE agents were given more freedom. The *New York Times* (2017) reported that "perhaps the biggest change was the erasing of the Obama administration's hierarchy of priorities, which forced agents to concentrate on deporting gang members and other violent and serious criminals, and mostly leave everyone else alone." Under Trump however, all undocumented immigrants are a top priority. Since Trump took office, the number of arrests by ICE agents at the end of the fiscal year registered at more than 110,000. This represents an increase of 42 percent from the same time period in 2016. Of these arrests, 32,000 people (29 percent) had no criminal record. In comparison to 2016, under Obama's administration, 90 percent of those removed had criminal convictions. In addition, during the same time period, 61,000 immigrants were removed from the interior of the country by ICE, which marks a 37 percent increase from the same time period in fiscal year 2016 (Pierce, Bolter, Selee 2018).

Immigration at a Glance

Scholars argue that age and life stage of migration and context of reception significantly affect modes of incorporation (Rumbaut 2004). The context of reception that the adolescent arrivals in this study encountered was a harsh and brutal anti-immigrant political climate. It is important to highlight however, that the political climate of the time is not new nor was it produced or created solely by Trump. A long history of prejudice and discrimination against minorities by the dominant White racial class in America exists (Higham, 1988). This history includes, but is not limited to, intolerance and discrimination against Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans among others (Montejano 1987; Rincon, 2008, Takaki 2008). Many of the laws and policies enacted throughout history reflect a nativist influence (Haney López 2006). These laws have continuously excluded minority groups from obtaining the right to lawfully reside in the United States. The Nationality Act of 1790 set racial requirements for naturalized citizenship in the United States. Under the provisions of this act, only "free white persons of good moral character" were eligible for naturalized citizenship (Ngai 2004). Although the provisions of this act were later contested it was not until 1952 that this racial stipulation was finally nullified with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (Hull 1985, Ngai 2004, Menchaca 2011). People of Mexican descent were the first to be exempt from the racial naturalization statute followed by black immigrants (Menchaca 2011).

Restrictive laws have been enacted throughout history to control who migrates to the United States. Prior to 1924, the period that Durand, Massey and Charvet (2000) refer to as the 'classic era of open immigration', most immigrants came from Europe. In 1921, the United States established the first per centum law restricting the admission of immigrants to 3 percent of the number of the foreign-born population by nationality. This law administered its restrictions based on the 1910 census. A few years later the number was dropped from 3

to 2 percent with the passage of the 1924 National Origins Quota Act also known as the Johnson-Reed Act (Bloch 1929). This law established quotas to limit the migration of allegedly undesirable white immigrants. Quotas were based on 2 percent of each nationality's proportion of the foreign-born U.S. population in 1890 based on the U.S census. It is argued that these laws were inspired by racialized hierarchies since they discriminated against immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and favored immigrants from northern and western Europe (Bloch 1929).

At the time, no numerical restrictions were placed on countries in the Western Hemisphere based on "the need for labor in southwestern agriculture and American diplomatic and trade interests with Canada and Mexico" (Ngai 2004:23). The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act or the McCarran-Walter Act, howerev, set "norms of desirability based on educational level, skill, and familial ties to Americans" (Ngai 2004:238). However it was the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act also known as the Hart-Cellar Act that abolished the national quota system and replaced it with a system of hemispheric allotments and priorities for family reunification. This act also set a cap of 120,000 to permanent residents admitted from the Western Hemisphere. It went into effect in 1968. It was expected that a few immigrants from Italy, Greece, and other European countries would come to the U.S. to reunite with family members but that not much significant increase would take place. This was proven wrong with the influx of immigrants that came to the United Sates in the decades that followed. With the abolition of the national quota system in 1965, immigration from third world countries increased. The large group of immigrants that arrived in the U.S. were not from the originally expected countries but instead came from Latin America and Asia (Hirschman and Massey 2008, Portes and Rumbaút 2014). The largest immigrant group is from Mexico (Durand, Massey, Charvet

2000, Flores and Chapa 2009, Portes and Rumbaút 2014,) more than half of undocumented immigrants in the United States are of Mexican descent (Passel 2005). A big factor that contributed to this was also the elimination of the Bracero Program. The Bracero Program was a sizeable guest worker program with Mexico that took effect in 1942. By the late 1950s there were about 450,000 Mexican workers coming in and out of the United States every year as part of the conditions of the program. This type of circular migration was cut off with the elimination of the Bracero Program. Unable to leave the country for fear of not being able to enter again, many workers decided to stay in the United States. This population that was once deemed 'legal' becomes an unauthorized population (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000).

Although the U.S. no longer applies the quota system based on national origin it still numerically limits immigration in other ways (Ngai 2004). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act failed to take into account that structural forces that had already begun to take over the immigration system in the United States (Rosenblum and Brick 2011). Push and pull factors and the low quotas of visas allowed from countries sending migrants created a great wave of unauthorized immigration from Mexico and Latin America in the 20th century (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003). Since then, immigration reform has impacted Latina/o immigrants by encouraging them to incorporate into the U.S. labor market, but never fully providing them with the means necessary to become full members of the culture, economy, and political system of the United States (Perez 2009, Portes and Rumbaút 2014). De Genova (2013) refers to this exclusion as "subordinate inclusion". He states "the phantasm of exclusion is essential to that essentially political process of labour subordination, which in fact is always a matter of (illegalized) inclusion and incorporation" (1190).

In an attempt to control unauthorized immigration to the U.S., Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. Some scholars view IRCA as a bipolar aspect of immigration reform (Flores and Chapa 2009). IRCA was implemented with the idea of controlling unauthorized immigration by eliminating pull factors such as employment opportunities. The provisions of IRCA called for employer sanctions for those hiring unauthorized immigrants. However, enforcement of this provision was minimal. On the other hand, under IRCA's amnesty provisions, nearly 3 million immigrants were able to regularize their status (Flores and Chapa 2009). This measure angered many anti-immigrant advocates including Governor Pete Wilson of California who shortly after introduced Proposition 187 or the "Save our State" Initiative. Proposition 187 was to act as a "disincentive" to undocumented immigrants by denying them public services such as health care and public education. In addition, those offering public services such as doctors and teachers were to turn in anyone suspected of being in the U.S. illegally (Newton 2000, Ochoa 2004). Proposition 187 was put to a public vote and it won by a wide margin. Most aspects of it however were later ruled to be unconstitutional (Flores and Chapa 2009; Ochoa 2004). Although the proposition was never implemented it still produced numerous challenges for the immigrant community (Rincon 2008). With Proposition 187, Governor Wilson urged the federal government to implement harsher immigration laws. In 1996 the federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) were enacted to further implement restrictions on immigration. Both of these acts can be seen as direct attacks against immigrants, both documented and undocumented (Rincon 2008).

Shifts in Immigration Discourse

The most recent major immigration reform was established in 1996 and since then although there has been a push for comprehensive immigration reform that would allow the more that 11 million undocumented people living in the United States to become legalized, this has yet to transpire. This concept of comprehensive immigration reform was first introduced in 2001. Aside from providing a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants living in the United States, it also calls for a program designed to help the U.S. labor market flourish by bringing in workers to fill labor demands. This policy has been debated multiple times in the Senate with no success. With the election of Trump to the presidency, many see their hopes of comprehensive immigration reform diminishing.

It is important to highlight that although the current anti-immigrant political climate is nothing new, nor was it created or produced by Trump and his administration, it is unique in its own way. Trump made immigration a central aspect of his campaign and was adamant about changing the U.S. immigration system since the beginning. No other president has ever prioritized immigration policy as Trump has, nor has there ever been an exclusive focus to curtail immigration flows both legal and unauthorized (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018). He not only framed immigration as a major threat to the economic security of the United States but also framed it as a threat to national security. His framing on immigration differs in many respects from how past presidents have talked about immigration in other historical time periods. In the past, U.S. presidents have treated immigration as a positive force even if the policies implemented during those time periods were not always favorable. Trump however has explicitly attacked immigration in all its forms and vowed to implement dramatic changes from cutting legal immigration to challenging family reunification, banning entries of nationals from eight countries, and vowing to build a wall across the southern border (Pierce and Selee 2017). Perhaps one of the most controversial changes in

terms of immigration is the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy which is designed to prosecute anyone who crosses the border without authorization with the crime of illegal entry or reentry (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018). Under this policy, migrant children are separated from their parents. Parents are taken in to custody for criminal proceedings and their children who by law cannot be held in criminal custody are taken to different shelters. This practice of separating children from their parents caused uproar from community leaders and significant parts of the public raising allegations that the practice is inhumane and in violation of human rights. In June 2018, a federal district judge in California ordered a halt to the family separations and instructed the government to reunite more than 2,500 children with their parents (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018). Trump's stance on immigration is unprecedented and has produced a wave of negative backlash from pro-immigrant supporters.

Trump is determined to do what he promised during his presidential campaign— to "Make America Great Again." One way to achieve this according to him is to put an end, for once and for all, to illegal immigration. A top priority of his political agenda is to build a wall of more than 230 miles to serve as a barrier on the southern border. This, he constantly assures, will deter illegal entry by immigrants to the United States. On the campaign trail he stated, "I will build a great, great wall on the southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words" (NPR 2018). To date, Mexico has refused to partake in the construction of such project.

Determined to build the wall, Trump demanded $5.7 billion in federal funds to support the infrastructure of the southern wall. Congress and Trump were unable to agree on an appropriations bill for fiscal year 2019 to fund the federal government. The Senate passed an appropriations bill that did not contain any funding for the southern wall. Trump

refused to sign this bill and continued to demand funding for the wall. The House then passed a stopgap bill that included funding for the wall but as expected the bill was blocked by the Senate. As a result, the longest U.S. government shutdown took place from December 22, 2018 to January 25, 2019. Trump signed a stopgap bill on January 25 to reopen the government for three weeks and allow Congress to continue negotiations on an appropriations bill. However, he warned that if no agreement was reached, he would shut down the government again or declare a national emergency at the southern border and thus use military funding to fund his wall (Paletta, DeBonis, and Wagner 2019).

Racialization Effects

The current political discourse on immigration has produced a wave of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear among immigrant communities who according to reports strive to stay clear of law enforcement agents. Many have succumbed to living in the shadows and avoid any contact with governmental agencies amid incidents of crime and domestic violence. Reports also demonstrate a decrease in applications for public benefits and health appointments (Pierce, Bolter, and Selee 2018). Although not to the same extent, fear and uncertainty also invade the lives of citizens of Mexican descent more broadly based on racialization practices in the United States.

For Mexican Americans, the process of racialization begins with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. It was then that the United States not only annexed Mexican territories but also its citizens. The United States government promised to grant citizenship to the 75,0000 to 100,000 Mexicans living in the colonized lands thus extending legal citizenship rights to Mexicans during a historical time period where citizenship was restricted and reserved only to whites (Molina 2014). However, as Chavez (2008) posits, “despite such legal definitions, Mexicans were still considered “non-white” in the public

imagination" (26). More so, the United States avoided granting full citizenship rights to Mexicans as accorded by the treaty (Vasquez 2011, Gutierrez 1995) and not only were land grants nullified but also Mexicans were automatically placed at the bottom of a social hierarchy facing constant discrimination and oppression. Racial dominance or as Blauner (2001) emphasizes, "internal colonialism" marks the history of Mexicans in the United States.

Never fully seen as American, but more as second-class citizens, Mexicans in the United States became a "legally racialized ethnic group" (Chavez 2008). On one side they were given the legal rights of whites, but on the other, they treated as both socially and culturally inferior (Molina 2014). According to Castles and Davidson (2000) minority groups in the United States are usually referred to as 'ethnics'. In the case of people of Mexican descent, their minority status is linked to an ethnic identity. Ethnicity, they argue has two facets, the *self definition* and the *other definition*. The *self definition* refers to a group's own self designation based on shared commonalities such as language, religion, traditions, etc. The *other definition* however relies on the dominant group's perceptions of the subordinate groups. The social definitions imposed on members of the subordinate group result from held stereotypes and discriminatory structures and practices. The visual cues used to *other* populations rely on phenotype, skin color, and other such features that denote race. These, together with other markers such as language and nationality, lead to the practice of racialization. Chavez argues that based on racialization practices, not only are Mexican immigrants seen as inferior but so are U.S. born Americans of Mexican descent. Moreover, the narrative extends to all Latinas/os and by definition all immigrants of Latin America.

In her historical account on the construction of race, Molina (2014) examines laws and policies that impacted the construction of the Mexican American identity from 1924 to 1965, in what she calls the age of the *immigration regime*. During this period she argues the southern border became a site of unauthorized immigration that led to the creation of the Border Patrol in 1924. The creation of this law enforcement agency set obstacles for Mexicans trying to cross the border into U.S. territory. It also sent a message to Mexicans that they were not welcomed in the United States. The construction of the Mexican as undesirable and "illegal" marks the racialization social order for Mexicans in the United States. For example, De Genova (2004) posits that:

> …migrant ''illegality'' is a spatialized social condition that is inseparable from the particular ways that Mexican migrants are likewise racialized as ''illegal aliens'' – invasive violators of the law, incorrigible ''foreigners,'' subverting the integrity of ''the nation'' and its sovereignty from within the space of the US nation-state (161).

De Genova argues that "illegality" as a concept, is a construct of the law. The legal construction of "illegality" serves as a mechanism of exclusion from which Mexicans and all Latinas/os in general by virtue of racialization, are seen not only as immigrants but also as undocumented immigrants. Some argue that although this is the case, "illegality" is also socially produced (Flores and Schachter 2018). They argue that society does not rely on documentation to classify one as undocumented but instead relies on "powerful stereotypes" to classify someone as being "illegal". The legal and social production of "illegality" poses a myriad of obstacles for Latinas/os whose experiences in the United States are heavily shaped by these conceptions. Regardless of their true immigrant status, Latinas/os are seen and treated as foreigners and intruders. As W.I. Thomas and Thomas (1928) contend, " If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." The consequence of being a person of Mexican descent in the United States is constant scrutiny about ones citizenship

status.

The current discourse on immigration coupled with racialization practices have reportedly lead to an increase in hate crimes during Trump's presidency so far. Researchers found that in counties that hosted a Trump rally in 2016 there was a 226 percent increase in reported hate crimes. (Feinberg, Branton, and Martinez-Ebers 2019). Although the findings cannot completely attest to the increase being a result of Trump's campaign rhetoric, the numbers are in line with nationwide figures. Feinberg et al. (2019) posit that there was a 17 percent increase in reported hate crimes from 2016 to 2017. Within the Latina/o community in the United States, increased visibility of hate crimes due to language practices has infiltrated the media. Scholars argue that Trump's emphasis to 'Make America Great Again' and his overt bias to particular groups, makes people who share in his beliefs react and partake in acts of hate against members of the groups he targets.

Language discrimination

Numerous incidents of Spanish speakers attacked for speaking Spanish in public spaces have become a common trend across social media. Advances in technology in particular in cell phone video cameras allow for the quick transmission of incidents involving both verbal and physical attacks on Spanish speakers. The overt discrimination exposed in the media over linguistic practices seems to have recently intensified during Trump's presidency. In fact, reports show that the number of people berated or attacked for speaking Spanish in public has increased since 2016 (The Guardian 2017). Stories have surfaced of Spanish speakers being kicked out of stores and yelled at or assaulted for speaking Spanish at restaurants or other public places. The increased visibility of such stories paints a picture that linguistic discrimination is a newly ascending trend. Although the number of such incidents might have increased recently, scholars argue that linguistic

discrimination in particular the racialization of Latinas/os based on language practices is not a new phenomenon.

The racialization of the Spanish language, according to scholars, is rooted in nativism (Feagin and Cobas 2008). Research shows that for other immigrant populations, English becomes the primarily language spoken as their native language tends to wither off by the second generation. For Spanish speakers however the life span of the language tends to be longer. It is not until the third generation that the Spanish language is documented to die out (Alba and Nee 2003; Davis and Moore 2014; Telles and Ortiz 2008). However even though this is the case, Spanish remains widely used across the United Sates. There are more than 37 million people in the United States that use the Spanish language at home, making it the most common non-English language in the country (Krogstad and Lopez 2017). Although the reasons for this vary, one explanation consists of the replenishment of the language by the continuous flow of first generation immigrants from Latin America, in particular from Mexico (Davis and Moore 2014; Jiménez 2009).

Feagin and Cobas (2008) use the white racial frame concept (Feagin 2006) in analyzing the racialization of the Spanish language. The racial hierarchy that exists in today's day and age began, they argue, in the late 1600s when people first began using the term "white" to identify themselves. The frame is used to not only interpret but also to justify oppression. They state:

> That frame has long included not only negative racial images, stereotypes, emotions, and interpretations, but also distinctive language and imaging tools used to describe and enforce the racial hierarchy. Central to this framing has long been a concept of white-superiority, in counterpoint to an idea of the inferiority of racialized others (in the early period African Americans and American Indians). Such "othered" groups were framed in terms of negative ideas, including the view that they were foreign, uncivilized, and physically ugly. Such othering was centered in part on physical appearance and in part on linguistic and other cultural characteristics (40).

Analyzing language through the white racial frame helps explain why Spanish as a language is racialized and devalued. Spanish, as scholars suggests, is a dominant marker of "foreignness" and thus carries with it a negative stigma. Gándara and Contreras (2009), among other scholars, argue that the reason why the Spanish language is devalued within a U.S. context is because of political reasons. Language they argue is twin skin with identity therefore if the language is accepted then by logic the speaker is also accepted. The politics surrounding this dilemma of who belongs and who does not belong in the United States is debated then through language practices. Irvine (1995) contends that boundaries between languages are socially constructed and thus in order to understand how one is viewed or treated based on language practices it is necessary to understand the held ideas and conceptions of the language itself. Because the boundaries created between languages result in the "othering" of groups in society, she argues it is important to pay attention to the "ideas with which participants frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and the differences among them, and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them" (970).

The numerous 'English Only' movements of the past are a testament to how the Spanish language as a dominant signifier of Latinoness is the result of racism, discrimination, and nativism. From Proposition 227 in California, which condemned bilingual education programs in public schools, to the elimination of the Bilingual Education Act of 2001 with the implementation of No Child Left Behind, both movements and laws have aimed to dismantle the use of Spanish in public spaces. Santa Ana (2002) contends that the insistence by the American society to eliminate other languages and make English the official language is part of the hegemonic view that English is intimately bound with being "truly American."

Theoretical Frameworks

This study takes a grounded theory approach in examining and understanding the experiences of adolescent arrivals. Grounded theory allows for the creation of an analytical approach from which to interpret findings. In order to use grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) posits we must first begin by gathering data. The data collected is a compilation of the observations and interactions we gather in a designated field site. The origins of grounded theory date back to the early 1960s with the work of Glaser and Strauss on the topic of how dying occurs in hospital settings. Charmaz argues that their work "first articulated these strategies and advocated developing theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories" (4). Moreover, grounded theory according to Charmaz is not a rigid set of guidelines that researchers must follow. On the contrary, its flexibility gives the researcher room for creativity as we "learn about the worlds we study" (10).

My analysis suggests that life course theory is fundamental in examining the experiences of adolescent arrivals that entered the United State during an overt anti-immigrant climate. As Elder (1998) argues, in order to understand the life choices and life trajectories of people it is important to understand how historical forces both shape and influence their actions as well as how social structure limits human agency. Choices, he argues, "are contingent on the opportunities and constraints" surrounding an individual (2). For adolescent arrivals that immigrated only a few months prior to the election of Trump to the presidency, the conditions surrounding their immigration experiences differ from adolescent arrivals during other time periods that predated Trump and his administration. Using a life course theoretical lens allowed me to study this particular cohort based on their historical location that placed them in the midst of an immigration battle that seeks to

criminalize their mere existence. Moreover, not only does life course theory center the individual and the historical context in which events take place, but it also emphasizes the need to analyze the structural, cultural, and social contexts that shape people's experiences. I use life course theory therefore to emphasize the crucial role of age and life stage of migration and historical location in understanding the experiences of adolescent arrivals in this study.

Liminality

The concept of liminality originated with the work of Arnold van Gennep (1960) in *The Rites of Passage*. Van Gennep outlined what he described to be "ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another" (10). These transitions in life are precisely marked as an individual successfully manages to move or enter from one group to another or from one social status to another. The three stages van Gennep presents are the preliminary stage or what he called the rites of separation, the liminal stage, which he called the transition rites, and the postliminal stage, which he referred to as rites of incorporation. He contends that not all rites are as equally important nor do they all carry the same weight. It is the second rite of passage he describes or the liminal stage that other scholars have taken up in their own work and further elaborated on and applied it to different contexts. Victor Turner (1967) for example elaborated on the liminal stage in his work on the rituals of the Ndembu people of northwestern Zambia. He contends that the liminal stage can be described as a liminal period of being "betwixt and between". The emphasis he argues is "on the transition itself, rather than on the particular states between which it is taking place" (96). The liminal stage he contends is not only complex but also bizarre for it makes the individual "at once no longer classified and not yet classified" (96). In this sense, Turner describes a state of being stuck

in the in-between of neither being here nor there. In order to transition to the next stage in life one must first successfully move from one stage to the other. The process is not as easy for everyone. Caught in the in-between stage, or the liminal stage, the youth in this study constantly find themselves in what Negrón-Gonzales describes as "the space between profound institutional exclusion and the supposed promise of the American Dream" (2013: 1284).

Drawing from the work of Turner, Cecilia Menjívar (2006) developed the concept liminal legality to highlight the state of living in legal limbo. In her study of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants, Menjívar uses Turner's analysis to suggest that the immigrants in her study by virtue of holding a Temporary Protected Status and due to the ever-changing immigration laws find themselves in a constant state of uncertainty or what Turner describes as 'transitional beings'. She elaborates:

> This uncertain status—not fully documented or undocumented but often straddling both—has gone on for years and permeates many aspects of the immigrants' lives and delimits their range of action in different spheres, from job market opportunities and housing, to family and kinship, from the place of the church in their lives and their various transnational activities, to artistic expressions (1001).

The nation-state and its laws and procedures, Menjívar argues, leaves immigrants straddling uncertain futures. In previous studies, the uncertainty immigrants live with as they continually abide by immigration laws in hopes of passing from a temporary relief status to a more permanent status has been called a state of "permanent temporariness" (Bailey, Wright, Mountz, and Miyares 2002).

In a contemporary study of childhood arrivals, Roberto Gonzalez (2016) argues that members of the 1.5-generation find themselves stuck in a liminal stage based on their lack of citizenship status. He proposes that although being undocumented may be less consequential for them as children once they reach adulthood, being undocumented becomes

a master status. Gonzalez states, “their immigration status prevents them from fully participating in adult pursuits, yet they cannot afford to linger in a prolonged childhood” (8). Members of the 1.5 generation he argues straddle both worlds and in doing so constantly live in limbo—socially and culturally integrated but legally excluded.

Building on the work of Gonzalez (2016) I frame my own work on adolescent arrivals. I argue that adolescent arrivals also find themselves stuck in a liminal stage regardless of citizenship status, but based on other factors that limit their opportunities and which become intensified with the current anti-immigrant climate. Menjívar (2006) contends that the political and economic context of the receiving country is essential in determining whether immigrants will experience either a favorable reception or an adverse one. My theoretical contribution, a concept I term *negotiating liminality*, allows us to fully grasp why adolescent arrivals in this study undergo certain experiences and how they make sense of them as they navigate unfamiliar territory.

Negotiating Liminality

Adolescent arrivals in this study arrived in the United States a few months prior to the 2016 presidential election. Most, if not all, were blissfully unaware of the political climate that welcomed them including an anti-immigrant discourse, enhanced immigration controls and the implementation of rigid laws. As adolescents, they were aware that the transition from their home countries to the United States would be challenging if not difficult, but they figured they would manage as many immigrants have done so before. As previously stated, the youth in this study, because of their age of migration, experience a different type of reception than do childhood arrivals or adult immigrants.

In his work, Gonzales (2016) highlights the complexity in the lives of the 1.5-generation. In doing so he argues that although first generation immigrants face hardships in

the host society, the difficulties encountered by those brought to the U.S. as young children and come of age in America are not only different, but to some extent even more complicated. He claims first generation immigrants leave their homeland aware of the hardships they will face in a new land which somewhat prepares them for the journey. The 1.5-generation however knows no other home but the U.S. and they grow up being indistinguishable from their U.S. born peers. Gonzales proposes that the 1.5-generation lives in a permanent liminal stage, as they can never fully transition from one status to another. My own findings help advance his argument to include adolescent arrivals members of the 1.25-generation and take it a step further. Adolescent arrivals I argue, also find themselves stuck in a liminal stage where they remain unable to transition to the next stage that would allow them to feel included and belonging in the United States. For the youth in this study, the obstacles that limit their transition are not only based on citizenship status but on many other factors such as linguistic practices. As immigrants and as English Language Learners in an unfamiliar country, these adolescents constantly find themselves in a conundrum as they navigate a new culture, a new school, and a new home. They constantly struggle and strive to not only feel like they belong in the United States but also to survive being the scapegoats of a broken immigration system that constantly criminalizes them and targets their communities. All of this, the results from a hyped-up political climate that comes to intensify the anti-immigrant movement.

Through a concept I term *negotiating liminality* I examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals. I define *negotiating liminality* as the meaning-making process to which adolescent arrivals adhere as they make sense, understand, navigate, and ultimately respond to political tactics that target their communities. *Negotiating liminality* is a cognitive, multi-layered process that demonstrates how adolescent arrivals navigate the political and social

contexts that confront them while being stuck in what van Gennep (1960) refers to as the second liminal stage.

Figure 1 (See appendix) is a visual representation of the concept *negotiating liminality* that I constructed. It shows the four foundational pillars of the concept. One of these pillars is meaning making. Meaning making is a process by which one acquires knowledge. It is referred to as personal epistemology (Briell, Elen, Verschaffel, and Clarebout 2011). In creating a personal epistemology, young people learn to make sense of the world around them. According to Mezirow (1978), it is from our experiences that we begin to make meaning of our surroundings and from which we develop our personal assumptions. This he argues is important because this is how one learns to identity problems, develop attitudes, make judgments, and take initiative. Meaning making therefore allows adolescent arrivals to make sense of the effects of the political and social contexts on their experiences as recent immigrants to the United States.

Another component of *negotiating liminality* is the act of understanding. The online dictionary definitions of the word understand are to "perceive the intended meaning of" and to "interpret or view (something) in a particular way". In this study therefore this concept is used to describe how adolescent arrivals perceive, interpret and/or view particular things, events, and situations as recently arrived immigrants during this historical period. By learning to understand the political underpinnings of their existence in the United States, adolescent arrivals are able to make something that is abstract to them more real.

A third component is the act of navigating. This concept speaks to how adolescent arrivals circumvent the current situations and events in their lives as newly arrived residents in a new land. The act of navigating spaces of belonging and not belonging allows

adolescent arrivals to try to do their best and stay afloat during periods of hostility and adversity.

The fourth and final component is to respond. Their beliefs, perspectives, and views heavily inform how adolescent arrivals respond to their experiences in the United States. Scholars argue that a sense of political consciousness among immigrant populations results during highly political times as seen with the immigration reform marches of 2006 (Barberena, Jiménez and Young 2014, Getrich 2008; Negrón-Gonzales 2013). Adolescent arrivals in this study have just been in the United States for a short period of time, therefore their way of responding collectively to the political climate is yet to be seen. However, the act of responding on their own terms to their current situations shows how the youth in this study face head on the challenges of being adolescent arrivals.

I want to emphasize that *negotiating liminality* is not a linear process where one element or component leads to the next but instead it is multi-directional. Depending on the individual or the situation one component or element can lead to the other and vice versa. Moreover, at any time one component can become more salient than the others depending on the scenario at hand or all components can transpire simultaneously. *Negotiating liminality* is a concept that helps clarify a process that adolescent arrivals adhere to as they find themselves in the midst of a wide national political debate on immigration.

Methods

The setting for this study consists of a community in California's central coast region. Over a period of two years, I conducted ethnographic work with 30 adolescent arrivals both documented and undocumented youth who immigrated to the United States months prior to the presidential election of Trump, the majority from Mexico. Using ethnographic methods enabled me to systematically examine the experiences of participants

and their 'life-worlds. According to Berg and Lune (2012), life-worlds are made up of an individual's subjective realities, which come to represent "their behaviour routines, experiences, and various conditions affecting these usual routines or natural settings" (15). These elements are best captured by the richness of qualitative data and therefore serve as the groundwork for this study.

I met most of the 30 participants in my capacity as an instructor and volunteer at their high school. I taught one class a week in the Level 1 English Language Development class at El Valle High School during the 2016-2017 academic school year as part of an instructional program affiliated with my university. Once in the classroom, the teacher asked for volunteers to aide in the ELD classes and I signed up to help. I volunteered daily at the school helping students with their reading, writing, and language skills. Not all the study participants were students in the class where I volunteered; some were recruited to the project by way of snowball sampling. Once I built rapport with the students I mentored, they introduced me to friends that fit the project's requirements of recently immigrating to the United States from a country in Latin America and be English Language Learners.

I conducted participant observation for two years (2016-2018). I observed students either before or after school as well as at their most frequented hangout locations with friends, family, and in the community, as well as in their homes when I was invited. Because of our constant encounters both in and out of school, most participants and their families began to see me as la *maestra* as they often refer to me. I documented all encounters with extensive fieldnotes and gathered over 250 single spaced pages of notes.

All 30 participants were between the ages of 13 and 18 when they migrated to the United States. On average, the participants had lived in the U.S. between 6 months to a year at the time they were first interviewed. Almost half of the sample (14) identifies as male and

16 identify as female. Although I did not inquire about citizenship status, some of the participants volunteered that information. Of those participants that volunteered their status information, 11 are undocumented, 4 are U.S. citizens, 2 are U.S residents, 5 are visas holders, and 2 are asylum seekers.

In-person interviews were conducted in the early months of 2017 with all participants at a place of their choosing where they felt comfortable and secure. These places included the participants' homes, local coffee shops, a gym that most of them frequent, or a public park. In order to participate, students and their guardians had to sign consent forms to meet the institutional review board's (IRB) requirements. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to protect their safety and confidentiality.

To produce a multilayered account of the experiences encountered by these students, I deployed a constructivist grounded theory perspective (Charmaz 2006). Interviews included both semi-structured interviews and informal interviews. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Some participants were interviewed twice, either because of time constraints or to elaborate on previous topics that were left unclear in the first interview. Participants were asked about various topics which included reasons for migrating, experiences at school and in the community, language, family, politics, and Trump, among others.

Interviews were transcribed and translated verbatim by the author. All interviews and fieldnotes were coded using the qualitative software program Dedoose. I paid close attention to common themes that emerged in accounts of the experiences of the participants. Topics that emerged as significant by participants were categorized and analyzed for frequency and importance. I wrote theoretical memos based on the raw data to clarify basic

codes and methodological issues (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006). These later became the main topics of discussion in the chapters of this dissertation.

The number of participants in this study remained at 30 because although my intent was to have more participants, things did not pan out that way. Records of the school where I met most of the participants show that in previous years, there are anywhere between 15-25 students that enroll in school after migrating to the U.S. at the beginning of any given school year. But the year after Trump was elected president, there were only four new students in the level 1 ELD classroom. School officials were adamant that this was in large part due to the political climate. Whether this was the case or not, the truth of the matter is that it was much more difficult for me to get permission from these four students and their parents to accept being participants in this study than it had been with the previous students. This speaks to the complexities that the political climate is also having on researchers that conduct work with immigrant communities. It is a roadblock that I faced early on and that made me realize that the fact that there are only 30 participants in the study is significant in itself because that is part of the story.

Setting

This study is based on the experiences of adolescent arrivals that arrived in San Eugenio[3], a city located in California's central coast region prior to the presidential election of 2016. According to U.S. census figures, San Eugenio's population stands at 88,410, and by economic standards is described to be a wealthy city with a median household income of $41,525 and the poverty rate registering at 15.1 percent. Needless to say, participants in this study do not live in the wealthy and upscale neighborhoods of San Eugenio but instead form part of the low income population that share living spaces with multiple family members or

[3] San Eugenio is pseudonym used to protect the confidentiality of participants.

friends in order to meet the high cost of living.

It is important to highlight that given the site for my research in California, the experiences of the youth in this study are largely influenced by location. The initiatives and harsh immigration policies proposed by Trump and his administration require the support of local and state jurisdictions. Even though immigration enforcement falls under federal jurisdiction, federal immigration agencies such as ICE depend on the cooperation from local and state agencies to notify them when they come into contact with an unauthorized person (Perce, Bolter, Selee 2018). There is much debate on this issue. Some cities and states have enacted sanctuary policies to protect undocumented populations from ICE agents while others have passed legislation to abolish sanctuary polices. The state of California stands firm in its decision to be a sanctuary state and has prohibited all local law enforcement agencies from cooperating with ICE. As such, the experiences of the participants in this study are not only influenced by the federal political context but also by the state political context, which to some degree might provide a sense of protection. However, since not every municipality agrees or shares in the same political views as the government of California, the experiences lived in one town as opposed to the next town can be completely different.

Reflexivity

Through this ethnographic study, I immersed myself in the life of participants as best as I could. Upon first meeting most participants in school, they were wary of my presence. However, the first time I taught in their ELD class I felt a connection with them. This connection transpired through my use of the Spanish language. I chose to teach the class in Spanish knowing full well that as recently arrived immigrants they did not feel comfortable with the English language yet. By volunteering daily in their classrooms and helping them

with their work assignments as they attempted to learn the English language and by teaching a class on language and society once a week in their school, I was able to build rapport with most of the participants. At first, since they only saw me as just another teacher, most were very reserved and would only speak to me if they had a question about their work. It did not take long however for them to let their guards down and allow me into their worlds. The more that I engaged with the students the more I got to learn about their experiences, their culture, and their struggles. Little by little I was able to gain their trust and approval. Every time I opened the door to their classroom students would clap, cheer, or scream out my name. They welcomed me into their worlds and allowed me to really get to know them. I have participated in a number of their life course events such as birthday parties, graduations, baby showers, award ceremonies, weddings, and dinners among many others.

I recognize that I am both an insider and an outsider for the adolescent arrivals in this study. As a Latina of Mexican descent, I share many life experiences with them due to our shared ethnicity. To begin with, I look like most of the participants sharing a similar skin tone, hair color and texture, and I speak their same language—Spanish—fluently. Immersed in their worlds, it never dawned on me that they took me in because they saw me as literally being one of them. For example on one occasion, Daniela who had recently arrived from Mexico, was having trouble with her English work assignment and asked me if I remembered when I mastered the English language so that she could have a sense of how long it would take her. I realized then that Daniela thought I too had migrated to the Unites States as an adolescent and had learned English in high school. I explained to her that I was born in the United States and therefore learned English in grade school. I also later learned that family members whom I interacted with through my fieldwork also saw me as sharing in their own experiences. One day when I was visiting Carolina and her family at their

home, her mom took out several items she was selling to show them to me. She grabbed a bedspread out of a package and indicated that it was of high quality and then asked if I had never used that type of bedspread in the homes I used to clean. They knew I was a graduate student and worked at the university. I have never held a job cleaning homes but somehow something about me, perhaps the way I look, made them think that at one point or another in my life I had cleaned homes for a living. It was at times like this that I was made aware of my status as an outsider in this study. My position as a university researcher, my citizenship privileges, and my ability to speak and understand English fluently marked me as an outsider from the adolescent arrivals who wholeheartedly opened up about their lived experiences in the United States.

Chapter Outline

In chapter two, “Coming to America,” I present the narratives as told by participants of their experiences embarking on an international journey. I detail their reasons for coming and interrogate how crossing the border clandestinely informed their perspectives of being immigrants, particularly adolescent arrivals. Not all participants experienced hardships coming over but for those that did their narratives are a testimony of determination and perseverance in the face of adversity. Through participants’ stories about the obstacles faced crossing over, we learn not only about the risks and dangers associated with crossing via illegal means but of the role that necessity, love, and hope play in the lives of immigrants who are willing to make great sacrifices to reach their desired destination.

In chapter three, “Negotiating Liminality: Adolescent Arrivals Navigating a Climate of Fear,” I analyze how the current national political and social contexts influence the incorporation of adolescent arrivals. Through the concept of negotiating liminality, I examine how the youth in this study not only make sense but also come to understand the

anti-immigrant climate that confronted them in the United States. Prior to immigrating, adolescent arrivals were unaware of the politics and laws governing immigrant communities in the United States. They understood that as immigrants they would face hardships but they never envisioned that the newly elected president of the United States would constantly seek to demonize immigrants, which in turn would impact their modes of incorporation. Adolescent arrivals demonstrate nuances in navigating their circumstances based on their age of migration and context of reception.

In chapter four, "'They want to make you feel inferior for not Speaking English': Language as a Master Status," I explore the role of linguistic discrimination in the lives of participants. Throughout U.S. history, the Spanish language has been both a marker of foreign status and a target of nativism (Feagin and Cobas 2008) and the political climate of the time is not the exception. Adolescent arrivals soon learned that their inability to speak and understand English and their constant use of the Spanish language in the public sphere set them apart and placed them at the bottom of a social hierarchy that characterized them as unfit to belong based on their "foreignness". This chapter illustrates how in times of political upheaval certain social categories become more salient than others. In the case of adolescent arrivals, language as a proxy for a Latina/o identity becomes both a weapon used against them to be "othered" and a shield they resort to as a defensive mechanism of community building. I also highlight the meaning-making process that shapes the perceptions of adolescent arrivals toward Mexican American youth based on language practices.

In chapter five, "Strategies of Survival," I explore the avenues adolescent arrivals follow to make the United States their new home. In learning to navigate their new surroundings, adolescent arrivals embark on transformative journeys as they develop

strategies of survival that serve as safety nets allowing them to feel secure and welcomed. This chapter examines the strategies adolescent arrivals develop and resort to as they learn to survive amidst the hostile climate of animosity against immigrants in America, in particular those of Mexican descent. It is through learning how to build community and creating their own spaces of belonging that adolescent arrivals find, even if for only short periods of time, comfort and acceptance in the new land.

Chapter six readdresses the main issues brought up in the other chapters and uses the findings for this study to present recommendations for the future incorporation of adolescent arrivals. It focuses on devising policies that can better assist this immigrant population in attaining first, an education and second, the skills necessary to enter the workforce. In addition, it emphasizes the need to invest in this population and learn more about their experiences for if neglected, the social, political, and economic consequences could be damaging not only for them but also for society at large.

Chapter 2

Coming to America

> *Héramos doce y sólo llegamos siete. Los otros cinco se cansaron y se rindieron…se quedaron, se entregaron. Y pues yo seguí. Y ya llegamos a Houston y le llame a mi mamá. 'Mamá, ya estoy acá. Ya no corro peligro. Sólo dígale a estos señores que le va a terminar de pagar pues de todo.' Y ya. Hasta me entregaron bien hasta eso. No me trataron mal ni nada como muchos dicen. Llegué a una casa donde había dos muchachas. Y me salen, me decian 'Nombre si yo tuviera tu edad yo no lo haría. Yo no lo haría sólo la verdad.' Me salían y así me halagaron un poco. Y ya llegamos y me dieron una coca, ah sabía a gloria la verdad! Si sabía bien la verdad con un sándwich. Y ni me quejaba. Yo estaba bien contento.*

> We were 12 and only 7 of us arrived. The other five got tired and gave up…they stayed, they turned themselves in. And well I kept going. We arrived at Houston and I called my mom. 'Mom, I'm already here. I am no longer in danger. Just tell these men that you will finish paying them all of it.' And then they turned me over. They didn't treat me bad or anything like many people say. I arrived at a house where there were two young women. And there they would say, 'Man, if I was your age, I wouldn't have done it. I wouldn't have done it for real.' They would tell me that and they would make me feel good. We got there and they gave me a coke. Oh, it tasted like heaven for real! It was real good for real and a sandwhich. I didn't complain. I was so happy.

Sebastian came to the United States at the age of 14. He was born and raised in Mexico. His mother, whom he had never met, immigrated to the United States when he was only three months old. She left him behind with his uncle and aunt who took care of him until he was nine years old. He knows nothing of his father. Sebastian recalls having a rough childhood. At the young age of five years old, he was already working in the fields helping his family with the harvest. "*Hacía mucho trabajo forzozo. Mucho trabajo pezado*"

[I did a lot of labor that requires strength. A lot of hard labor]. The harvest was what kept the family afloat; providing both food in the table and food to exchange for money or other necessities. Because he worked, he did not attend school. "*Iba pero una vez a la semana. Sólo iba por la comida y luego me iba,*" [I went but only once a week. I would only go get food and then I would leave] he recalls.

At age nine, his older sister who was raised in another part of Mexico with other family members, took him in. She began home schooling him and little by little he began to read and do math equations. Soon after, he began school. During this time, his mother kept telling him to come to the United States to live with her. He always refused. Then one day, he walked in on his sister talking on the phone with his mother. He recalls her saying how she would love to go to the United States but because she had recently become a mother herself it was not feasible for her to go. As he heard his sister talking about her dream of going to the United States, something in him changed. It was then he decided he would go.

> *Es que yo no tenía tantas ganas pues diciendo 'No, es que va hacer peligroso y todo'. Y miraba a mi hermana hablar con ella diciendo que era bueno y digo yo 'Bueno, voy a cumplir el sueño de mi hermana y de una vez conozco a mi mamá.' Y ya pues a los 14 me sale mi mamá un día, 'Tienes una semana. Si quieres despídete y ya te vienes ya para acá.' Y le digo yo 'Okay ama esta bien.' Y ya. El mero día no me quería ir. Le dije 'Sabes que ya no me quiero ir'. Y no pues me vine de todas maneras.*
>
> [It's because I didn't want to come. I would say, 'No, it's going to be dangerous and all that.' And I would see my sister talk to her saying that it was a good thing and I said, 'Okay, I am going to fulfill my sisters dream and on the way I will finally meet my mom.' And when I was 14, my mom told me one day, 'You have one week. If you want, start saying your goodbyes and come with me over here.' And I said, 'Okay, mom. I'll go.' And that was it. The day I was supposed to come I didn't want to go anymore. I said, 'You know I don't want to go anymore.' But I came anyways.]

Sebastian shared with me his story of coming over to the United States one day as we sat outside in a bench of a local gym he frequents with his friends. When I got to the gym I quickly noticed that he was not there. Sebastian is hard to miss. He is around six feet

tall and has wavy short hair. He has dark skin and for the most part always dresses in black. Today he was wearing a long black t-shirt and black cotton pants. He is always sweating and panting and speaks really fast. I believe this has to do with the fact that he did not speak Spanish growing up. He used to speak a dialect from the region where he was raised in Mexico. He learned Spanish when he went to live with his sister and although he is now fluent in Spanish, he tends to jumble his words and at times it is difficult to understand what he is saying.

Coming to the United States was not something Sebastian ever envisioned he would do. In fact, he was happy living with his sister and his niece. He grew attached to them, in particular his sister whom he says *"la miraba como mi mamá pues ya le decía ama*" [I saw her like my mother and I even began calling her mom]. Having had a rough childhood, he loved the time he spend with his sister and for the first time felt what it was like to have someone that resembled a maternal figure in his life. His mom would call him every Saturday. That was the only day he got to hear her voice. When he told me this I asked him if he had seen the movie *Bajo la Misma Luna*[4]. He laughed and said he did not remember. When I described that the young boy in the film would get a weekly call on Sundays from his mother who lived in the United States, he laughed and said, "*si si ya me acorde…si mas o menos*" [yes, yes I just remembered. Yes it was more or less like that].

The goal of this chapter is to document the experiences of adolescent arrivals who immigrated to the United States during the Trump Era. In doing so, I define who adolescent arrivals are and how their experiences provide a nuanced understanding of different immigrant populations based on their age of migration. Scholars argue that life stage and

[44444444] Under the Same Moon is a film released in 2007. It narrates the story of mother who immigrates to the United States. She lives as an undocumented immigrant in Los

sociodevelopmental context influence the incorporation of immigrants (Rumbuaut 2004). For adolescent arrivals, who participated in the decision making process of immigrating to the United States and whose context of reception was marked by a hostile political climate attacking immigrants, their incorporation in the United States is starkly different than other immigrant groups. I consider how the act of crossing the border and immigrating to the United States informs their formation in the host country and how they learn to understand their position in society. Moreover, by presenting testimonies of being caught and detained at the border, I highlight the consequences associated with the enhancement of border enforcement efforts. I argue that their experiences demonstrate acts of resilience in the face of adversity. At their young age, participants risk everything and defy borders, created by nation-states in an effort to control the movement of people, to reach their desired destination. Not all journeys are the same. But for those who succumbed themselves to the dangers of a clandestine border crossing, their testimonies speak of their valor, strength, and force. Their lived experiences act as a shield of survival having taught them how to confront obstacles and hardships after having surpassed one of the biggest hurdles of their lifetime—coming to America.

Participants

As previously discussed in chapter one, childhood arrivals are described to be children under the age of 18 who enter the United States either alone or with primary caregivers and who do not possess the legal documentation to reside in the country. Under this definition, all immigrants arriving under the age of 18 are considered to be childhood arrivals. Existent literature captures in great wealth the experiences of those who immigrated at a young age and who lived in the United Stated during their formative years also know as

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Angeles who struggles to make a living and send money home. In order to embark on the

the 1.5-generation (Abrego 2006; Flores and Chapa 2009; Gonzales 2010, 2011, 2016; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009, Negrón-Gonzales 2013, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017).

A lot of what we know about childhood arrivals centers around those that entered the United States at a young age and their transition to adulthood (Abrego 2006; Flores and Chapa 2009; Gonzales 2010, 2011, 2016; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009, Negrón-Gonzales 2013, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017). It is estimated that more than 2.1 million undocumented youth reside in the United States (Batalova and McHugh 2010; Gonzales 2011). Because of their age of migration, childhood arrivals of the 1.5-geneartion are raised no differently than their U.S.-born counterparts. They attend U.S. schools and most, successfully integrate both culturally and socially into the American mainstream. Many of these youths, are unaware of their legal status growing up. Some learn of their precarious status until they come of age and find themselves in situations where legal documentation is required such as driving a car, working, and voting among other things (Abrego 2006; Gonzalez and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009).

Adolescent arrivals are also not adult immigrants otherwise known as first generation immigrants. They are also not second-generation immigrants who are generally defined as U.S.-born children of foreign-born parents. Howerver, because their experiences are hypothesized to be somewhat closer to first generation immigrant adults, some scholars classify them as members of the 1.25-generation (Rumbaut 2004). Their experiences are rendered invisible in the literature amongst a sea of scholarship depicting the experiences and trajectories of both first-generation immigrants and 1.5-generation immigrants.

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journey, she leaves behind her nine-year-old son with her mother in Mexico.

Adolescent arrivals immigrate to the United States either with their families of origin or alone. A major difference between them and childhood arrivals is that even though some might have come with their parents, they all participated in the decision-making process of migrating. Because of their age at migration, they are aware of the reasons for migrating since they experienced first-hand the difficulties encountered in their home countries such as poverty, violence, and uncertainty among others. For those that immigrated on their own, family reunification is a major motif. Most of the adolescent arrivals in this study that embarked on the international journey alone had never met their parents before. Still others came to pursue a better education or economic stability.

Unaccompanied Immigrant Children

There are numerous theories that aim to explain why people migrate. Contemporary immigration patterns have shifted away from Europe to other parts of the world such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Massey, Arrango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor 1993). The once dominant push and pull theory cited in the literature, although useful in highlighting economic factors motivating migration patterns, does not encompass the entire picture. Massey et al. (1993) contends that:

> There is no single, coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries (pp. 432).

Theorizing the reasons for why individuals immigrate are beyond the scope of this manuscript. What is at issue here is understanding how immigrants, in this case adolescent arrivals, experience the journey of coming to America. Because of their age, adolescent arrivals that immigrate on their own are classified as being Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC). Apprehensions at the Southwest border reached an all time peak in 2014 shedidng light on the plight of UAC's.

The guidelines by which the apprehension and care of UAC are handled and processed were established in the Flores Settlement Agreement of 1997. At that time, the department of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) oversaw its implementation. This settlement provided a basic framework for how UAC were to be treated and handled to ensure their safety. Basic requirements were stipulated such as making sure UAC received medical assistance and be placed in facilities with toilets and sinks. Skepticism over if these regulations were being met, led to the creation of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 which then divided the responsibilities of UAC handling between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). At port of entries, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) handle apprehensions and detentions of unaccompanied children. Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) takes care of custody transfers and repatriation proceedings and also administer apprehensions of UAC in the interior of the country. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) then oversees the placement and care of UAC. In 2008, concern that some UAC faced danger when repatriated to their countries of origin due to lack of adequate screening from agents, led to the passage of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. Under this act, additional screening must take place to ensure UAC safety. This act also set guidelines for the handling of UAC from contiguous countries such as Mexico and Canada. The act allows UAC from Mexico and Canada to return to their countries without penalties. On the other hand, those coming from countries other than Mexico and Canada are transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement to be properly placed in a shelter (Kandel 2017).

Out of the 30 participants in this study, eleven of them came to this country alone and were therefore classified as UAC. All eleven of them crossed the border clandestinely

with the help of a *coyote* or human smuggler. Of these, six participants came from Mexico and five from either Guatemala or Honduras. As stipulated in the law, all five of them were apprehended, detained, and transferred to a shelter awaiting to be reunited with a family member. Even though UAC are released to the custody of a family member, removal proceedings still continue, as is the case for participants in this study. Of the participants who came from Mexico, all of them with the exception of one were apprehended various times and repatriated to their homes until they were finally able to cross the border successfully.

Border Crossing

Carlos was 16 years old when he decided he would come to America. He is tall, around 5 feet 8 inches and is fairly thin. He has dark brown skin and ever since I first met him he always has hickies on his neck, which he never tries to hide. His hair is black and he usually wears it long on the top and short on the sides. Carlos likes to keep to himself. He comes across as being shy. Carlos is not one to voice his opinion or speak up but instead just sits back and smiles. Although he is always smiling, he constantly uses his hands to cover his mouth when he does. One thing that stands out from Carlos is his gaze. I can best describe his eyes with a Spanish slang word known as "*picaros*" which means flirtatious with a hint of mischief. Although Carlos is on the shy side, he is constantly getting in trouble at school for being late to class or not doing his work.

One day at school, Carlos invited me to meet his family. He said he wanted me to meet his parents and arranged for me to come over on a Saturday evening. When I got to his apartment, everyone in his family— his mother, father, younger brother, and older sister with her newborn baby girl—was there, except him. The apartment is an old run down place in the center of town. As I was walking over, I noticed there was trash everywhere around

the apartment complex and the environment did not look inviting. There were a few men in the parking lot of the apartment building fixing a car. A white man got out of one of the upstairs complexes and began yelling at the top of his lungs something that I could not make out. Afraid, I hurried towards the address Carlos had given me and realized that it was upstairs next to the man that was screaming. I decided to call Carlos' mom who came outside to greet me. As I walked into the apartment I could not help but feel sadness. The apartment is a tiny cramped space. In the small area that would serve as a living room was a bed and next to it was a sofa. On the opposite side was a small kitchen and a small hallway that I later learned led to two small bedrooms and a bathroom. Carlos' mom told me to sit in the couch while she sat on the bed next to her young son who was lying there. She smiled and said that today the little boy was celebrating his 8th birthday and then followed with "*esta muy triste la cosa*" [it's a sad situation]. Soon after Carlos came rushing in the front door and sat next to his mom in the bed. He said he had gone downtown that morning and was on his way back on the bus but it took forever to arrive.

As the seven of us sat there in the center of the cramped apartment with no ventilation but an open window, we began talking about life in Mexico and their experiences in the United Sates. Carlos' dad sat by the window trying to get some fresh air. He told me he had lived in the United States for almost 17 years. He left Mexico when Carlos was an infant. Six years later, his mother decided to join him and left Carlos behind with his grandmother. When I initially asked Carlos why he decided to come to the United Sates he said, "*Porque, aca estaba mi familia y queria estudiar aca, aprender otro idioma*" [Because my family was over here and I wanted to study, learn another language]. But his mother barged in and said that he wanted to come because of everything that happens in Mexico. She added, "*Dile, yo pensaba que mis papás estaban más mejor qué alla en Mexico pero ya*

veo que no" [Tell her that you thought your parents were better off than they were in Mexico but you already saw that that's not the case]. When she said this the entire family laughed. When the laughter came to an end, Carlos informed me that living in Mexico was hard for him. There was no money and thus suffered from hunger and feared the violence that surrounded his community. It would take him 3 attempts to cross the border before he was finally reunited with his family.

> Liliana: *¿Y cómo te viniste? ¿Con quién te veniste?* [And how did you come? With whom did you come?]
> Carlos: *Sólo. Me trajo un señor a Tijuana. Y ya me dejaron solo en Tijuana por un mes y ya pasé para acá.* [Alone. A man brought me to Tijuana. And he left me there alone in Tijuana for about a month and then I came over here].
> Liliana: *Con quién estuviste allá ese mes?* [Who were you with that month?]
> Carlos: *Con unos señores, no sé, que pasaron para acá.* [With some men, I don't know, that came over here].
> Liliana: *¿Cómo fue esa experiencia para ti?* [How was that experience for you?]
> Carlos: *Fea.* [Ugly.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]
> Carlos: *Porque cada vez que intentaba pasar me agarraban y ya me quería pasar para acá.* [Because every time I tried to cross, they would get me and I already wanted to come over here.]
> Liliana: *¿Te daba miedo?* [Were you afraid?]
> Carlos: *Sí, de qué me agarraran otra vez.* [Yes, that they would get me again.]
> Liliana: *Y cuando te agarraban como era ese proceso?*[And when they would get you how was that process?]
> Carlos: *Me hician firmar papeles y ya me mandaban como a una casa hogar y hasta que fuera un alguien por mi alli.* [They would make me sign papers and they would send me to a shelter until someone would go get me.]
> Liliana: *¿En México?* [In Mexico?]
> Carlos: *Si en Tijuana pues. Y hasta que iban unos señores a sacarme pero de los que pasan pues y ya me iba con ellos y otra vez asi. Me esperaba otro rato y otra vez cruzaba asi.* [Yes, in Tijuana. And then some men would go get me but those men that cross people and I would go with them and then I would try again. I would wait a while and then I would try to cross again.]

Carlos finally entered the United States in July of 2016. Because it was summer, he was not able to go to school. His mother who was nodding in agreement informed me that when he arrived all of his legs were injured. Carlos who at first beckoned his mom to stop talking, then added that he had no skin in his legs for he had scrapped all of it off when he was slithering through the dessert trying to avoid getting caught.

Carlos understood the risks he was taking by crossing the border illegally. His yearning to escape the poverty that surrounded his life in Mexico and the desire of reuniting with his parents, for him, outweighed those risks. Golash-Boza (2015) posits that migrating to a different country is for anyone a "momentous decision" even for those that do it legally. However for those that do the journey illegally, there is much courage and even recklessness to some extend, she argues. Many immigrants die during their attempt to cross the border. In FY2005, the number of deaths at the border reached a record-breaking high of 473 migrants (MPI 2006). Fortunately, Carlos eventually managed to cross the border and be reunited with his family. Even though he underwent the cruelest of obstacles he could ever imagine, he does not regret his decision to migrate. Although what he found in America was not what he had envisioned, for poverty still surrounds his life, he is content. He is not into politics and prefers to avoid the news. He only knows that there is a new president that does not like him. "*Dice artas cosas de nosotros*" [He says a lot of things about us], Carlos said. But for the time being, he does not let these comments get the best of him and instead focuses on the possibilities of a brighter future.

There exists an ongoing debate on what is the best way to handle unaccompanied immigrant children such as Carlos. These debates aim to address ways to better manage the flow of UAC entering the United Sates. Donato and Perez (2017) contend that in order to determine this, it is necessary to understand the reasons for why immigrant children migrate

in the first place. Examining the systemic factors that push children to immigrate is a vital component missing in the debates. I argue that equally as important is examining the journeys themselves in order to fully understand the complexity behind the migration of UAC. This chapter is dedicated to highlighting the stories of adolescent arrivals that under the law are classified as unaccompanied immigrant children. In doing so, it provides a snap shot of the intricacies that UAC undergo to reach their desired destination. The stories in this chapter testify to what Golash-Boza (2015) found in her study, that the enhanced security measures at the border did not deter immigrants from crossing over but instead just made them more vulnerable and their journeys much more difficult.

Like Carlos, Carmen also underwent a heart wrenching experience immigrating to the United Sates. She was 17 years old when she embarked on the journey. Her father had been working in the United States since she was four years old. Unlike other participants in the study who reported wanting to come to the United Sates to meet their parents, Carmen had no interest in being reunited with her father. She grew up with her mother who is now remarried. Carmen says the only reason she decided to come to America was to get a better education. With limited opportunities in her home country of Honduras, she desired to get a good education in order to make someone of herself. Her trip to the United States however was not a pleasant experience. She recalls details of her trip in the following excerpt from her interview.

> Liliana: *¿Y cómo fue el viaje?* [And how was the trip?]
> Carmen: *Pues.* [Well.]
> Liliana: *¿Fue difícil?* [Was it difficult?]
> Carmen: *Si, pase por muchas cosas, vivi muchas cosas que nunca pensé que iba a pasar. A veces que no comíamos cuando veníamos en el camino. A veces nomas cenabamos, desayuno o almuerzo no haciamos. Durante todo el transcurso a veces hacía frío. Cambios de clima que yo casi no miraba alla. Pues también que escuchaba tanto como los Zetas como pandillas qué casi allá no sabía que eran esos. Y más el tiempo que estuvimos casi encerrados tanto tiempo. Ver diferentes clases de comidas alla que yo nunca había visto*

> *en mi vida.* [Yes, I went through a lot of things, I lived a lot of things that I never thought I would. Sometimes we didn't eat in the trip. Sometimes we only had dinner, we didn't have breakfast or lunch. During the trip sometimes it was very cold. There were temperatures that I had never been through in my home. Also, I had heard so much about the Zetas, like gangs that over there in my hometown I didn't know who they were. And also all the time we were held behind closed doors. Seeing different types of food that I had never seen in my life.]

The enhancement in border enforcement has made journeys for many immigrants extremely difficulty and almost deadly (Golash-Boza 2015; Inda 2007). Carmen's story highlights the dangers associated with crossing to the United States illegally. There has been an increase in border security measures since the mid-1990s in an attempt to control undocumented immigration to the Unites States. A series of efforts were launched as a result including "Operation Hold the Line" implemented in 1993 in El Paso and "Operation Gatekeeper" in 1994 in San Diego. Along with this there was an increase in the number of not only personnel but also resources along the Mexico-U.S. border. Federal funds were used to fence 70 miles of the border and in the purchase of surveillance technology such as sensors and infrared monitors to better assist federal agents in the apprehending undocumented immigrants (Cornelius and Salehyan 2007). The increased presence of US border patrol agents and border security measures have resulted in what has become known as the militarization of the border. The militarization of the border has not only resulted in mass deportations but in close deadly encounters that some like Carmen consider themselves lucky to be able to share.

> Carmen: *Nos vinimos en un tráiler casi por tres días sin parar. Estuvimos en Tamaulipas de ahí nos llevaron a un hotel de ese hotel nos quedamos 3 días y nos llevaron con otra señora y estuvimos casi 2 semanas. Dos semanas con una señora que tenía sus hijos y de ahí pues a mí me separaron del grupo con el que venía.* [We came in a tractor trailor for three days nonstop. We were in Tamaulipas and from there they took us to a hotel and in that hotel we stayed three days and they took us over to a woman whom we stayed with for almost two weeks. We stayed two weeks with her and her kids and then they separated me from the group.]

Liliana: *¿Te separaron?* [They separted you?]
Carmen: *Si*. [Yes.]
Liliana: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]
Carmen: *No entendí porque pero me separaron y me pasaron en el río.* [I didn't understand why they separated me and they passed me through the river.]
Liliana: *¿En Tamaulipas?* [In Tamaulipas?]
Carmen: *Si para cruzar el lo que es el…*[Yes to cross the…]
Liliana: *¿El Río Grande?* [The Rio Grande?]
Carmen: *Sí. Y pues de ahí me dijeron que caminara y yo ya no sabía ni qué hacer porque estaba sola y la persona que me llevó pues nada más me dijo que caminara ya no parara de caminar y de ahí me agarró migración y pues me metieron a un carro y me preguntaron cómo me llamaba y todo después me metieron a la hielera.* [Yes. And well from there they told me to walk and I didn't know what to do because I was alone and the person that took me just told me to keep on walking and don't stop and that was when immigration got me and they took me in a car and they asked me what my name was and then they put me in the freezer.]
Liliana: *¿Qué es eso?* [What is that?]
Carmen: *Es donde están es como la cárcel donde agarran todos los inmigrantes y los meten en un cuarto frío. Es un castigo que les dan por cruzar ilegalmente.* [It is where you are like in a jail where they put all the migrants they catch and they put them in a cold room. It is supposed to be like a punishment for crossing illegaly.]
Liliana: *¿Y eso ya es en los Estados Unidos?* [And you were already here in the United States?]
Carmen: *Sí. Ya estaba en Texas.* [Yes. I was in Texas.]
Liliana: *¿Te trataron mal?* [Did they treat you bad?]
Carmen: *Pues como era menor de edad pues no me podían tratar tan mal pero cuando estaba allí sí porque me metieron a la hielera y estuve aguantando casi toda una noche de frío porque no te dan ni siquiera una sábana para taparte.* [Well since I was a minor they couldn't treat me bad but when I was there yes because they put me in the freezer and I had to endure the cold all night long because they don't give you even a blanket to cover yourself.]

Amidst the horrible experience she went through, Carmen does not regret her decision. She still cannot get used to living in the United Sates because she misses her mother and siblings dearly but she is determined to get a good education. Her younger brother has told her in various occasions that he too wants to immigrate to the United States but she often discourages him. She does not want him to undergo the horrible experiences she had coming to America. María also suffered a similar experience like Carmen. She wanted to

come to the United States to study and make someone of herself. Born and raised in Guatemala, María also faced scarce resources and she desired to get an education and become a professional. In Guatemala, she would sew clothes for a living and got paid very little. She told her parents that if they did not allow her to go to the United Sates she would become a police officer in Guatemala. They ultimately agreed to let her come. Her father was already in the United States working and sending money home. However, she did not come here to reunite with him. In fact, when I met her she was living with her uncle and aunt who took her in. María too says she had heard stories of the difficulties associated with the journey but she was willing to risk it all for a better and stable future.

> Liliana: *¿Sabías lo que podía pasar?* [Did you know what could happen?]
> María: *Sí. Ya varios familiares de mi familia se han intentado venir y contaban cosas así raras. Decían que unos quedan muertos otros se quedaban allí en el desierto pues nunca les creí. Al principio sí me sentí agobiada porque dejaba a mi mama. Todo el tiempo estaba con ella hasta ese tiempo que me separé de ella. Entonces ya cuando pues el señor que nos traía, él no nos dejaba aguantar hambre y sólo veníamos menores y nos cuidaron bastante. Ya cuando ya nos entregaron ya que a otro señor para que nos pasara el río fue dónde aguantamos una semana de hambre que no nos daban comida. Que sólo nos daban unos chiles verdes jalapeños creo que son.* [Yes. A few family members had tried to come before and they would tell stories of weird things that would happen. They would say that some would die in the trip and others would stay there in the desert but I never believed them. At first yes, I felt overwhelmed because I was leaving my mother. I had always been with her until then. So when the man that brought us, well he never let us go hungry and it was only minors that came in the trip and they took good care of us. And when he turned us over to another man, the one that crossed us through the river, that is when we went a week of starvation since they didn't give us food. The only thing we got were green chile jalapeños. I think that's what they were.]
> Liliana: *¿Y no comías?* [And did you eat?]
> María: *No. Sólo estuvimos a pura agua y con unas tortillas que habían allí. Había lo que era arroz pero estaba con gusanos. Fue algo difícil ahí en esa semana pero ya después cuando ya nos tiraron y nos agarró lo que fue migración si nos pasaron a una hielera pero nos dieron bueno se pudiera decir como un burrito y un jugo que nos dieron.* [No. We only had water to drink and some tortillas that were there. There was rice but it had worms. That week was difficult but after they left us and immigration agents apprehended us they transferred us to the freezer but they gave us what we would call a burrito and a juice.]

Liliana: *¿Y si te lo comiste?* [And did you eat it?]
María: *Sí. Me pegó dolor pero después ya dije pues me tengo que aguantar. Fue un poco difícil ya la última parte pero al principio todo estuvo bien.* [Yes. It gave me a stomachache but I told myself I had to deal with it. The latter part of the trip was a little difficult but at the beginning everything was fine.]

María was finally able to cross the river using a car tire as a floating device. It took her 15 days to finally cross over to America. It was there that she was apprehended and transferred to a detention center for minors. She acknowledges that her trip was difficult and for many months later she had trouble eating because everything would upset her stomach. In school, she usually never had lunch or snacks and would choose to stay in class while her peers went to the cafeteria to eat because she could not stand eating too much food. She believes her stomach problems originated in her trip. She never once complained about it though. Soon after arriving in the United States, she joined a church and became fully immersed in her spirituality. She does not dwell on the negative aspects of her life but instead constantly counts her blessing and is happy to have found a place where she can grow spiritually. Among a sky of grey clouds she says, her spirituality "*es lo mejor que se podría decir en mi vida*" [is the best part of my life one could say].

Detention Centers

When unaccompanied immigrant children are apprehended and detained by border patrol agents at the border, they are obligated under law to turn them over to ICE. ICE agents then have 72 hours to determine whether or not they are dealing with an unaccompanied minor. If it is determined that the person apprehended is an unaccompanied minor they must be released to the Office of Refugee Resettlement who then arranges for the placement of UAC in an appropriate and designated shelter (Kandel 2017). Information obtained from the Office of Refugee Resettlement states that due to the high numbers of

UAC in recent years, as of October 2017 they increased the number of shelter beds from 6,500 to 13,000 beds.

As was the case for participants in this study, those who were classified as UAC from noncontiguous countries such as Mexico or Canada were placed transferred to the custody of the ORR and placed in a shelter until they were reunited with a family member. According to rules and regulations under which ORR operates, UAC are cared for in facilities that provide classroom education as well as medical health services. ORR must conduct a series of background checks before determining if the UAC will be released to a family member or sponor. The *Flores Agreement,* established a ranking guide for sponsors. The ranking order is as follows: parent, legal guardian, an adult relative, an adult specified by the parent or legal guardian as being a designated entity, a licensed program, and finally an adult approved by ORR (Kandel 2017). All paticipants who were apprehended and transered to a shelter were later released to a parent already living in the United States.

Mateo who came to the United States for poverty-related issues, was detained in the border town of McAllen, Texas. This was his second attempt trying to cross illegaly. Unlike his first attempt, this time he managed to actually cross to the United States before being caught. It was during the night and he vividly recalls feeling scared that he would be sent back to Guatemala again. Unfamiliar with the law, he did not know then that because of his age, he would not be sent back but instead would undergo a different process.

> Mateo: *Cómo era menor de edad nos detuvieron a todos y los que eran mayor de edad los deportaban y como era menor de edad me mandaron a un albergue.* [Because I was a minor they detained all of us and the ones that were adults they got deported and since I was a minor they sent me to a shelter.]
> Liliana: *¿Y dónde está el albergue?* [Where was that shelter?]
> Mateo: *En Texas.* [In Texas.]
> Liliana: *¿En Houston?* [In Houston?]
> Mateo: *Si.* [Yes.]

Liliana: *¿Cuánto tiempo duraste en el albergue?* [How long were you at the shelter?]
Mateo: *Un mes y cinco días.* [A month and five days.]
Liliana: *¿Y ahí estabas agusto?* [Were you comfortable there?]
Mateo: *Sí, alli si porque me daban todo. Mantenían bien a uno y todo asi.* [Yes, they gave us everything there. They treated us good and everything.]

Mateo is happy with the treatment he received at the shelter. He enjoyed the time he spent there and was able to make new friends. The friendships though he said were temporary because they were not allowed to have phones and therefore were not able to get any contact information from any of them. Once the necessary background checks were made for his sponsor, Mateo was finally released to his father.

Emiliano, too was detained in the border town of Brownsville, Texas. When I first met Emiliano in school, I told him I was originally from Brownsville and I remember he smiled and said he knew where that was at. Unaware of how he knew the town I did not make much of it. It was not until I formally interviewed him a few months later that I would learn how he knew of my hometown.

Emiliano: *Pues fue donde me detuvo la migra y me llevó al a la a la hielera.* [Well it was here immigration detained me and took me to the freezer.]
Liliana: *¿Cuánto tiempo duraste alli?* [How much time did you spend there?]
Emiliano: *Un día.* [One day.]
Liliana: *¿Y luego a dónde te mandaron?* [And then where did they sent you?]
Emiliano: *A la pollera.* [To a detention center for children.]
Liliana: *¿Y dónde fue eso?* [And where was that?]
Emiliano: *Ahí mismo pero como a media hora de allí.* [There in the same place but like thirty minutes from there.]
Liliana: *¿Ahí había más jóvenes?* [Were there more youth there?]
Emiliano: *Sí.* [Yes.]
Liliana: *¿Cuánto tiempo duraste allí?* [How much time did you spend there?]
Emiliano: *Un día también.* [Also one day.]
Liliana: *¿Y luego?* [And then?]
Emiliano: *Me trajeron para Houston, Texas.* [They took me to Houston, Texas.]

In Texas, Emiliano spent his days in a shelter waiting for all the paperwork to be completed so he could be released to his mother. Emiliano was happy when that day came. When he was finally reunited with his mother at the airport he says they hugged a long time as his mother wept softly in his arms.

Participants entered the United States through various ports of entry. The experiences of getting caught and detained however were similar regardless of place or region. Marco crossed to the United States through California. He embarked on the international trip with an older cousin. He had no idea that both of them ran different risks based on their age. Unaware of how immigration proceedings took place in the United States, he came along thinking he would never get separted from his cousin. When the both of them got detained, his cousin was deported but he was not.

> Marco: *Por mi edad que estoy aquí si no fuera eso pues yo estuviera en México.* [Because of my age I am here if not I would be back in Mexico.]
> Liliana: *¿Pero venían solos o se vinieron con alguien que los iba guiando?* [But did you all come alone or did you come with a guide?]
> Marco: *Veníamos solos porque él ya conocía dice.* [We came alone because he already knew the way.]
> Liliana: *¿Y luego cuando los agarran cómo fue eso para ti?* [And when they apprehend you how was that experience for you?]
> Marco: *Pues sentí un poco de miedo porque nunca me habían agarrado y dije 'Que tal si me golpean' y así.* [Well I felt a bit scared because I had never been detained and I said, 'What if they beat me up' and like that.]
> Liliana: *¿Fueron malos?* [Were they mean to you?]
> Marco: *No, fueron este buena gente.* [No, they were nice people.]
> Liliana: *¿Como dices buena gente?* [What do you mean nice people?]
> Marco: *Porque nos agarraron los gringos, los güeros y pues se portaron bien con nosotros. Nomás nos dijeron que ahora sí pues todo y ahí nos paramos y luego pues nos subió en la 'perrera'.* [Because the gringos, detained us and well they were nice to us. They just told us that now they had gotten us and everything and we stopped there and then they took us to the 'dog pound'.]
> Liliana: *¿Les hablaron mal?* [Did they talk to you in a bad way?]
> Marco: *No, no nos hablaron mal.* [No, they did not talk bad to us.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué pensaste durante todo este proceso?* [What did you think throughout all of this process?]
> Marco: *Pues yo dije, pues como no escuchaba. Más o menos inglés y nomás así me quedé pensando lo que decían y ni sé si me dijeron alguna cosa mala o alguna cosa buena.* [Well I said, since I didn't hear them. They were

> talking more or less English and I just stayed there thinking what they were saying, and I don't even know if they said something bad or something good.]

Marco was not aware that he would be taken to a shelter with other immigrant youth. He crossed to the United States through California and soon after was taken to a shelter in Arizona. Marco remained in the shelter will ORR located his father in order to be released. While in the shelter, he says was treated well and was able to participate in their education programs, which he really liked and appreciated. He says, "*me estaban enseñando inglés mientras mi papeleo hacían para que me dejaran libre aquí en los Estados Unidos.* [They were teaching me English while they were doing all the paperwork to let me free in the United Sates].

Most adolescent arrivlas in this study reported not knowing how UAC are processed in the United States. The only thing they knew was that they had to get to the other side without being caught and do everything was in their power to survive the journey. Deportations have been in an all time high in recent years. Golash-Boza (2015) refers to this phenomenon of immigration enforcement as mass deportation since the numbers exceed any of those in previous years. The highest levels of deportations were reported in 2009 under President Obama, averaging nearly 400,000. (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Motel 2011). Participants knew of the risks of deportations but were not deterred by them. Isaac, for example, was sixteen when he migrated to the United States. It took him six attempts to finally reach his destination. Everytime he was detatined in the border he was sent back to Mexico City and placed under the care of the National System for Integral Family Development. He was not released until a family member would go claim him. Everytime that happened, his mother would travel from his hometown to Mexico City to claim him. Although he was supposed to go back with her, he never did. Instead he would continue to

cross illegally again until one day he was finally able to do so. All six attempts took place within a time lapse of two months. The experience of it all he says made him a stronger person, not by choice but by necessity. Migrating to the United States he says changes a person. It turns you into what he says, *"más fuerte, una persona más fuerte más dura"* [more stronger, a person who is stronger and harder to break.]

Reasons for Migrating

Participants in this study decided to come to the United States for several reasons. The most common reason cited by participants was family reunification (35.5%), followed by economic reasons (22.6%), and then parents decision to have the entire family migrate either to escape poverty or violence (12.9%). Other reasons such as seeking a better education, safety, and a better future combined totaled 21.4%. Because the reasons behind their decision to migrate differ for participants, their experiences also differ. For those who came along with their parents and siblings, although leaving their homes behind was difficult, the actual journey was not and therefore some even anticipated it. For those that came on their own and had to endure an illegal border crossing, the journey was not only difficult, but became an unforgettable experience that marked them for life.

Coming Along for the Ride: A Family Decision

Paulina came to the United Sates with her family. Her father had been working in the United States for a couple of years before sending off for his wife and children. She claims she was happy to embark on the journey and to begin a new life. While her father was working in the United Sates, Paulina lived with her mother and sister in a small rural town in Mexico. She desired to do something with her life but had limited opportunities in her hometown. When the family decided that everyone would immigrate to the United States, Paulina was more than trilled about the decision.

> Paulina: *Pues fue fácil porque haya yo no estaba haciendo nada porque no podía empezar a estudiar algo porque yo sabía que nos íbamos a venir. Y pues allá voy a poder estudiar inglés y luego ya una carrera.* [Well it was easy because over there I was not studying because I couldn't start studying since I knew we were going to come. And well, over there I could learn English and get a career.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué dices que ya sabías que se iban a venir?* [Why do you say you already knew you were coming?]
> Paulina: *En cuanto nos dijeron que si podíamos venir a los Estados Unidos, mi papá dijo, 'en cuanto nos lleguen los papeles nos vamos para allá.' A bueno.* [As soon as they told us that we could come to the United Sates, my dad said, 'as soon as we get our papers we are going over there.' Oh ok.]

Paulina says she was bored in Mexico and was happy to move to the United States with her family. She had heard of the many opportunities available to students in the United Sates and she wanted to take advantage of that knowing very well that in Mexico she would never be able to experience upward mobility due to scarce resources. Because Paulina was 18 when she immigrated with her family she was not able to enroll in high school but instead enrolled in a local community class to learn English. Her sister Gabriela, on the other hand, was 14 years old when they immigrated. She was not as happy as Paulina was to come to the United States. She says "*yo estaba acostumbrada a otro tipo de vida*" [I was used to another type of life]. Gabriela has had a hard time adjusting to her new life. She is very reserved in her personality and making friends has not been an easy task for her. Gabriela and Paulina were fortunate to experience a pleasant border crossing. They both acknowledge that the trip was not a difficult one and are glad to have been able to make the trip with both of their parents. The sisters did not experience hardships crossing the border and have even been able to visit their homeland on several occasions.

Sergio too came to the United States with his family. His older sister had immigrated to the United Sates a few years earlier and although at first she was living with extended family members, she began to have problems with them and decided to venture off on her own. Her parents were not happy with this decision and since they themselves had lived in

the United States 20 years earlier they decided to come again. This time they would not only work to sustain the family but also help their oldest daughter along the way. The news did not settle well with Sergio who at 16 years old was not excited about leaving everything behind and moving to a new country.

> Liliana: *¿Y tú qué pensaste?* [And what did you think?]
> Sergio: *Qué me iba a sentir extraño pues es otro idioma son otras costumbres. Y sentía como miedo de no poder estudiar aquí por la diferencia de idioma.* [That I was going to feel strange since I didn't know the language nor other customs. And I felt scared that I wouldn't be able to study here because of the differences in langague.]
> Liliana: *¿Y fue una opción decir 'me voy a quedar'?* [And was it an option for you to say, 'I will stay'?]
> Sergio: *No. No fue opción. Un día ya estamos aquí….y tienes que echarle ganas.* [No. It was not an option. One day we were here…and I had to give it all I had].

Sergio, like Paulina and Gabriela did not encounter difficulties crossing the border. They were able to enter the United Sates with documentation and thus did not undergo hardships and obstacles like other participants did. Once the family made the decision to migrate, the trip was a done deal and there was no negotiating for them. As minors, their parents made the decision for them but as adolescents, they understood the reasons for migrating and ultimately embarked on the trip showing not only support but also respect for their parents. The decision to migrate may have not been initially theirs, but as they explained to me, they were involved in the process and planning of the trip, which allowed them to mentally prepare and be somewhat ready for what was to come.

Fleeing Violence

Jimena and Carolina also came to the United States as a family with their mother. However, unlike Gabriela and Paulina, they came here as asylum seekers. The sisters did not want to come to the United States but their parents said they had to. In fact, their mom came with them on the trip with the idea to just drop them off at the border and pass them

off to their older sister who had immigrated to the United States 16 years ago. Things did not happen as planned. When the three of them arrived at the Mexico-U.S. border, the officers did not allow their mom to drop them off. Jimena recalls him telling her mom that she could not do that "*porque no era guardería para que nos dejara aquí*" [because it was not a day care where she could just leave us there]. And just like that their plans changed. Their mom had to come with them to the United States and was forced to call her husband back in Mexico to inform him that she would not be returning home.

Jimena was 15 years old when she came to the United States. She is about five feet, five inches tall and has a dark skin tone. She is heavy set and has dark brown curly hair, which she usually wears in a ponytail. She has round chubby cheeks that seem to rise up close to her eyes every time she laughs. Jimena has a bubbly personality and is very loud. In school, she tends to get in trouble often for laughing out loud and talking out of place. Her sister Carolina, on the other hand, was 17 years old when she came to the United States. She looks nothing like Jimena. She is short, about five feet tall and has light skin. She is the only one in her family with a light complexion, which is why they call her "*la güera*" [the white one]. She has long brown hair and she usually never wears makeup. She has a squeaky voice and a loud laugh.

Of all the participants in this study, it is perhaps with Jimena and Carolina that I have spent the most time with. I have been in all of their family celebrations from baby showers to baptisms to birthday parties. They are a united family that loves to have fun and enjoy each other's company. It is hard to believe that underneath all their joy and happiness there is a lot of pain and suffering. Jimena and Carolina came to the United States fleeing violence. They are currently seeking asylum because their brother went missing not long ago. They believe he is another victim of the cartel violence surrounding many Mexican

towns. Their brother is one of many gone missing in their Mexican hometown. Jimena once told me, *"Mucha gente inocente la agarraron también de allí de donde nosotros vivimos y hasta ahorita no han sabido tampoco nada de los demás*. [They took a lot of innocent people from the town where we live and as of now they don't know anything about them either]. When their brother went missing, their parents told them that they needed to leave Mexico and come live with their older sister in the United States. Carolina recalls not wanting to leave. She said, "*porque yo estaba a gusto alla. No me quería venir porque pues yo quería saber si mi hermano iba a llegar*" [because I was comfortable over there. I didn't want to come because I wanted to know if my brother was going to return]. In fact, that is the reason why their father stayed behind. He is still waiting for the day his son will return home.

Their brother sold chickens from his home for a living. The day he went missing, his mom who helped him with his business, informed him that they no longer had any chickens to sell and they had just received a large order and she did not know what to do. The brother decided to go to a chicken warehouse to purchase more chickens and that was the last time they saw him.

> Jimena: *Pues mi hermano le tocó ir hasta allá y ahí lo agarraron. Es cuando estaba bien feo por allá.* [Well my brother had to go there and they got him. It was when things were really bad over there.]
> Liliana: *¿Pero quién lo agarró?* [But who got him?]
> Jimena: *La policía. La policía se lo entregó a los, a los del cartel que les dician alla.* [The police. The police gave him over to, to the cartel like they would call them over there.]
> Liliana: *¿Y tu familia como se dio cuenta de que agarraron a tu hermano?* [And how did your family discover that they got your brother?]
> Jimena: *En las cámaras miraron. Porque nosotros fuimos a buscarlo. Miraron que lo agarró la policía y pues la policía lo llevó allí que después lo entregaron con los señores esos y ya.* [The cameras captured that. Because we went to go look for him. They say that the police got him and well the police took him there and then turned him over to those men.]
> Liliana: *¿Ustedes fueron a preguntar a la policía sobre tu hermano?* [Did you all go ask the police about your brother's whereabouts?]

> Jimena: *No. Ahí donde venden el pollo, ahí tenían cámaras y el señor y pues ahí fuimos nosotros a preguntar 'no ha venido un muchacho por pollo?' dijo 'no.' Dijimos 'pero dijo que iba a venir para acá'. Dijo 'nose pero ya ve como están las cosas quién sabe que haya pasado.' Y dijimos 'oh.' Y ya dijo 'si quiere me fijo en las cámaras a ver si por aquí llegaría bien' y si se fijaron y miraron que lo agarraron los policías.* [No. There where they sell the chickens, there they had cameras and the man, well we went to go ask there 'have you seen a young man that came looking for chickens?' he said, 'no.' We said, 'but he said he was coming here.' He said, 'I don't know but you know how things are right not so who knows what could have happened.' And we said, 'Oh.' And he said, 'if you want I can check the security cameras to see if he got here okay.' And they checked and saw that the police had gotten him.]
> Liliana: *¿Esa es la última vez que lo vieron?* [Was that the last time you saw him?]
> Jimena: *Aja.* [Yes.]

Jimena and Carolina were very close to their brother and they miss him dearly. They remain optimistic that one day their brother will come back home. Jimena feels guilty having come over to the United States because it makes her feel as if she has abandoned her brother's search. She wishes she would be home the day he walks through the front door again. Her parents however did not want to take any changes and soon after his disappearance, they told the girls they needed to leave. As asylum seekers, they had to provide proof that their lifes were in danger in their hometown. They had their brother's missing report and evidence that an uncle had recently been killed as a result of the cartel violence and were thus granted entrance to the United States.

Escaping Poverty

Other participants came to the United States escaping poverty and hoping to help their families financially. Mateo was 17 years old when he decided to come to the Unites States. His father had come to this country nine years earlier and had been working here since. With his income, he had managed to sustain his family in Guatemala but the family was struggling. Mateo who lived with his mom and 4 younger siblings said, "*no hay dinero*

allá. Es escaso el dinero y allá no sobre sale uno si no trabaja y todo eso" [there is no money over there. Money is scarce over other and one cannot experience mobility if one does not work and all that]. He therefore decided to embark on the international journey one day to join his father and work to send money back home.

Mateo is what some would consider short for his age. He is about five feet four inches tall. He has dark brown skin and he always fixes his hair in a spiky hairdo. He wears thick black glasses that make his eyes look extremely big. Although Mateo is shy and reserved and hardly joins in on any of the conversations in class, he always laughs at the jokes said by his classmates. Mateo is the only participant that never hangs out with the rest of his peers and keeps to himself for the most part. He once told me that he does not like to go out and prefers to stay home either watching television or listening to music on his headphones. Perhaps because of his personality, other participants refer to him as "*El Viejon*" [The old man]. He is not bothered by this and in fact takes pride in being called that. The others refer to him as such so often that I once heard their English teacher ask them if they knew where "*El Viejon*" was at since he was not in class. This made everyone laugh including myself. In his home country, Mateo says he would go to school and work all day. He worked in the fields harvesting corn, beans, and rice. He worked long days with very little pay.

> Mateo: *De sies de la mañana hasta las tres de la tarde, como 50 quétzalys.* [From six in the morning to three in the afternoon, like 50 quétzalys.]
> Liliana: *¿Cuánto es eso?* [How much is that?]
> Mateo: *Casi nad*a. [Almost nothing.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué viene siendo eso aquí en dólares?* [What is that in dollars?]
> Mateo: *Como cinco dolares.* [Like five dollars.]
> Liliana: *¿Y ese dinero se lo dabas a tu familia?* [And that money you would give it to your family
> Mateo: *Si, a mi mamá*. [Yes, to my mom.]

Seeing the poverty that surrounded his family, prompted Mateo to want to come to the United Sates. He is the oldest in his family and as such felt obligated to help provide for his mother and siblings. One day his cousin who was ready to immigrate to the United Sates went to visit them and asked his mom if any of her children wanted to join him. Mateo did not think twice about it and volunteered to go. Afraid of what could happen, since he had heard horror stories about crossing the border, Mateo felt somewhat protected since his cousin had embarked on the international journey before and therefore knew the way. It took Mateo one month and 15 days to finally get to the United States. The trip he says was horrible.

> Liliana: *¿Y por qué dices que fue difícil?* [Why do you say it was difficult?]
> Mateo: *O porque por todo lo que sufre uno en el camino sin comida, sin agua.* [Oh because of all that one suffers on the way without food or water.]
> Liliana: *¿Cómo fue eso para ti?* [How was that for you?]
> Mateo: *Pues duro. Fue duro porque no, uno no tiene lo suficiente para comer en el camino.* [Well it was hard. It was hard because one does not have enough to eat on the way.]
> Liliana: *¿Y siempre estuviste con tu primo en el camino?* [And you were always with your cousin?]
> Mateo: *Sí, siempre estuve con él. Andaba junto con el. Donde él iba, iba yo también.* [Yes, I was always with him. I was with him. Where ever he went, I went too.]
> Liliana: *¿En México no te tuvistes que quedar en ningún lugar antes de venir.* [Did you have to stay anywhere in Mexico before you got here?]
> Mateo: *Bien en varios lugares porque llegaba la noche, nos dormíamos y al amanecer seguíamos el camino otra vez y así hasta llegar hasta aquí.* [In various places because when night would fall, we would sleep and then in the morning we would continue on our way until we got here.]
> Liliana: *¿Y qué fue lo más pesado?* [What was the hardest part?]
> Mateo: *Ah bueno pues fue al cruzar el desierto. Fue lo más pesado porque ay si no teníamos comida ni nada. No teníamos nada que comer, de bebér. Y uno no aguantaba lo que era caminar todo el día y la noche también.* [Oh well it was crossing the desert. That was the hardest part because there we didn't have food or anything. We didn't have anything to eat or to drink. It was difficult having to walk all day and all night.].
> Liliana: *¿No te enfermaste?* [Did you get sick?]
> Mateo: *No. No me enfermé.* [No. I did not get sick.]
> Liliana: *¿Te arrepentirás en algún momento?* [Did you regret you decision at any moment?]
> Mateo: *Si. Siempre me arrepentía en las noches porque ya no aguantaba los pies y todo. Se cansaba uno al llegar hasta aquí.* [Yes. I would always regret

> it at nights because I couldn't stand the pain in my feet and all. We would get really tired trying to get here.]

Mateo was apprehended in Mexico on his first attempt and served two weeks in jail before being sent back to Guatemala. A week later he embarked on the trip again. This time he managed to cross the border into the United States and was apprehended by the border patrol in McAllen, Texas. When he was finally able to join his father, he was not able to work as he had anticipated but because he was apprehended and detained and classified as an UAC, he was required to enroll in school.

Like Mateo, other participants who reported wanting to escape poverty as the reason for migrating, empathized the lack of resources and opportunities. Daniela for example, who came to the United States with her mother, is happy to finally attend a school that has the necessary resources for her to succeed. However what she is referring to is not what one might envision when talking about school resources such as state of the art technology, books, and other equipment. Daniela is talking about a basic necessity that she did not have in her home country—food.

> *Es que desafortunadamente, en México no contábamos con los recursos y nunca nos daban de comer. Teníamos que comprar. Entonces mi mamá siempre, no tenemos mucho dinero entonces siempre me daba diez dolares y costaba cinco el pasaje. Osea era cinco de bajada y cinco de subida. Entonces no tenía con que comer y pues a veces nada más comía una coca o un gansito porque era lo que me llenaba o una sopa de plástico y pues afortunadamente aqui si nos dan de comer.*
>
> [Unfortunately, in Mexico we didn't have resources and they never gave us to eat. We had to buy it. My mother would, well we didn't have much money, so she would always give me ten dollars but the transportation was five dollars. I mean five dollars to go and five dollars to come back. I therefore did not have money for food and I would only drink a coke or bread because that was the only thing that would fill me up or a soup in a can and fortunately here they do give us to eat.]

Daniela was surprised when she first arrived at her new school and saw everyone eating free food. At first, she did not know if it was okay for her to get food but after finding out that she could she was in disbelief. She was grateful to have food to eat so that she could concentrate on her studies instead of worrying about having an empty stomach. As evident in the stories highlighted in this study, it is not only men and women embarking on international journeys but also adolescents who at their young age have experienced the consequences of living in poverty. Poverty in less developed countries has triggered the movement of people to highly industrialized nations in search of better economic opportunities (Sassen 2007).

Isaac migrated to the United Sates when he was 17 years old. He used to work for a towing company in Mexico. Even though her worked long hours, his family was barely making ends meet. He told me he started working at a very young age. He ultimately decided to migrate to the United States since he did not see a bright future for himself in Mexico. He said, "*Trabajo hay, trabajo hay. El problema es el que te pagan muy poco y las cosas están muy caras y no puedes tener muchas cosas sólo tu comida y pues tu ropa. si tienes suerte"* [There is work, there is work. The problem is that they pay very little and everything is so expensive and you can't have many things only your food and clothes. That's if you're lucky]. Participants who came to the United Sates escaping poverty understand the difficulties of surviving with scarce resources. Push-pull factors best describe the structural conditions motivating their migration to the United States. The desire to move out of poverty and low-wage jobs to better paying employment opportunities justifies their transnational move. The decision was difficult but in the end was in their best interest. Pablo summarized it best when he said, *"Pues es que sí extraño mucho allá pero también se la forma de vivir. En lo económico que no no hay para todos"* [Well I do

miss being over there but I also know how it is to live over there. In terms of the economy, there just isn't enough for everybody].

Family Reunification

The most cited reason for migrating to the United States by participants was family reunification. Some participants reported they had not seen their parents since they were infants. For these participants, the most common story told was their mothers had given birth to them and soon after immigrated to the United States leaving them under the care of their grandmothers. These participants came to the United Sates seeking to meet either their mothers for the first time or both of their parents. For participants who reported coming to the United States to reunite with their fathers, they had seen their fathers a few times growing up since it was more common for immigrant dads to work for a few years and then go back home to visit the family and then return to the United States again. These stories resonate with the findings of Dreby (2010) who argues that immigrant parents who migrate and leave their children behind do so as a migration strategy rationalizing that their decision to divide the family is in the best economic interest for the family as a whole. Smith (2006) posits that children who are left behind expect their parents to better provide for them as they work in the United States. This is what he calls the "immigrant bargain." Under this bargain, parents are expected to fully provide for the children financially which in turn makes up for them not being present in their lifes. It is important to emphasize the gendered dynamics at play in these migration stories. In line with what Dreby (2010) finds in her study, there seems to be more of an emotional aspect associated when it is the mother who immigrates as opposed to the father. Dreby finds that this is the case because the mother is seen as the caregiver and nurturing one and when a mother migrates children seem to take this harder than when the father migrates. Immigrant fathers are typically seen as the

providers and therefore there is an implicit expectation for them to provide for them financially even if that means they are not physically present.

The adolescent arrivals in this study form part of what scholars call transnational families (Abrego 2014; Derby 2010, Smith 2006; Waldinger 2015). All of the participants who reported family reunification as their number one reason for migrating kept in contact with their parents through weekly phone calls. Technology allowed participants to be in communication with their parents even if they had never met them before in person. A characteristic of transnational families is the ability to maintain relationships across space. For adolescent arrivals who were left behind in their home countries as infants, technological advances allowed them to know the United Sates through the many stories told to them by their parents.

Emiliano was 14 years old when he made the decision to come to the United States to be reunited with his mother. He was only three years old when his mother herself migrated in an effort to help her parents and her children financially. Emiliano's father passed away when he was an infant making his mother the breadwinner of the family. At the time, his grandparents thought it was in the best interest for the family to have her go to the United States and send money back home. She did and never went back.

Emiliano is tall for his age. At only 14 years old he is almost six feet tall. He is heavy set and always wears basketball shorts and t-shirts. Emiliano has curly hair. His curls make him look like a big kid. One thing that stands out from Emiliano is his red chubby cheeks. They only get red when he laughs and he laughs often. His friends would classify him as being childish for doing things that always get him into trouble such as laughing at others and doing pranks on just about everyone. He enjoys getting on his teachers' nerves doing things that he knows will annoy them such as throwing papers, putting his head down,

and eating in class. All silliness aside, Emiliano understands perfectly well the risks associated with his legal status. However, he does not regret his decision to come to the United States illegally.

> Liliana: *¿Sabías los riesgos a los que te exponias al venirte?* [Were you aware of the risks of coming over?]
> Emiliano: *Sí*. [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Y no te importó?* [And you did not care?]
> Emiliano: *No*. [No.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué no te importaba todo eso?* [Why didn't you care about all of that?]
> Emiliano: *Porque quería ver a mi mama*. [Because I wanted to see my mother.]

The weekly phone calls were not enough for Emiliano who yearned to see his mother, hug her and have her in his life. Since being in the United States, his mother has remarried and has a daughter. When Emiliano was finally reunited with his mother, he met his little sister too. Adjusting to his new family has been somewhat difficult for him since he is not used to them especially his mother. Having been raised by his grandmother, he is not accustomed to his mother yet. He says, "*porque no tiene así como el mismo modo o la misma forma de tratarme."* [because she doesn't have like the same form or way of treating me].

Just like Emiliano, Raul had a similar experience. He was raised by his grandparents in Guatemala. Both his parents migrated to the United States when he was a young boy. However, his parents divorced a couple of years later and his father returned to Guatemala but his mother remained in the United States.

> *Despues que mi apa llego a Guatemala, el empezo a tener un negocio…yo le ayudaba cuando yo salia de la escuala y desgraciadamente le paso un acidente y el se murio. Entonces por ese motivo me decidi venir con mi mama y ella me apoyo. Me dijo 'vente te apoyo, este te voy a tener aquí en los estados unidos para que estudies.' Entonces me lo meti a la mente y me vine pa'ca.*

[After my father got back to Guatemala, he had a business…I, more than anyone, would help him when I would get out of school but unfortunately he suffered and accident and he died. That is why I decided to come live with my mom and she supported me. She told me, 'come, I support you, you can come live with me in the United States so you can go to school here.' So since then, I got that into my head and I came over here.]

Raul was only 15 years old when he migrated by himself to the United States in hopes of reunited with his mother. The trip, as he describes was not easy. He tried crossing illegally twice and both times he was apprehended and detained in Mexico and then sent back to Guatemala. In his first attempt, he served an eight-day sentence in a Mexican jail. In his second attempt, due to his prior record, he served one month in jail. It was not until his third attempt that he was finally able to cross without any problems. Raul, as well as other participants in the study, did not give up easily. They faced adversity with resilience and tenacity. At their young age, they confronted obstacles that would make many give up but not them. Their lived experiences allowed them to persist and not look back. For Raul, it was not an option to give up, he said, *"me sentia mal, trise porque para mi se me hizo dificil cruzar y pues no renuncie y pues yo dije 'Voy a llegar a los estados unidos y lo logre'."* [I felt bad, sad because for me it was difficult to cross and well I never gave up and I said, 'I am going to get to the United States and I achived it.']

Raul had not been in constant communication with his mother growing up, which made things even more difficult when he finally met her in person. He says he did not recognize her and not only was he in disbelief to finally meet her but was in shock to realize that he had finally made it to the United States.

Porque tenia seis años cuando ella salio. Especificamente yo pensaba que mi mama se murio no se y mis abuelos me decian 'tu mama esta viva y esta en estados unidos.' Y pues yo dije tal vez algun dia la voy a conozer y hasta que se hizo y la conoci a ella. Llegue aquí y me sentia como nuevo como una persona, estando a lado de mi mama.

> [Because I was six years old when she left. Precisely, I thought that my mom had died, I don't know, but my grandparents would tell me, 'your mom is alive and lives in the United States.' And I would say that maybe one day I would get to meet her and it finally happened and I got to meet her. I got here and I felt like a new person, being here with my mom.]

Not only did Raul get to meet his mother but he was also greeted with a big surprise. He had been focused on his mother all along that when he first met her he did not pay attention to the little boy next to her. Astonished to see him he asked his mom who the boy next to her was and she said, '*es tu hermano.'* [he is your brother]. Raul learned that his mom had remarried in the United States and not only did he have one brother who was five years old but he also had another brother that was one year old. He never imaged he would go from being an only child to being a big brother in the same day. Raul however is happy with his new family. Since being here, he has taken up the responsibilities and duties of a big brother and enjoys taking care of his siblings after school and in the weekends whenever help is needed.

Some participants who came to the United States to reunite with their parents did so upon their parents' request. Dreby (2010) argues that parents that make the decision to leave their children behind and migrate worry about the reaction their children will have upon separating. Such was the case with Julisa whose mother migrated when she was 3 years old along with her father who has since separated from her mom and has lost contact with them. Julisa always dreamed of the day she would reunite with her mother.

> *Cuando yo tenía como diez años ella me dijo que si yo quería estudiar y le dije que sí pero ella no quería que yo siguiera estudiando porque le iba a dar como más molestias a mi abuelita. Por eso ella dice 'No quiero que tu abuelita se preocupe por ti que tú estás fuera de casa'. Entonces me dijo ' Si te quieres venir es que yo voy a hacer lo posible para traerte'. Entonces le dije que sí que yo me quería venir para acá. Entonces ya desde allí mi mamá fue ahorrando para poderme traer.*

> [When I was like ten years old she asked me if I wanted to study and I told her yes but she didn't want me to continue going to school because I would only be troubling my grandmother. That is why she told me, 'I don't want your grandmother to be worrying about you when you are not at home.' So then she told me, 'If you want to come, I am going to do everything possible to bring you're here.' So I told her that I did want to come over here. So from there on my mom began saving money to bring me.]

When Julisa was 15 years old, her mother told her she had saved enough money to bring her with her. Julisa recalls that moment with great joy. Because she lived in a rural town in Mexico she only received up to a sixth grade education. In order to attend la *preparatoria*, or high school, she would have to travel quite a distance to attend. Due to violence in the region, her grandparents did not feel comfortable letting her go by herself so they opted for her to stay at home instead. Work was not an option for her since as she explained, "*los del pueblo no dejan a sus hijas que trabajen"* [in our rural town they don't let their daughters work]. Although Julisa was sad to leave her grandparents behind, she knew she did not have a future there. When her mother told her she could already come to the United States, she was more than delighted to embark on the journey. Julisa traveled to the United Sates with her older brother and an aunt. She did not reveal much details about the actual journey only that at times she thought she would not be able to cross but luckily she did and with no problems at all. Once in the United States, Julisa was anxious to meet her mother even though she barely rembered her.

> Liliana: *¿Entonces esa fue la primera vez que viste a tu mamá desde que tenías tres años?* [So that was the first time you saw your mother since you were three years old?]
> Julisa: *Aja.* [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Y si la conociste?* [And did you recognize her?]
> Julisa: *No porque no podía creer que era mi mama. Llegó ella mi mamá y dijo 'Pasenle a la casa' y me quedé así y dije 'Esa será mi mamá o quién?' Y cuando vi a mi hermanita ella tampoco la conocía.* [No because I couldn't believe that she was my mother. She got there, my mother and said, 'Come in to the house' and I just stayed like that and I said, 'Is that my mother or who is it?' And when I saw my little sister I didn't recognize her either.]

> Liliana: *¿Ella nació aquí?* [She was born here?]
> Julisa: *Si ella nació aquí. Y entonces dije 'Y esa niña es mi hermanita o qué niña es?' Porque la señora donde vivía ella tenia dos niños. Entonces dije 'Esa niña será de aquí?' Entonces dijo 'Siéntate. Siéntate.' Y luego mi hermana se metió y se sentó y dije 'A lo mejor si será mi hermanita' pero me incomode allí porque no las conocí.* [Yes she was born here. And I said, 'Is that little girl my little sister or who is she?' Because the lady that lived in the house with my mom also had two kids. So I said, "Is that little girl hers?' And then she said, 'Sit down. Sit down.' And then my little sister went in and she sat down and I said, 'Maybe she is my little sister' but I felt uncomfortable because I didn't know them.]
> Liliana: *¿Y no lloraste cuando viste a tu mamá?* [Did you cry when you saw your mother?]
> Julisa: *Pues.* [Well.]
> Liliana: *¿Tuvistes que preguntar '¿Tú eres mi mamá?'* [Did you have to ask, 'Are you my mother?']
> Julisa: *No me dio como ya ni quería ni preguntar ni nada porque decía 'Ay Dios mío ¿que digo?' Me daba pena preguntar '¿Usted es mi mama?' Iba a decir '¿No me conoces o que?' Y es cuando me dijo mi tía, 'Abraza a tu mamá'. Y entonces la abracé y dije que ya estábamos aquí.* [No I felt like, I didn't want to ask because I would say, 'Oh God, what do I say?' I felt embarrassed to ask, "Are you my mother?' What was she going to say, 'Don't you recognize me or what? That is when my aunt told me, 'Hug your mother.' And then I hugged her and told her that we were finally here.]

Julisa is one of the few participants who reported to be happy to be in the United States and that she never wants to go back to Mexico. She enjoys going to school but was only able to attend high school for one year before she was told that she would not have enough credits to graduate and would therefore have to go to an adult school to get her GED. This news saddened her because she wanted to get her diploma but unfamiliar with the educational system in the United States and unable to navigate it she ultimately signed the papers to withdraw from school and enrolled in an adult school. The practice of diverting adolescent arrivals to adult schools is fairly common. Faced with additional pressures to meet high performance standards and graduation rates, some schools do not provide immigrant youth with the much needed support and or services to succeed (Colman and Avrushin 2017; Pierce 2015). Menken and Solorza (2014) posit that because of this school

administrators more times than not opt to divert older immigrant youth to adult schools. By sending older immigrant youth who are seen as low performing, to adult education programs, schools are able to limit their costs while maintaining their desired performance and high graduation rates (Sugarman 2016).

Similar to Julisa's experience upon meeting her mother, Sebastian himself did not know who his mother was when he first met her. His uncles and mother went to pick him up the day he arrived in the United States and although he was delighted to be with them he felt somewhat uncomfortable because he did not know them. Everything at the moment felt unreal to him so he says he had to constantly pinch himself to make sure that he was not dreaming. When he saw his mother he became paralyzed. He said *"No sabía, me le quedaba así y pues miraba la foto y bajó mucho de peso y digo yo 'Oh, ya sé quién es ella. Ella es mi mama'."* [I didn't know, I would just stay like that and I would look at the picture and well, she lost a lot of weight, and I said, 'Oh, I know who she is. She is my mother.'] And just like that, the woman in the picture hugged him for the first time and took him home.

Conclusion

The stories highlighted in this chapter are a testament of the hardships and obstacles adolescent arrivlas adhere to as they decide to immigrate to the United States. Morever, their experiences speak to the dangers immigrants are exposed to with the enhancement of border security measures. As UAC, adolescent arrivlas, are processed differently than other immigrant populations, however the dangers of crossing over illegally remain the same. Because of their age of migration, adolescent arrivlas are a vulnerable population that runs a high risk of suffering violence, abuse, or mistreatment. Scholars argue that enhanced enforcement of the border does not deter immigrants from crossing over but intead only make the crossings more dangerous (Cornelius 2006; Golash-Boza 2015; Inda 2007).

Although participants did not divulge the amount of money it cost them to come the United States, perhaps because they were unaware of the amount since their parents handled the fianancial matters, they did mention that it took their parents years to raise the money to finally be able to bring them over. This finding aligns with that of other scholars who posit that increased security measures dissuaded parents from going back to their hometowns to visit their children and instead opted to raise the money to pay someone to bring their children to them (Golash-Boza 2015).

The reasons for migrating to the United States varied across participants. The top three reasons cited were family reunification, poverty-related issues, and because it was af amily decision to migrate. When parents made the decision to migrate as a family, it was either for economic reasons or to flee violence in their homeland. The stories presented in this chapter render it evident that push factors outweigh the risks associated with migrating illegally to the United States. For adolescent arrivlas and their familiies, the pull to the United States poses as a stronger force against all dangers, hardships, and obstacles they may encounter. As adolescent arrivlas howerver, their experiences are marked by their age of migration. Their age of arrival therefore is crucial in understanding the process of incorporation that awaits them as they venture into unknown territory. The following chapter focuses on how adolescent arrivals negotiate their presence in the United States during a historical period marked by a brutal anti-immigrant political climate.

Chapter 3

Negotiating Liminality: Adolescent Arrivals Navigating a Climate of Fear

> *Los republicanos fueron los que le dieron el voto a Trump por eso pasó. Pues me sentí mal. Me sentí un poco asustado de primero aunque yo sé que no pueden hacerle nada a todas las personas pero por mis familias que tengo, tenía familias indocumentadas, bueno todavía tengo algunas y pues no creo que la suerte sea para todos igual. A ellos les puede pasar que los deporten a mí no o a mi si y a ellos no, pero como sea de todos modos si da miedo. Porque tambien mis compañeros en la escuela estaban asustados y como nadie creía eso que había ganado Trump hasta que ya dicen 'ganó Trump' y ganó Trump.*
>
> [It was the republicans that voted for Trump and that is why he won. I felt terrible. I felt a bit scared at first even though I know that they cannot do harm to every single person but I fear for my family. I had family members that were undocumented, well I still have family members that are undocumented and I don't believe we all run with the same luck. It could be that they get deported and not me or that I get deported and not them but regardless it is scary. Also, my friends in school were afraid and since no one believed that Trump had won until they said, 'Trump won' and Trump won.]
>
> -Pablo, age 18

Pablo is an 18-year-old immigrant who came to the United States from Mexico with his family in the early months of 2016. He is average height and has a fit body since he enjoys working out regularly. He has dark brown skin and like many boys his age suffers from acne that comes and goes. Some days the acne is less noticeable than others. He always wears a cap whether at school, at home, or at work. He usually wears tight jeans

with a white cowboy belt and colorful T-shirts. He is known to be the class clown as he enjoys telling jokes and making people laugh. He always has a lot to say and he is not afraid to speak his mind. One of his favorite topics is his hometown in Mexico. He can go on and on talking about the little ranch located on the outskirts of the municipal city where he grew up. In a matter of seconds, he can indulge you with a conversation about his childhood, the delicious Mexican delicacies of his homeland, the *fiestas patrias* (patriot celebrations), and the dances where he danced all night long with his *amorcito* (girlfriend) with whom he is still in a relationship. To illustrate his point, he will place his right arm across his belly as if hugging her and his left arm swinging up in the air and twirling around as he moves to the rhythm of *banda* music that only he can hear. His smile is contagious and he is very mature for his age although he likes to downplay that aspect of himself.

Pablo, like many of the other participants in this study, does not enjoy his new life in the United States but recognizes that the decision to migrate was for the best. When I first asked him why he decided to come to the United States he laughed and said, "*Pues yo no me quería venir, me trajeron*" [I didn't want to come, they brought me]. He informed me that there was a lot of poverty in Mexico. Even though one works back home, futures are always uncertain since pay is extremely low and work is scarce. However, for Pablo the hardest part about migrating to a new country is simply being here. He explains, "*No está impuesto uno a estar aquí, a vivir encerrado y pura vida de trabajo sin mucha gente que conozcas*" [One is not used to being here, to live in a cage and just live to work without knowing many people]. To this I replied that his words reminded me of a well-known song from the

Norteño group Los Tigres del Norte[5] called *La Jaula de Oro*[6]. He laughed and said he felt exactly what the song described.

Even participants like Pablo who stated they do not like living in the United States, said they would never go back to live in their hometowns. They say they prefer to stay here because they realize that there are more opportunities for them in the United States than in their countries of origin. They love the idea of being back home but they know it is not in their best interest. They came here in the first place because they wanted to better their circumstances and make someone of themselves. The desire to help their families and provide a better future for them keeps participants firm in their decision to stay here even if they are not truly happy.

My findings align with those of Suárez-Orozco (1987) in his study of immigrants. In analyzing aspects of the achievement motivation among Central American youth in the United States, Suárez-Orozco found that immigrants favorably viewed their experiences in the host country despite the hardships and obstacles they constantly faced. In comparison to the experiences of war and deprivation in their home countries, discrimination and institutional racism in the U.S. did not seem so terribly bad. Through what Suárez-Orozco calls a dual frame of reference, participants in this study recognize that although they are not happy or satisfied with their new life in the United States, they are nonetheless grateful for the opportunities to experience some sort of economic upward mobility.

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[5] Los Tigres del Norte is a Mexican regional band whose music ranges from ballads to narcocorridos. They are known for their music which carries forth a progressive political agenda on behalf of immigrants in the United States.

[6] The lyrics of their 1985 hit song "La Jaula de Oro" narrates the story of an immigrant who crossed the U.S.-Mexican border illegally. Despite being in the United States for ten years, the immigrant continues to be undocumented and feels trapped in a country that does not allow him to enjoy freedom of movement.

The goal of this chapter is to examine how the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals in the United States through a concept I term *negotiating liminality*—the meaning-making process to which adolescent arrivals adhere to as they make sense, understand, navigate, and ultimately respond to political tactics aimed directly at dismantling their communities. I define *negotiating liminality*[7] as a cognitive, multilayered process that demonstrates how adolescent arrivals navigate the national political and social contexts while being stuck in what van Gennep (1960) refers to as the second liminal stage. This concept is not a linear process that results in a single outcome, but instead is multidirectional. Analyzing the experiences of adolescent arrivals through this concept reveals and highlights how participants exert their agency to navigate structural forces beyond their control.

Even though participants find themselves in a liminal stage where they constantly struggle to belong, feel accepted, and survive the anti-immigrant discourses that inform their realities, by negotiating their liminal status they acquire the tools needed to face adversity head on and on their own terms. In addition, by negotiating their circumstances, they demonstrate that their liminal status is not necessarily something negative from their point of view, as they learn to embrace their conditions, but rather is made negative by others. Through the concept of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) or the ability to understand a situation based on the point of view of the actor, we can deepen our understanding of the social processes that adolescent arrivals undergo as they negotiate their liminal status. In particular, because according to symbolic interactionism, the self is a fundamental object in making sense of the world around us (Goffman 1961). Lal (1995) posits that subjectivity is the centerpiece of symbolic interactionism. She explains:

[7] See Figure 1 in Appendix for a conceptual model of the concept *Negotiating Liminality*.

> ….the individual's understanding of his or her situation and his or her ability to make decisions and to express preferences, as opposed to the requirements of a social system or the dimensions of social structure or "variables" on the one hand or unconscious drives or "interest" on the other, are the basis of explanation of ongoing group life (423).

How one comes to make sense of one's self is shaped by how others view us as well as the opportunities and constraints we face (Lal 1995).

As the data shows, adolescent arrivals are not passive individuals that see themselves as victims but instead are active agents negotiating the consequences of being immigrants, English Language Learners, and people with precarious citizenship status, among many other factors that limit their opportunities in the United States. This chapter addresses this by centering the lived experiences of adolescent arrivals who constantly navigate the climate of fear that welcomed them to the United States when they first set foot in the 'land of opportunities.' I interrogate how adolescent arrivals perceive the current political climate. In doing so, I highlight their perceptions of Trump and how his actions and attendant nativist anti-immigrant discourses informs their day to day decisions and ways of living. It is by examining how adolescent arrivals perceive the political climate that we learn more about the meaning making process that informs their personal epistemology and thus how they make sense of the world around them (Briell, Elen, Verschaffel, and Clarebout 2011). To complicate matters, because of their age, participants not only find themselves navigating a political climate that intensifies their liminal status but are at the same time navigating adolescence which is argued by some scholars to be in itself a liminal period in a person's life (deMarrais and LeCompte 1999). Adolescents are not children and they are not adults and therefore find themselves in a "precarious position in modern society, at times vulnerable, privileged, and often segregated from the rest of society" (Bettis and Mills 2006: 63). The period of adolescence presents its own challenges and participants not only deal

with the consequences of being an adolescent but also of being an immigrant and thus a foreigner in a new land. *Negotiating liminality* as a concept helps inform how adolescent arrivals make sense of their new worlds and how they respond to situations they encounter as they learn to not only adjust but also adapt to living in the United States.

Politics of Fear

The contradictions between what is being said and what is taking place result in uncertainty and anxiety for participants who are unsure of what the future holds. As soon as Trump became president rumors began to circulate in the participants' communities. Julisa, whom we learned in chapter two migrated to the United States to meet her mother whom she had not seen since she was 3 years old states, "*Muchas personas ponen miedos que dicen que el presidente que entró que a lo mejor nos va a sacar y entonces, digo eso es como un desánimo que dan*" [Many people instill fear in us saying that the new president will probably take us out and that is discouraging]. Unfamiliar with the political system in the United States, adolescent arrivals find themselves at the center of an immigration debate which they try their best to make sense of. Sandra, 16 years of age, explains her understanding of the current situation:

> *Pues que a lo mejor también dicen que creo estaban deportando los que son residents de aquí de Estados Unidos pero que tienen mal record, según pero no se. Y ya pues yo soy residente de aquí pero que sepa no tengo mal record. Pero como que si da meido porque de todos modos uno tiene familia que está illegal aquí que no tiene ningún permiso de estar aquí.*
>
> [Well I think they are also saying that they are deporting people who are residents of the United States that have bad records. Supposedly that's what they say but I don't know. I am a resident of the United States but I don't have a bad record, not that I know of. But either way it is scary because we still have family that is here illegally that don't have any type of permit to be here.]

Where and how participants are getting their information about Trump, immigration, and deportations is essential in understanding their perceptions of politics in the United States. As Sandra's statement illustrates, she is not too clear about the process of deportations, who is most susceptible to being deported, and under what conditions do deportations take place. What she does know is that as an immigrant she needs to always be vigilant and aware of what is politically happening around her not only for her own safety but that of her family members as well. Amid all the news she hears about deportations and immigration at home and at school, she tries to make sense of the impact of the current political climate surrounding her existence. She is not alone. The following is an excerpt from my field notes on a day that I was teaching my weekly class at El Valle High School on February 2017.

> While in class the students brought up their fears surrounding the current political climate. I was teaching about a completely different subject but they kept bringing the discussion back to politics. I decided to stop the lesson plan and asked them if there was something that they wanted to talk about. They said they wanted to talk about Trump and about what is going on. At that point, their teacher who was sitting in the back of the class joined the conversation. She told me that students were voicing their concern and panicking because they feared deportation. However, she said that those fears were unfounded and that she had already informed them that it was not as if law enforcement agents were racially profiling people in the streets. She continued to say that they were only going after criminals. I decided that it was time to have a critical discussion about the current political situation. Although I did not want to scare the students, I did want them to be aware of what is going on at the local, state, and national levels. I explained to the students that there was reason to fear and the panic that they were experiencing in their communities was not unfounded. Although I did not want to overstep my boundaries in the classroom and disregard the teacher's statements, I saw it necessary to inform students of the reality of our current political state. I explained to them how notions of criminality and illegality are constructed in society and the effects that these have on immigrant communities. I told them that I did not have all the answers but that it was important to be informed and to try to avoid unnecessary attention from law enforcement agents. The students seemed extremely worried and concerned about deportations and the teacher did not validate their fears but instead minimized what they were feeling. I know that students were looking for comforting words and for someone to tell them that everything was going to be okay but I couldn't lie to them. I saw fear and anguish in their sad droopy

> eyes. For the time being, all I could offer them was the information I knew and advise them to keep themselves informed.

Drawing from Jane Mansbridge's (2001) concept of oppositional consciousness, Negrón-Gonzales (2013) posits that the social and political climate in which immigrant youth develop, shapes their political consciousness. She argues that oppositional consciousness, a mental state acquired by oppressed individuals to undermine systemic forms of domination, emerges as undocumented youth navigate their "illegality" during highly political times. In the past, nativist anti-immigrant rhetoric and what Menjívar and Abrego (2012) call legal violence, produced by the creation of restrictive laws that criminalize immigrants, have transformed undocumented youth "as a potent political force" as evident in mass mobilizations against House and Senate bills and pro-immigrant marches. Other studies (Abrego 2006, Flores and Chapa 2009; Getrich 2008; Gonzales 2011; Gonzales 2016; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017,) also highlight how immigrant youth respond or navigate their status and existence in a country where they are constantly attacked, mistreated, and deemed inferior. Being informed of the politics that inform their lived experiences is important to allow immigrant youth, such as the ones in this study, to navigate their surroundings especially during these harsh political times. For some participants being informed allows them to keep calm amid rumors they hear. Daniel, 18 years of age, states:

> *Pues que eso de lo que decían de qué iba a deportar mexicanos no es nada nuevo. Es algo que durante todos los años ha pasado así. Sinceramente eso también paso con Obama no? De que iban a deportar y todo eso y Obama igual deporto a muchos no? Pero no fue tan escandaloso como éste.*
>
> [Well what they used to say about deporting all Mexicans is nothing new. That is something that for years they have said. Sincerely that also happened with Obama, right? That he was going to deport a lot of people and all that and Obama did deport a lot, right? But he wasn't as scandalous as this one.]

Daniel is one of the few participants that indicated that he does not worry about the political climate. He is also only one of two students in the study that can pass for a white American. He is average height about 5 feet 10 inches, light complected, with blonde hair and light brown eyes that almost look hazel in the sunlight. He says that upon meeting him for the first time, people usually begin speaking to him in English thinking he is white. When he first arrived in school in early November 2016, I too thought he was a white American who accidently got placed in the wrong course since I was volunteering in the English Language Development class. I later confessed that to him and he laughed saying that he is used to being mistaken as being white by others. According to Burke and Embrick (2008), colorism is an ideology that privileges and disadvantages individuals based on the lightness or darkness of their skin. This practice favors light skin over dark skin. In the Americas, colorism, or the preference for light skin dates back to the period of colonization (Golash-Boza 2016). Daniel's experiences in the United States, as evident in the data, are different that those of other participants whose race and ethnicity are marked by visual cues that set them apart from a white phenotype.

Perceptions of Trump and Anti-immigrant Politics

Adolescent arrivals in this study immigrated to the United States during political chaos. It was during this time that Donald Trump began to unleash his fury against immigrants, in particular those of Mexican descent. Upon first arriving in the United States, students quickly became aware of his politics, his perception of immigrants, and his nativist agenda. When I asked Jasmine, 16 years of age, how she came to know of Trump she said, "*En las noticias pues ya que aquí todos hablan de él, que es un corrupto y eso*" [In the news since everyone here talks about him that he is corrupt and all of that]. At first, Jasmine who is very reserved seemed to not want to talk about the topic. We therefore began talking

about other things such as activities she does for fun and her memories of Mexico. After a while, our conversation returned to the theme of Trump. This time she did not hold back and simply stated, "*Esta loco. Es un racista*" [He is crazy. He is a racist]. Jasmine is not alone in her views. Pablo, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, had the following to say when I asked him about his views on Trump.

> Liliana: *¿Qué opinas del presidente Trump?* [What do you think about President Trump?]
> Pablo: *Me cae gordo el hijo de su puta madre.* [I don't like that motherfucker.]
> Liliana: *¿Porque te expresas así de el?* [Why do you express yourself that way?]
> Pablo: *Porque él se expresó así de los mexicanos. Qué chingue a su madre el guey de todos modos yo también digo lo mismo. Pero él es muy racista. Siente que el mundo es de él como que el nomás puede. El puede pero que no se olvide que aquí este país se mueve por toda la gente no nada más por el. Por tener dinero, no es el rey del mundo.* [Because that's how he expressed himself about Mexicans. He can go fuck his mother, I too can say the same things. But he is very racist. He feels like the world is his and that only he can do as he pleases. He can, but he can't forget that this country is what it is because of its people not only because of him. Just because he has money does not mean he is the king of the world.]
> Liliana: *¿Cómo te hacen sentir sus comentarios?* [How do his comments make you feel?]
> Pablo: *Ofendido. Me he sentido ofendido y enojado por lo que habla de la gente.* [Offended. I have felt deeply offended and angry of all he says about our people.]
> Liliana: *¿Te da miedo?* [Does it scare you?]
> Pablo: *No. Me la pela el güey. Qué pinches me hace ese cabrón.*[No. He can suck my dick. That dumbass does nothing to me.]

Pablo's anger and disillusion with President Trump is unmistakable. He, like other participants, disagrees with Trump's political agenda. The participants are embedded within the immigrant narrative and are conscious of the contributions their communities make to the well being of the United States. Internalizing the anti-immigrant sentiments put forth by Trump would be detrimental. Expressing themselves and voicing their opinions serves as a mechanism to avoid internalizing disparaging messages that could eventually harm their

mental and physical health. Studies show that undocumented youth suffer mental health issues as they navigate their status and try to cope with the uncertainty in their lives (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, Dedios-Sanguineti 2013). Kimberly, age 16, echoes Pablo's sentiments:

> *Pues pienso que está mal porque muchos están aquí para ayudar a sus familias. Y pues el presidente no comprende eso. El no sabe que gracias a los Latinos Estados Unidos es grande, es famoso. Hay muchos latinoamericanos que trabajan y qué bueno normalmente uno no va a ver a los Americanos sembrando o haciendo cosas como jardinería o cosas pesadas. Entonces si nosotros nos fuéramos quién los haria? Entonces creo que el presidente no piensa porque es racista.*
>
> [I think he is wrong because many are here to help their families. The president does not understand that. He doesn't know that it is thanks to Latinos that the United States is big, it is famous. There are a lot of Latin Americans that work and we don't normally see Americans sowing the harvest or doing things like gardening or any type of hard labor. So, if we leave, then who would do that work? The president is not thinking right because he is a racist.]

Kimberly, like Pablo, recognizes the problematic nature of Trump's anti-immigrant discourse and points to the value of the work that immigrants do in the United States. By opposing Trump's views and sentiments, these students are legitimizing the value of immigrants who leave their home countries in search of a better future to perform tedious labor in the fields and elsewhere in America. Borrowing from the work of Giorgio Agamben, De Genova (2010) equates the concept of bare life, of the "homo sacer," to the Mexican immigrant. Immigrants too, he argues, experience bare life as they operate under the shadows of illegality. He contends "bare or naked life may be understood to be what remains when human existence, while yet alive, is nonetheless stripped of all the encumbrances of social location, and thus bereft of all the qualifications for properly political inclusion and belonging" (p. 37). Just like the homo sacer, immigrants in the United States are made to be invisible though their labor is necessary and indispensable. To

participants it is important to highlight this as they contest the rhetoric behind Trump's allegations. At their young age, they are conscious of the economic contributions the immigrant community makes and of the dismissive treatment they receive. Felipe, 14 years of age, had the following to say when interviewed about this topic.

> Liliana: *¿Qué piensas del presidente Trump?* [What do you think about President Trump?]
> Felipe: *Que se vaya a la verga*. [He can go fuck himself]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]
> Felipe: *Porque él está haciendo cosas que no están bien como sobre los inmigrantes y sobre la barda que está haciendo y todavía quiere que la paguen los mexicanos. Pues si él la quiere poner que la ponga de su bolsa. Entonces cómo va estar Estados Unidos sin los mexicanos? Si ellos son la parte esencial para el país.* [Because he is doing things that are not good like for immigrants and also the border wall he wants to build and wants the Mexicans to pay for it. If he wants to build that wall he should pay for it himself. And then, how is the United States going to function without Mexicans? They are an essential component of this country.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué dices esencial? ¿Qué es lo que en tu opinión hacen los mexicanos para este país?* [Why do you say essential? In your opinion what do Mexicans do for this country?]
> Felipe: *Porque los mexicanos son los que mueven aquí y los que hacen el dinero porque ¿Cuando va haber un americano que se meta a una cocina a cocinar? Obvio no, ¿Verdad?* [Because Mexicans are the ones that move this country and make the money because when is there going to be an American that gets into the kitchen to cook? Obviously no, right?
> Liliana: *¿Te da coraje?* [Does this make you mad?]
> Felipe: *Si*. [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué es lo que tú sientes cuando el dice esos comentarios?* [What do you feel when he makes those comments?]
> Felipe: Pues me da como coraje. [Well I get like angry].

Felipe, like other participants, expressed similar views when it came to acknowledging the economic contributions of immigrants in the United States. Because of their life-stage of migration that allowed them to participate in the decision-making process of immigrating to the United States, they are not naïve about the political, social, and economic forces that attempt to encumber them and their communities. To some participants however, being

aware of their vulnerability that both shapes and influences their experiences in the United States informs their perceptions of Trump. Raul, now 16 years of age told me:

> *Pues mas que todo yo no puedo pensar, no puedeo pensar mal de él o bien porque él tiene derecho, esta en su pais y luego nosotros no podemos decir nada. Pero sé que toda la gente se apoya. Las personas se apoyan en si mismo como cuando Donald Trump empezo hablar que iba a sacar a los latinos. La gente ya se desperto y no se quizo dejar. Hasta ahora, nosotros los indocumentados que no tenemos papeles, no sabemos nada si él nos va a sacar o nos va dar libertad para quedarnos aquí. No se que va a pasar.*
>
> [Well I really can't think, I can't think bad or good about him because he is in all his right, this is his country and we cannot say anything. But I know that the people support each other. The people support each other like when Donald Trump won he began saying that he was going to kick out all the Latinos. The people woke up and didn't stay silent. As of now, those of us who are undocumented that we don't have papers, we don't know if he will kick us out or if he will give us the freedom to stay here. I don't know what will happen.

To support his opinion that regardless of what the president says or does, community support is vital during times of upheaval, Raul states that he holds no hard feelings toward Trump. In fact, he states that he is neutral when it comes to him. Instead of worrying about how Trump expresses himself about immigrants, Raul seems more concerned with having community support that he believes can ultimately result in justice for immigrants.

The Walkout

Community support is an important element for most participants. It is through support systems that they learn how to navigate their new lives in America. There is one event in particular that took place in November 9, 2016, the day after the presidential election, that served as a learning experience for the adolescent arrivals in this study. The experience of this event allowed many of the participants to engage with politics with the first time and showed them that they are not alone. The following excerpt is from the field notes I wrote that day:

> As I was walking to class today to volunteer, I saw a small announcement on the wall that caught my attention. The announcement was a small flyer with a black and white picture of what resembled those iconic images of the Chicano movement high school walkouts in the late 1960's. The image contained what appeared to be young students with placards that were not readable due to the bright red lettering in all caps over it that read "ALL SCHOOL WALOUT TODAY AT 12 MEET AT SENIOR LAWN." I stopped to take a picture of the flyer with my cell phone. As I was walking away, a student passed me by and I asked her what the flyer was about. She explained that there was going to be a walkout to protest Trump winning the presidential election. When I got to class, I heard the teacher explaining to the students about the walkout. She explained to them that she had received an email from the district informing them of the walkout and although they were welcomed to participate they would have to be counted as absent. However, she informed them that if they participated their parents had the right to call in and request that they be excused for not attending class and if they did that then the school could not count them as being absent. When the clock struck noon, most of the students with the exception of four, walked out to the senior lawn. When we got to the lawn we saw hundreds of students piling up with placards and chanting at the top of their lungs their discontent with the election results. The participants in this study told me they were amazed to see so much support. The students walked to the local courthouse as part of the walkout and held a rally on the steps of the courthouse. As they walked down the streets, they were encountered by a white man who seemed to have been jogging in the area based on his workout attire. He stopped on the opposite side of the street from where the students were walking and began yelling offensive remarks at the students as he made crying gestures implying that the students were nothing but crybabies. He then raised his arms and started yelling "Trump, Trump, Trump." The students who at this moment felt empowered by the numbers began booing the man and calling him names. Their contact with him was the only negative encounter that I noticed during the walkout. For the most part, the cars that drove by would honk at the students as a sign of approval for what they were doing.

Most of the students in this study participated in the school wide walk-out in protest of the newly elected president of the United States, Donald Trump. They joined other students from their school as they poured into the streets with placards and chants demonstrating their discontent with the election results. Most of the participants did not fully understand what the placards proclaimed much less what the chants were about. As recently arrived immigrants unfamiliar with the English language, they walked along with others, knowing that their voices could not be heard, but well-aware that the racially-charged

rhetoric surrounding Trump's campaign was a direct attack against them, their families, and their communities. The support that they saw from classmates and others served as an empowerment tool that allowed them to realize that they are not alone in the struggle. Pablo describes the event:

> *Si todos salimos a hacer huelga una vez. Hicimos una huelga en contra de que ganó Trump. Y ya se la rayabamos al güey entre todos. Le decíamos el perro. Hasta un señor como un americano nos hacía burla porque había ganado Trump cuando íbamos caminando.*
>
> [Yes, we all participated in a protest. We did a protest to oppose Trump's victory. We called him out. We called him a dog. There was even a white American who was making fun of us in the streets because Trump had won].

The walkout was a new experience for participants. Unlike DREAMers who have become what Negrón-Gonzales (2013) calls a "potent political force" because of their participation in mass mobilizations and activism, the participants in this study experienced the walkout as their first time participating in a political event. Although they have not been in the United States for a long time, as adolescent arrivals they understand the problematic nature of the outcome of the presidential election. The event was an empowering moment for students, and as a community ethnographer, this was an eye-opening experience for me. I witnessed the resilience, determination, and strength from students whom days before were unaware of the politics surrounding their existence in the United States. Their participation in the walkout highlights their agency as active members in a society to which they wish to belong and from which they desire acceptance. The walkout sparked something in them. It was through this event that many learned to make sense of the political climate that confronted them in America. It is thus when I began to see how participants began to not only make sense but also understand their precarious situation and realized that they had to strategize how to best navigate their new home. I call this process *negotiating liminality*. It is by *negotiating liminality* that adolescent arrivals developed their personal epistemologies

that informed their views and perceptions of the politics surrounding them and their loved ones. More so, by becoming alert of the current political situation, adolescent arrivals became more aware of the importance of developing safety nets to best protect themselves and be safe. Perhaps for some, participating in the walkout was just a way of simply skipping class since they are adolescents after all. However, participating in the event became a learning experience for most of them as they continued to talk about it in the weeks following the walkout. Their conversations began to change and take on a more political tone as they began to question Trump's anti-immigrant agenda. By participating, they witnessed that there are many people who like them also disagree with Trump and his political agenda and most importantly, they began to understand the power of community support.

Although the walkout was a great experience for those that participated, it is important to note that there were problematic aspects with it. The entire walkout, including placards, chants, and cheers were all in English. The speeches that were given at the courthouse where the walkout culminated at were also in English. The walkout was not an inclusive space for participants who kept asking me what the placards said and what the chants were about. Moreover, none of the participants were part of the planning process for the walkout yet as the scapegoats of a broken immigration system, their input would appear to be significant. Theirs were the voices that needed to be heard yet they were silenced even if not intentionally. At the end of the day, the boundaries that the walkout intended to blur were made more visible than ever for participants who held feelings of not belonging and of not being welcomed, feelings that in their view were confirmed with the election results.

Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (1997) focuses on the concept of participating in power in advancing a theoretical framework suitable for successfully educating and working with

minority students within the educational system. His concept of participating in power is useful in understanding the importance of allowing all students to feel included, and most important, to feel welcomed, in schools. In order for the students to feel that they belong in the system they must be allowed to be active participants in their education. Unfortunately, that is not the case for adolescent arrivals whose linguistic capital does not include the dominant language of instruction in the United States. As evident in the walkout event, although participants participated in the political activity they were not fully included. Participants were not involved in the planning process nor did the prepare placards to carry during the event. They were not even aware that such an event would take place until they were informed about it in their homeroom class.

The participation of adolescent arrivals in the walkout was of great significance nonetheless. By participating in the event, even if it was simply walking along with peers, participants were able to express their discontent with the election results. What significance did this have on participants and how did this allow them to make sense of the political climate became evident in the weeks and months that followed. As adolescent arrivals new to the U.S. context, this event was invaluable to them. Not only did they discover allies who supported them as immigrants, but it was also a realization that the road to incorporation in the United States would be met with hostility and difficulties. Just how adolescent arrivals learn to cope with the mechanisms of exclusion that day after day become more visible to them based on their experiences is the topic of discussion in the following sections. Although politics became a theme of constant discussion among adolescent arrivals, a noteworthy finding is that male participants were more likely than female participants to engage and elaborate on conversations about the political climate. Data shows that for the category of politics and immigration males engaged in this topic at a rate of 56 percent

compared to females at 44 percent. However, it was females who were more likely to talk about fear when discussing political and immigration matters. In the category of fear, females related comments pertaining to feeling afraid at a rate of 81.4 percent versus males at 18.6 percent.

Navigating a Climate of Fear

When participants either made the decision to migrate to the United States or learned about the decision made by their families to migrate, they knew it would take them some time to adjust. Leaving the only place they called home was difficult for them but they understood the reasons behind the journey and therefore did not dwell on this and instead tried to prepare mentally for the journey. Politics was note a topic that they focused on nor was it something they worried about. Soon after arriving in the United States however, participants became aware of the politics surrounding their existence as immigrants. The walkout was one of the first encounters they experienced that made them aware of the harsh political climate and of the difficulties their communities face due to a fierce anti-immigrant movement. In the past, anti-immigrant policies have created political mobilization by undocumented youth who according to Negrón-Gonzalez (2013) risk deportation as a political strategy. New to the U.S. context and relatively unfamiliar with its laws and policies, adolescent arrivals in this study report resorting to other strategies to confront the contemporary political climate. Participants came to understand that their presence in the United Stages was the root of an immigration debate resulting from a broken immigration system. As adolescent arrivals they soon learned that immigrants are seen as foreigners and invaders. New to this context, participants reported having to negotiate their new lifestyles in order to navigate living in a country they hardly know. As the data reveals, it is through the use of humor, learning to adapt to the climate by altering their lifestyles when deemed

necessary and by their consequences of their decisions that adolescent arrivals negotiate their liminal status as they learn to exert their agency.

“The Mexican laughs at his misfortunes”: Humor as a Mechanism of Survival

Although the students in this study lack the linguistic capital to navigate their new worlds, the nativist messages delivered by Trump, the media, and political pundits were heard loud and clear. Conversations about citizenship status among participants and peers rarely surfaced before the presidential election of 2016. However, after Trump won the presidency, respondents began to inquire about each other’s citizenship status. After November 2016, it was not unusual to hear participants ask one another *“Tienes papeles?* [Do you have papers?]—a question they had never bothered to ask before. Like this, I noticed how things began to change in the lives of the participants as they became increasingly aware that they were the targets of Trump’s discourse. Respondents reported engaging in conversations with family and friends about what the future holds under Trump and his administration. Within these conversations, jokes became indispensable especially amongst participants and their friends. It is important to highlight that although jokes became a daily occurrence in their lives, participants adhered to an insider/outsider lens in the use of humor. In terms of how humor was deployed, participants were very careful to make distinctions between what was acceptable and what was not. Humor deployed by the participants themselves was positively received whereas jokes made at their expense by other students who did not share in their immigrant experiences were not tolerated. In terms of gender, it was the male participants who were more likely to talk about jokes and humor when discussing the political climate. Data on the category of jokes indicates that male participants engaged in this topic at a rate of 78.9 percent versus females at 21.1 percent.

Sergio came to the United States with his family. They came here to reunite with his older sister who had migrated to the United States a few years before. Sergio stands out a bit from other participants in this study. He has light fair skin with dark brown hair which he sometimes tames with gel to the ride side in a contemporary hip kind of way and other times he lets it loose free flowing all over his head. He dresses in up-to-date casual attire, which consists of flashy shirts, jeans, and the latest shoe styles. His dark brown eyes give him a very serious look. He usually keeps to himself and is very observant. I was set to meet with him downtown at a local coffee shop early on a Saturday morning. He chose the location and told me he would meet me there. When I got to the coffee shop, I looked around and did not see him. I decided to send him a text message and he quickly responded telling me that he was coming on the bus so that he would be late to our meeting. This is a common thing for all of the participants. They do not drive. Unlike other students their age, they are not driving cars or applying to get their driver's licenses. Instead participants use other modes of transportation to get around. It is not unusual for me to see them riding their bikes and skateboards, walking, or taking the bus. For the most part, it is the girls who reported taking the bus most often to get to and from school and getting around town. The boys for the most part indicated a preference for riding their bikes and skateboards. They do not complain about this because most of them are used to this way of transportation. When they talk about their homelands, they tell stories of what their life was like in their home countries and one thing they always talk about is the freedom they enjoyed walking all over their towns, in the plazas, and elsewhere.

After waiting in the coffee shop for about 15 minutes I saw Sergio approaching me. He looked tired and he was sweating profusely. When he greeted me I noticed he was also out of breath. He looked like he had run to the coffee shop. Sergio told me he had just gotten

off the bus and sped walk to get there. I offered him something to drink and we got in line to order. After I ordered my drink, Sergio ordered his. The man behind the register looked confused. He did not understand what Sergio was ordering. "What is that again, I didn't get it?" he asked. Sergio repeated himself but the man still did not understand his broken English. Sergio ordered again but his time pointed at the item on the menu board. The man looked at the menu board and once again said, "I don't understand. Do you want a Frappuccino?" Sergio shook his head in agreement and said "Vanilla bean crème". Finally able to understand what Sergio wanted, the man who seemed embarrassed based on his face gestures, placed the order. He then apologized to Sergio for not understanding. Sergio just smiled. Although it was clear that the man had a hard time understanding Sergio because of his broken English, he told us that he did not understand the order because he was a new employee and was just learning the items on the menu. Like this, I had many other similar encounters with participants as they struggled to communicate with others around their community. Lacking the dominant linguistic capital used in the United States, participants are faced with obstacles as they try to gain a sense of belonging. This topic is discussed in more detail in chapter four.

We waited for our orders and then headed upstairs to find seats but the coffee shop was packed. We decided to get a table outside and enjoy the nice warm breeze. We talked about many things from his hobbies, to his family life, to his experiences in school, as we enjoyed our drinks. It was only a matter of time before we began talking about politics. He informed me that his family had devised a safety plan in case any of them end up victims of the recent immigration raids taking place around nearby communities. Among his friends, however, he said, it is a different story. When he is hanging out with his friends, they talk about politics, deportations, and Trump, but in a joking manner. Although at first I found

his comment to be strange, it did not entirely surprise me for I had heard participants tease each other and make fun of the current political climate. I decided to use that moment to ask Sergio to explain this to me. I told him I was baffled at the idea that students would be making jokes of such a serious matter. I asked Sergio to explain to me why humor was a common emotional response reported by participants. When I asked him this, his demeanor changed a bit. He sat back in his chair, took a sip of his vanilla bean crème Frappuccino, and looked me straight in the eye. He then half smiled half smirked and said, "*el Mexicano se rie de sus desgracias*" [the Mexican laughs at his misfortunes]. Sergio's response is a popular anecdote within the Mexican culture that portrays the Mexican as someone who does not give up easily and instead of lamenting a circumstance or victimizing oneself amid troubled times, the Mexican powers through difficult situations with a good sense of humor. Sergio is not immune to the politics surrounding his existence and that of his loved ones at this particular moment in time, but he uses humor to make light of a situation that he cannot escape and cannot control. Sergio is aware that there is much at stake but refuses to dwell on the 'what if's' and concentrate instead on the possibilities of today.

The use of humor in situations of distress is a common occurrence. In fact, studies show that prisoners of war tend to use humor as a coping mechanism (Henman 2001). For example, in 1975 the U.S. Navy concerned about the health of 566 Vietnam prisoners of war, who had been held in captivity for seven years, prompted them to do a longitudinal health evaluation on the soldiers. As prisoners of war, they were tortured, beaten, and starved while in captivity. After 20 years, the results of the psychiatric evaluations proved to be astonishing. The evaluations demonstrated that the level of posttraumatic stress disorder registered among the soldiers was no more different that that of the general population. The reasons for this occurrence are cited to range from their participation in

survival training programs to the medical care received there after. However, Henman (2001) argues that other factors contributed to this such as the use of humor. In her qualitative study on the use of humor among Vietnam prisoners of war, Henman finds that humor is a form of resilience that helped the soldiers navigate challenging times. Her findings illuminate humor to be a construct of resilience. Moreover, Duran (1992) contends that humor is a mechanism one resorts to in difficult situations to diffuse tension. He posits:

> Novel social settings often create social tension and wit is a positive means of handling the anxiety that can be generated in a social encounter. Wit aids an individual in the handling of an awkward situation. Often the way wit functions is to verbally acknowledge the anxiety present in a social context due to inconsistencies or irregularities present between the physical, social, and/or relational context. Therefore, wit is an adaptive response to tense social interactions (256).

Humor, as a coping mechanism helps individuals manage adversity by providing a sense of control in situations that are beyond them. The literature cites four different theories of humor—superiority theories, incongruity theories, psychoanalytic theories, and cognitive theories (Berger 1987). Although these help explain how humor comes to exist, they do not help explain why humor is used as a coping mechanism by those in distress. In fact, Berger (1987) contends that there is no single theory on humor that explains everything about it. Humor however, as the research shows, is an important element of resilience for it has proven to allow individuals to adapt and confront unpleasant encounters (Lifton 1993; Vaillant 1977). The emergence of humor in challenging times functions as a mechanism of survival that aside from providing a sense of comfort also functions as a tool used to build community among those that share in the same circumstances (Henman 2001).

As is the case with prisoners of war and the use of humor to deal with their excruciating experiences while in captivity, adolescent arrivals in this study turned to humor as a strategy to get by as the political climate began to creep into their lives. Like Sergio,

Sebastian, resorts to humor as a way to negotiate his liminality and build relations with peers his age group that share in similar experiences. During one of our talks about the political climate he informed me that he and his friends tend to resort to jokes about deportations as to not take things too seriously. He said, "*también antes así nos la llevábamos un poco pero ya cuando empezó eso [redadas] así ya eran más burlas así*" [Before we would also get along that way but after this [deportation raids] started happening we began making more jokes]. He, like many of the other participants, turns to humor as a mechanism of survival for it somehow eases up tensions and makes their circumstances more manageable to some extent. Sebastian narrated the following to me in between laughs:

> *No pues me hacían burla me decían 'te vas para México' y le digo yo 'tus padres también güey.' Me hacían burla y se las regresaba. Le digo yo 'güey tú tampoco tienes papeles cállate' y asi nos hacíamos burla entre nosotros.*
>
> [They would make fun of me and say, 'You are going back to Mexico' and I would say 'Your parents too dude'. They would make fun of me and me of them. I would tell him 'Dude, you don't have papers either so shut up' and like that we would make fun of one another.]

Sebastian explains the common practice of making jokes with other immigrant friends at each other's expense. This behavior is acceptable because both parties share the immigrant experience and thus find themselves in the same situation, which may lead to potential similar outcomes. As insiders, these jokes were made without malice and served as a way to cope with the current political climate. Pablo reports that jokes about immigration have always existed, but he noticed an increase in jokes after Trump won the presidency. He states:

> *Porque algunos los que no están bien les causa risa. Piensan que es un juego pero pues es una realidad que se vive. Parece que no es una realidad pero cuando entró Trump si aumento más como los chistes de eso que te va a deportar Trump.*

[Because for those that are here unauthorized, well they think this is funny. They think this is a joke but it's a reality. It seems like it's not when Trump became president, there was an increase in the number of jokes made about Trump deporting you.]

Pablo echoes the sentiments of his immigrant friends when he acknowledges that the jokes are harmless and a way of navigating a situation that is beyond their control. Carlos also expressed his views on the increase of jokes made after Trump won the presidential election. During one of our encounters where we met up to have ice cream and talk about his experiences in school, he told me that he is used to the jokes made about deportations and that he is not bothered by these. Carlos, who was introduced in Chapter two, told me:

> *Bromeaban mucho porque decían 'no ya ganó Donald Trump nos va a mandar para México.' Y otros decían 'no pues a mí no porque yo tengo VISA o esto.' Y me decían 'a ti sí te van a llevar porque no tienés nada.' Y yo decía 'pues no me importa.' Pero jugando pues. Me decían 'va a venir la migra.' Pues que venga.*
>
> [They joke around a lot because they would say 'Donald Trump won and he is goig to send us back to Mexico.' And others would say 'Not me because I have a visa or something.' And they would tell me 'They will take you because you don't have anything [papers].' And I would say 'Well I don't care.' But we were just playing. They would tell me 'The border patrol is coming.' Let them come.]

Carlos, like other participants, understands the seriousness of the current political situation. However, as many reported, humor is used as a coping mechanism to navigate their liminality. In their analysis on the stress coping strategies among Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans, and non-Hispanic white Americans, Farley, Galves, Dickinson, and Diaz Perez (2005) found that humor as a stress-coping style is significantly associated with lower levels of perceived stress. As they argue, stress can have detrimental health effects and it is important to understand how coping mechanisms are helpful in minimizing negative health effects caused by stress.

On the other hand, Janet, age 14, emphasizes the problematic nature of humor when immigrant students are made to be the punch line of immigration jokes. Applying an insider/outsider lens to analyze the use of jokes about immigration and deportation at their expense, Janet acknowledges the harmful impact that this has on the immigrant community. She expressed this during a time that we met up for lunch. Janet is the youngest participant in the study. She came to the United States when she was 13 years old with her father and older brother. Afraid that his only daughter was turning into what she called a "*chola*[8]"—for she was beginning to hang out with a bad crowd, misbehaving, and just doing as she pleased—he decided to bring her to the United States and start a new life here.

That day, when we were set to have lunch, she arrived at the restaurant late. I knew that she would be walking so I decided to wait a bit before contacting her. After about 15 minutes of waiting, I finally saw her walking towards me. She was wearing a white tight top with blue jeans and tennis shoes. Her hair was nicely done into buns on each side of her head. Her bangs were long, flowing all over her face, and covering most of her eyes. Her makeup like always was flawless and she was wearing huge silver hoop earrings. Although she is the youngest participant, she does not look it. She looks older that she actually is. When I first met her I thought she was 18 years old. I was surprised to find out that she was so young.

After we ordered our *tortas,* we took a seat and began talking away. Janet is very outspoken and does not hold back. She is constantly getting in trouble at school for not listening, skipping class, or making rude remarks to her teachers and peers. It only took us a few minutes before we began talking about Trump. She informed me that she dislikes him and his politics and wishes things would be different. She told me "*a veces me siento como*

[8] Her definition of "chola" is a person who uses drugs, hangs out in the streets, and

asustada de que nos venimos aquí por un buen futuro y nos pueden sacar en cualquier momento" [Sometimes I feel afraid that we came here for a better future and they can kick us out at any moment]. Janet's father constantly tells her to not be afraid. Her brother on the other hand, does not like to talk about politics and tries his best to avoid having these conversations with them. When I asked her if she had noticed how some people use humor to make light of the political climate she recounted a story that took place in one of her classes. This is a summary of our discussion as written in my field notes:

> She talked about a time when in class two Chicano boys were fighting. It was a physical fight and the cops had to come in to break up the fight. As soon as the cops walked in, she said the White and Chicano students started laughing and saying things like "They are coming for you' or 'They are here for you guys'. Then they all burst out laughing. She said that there were three native Spanish speakers in the class and being one of them, she decided to own up to her identity. She told one of the other native Spanish speakers in the class 'Hide me so that they won't take me but take you instead. It's better if they take you instead of me'. This made him laugh and reply 'Why? Its best if they take you instead. Take her. She's right here'. He said this as he pointed at her so the cops could identify her. And with this, it was their turn to laugh. The native Spanish speakers started laughing and embracing the moment. She said that once they engaged or joined in on the jokes, the other students backed off. She said she was trying to prove that their comments could not hurt her because she was also in on the joke and she was not scared.

Janet demonstrates how she negotiated being an immigrant. She did not appreciate the jokes being made at their expense and quickly thought of a way to turn things around. Her quick thinking resulted in joining in on the joke and being a part of the conversation. Joining in on the jokes allowed her to gain self-confidence and most importantly to show the others that she was not to be used as the punch line of any joke. By following her lead and engaging in this encounter, her immigrant peers managed to turn the tables around and instead of resorting to fear, took ownership of their identity reclaiming their pride and dignity. For these students, who are in the midst of integrating to a country they barely

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eventually becomes homeless.

know, navigating situations such as the one narrated above can prove to be difficult. On the one hand, if they choose to keep quiet and allow others to laugh at their expense, they continue to be the outcasts. If they speak up and join in on the jokes made, they might temporarily feel like they are 'in' with the crowd, even though that is far from being the case. As immigrants trying to adapt to their new environments in the middle of political chaos, they understand that their vulnerability informs their social realities.

Felipe also shared and talked about a similar experience. We met at a local park and as we were talking about his interests, he looked around as if scanning the area at the empty soccer field where he informed me he usually comes to play with his friends or sometimes with strangers that also enjoy playing soccer. Today there was no one playing in the field. He likes to joke around a lot, which makes it difficult for me to know when he is being serious. When I brought up the topic of Trump, he kept making jokes, laughing, and saying things about how he thought very low of Trump and did not care much for him. He then got serious for about a minute and told me about an incident he remembered that occurred while he was playing soccer with a group of guys from his high school.

> Felipe: *Una vez así pasó aquí cuando estábamos jugando cuando pasó la policía y dice 'hay viene la migra, escóndete!' Pero se lo dijeron a un amigo.* [One time it happened that we were playing here when a cop drove by and someone said 'border patrol is coming, hide!' But they said it to a friend.
> Liliana: *¿Y tu amigo que hizo?* [What did your friend do?]
> Felipe: *Pues nada se quedó así.* [Nothing he just stayed like that.]
> Liliana: *¿Pero era como burla?* [But it was to make fun of him?]
> Felipe: *Sí, porque él es un inmigrante de Guatemala. Le dijeron una burla o sea para mí fue una burla porque luego que pasó la policía luego le empezaron a decir 'ahí viene la migra. Viene la policía escóndete te van a sacar.'* [Yes, because he is an immigrant form Guatemala. They told him that as a joke or at least that's how I took it. It was a way to make fun of him because when the cop drove by they immediately started telling him 'Border patrol is coming. Here come the cops they are going to take you out!']
> Liliana: *¿Y qué fue la reacción de tu amigo?* [And what was your friend's reaction?]
> Felipe: *Pues se sintió mal obviamente.* [Well obviously he felt bad.]
> Liliana: *¿Pero respondió algo?* [But did he say anything?]

Felipe: *No.* [No.]

I asked Felipe if he himself had said something at that moment. He told me he did not. He said that just like his friend, he remained quiet and felt terrible about the situation. He did not appreciate that the guys were making fun of his friend. At the moment, he was just relieved that they did not attack him too. He said they continued playing after that as if nothing had happened. But he recalls that incident as a moment of discrimination and he often replays the events of that day in his mind. I did not tell him then, but he had already shared that story with me before. He told me that same story one day that we met up at a local gym he likes to frequent with his friends. Like that day, today, he also looked down as he was narrating how things transpired.

Felipe is one of the younger participants in the study. He is short for his age and a little overweight. He has a round face and brown skin. He tends to perspire a lot and usually when he is hot his face fills up with drops of sweat, which he never makes an effort to wipe off. Perhaps because of his age or maybe it is just his personality but he is always clowning around. He is easily distracted and constantly checks his phone as if he is waiting for an important text or a phone call. He is usually the one making jokes about serious situations such as deportations. But through all the clowning and jokes, he realizes that there are boundaries that one cannot cross. In this event, the guys they were playing soccer with were either white Americans or Mexican Americans. As outsiders to the immigrant experience, their jokes about immigration were not well received. Their comments made both Felipe and his immigrant friend feel insecure and vulnerable and neither of them was able to defend themselves. They decided to just ignore the comments and continue playing soccer as if nothing had happened. To this day, Felipe says he has not been able to talk to his friend about the incident because he is too embarrassed to bring it up.

Amongst participants, comments about the border patrol and deportations are common. Although humor is used as a coping-strategy during these repressive political times, to avoid dwelling on situations that are out of their control, some participants feel that more than trying to make light of the situation, they are resorting to humor as a way to hide their true emotions. Karla, 17 years-of-age, expressed living in fear since Trump won the presidency. Ironically, Karla is one of two participants that because of the lightness of her skin and of her hair, is often confused with being a white American. She has long light brown almost blonde hair that flows freely above her waistline. Her light brown eyes compliment the light brown freckles that cover her arms and face. She is always moving her lips around as she constantly messes with her braces that she got in the United States when she first arrived. She is very open about her family life and loves to talk about her beloved Mexico. Karla lives with her mother, younger brother and extended family members in a small house. When asked about how that made her feel she responded, "*Pues a veces me siento como asfixiada porque somos tantos niños que pues aveces te estresan y quieres estar sola y pues no puedes porque todos están allí*" [Well sometimes I feel suffocated because there are so many of us kids that well sometimes they stress you out and you want to be alone but you can't because everyone is there]. Although she hates being cramped in a small house, she is happy to be living with her mother and tries to make the best of the situation. We have had many conversations regarding politics and she constantly expresses concern. One day we met for coffee and we started talking about how students were making more and more jokes regarding deportations. I asked her about this and she confirmed that jokes about immigration were on the rise.

> Liliana: *¿Entonces porque tú crees que hacen chistes pero entre ustedes mismos?* [Why do you think you all make jokes amongst yourselves?]
> Karla: *Pues algunos por divertirse. por divertirse nadamas.* [Well some do it for fun. They do it just for fun.]

Liliana: *¿Pero si recuerdas escuchar cosas así?* [So you do recall hearing these jokes?]
Karla: *Si, pero yo digo que lo hacían por diversión.* [Yes, but I think they did it for fun.]
Liliana: *¿Pero crees que habia otras razones?* [But do you think there were other reasons?]
Karla: *Pues claro todos tenemos miedo.* [Well of course we are all afraid.]

Karla does not appreciate the jokes being said about immigration and deportations even if it is amongst themselves. She strongly believes that these jokes are the product of fear and making jokes is a way to manage that fear. The future is uncertain for most of the adolescent arrivals in this study, and although Karla does not appreciate the jokes she realizes that for many this is a way to take ownership of a situation that seems to be out of their control. In their analysis of Americo Paredes' *With His Pistol in His Hand*, George Lipsitz and Russell Rodriguez (2012) argue that he strategically and tactically managed to "turn hegemony on its head." The concept of "turning hegemony on its head" was theorized by Joane Nagel (1997) who posits that in order for negative ascriptions to be undone one must learn to embrace but also invert and subvert the identities given to them by others in order to reclaim power. Humor therefore, in the situation of these adolescent arrivals who are learning to survive in a harsh political climate where they are constantly attacked, serves as a way to take ownership of their lives and resist the injustices their communities encounter on a daily basis.

"One can no longer go out feeling secure": Changes in Lifestyles

As described in the previous section, some participants use humor as a coping mechanism. But all jokes aside, participants are well aware of the severity of Trump's nativist discourse. So much has changed since they first learned they would immigrate to the United States. Sergio, for example, did not want to come here because he was happy in his home country, going to school, and hanging out with his childhood friends. When his

parents informed him that they would be immigrating to the United States he was promised certain things, many of which can no longer be fulfilled. He explains:

> *Cuando ibamos a venir mis papas me dijeron que ibamos a estar bajando cada 6 meses a Mexico y pues ahora que gano Trump mi mama me dijo pues que tenia miedo pues de que si salieramos ya no entrar y dijo que nos tenemos que aguantar un tiempo de aqui a que mi hermana nos arregle.'*
>
> [When we were going to come, my parents told me that we would be going back every six months to Mexico and after Trump won my mom told me that she was scared that if we leave the country we would not be able to come back so she told us that we have to make a sacrifice and wait a bit longer until my sister can help us fix our papers.]

Like Sergio, many of the respondents reported feeling uncertain about their fate. The internalization of the constant anti-immigrant messages they are so familiar with now, troubles them as they worry not only for themselves but for their loved ones. Mariana, age 14, who was born in the United States but taken to Mexico as an infant, expressed how she feels:

> Liliana: *¿Te preocupas tú sobre todo lo que está pasando en cuestion de la politica?* [Do you worry about what is happening in terms of politics?]
> Mariana: *Sí*. [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué te preocupas si a ti no te afecta directamente?* [Why if it does not affect you directly?]
> Mariana: *Pues porque mis papás están ilegales aquí y por eso.* [Well, because my parents are here illegally and that's why.]
> Liliana: *¿Entonces aunque tú te sientes protegida tu familia no?* [So even though you feel protected your family is not?]
> Mariana: *Aja, sí.* [Yup, yes.]

Even among participants who have some type of documentation to be here, feelings of uncertainty and anxiety are not uncommon. Like Mariana, they understand that although they might not be in immediate danger, their loved ones are, and that makes matters equally as bad for them to handle. The threat of family separation lingers in the minds and thoughts of the youth who reported feeling powerless and even angry to some extent. Isaac, age 18 describes his feelings: "*Da coraje, mucho coraje. No te sientes bien pues allá tienes toda tu familia y tú eres de esas raíces pues y que venga alguien y te quiera hacer menos no no va"* [I feel anger, lots of anger. You don't feel good since all of your family is over there and

those are your roots and for someone to come and want to make you feel inferior that's not right]. Isaac, is not alone in his feelings. Like him, other respondents do not understand why they and their loved ones are not wanted here. They came to the United States with high hopes and dreams and now find themselves in the midst of political turmoil.

For many respondents, Trump's election has demanded sacrifices and changes in their lifestyles. For example, to protect herself, Karla avoids going out since Trump was elected president. She lives in constant fear that her loved ones will be affected by his politics and anti-immigrant rhetoric. She said that after November 2016 she decided to stay home as much as possible to avoid any unnecessary attention. Internalizing the anti-immigrant discourse of the current political climate, Karla decided that it was best for her to not go out and stay home. Otherwise she told me, "*Si salgo, me agarran y me sacan*" [If I go out, they will get me and kick me out]. In order to avoid this, Karla claims she stopped going out and instead of hanging out with friends chooses to stay home.

Jasmine, also expressed fear for her family's well-being. "*Como que ya no sales con tanta confianza porque pueden andar los de migración y te pueden mandar a otro país o te pueden deportar"* [Like one can no longer go out feeling secure because immigration officers can be out there and they can send us to another country or they can deport us]. Jasmine, as stated before, is very reserved and hates being in the United States. She constantly tells me that she wants to go back home but her parents do not see a future in Mexico. Jasmine rarely goes out with friends. She tends to like to stay home and watch *novelas* (Spanish soap operas). If she does go out, it is with her parents. One day, while I was visiting with her and her family, we were sitting outside in the front porch of the house where they rent, and we began talking about movies and school. That day I noticed she was smiling more and laughing often. The first time I had come to visit her, she had cried the

entire time because she said she was miserable living in the United States. I was glad to see her in a happier mood. Jasmine is a bit overweight and always dresses with jeans and sweaters regardless if it is a hot, cold, or rainy day. Her brown hair is always slicked back in a pony-tail and she never wears make-up. That day she was sporting new eye glasses that gave her a much more sophisticated look. She was telling me that she likes to take walks with her mom but that nowadays they take walks less often. She told me they are scared that "*algún día pues salgamos a caminar y nos deporten, nos separaren o asi.*" [one day that we are out walking that they deport us or separate us or something like that]. The thought of that makes Jasmine and her family think twice before planning an outing.

Carolina, who was 19 years of age when I first interviewed her, also reported making changes in her lifestyle like Karla and Jasmine did soon after Trump won the presidential election. She stated:

> *Pues si no salíamos mucho porque pues decían que andaba migración y cosas así y a mí a veces hasta me da miedo de ir a la escuela porque luego nos agarran allí nos reportan y pues de ahí pues nosotros tenemos permiso y todo pero de todos modos es migración y se les pone y nos pueden sacar.*
>
> [Well, yes we didn't go out a lot because they would say that immigration officers were out and about and things like that and at times I was even afraid of going to school because then they would get us there and report us and well I know we have permission to be there and stuff but if the immigration officers wanted to they could kick us out.]

Carolina, like other participants, understands that they are part of a vulnerable population and based on the anti-immigrant rhetoric she constantly hears she is aware that they are not welcomed here. She is not happy with the decision her family made to have her and her sister come live in the United States as they seek asylum due to the violence in their hometown, but she knows she cannot afford to go back home at this time. In order to

protect herself she feels that staying low and clear of immigration officials is in her best interest. To do this, she does her best to stay indoors as much as possible.

Carlos, who came to the United States after suffering extreme poverty in his home country and wanting to reunite with his parents told me that he knows he does not belong here. He constantly strives however to make the best of his current situation in hopes of one day achieving financial stability. For the time being, he confesses it is hard not to worry about what could happen to him. He said, *"Pasar para acá no fue tan facil para que nos saquen luego"* [Coming over here was not that easy and then they can kick us out just like that]. Carlos understands that due to his lack of citizenship status he runs the risk of being deported but remains optimistic about being here and like other participants does what ever he needs to do to avoid encounters with law enforcement agents that would jeopardize his stay.

On the other hand, there are some participants that claim that fear is not a sentiment that Trump provokes in them. They assert that instead they feel sadness for what is happening in the United States. Unable to find the adequate support from their own governments and unable to make ends meet, drove many participants to migrate to the United States. They came here with dreams and aspirations only to find themselves having to fight off the negative ascriptions that stigmatize their existence in the United States. Daniela is one of the respondents who is thriving in school and has big plans for her future. She wishes the current administration would take the time to understand their plight. She explained her feelings this way:

> *Me da tristeza el hecho de saber que muchas personas aquí no estamos para robar, no estamos para quitar empleos. Estamos aquí por las oportunidades que nos dan. Me da más tristeza saber que nadie puede venir en verdad a sacar todo lo que tiene. Me da tristeza el saber qué hay tantos niños en México inteligentes que en verdad no tienen ni para comer y son*

> *siempre sacan todo lo mejor de ellos y que el [Trump] no se dé cuenta lo que estamos pasando eso me da tristeza.*
>
> [I feel sad knowing that a lot of people are not here to steal, we are not here to take away jobs. We are here only for the opportunities that they give us. It makes me sad to know people cannot truly come here and give it their all. It makes me sad to know that there are a lot of children in Mexico who are intelligent and who truly don't have anything to eat and they give it their all and he [Trump] does not realize what we are going through. That makes me very sad.]

Daniela claims that she does not live in fear because her sadness is greater than any other emotion she can feel. One aspect of *negotiating liminality* is the very essence of dealing with emotions that allow adolescent arrivals to make sense of the current political climate. Caught between a harsh political environment that constantly demonizes them and their communities, adolescent arrivals allow themselves to feel the social consequences that surround them. It is "in situations of rapidly developing threat" that as Laura Barberena, Hortensia Jiménez, and Michael Young state, "actors must feel their way in order to orient themselves (2014:45). Their feelings and emotions allow participants to make sense and better understand their situations as they try their best to stay afloat.

"If it's my turn to go, then it's my turn to go": Acceptance and Resignation

At their young age, respondents understand that every action has a consequence and although the majority are troubled with how Trump and his administration are (mis)handling immigrants, many report accepting whatever comes their way. In negotiating their liminality, adolescent arrivals in this study, use their experiences, which inform their realities to develop modes to best circumvent their situations. Even for those who report feeling fear, they learn to navigate not only the political climate but also their emotions. For them, giving up is not an option and instead of lamenting their situations their lived experiences are a testament to the resilience and persistence that allowed them to embark on an international journey in the first place.

Paulina came to the United States with her mother and younger sister to reunite with her father. She is happy to be here with her family and of possibilities to experience upward mobility. When asked if she is worried or concerned about Trump and his politics she responded with the following statement:

> *Pues no nací aquí. Si me sacaran de aquí no es como si mi mundo se fuera a acabar porque yo tengo mi casa en México. Tal vez no hay trabajo como aquí pero no es como que si me echan de aquí me voy a morir de hambre por eso no me preocupa si me echan de aquí. No hay problema. Tengo mi casa.*
>
> [Well I was not born here. If they kick me out, it is not as if my world would come crumbling down because I have my home in Mexico. There might not be work over there like there is here but it's not as if they would kick me out I would die of hunger that is why I am not worried if they kick me out. That is not a problem. I have my home.]

Paulina grew up in Mexico, and unlike members of the 1.5-generation she does not feel a strong attachment to this country. Members of the 1.5-generation were brought to the U.S. as children and raised in the U.S., which is why many, if not most of them, identify as American (Abrego 2006, Flores and Chapa 2009; Gonzales 2016; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017). This is not the case for adolescent arrivals who although sharing many similarities with members of the 1.5-generation, such as living in a country that constantly attacks their communities, they experience a different set of obstacles. As argued before, participants in this study find themselves stuck in a liminal stage. Their liminality however is multi-layered and goes beyond citizenship status. Because of their life-stage of migration their liminality encompasses several different factors that they must learn to navigate in order to survive in the host country. In doing so, they demonstrate the importance of *negotiating liminality* by either conforming or resisting the social forces that hinder their abilities to experience any type of upward mobility.

Paulina does not agree with Trump's political agenda. Having been born and raised in Mexico, a country whose history is marked by the lack of government support for the masses and government corruption, she at least admires that he does not lie about his plans and ideas. She does not defend his tactics but appreciates not being blindsighted when it comes to immigration matters. She explains:

> *Lo admiro porque al menos en su campaña fue honesto lo que en México no. Nomás lo admiro por su honestidad. Desde su campaña dijo lo que era y en comparación en México que dicen muchas cosas y no lo hacen y él sí lo está haciendo. Entonces digo que al menos es honesto.*
>
> [I admire him because at least in his campaign he was honest not like in Mexico. I only admire him for his honesty. Since his campaign, he said what he felt and in comparison with Mexico they say many things and never follow through and he is doing what he said he would do. At least in that respect he is honest.]

The national political context that participants navigate daily was made known to them with the election of Trump to the presidency. Although they wish things were different they understand that political matters are complicated.

As the data demonstrates, although it is clear and understandable that fear and uncertainty exists in participants' lives, there is also a sense of resignation that prevails from ultimately accepting that they are foreigners in a strange land. They have only been in the United States for a short period of time, and unlike members of the 1.5-generation, they have yet to feel like this is their new home. Participants report that home to them is their country of origin and the United States is a country where they simply reside. Their experiences, therefore, inform their reasoning for accepting and resigning themselves to whatever outcome transpires. Although some may see this as simply giving up, for participants accepting the consequences is a way of taking ownership of their decisions.

Raul, age 16, reported feeling happy to be in the United States regardless of the highly political climate that surrounds his existence. He explains: *"Pues mas que todo yo no*

puedo pensar, no puedo pensar mal de él o bien porque él tiene derecho, esta en su pais y luego nosotros no podemos decir nada." [Well, foremost, I can't really think bad or good about him [Trump] because he is in all of his right, this is his country and we can't say anything]. Just as Raul, Sebastian, does not feel like he has the right to judge the actions of a president in a country where he was not born: "*Si me toca irme para alla me toca no me voy a estar quejando. Al presidente nadie va a estar diciendole algo ya que es la persona mas importante de aquí."* [If it's my turn to leave well it's my turn to leave. I am not going to be nagging. Nobody is going to be telling the president anything because he is the most important person here]. Through their statements, both Raul and Sebastian highlight the notion of feeling like foreigners. Despite their efforts to make this country their home, participants constantly struggle to navigate a place that has not fully welcomed them. Adhering to a dual frame of reference, as Suárez-Orozco (1987) presents, participants are willing to face adversity knowing full well what awaits them back home in their countries of origin or the countries where they were raised. It is perhaps this perspective that allows respondents to accept their destinies. Julisa, age 17, shares:

> *Si el nos saca, estamos en un pais que no es de nosotros. Esta en su derecho. Nosotros no podemos exigir en un pais que no es de nosotros. Nosotros estamos aqui para seguir adelante y si no podemos, pues.*
>
> [If he kicks us out we are in a country that is not ours. He is in all his right. We cannot demand anything in a country that is not ours. We are here to better ourselves and if we can't, oh well.]

Julisa like many others, reported wanting to better herself by getting an education and one day having a career that will allow her to help her family out financially. She wishes things were different, but does not complain about the situation at hand because for the time being, she is living out her dream. Others, such as Isaac, report hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. One day while sitting with him on a bench watching others play

basketball at a local gym that most respondents frequent, he told me, *"Como yo lo veo, one día tiene que pasar algo. Si me toca a mi irme, entonces me toca a mi irme."*[The way I see it, one day something has to happen. If it's my turn to go, then it's my turn to go]. Isaac demonstrates his resilience as he learns to accept his destiny in the country where he hoped to better himself. Like him, participants are doing their best to navigate their new lives under the conditions by which they are confronted. They all came to the U.S. during a time of heightened animosity against immigrants and their daily struggle is not only trying to adapt but also to survive in their new home.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I identify how the concept of *negotiating liminality* plays out in the lives of adolescent arrivals. In doing so, I examine how the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals in the United States. As the data reveals, adolescent arrivals are not passive individuals just waiting for life to happen but instead are active agents negotiating boundaries set forth by their circumstances. The findings presented highlight how adolescent arrivals perceive Trump and his politics and how these in turn inform their way of living. I demonstrate the multiple forms that adolescent arrivals use to negotiate their liminality and how this differs from other immigrant populations such as members of the 1.5-generation.

The current political and social contexts greatly influence the integration of immigrant youth who recently immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. A heightened level of nativist discourse and anti-immigrant sentiments greeted them as they settled in their new home. Van Gennep's (1960) concept of transitions along the life course of individuals is helpful in examining the experiences of adolescent immigrant youth during the Trump Era. It allows for a better understanding of how

adolescent youth navigate the political climate in which they arrived. In order to transition to the next stage in life one must first successfully move from one stage to the other. The process is not as easy for everyone as evident in the testimonies and lived experiences of the immigrant youth exemplified in this study. Caught in the in-between stage, or the liminal stage, these youths constantly find themselves in what Negrón-Gonzales describes as "the space between profound institutional exclusion and the supposed promise of the American Dream" (2013: 1284).

By interrogating how adolescent arrivals perceive the current political climate, this study contributes to the literature of immigrant youth during the Trump era. Highlighting the challenges they face in the host country and examining how they respond to these challenges, I advance and demonstrate how by *negotiating liminality*, adolescent arrivals make sense and ultimately respond to the harsh anti-immigrant climate that currently invades every corner of their lives. For example, humor surfaced as a coping mechanism among participants to make light of a situation that is beyond their control. It is through humor that participants are able to talk about the severity of Trump's regime without falling victim to political tactics aimed at debilitating their communities. Another way adolescent arrivals negotiate their liminality is by being cognizant of how they live their lives and choosing to either conform or resist the social forces set into gear that prey on their vulnerability. Finally, adolescent arrivals learn to negotiate their stay by accepting their fate in a country that sees them as nothing more than just foreigners.

Chapter 4

"They want to make you feel inferior for not speaking English": Language, Identity, and Master Status

> So, if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex, and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.
>
> -Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, 1987

One sunny afternoon, I waited for Janet to meet me at a local eatery near her house. It was a hot day and I could hardly stand the sun as it burned my skin. I decided to step inside and wait for her there. I sat near the front facing a window that allowed me to view the surroundings outside so I would be sure to see her when she arrived. It must have been about half an hour later that I saw her at a distance. She was strolling nonchalantly down the street making her way to our meeting place. Janet is the youngest participant in the study. Although she is only 14 years old she looks older. She is physically overdeveloped for her age. She likes to wear a lot of makeup and her long black straight hair is always flawless. She has light skin and has a thick body frame. She usually wears tight clothes that accentuate her body. Her drowsy eyes under her long bangs give her a tough girl look that she uses to her advantage to constantly defend herself from anyone who dares stare at her the wrong way or say something negative about her. Today she was wearing grey colored

jogging pants with a short tight grey shirt that she tied in a knot on her back for an extra tight look.

We met at a coffee shop near the university and as always, the place was packed with college-aged students. I realized at that moment that Janet fit right in. She looked like one of them, and I am sure she would easily be mistaken as an undergraduate student by anyone that does not know her. I went outside to greet her and we walked inside to order a drink. I ask her if she knew if any of the cold teas there were good and she named one but I did not understand which one she said. We were talking to each other in Spanish and the young man behind the counter quickly called over a Latino employee to come take our orders. He whispered something to him and left the counter. The Latino employee seemed excited to assist us. I think he thought Janet was cute and wanted to impress her.

> "*Las puedo ayudar,*" [Can I help you?] he asked. At first I was tempted to respond in Spanish but I wanted him to know that we spoke English and that it was rude for his coworker to assume that we did not.
> "I'll take an iced coffee." I told him.
> "And what will you have?" he asked looking at Janet. In her broken English, she replied, "I'll have a strawberry acai lemonade."
> "What was that again?" he asked trying to be polite.
> "Strawberry acai lemonade," she repeated herself.

Again, unsure of what she had ordered, he asked her to repeat herself. She did and again he did not understand. He continued to ask her to repeat the order and she kept saying the same thing over and over again. He kept looking over at the menu in an attempt to understand what she was asking for. I myself could not make out what she was saying. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity of trying to make out what she was saying she pointed to the item in the menu and I read it out loud. He then smiled and said, "got it," as he put in our orders and charged me for the drinks. He looked embarrassed for not being able to understand Janet. Janet on the other hand, thought nothing of it. She waited for her

drink as she laughed and joked with me. Once we got our drinks we walked towards a table to catch up on her experiences in the United States.

The above encounter highlights the fundamental role that language plays in the integration (or lack of integration) process of adolescent arrivals in the United States. The incident at the coffee shop with Janet is not an isolated encounter. However, it is one that highlights language as a site of contestation in the experiences of adolescent arrivals. As English Language Learners, participants face an additional barrier to incorporation. Unable to communicate with monolingual English speakers in everyday mundane encounters, is a constant reminder of their 'outsider' status, which marks their experiences in the United States. Adolescent arrivals constantly feel the repercussions of not speaking English both in school and in the community. Even though participants hold their native Spanish language with high regards they have learned that in the United States their beloved language not only carries a negative stigma but is also devalued and underappreciated.

Findings from this study demonstrate that although social or identity categories such as race, gender, class, and citizenship status are important factors to consider when analyzing the experiences of adolescent arrivals, language plays a crucial role in their incorporation process. Language is a fundamental component of identity. Speaking a particular language is correlated and associated with ethnic identity. Language in this sense is taken to be a cultural component of ethnicity. In the case of the Spanish language, those who speak it are perceived to be Latina/o. Davis and Moore (2014) argue that the act of treating language as a cultural component misses the racialized aspect of a language. Because those who are racialized based on language practices feel the repercussions of being treated differently, seen as outsiders and foreigners, regardless of citizenship status, and

placed at the bottom of a racial hierarchy, it is necessary to analyze language as a significant marker of racial boundaries that functions to 'other' certain members in society.

Crenshaw (1991) argues that "race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination—that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different" (1241). The experiences of immigrant youth are the product of what Crenshaw calls intersecting patterns of the "isms" such as racism, classism, and sexism. Consequently, it would be an injustice to them to try and disentangle their experiences based on one category. The goal of this chapter therefore is not to obscure these other social categories but to demonstrate how in the contemporary political climate, language as a proxy for identity has become intensified and thus more salient in their lives. As such, it overwhelms other social categories and becomes a master status (Hughes 1945; Gonzales 2016) that shapes their experiences in the United States. A master status predominates other categories and becomes the leading factor influencing how one is perceived, treated, and read. Because a master status overshadows other attributes or categories, it comes to define who we are. In demonstrating the master status qualities of language, I place the concepts of master status and intersectionality in dialogue with each other. I argue that at a particular historical moment in time, one social category, in this case language as a proxy for identity, takes center stage in the lives of those who live at the margins of society.

The goal of this chapter is to examine how language practices influence the integration of adolescent arrivals. Because of their life-stage of migration, adolescent arrivals lack the linguistic capital to navigate their new surroundings. Not knowing English, creates a barrier difficult to overcome for adolescent arrivals who unlike members of the 1.5-generation who migrated at a young age and therefore possess the linguistic capital to

speak to power, participants in this study do not. Through the concept of *negotiating liminality,* I interrogate their experiences. The concept *negotiating liminality* refers to the cognitive and multilayered processes that adolescent arrivals navigate under political and social contexts while being stuck in a liminal stage. In their experiences, they come to see language both as a weapon used against them and as a tool used by them to build support systems for survival. I examine aspects of this meaning-making process that shape the experiences of adolescent arrivals as language becomes a master status in their lives. In particular, I examine the role of language in discriminatory encounters, how it shapes their perceptions of Mexican Americans based on language practices, and how language shapes the incorporation process of adolescent arrivals in the United States. In order to better understand the lived experiences of adolescent arrivals, the data presented in this chapter is solely from their perspective. It is not my intention to examine intraethnic relations which is why the perspectives of their Mexican American peers is not included in the findings. As discussed in the previous chapter, the contemporary political and social context heavily influences not only their integration experiences but also perceptions of adolescent arrivals.

Language as a Racialized Marker of Difference

Feagin (1997) argues that the origins of nativism date way back to about two centuries ago. With the steady growth of the Latina/o population over the decades, registering at 18 percent of the entire U.S. population or nearly 58 million in 2016 (Flores 2017), the Latino threat (Chavez 2008) is more prevalent than ever before. The 'browning of America' produces fear and anxiety on White Americans who see the American culture deteriorating and the English language vanishing (Cobas and Feagin 2008; Cornelius 2009). Cornelius (2009) posits that anti-immigrant sentiments arise based on people's perceptions of culture and language. Research shows that attitudes towards immigrants are negative

only towards particular immigrant groups. For example Vidanage and Sears (1995) find that attitudes of whites toward immigrants were based on their perceptions on the Latina/o populations versus other immigrant groups suggesting that their negative attitudes are not necessary against all immigrants but just toward Latina/o immigrants more generally.

Throughout history, numerous nativist campaigns aimed to make English the official language in the United States. Santa Ana (2002) argues that in America, language is a cover term for every other type of speech except English. The ideological perspective in the United States is that English is not a language but instead is a natural form of interacting. By establishing English as the only proper form of communicating, then by definition language is made to be a foreign concept and therefore all other types of speech, including Spanish, are viewed as foreign languages.

Ever since the first English settlers first set foot in North America, it became their mission to 'civilize' those they deemed as inferior. Language constituted a major aspect of their colonization initiatives (Cobas and Feagin 2008). Cobas and Feagin (2008) posit the following:

> By the mid-nineteenth century the civilized-savage polarity was replaced by a racist Weltanschauung which played up the achievements of the 'Anglo-Saxon race' against the shortcomings of inferior 'others'. A common element in both the English-other and the white-other conceptions was that the dominant group viewed the language of the 'others' with suspicion and often sought to eliminate it (391)

Since then, English conveys a high prestige status, is viewed as having more cultural capital, and hence seen as the most powerful language. Spanish on the other hand, is viewed as a language of low aptitude and distrust (Santa Ana 2002) even though other languages from other parts of the world are not seen as inferior (Bourdieu 1991).

Most of the participants in this study, 63 percent, emigrated from Mexico, 4 are U.S. citizens and the rest came from other parts of Latin America. Although they recognize that

prior to migrating they were aware of the differences between them based on nationality and even region, once in the United States conversations about nationality or citizenship status were seldom had. These concepts seemed to evaporate once they set foot in the receiving country. To participants the differences that existed before in their countries of origin diminished in the U.S. context. Participants did not create or reinforce these boundaries of distinction. However, in the United States there was another boundary of distinction that became more significant—language. Not knowing English, the dominant language of instruction, constituted a setback in their education and made it difficult for them to fully incorporate themselves in their new home. The data from this study reveals that language served both as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion by which participants were "othered" and by which they themselves "othered" peers. In her study of urban youth cultures, Bejarano (2005) finds that language is the most vital ethnic marker. Language, she contends, plays a huge role in the lives of Mexican descent students, for it serves as a tool used by the students to distinguish themselves from one another. She posits that youth create their unique cultures through the customs and trends they create to reinforce the borders between them. Davis and Moore (2014) call this process of erasing ethnic divisions as 'ethnic erasure' which they contend takes place when a powerful commonality shared such as language manages to erase differences once thought to be significant.

Linguistic Discrimination

After the election of Donald J. Trump, instances of what Anzaldúa (1987) describes as "linguistic terrorism" began to surface nationwide. Linguistic terrorism is a concept used to describe how members in society police linguistic practices that result in the harassment, assault, or belittling of people for speaking a particular language in the public sphere. In the case of people of Mexican descent, Anzaldúa argues that "because we internalize how our

language has been used against us by the dominant culture, we use or language differences against each other" (80). Anzaldúa argues that just as others police our language practices we too are complicit in policing and holding others accountable for their linguistic practices.

In May 2018, a New York attorney made national news when he berated customers and employees in a local café in Manhattan for speaking Spanish after being filmed by someone's cellphone. He is heard in the video saying, "Your staff is speaking Spanish to customers when they should be speaking English," and "if they have the balls to come here and live off my money, I pay for their welfare, I pay for their ability to be here, the least they can do is speak English." This unfortunately is not an isolated incident. Like this, many others have taken place all over the United States in restaurants, on the streets, and in public transportation.

Acts of discrimination due to language practices have also been felt by adolescent arrivals in this study. Participants described incidents of discrimination in their everyday lives. Paulina, 18 years of age, shares a story of an incident when she was verbally attacked by someone who demanded she speak English.

> Paulina: *Estaba esperando a mi hermana en un centro y una señora llegó preguntando algo y hablando muy rápido y no le entendí y le dije 'Oh lo siento no hablo inglés," entonces yo no sé, supongo que andaba drogada porque reaccionó exagerado más que una persona normal. Y empezó a decir muchas cosas pero como yo no entendía, yo nada más me quedé mirándola, diciéndole que si. Le dije también 'Dígame lo que quiera acabó no le estoy entendiendo,' y ya se fue muy enojada.* [I was waiting for my sister in a shopping mall and a lady approached me to ask me something and she was speaking really fast and I did not understand her and I told her 'Oh, I am sorry but I do not speak English,' and then I don't know, I think she must have been on drugs or something because she reacted in an exaggerated way, more than a normal person. And she began telling me things but since I did not understand, I just stayed there staring at her and saying yes. I also told her 'Tell me all you want, I still do not understand what it is you are saying,' and she left furiously.
> Liliana: *¿Y todo eso lo dijo en inglés?* [And all of this she told you in English?]

> Paulina: *Si, lo dijo en inglés pero dije 'okay, no entendí. Okay, desahógate, de todos modos no te estoy entendiendo.'* [Yes, she said it in English but I said, 'Okay, I do not understand. Okay, vent all you want, I still don't understand what you are saying.'
> Liliana: *¿Cómo te sentiste en ese momento?* [How did you feel in that moment?]
> Paulina: *Normal. Me quería soltar la risa porque así veo que te estás quebrando la cabeza y yo no te estoy entendiendo. Bueno pero dije si me río se va a enojar más, así que mejor me mantuve seria.* [Normal. I wanted to burst out laughing because I was seeing her breaking her head over this and I did not understand her. But then I thought that if I laughed she would get angrier so I decided to remain serious instead.]

Paulina knew best than to respond to the woman who was already infuriated by no fault but her own. Unfortunately, this encounter indicated to Paulina that her language is not accepted nor tolerated in public spaces. It reinforced a nativist message that if you reside in the United States you must speak English at all times. In contemporary America, language has become a weapon used to discriminate against those who do not speak English. However because as previously discussed, language is racialized, it has become a proxy for identity. Trump's anti-immigrant discourse attacking immigrants in particular those of Mexican descent is not a new phenomenon but with his charged rhetoric he unleashed a monster in the making. According to Gándara and Contreras (2009), language and identity are bound up together. Demanding that a particular language be used in the public sphere has everything to do with political power and belonging. They argue, "if one's language is accepted, there is a tacit understanding that the speaker of the language is also accepted" (142).

Language as a Proxy for Identity

On a hot summer day, I met up with Karla at a local café near her house. Karla came to the United States with a visa. She had just returned from a trip to her hometown in Mexico and was excited to share the details of her trip with me. We arrived at the location

at around the same time and headed inside to grab a bite to eat. As we talked, she told me about her recent trip and how happy she was to be able to see her older sister and her nephew. She confessed that on the way back to the United States she was nervous. She said, "*Cuando pasamos por la línea pues a veces algunos no tienen la suerte de regresar. A algunos les quitan su visa. Pero pues todo salió bien,"* [When we pass through the line, well, sometimes some people don't have the luck to come back. They may take their visa away. But everything turned out fine]. She looked relieved as she said this.

Karla, like most participants in this study, is trying to learn English at her local high school. As English Language Learners, she and others struggle with this task, preferring to speak in Spanish. They often surround themselves with others who share their similar experiences and those with whom they can communicate fluently. Language is "twin skin" (Anzaldúa 1987) to their identity and thus they take pride in forming community with those that speak their same language. As will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, their experiences are a testament to the stigma associated with speaking Spanish. Karla is light complected and is constantly mistaken as a Caucasian American. She laughs when this happens because as soon as she opens her mouth she reveals what she calls to be her "true identity." This is when she feels the rejection. As she told me, "*tengo la mentalidad de que todo lo tengo de Mexico, mi acento, todo*," [I have the mentality that I have everything from Mexico, my accent, everything]. Although she does not consider her light skin to be a privilege, she realizes that others think it is. To her however, there is something more important than skin color that would allow her to have an advantage here in the United States. She said, "*No importa ser güerra ni nada porque fuera ventaja si supiera inglés!*" [It doesn't matter if you're white or anything because it would be an advantage if I knew English!]. In contemporary society, hierarchies based on skin color are still as prevalent as

ever before (Hunter 2002; Telles 2014). Although Karla recognizes that her light skin grants her some privileges in the United States such as having others be friendly to her and making her feel accepted, she knows that once she opens her mouth and speaks in Spanish she will be treated differently. In Mexico, her country of origin, having a light skin complexion also granted her unearned privileges that she was unaware of. However, now that she resides in the United States she is coming to understand that although having a light skin color has its benefits it does not shelter her completely from racism. She states, "*se basan en el color porque se fijan si eres de tal color y [si eres de piel morena] da asi como fuchi y más si aparte si no sabes el idioma se quedan como 'uff'* " [They base it on skin color because they see what color you are [and if you are dark skin] they think its gross and if you don't speak the language they are like 'ugh']. Karla explains how skin color and language are viewed in the American context. With this statement Karla acknowledges that those who have dark skin have it worse than her. The fact that she says people rely on skin color says a lot about her understanding of colorism even though she tries to down play it and make it seem as if she can completely relate to being discriminated against. This is an example of how the processes of colorism and racism are interconnected and how they work simultaneously to marginalize certain members in society (Hunter 2002).

Karla feels that not knowing English poses the biggest obstacle in trying to integrate to the United States. She recognizes that language plays a huge role in how she is treated and to some extent feels bothered when others assume she speaks English and then she has to reveal to them that she in fact does not. According to Flores (1997) factors such as race, language, and culture serve as markers used to deny equal rights and treat people as others. Linguistic differences mark members of minority groups as different from the dominant society.

Luciana's case presents another example of how linguistic practices shape modes of incorporation for adolescent arrivals. She was born in the United States to an immigrant mother. Because it was difficult for her mother to work and attend to Luciana at the same time, she made the decision to send her daughter at age three to live with her grandmother in Mexico. Luciana was therefore raised in Mexico by her maternal grandmother and although she is proud to say she is American by birthright, because of her culture, her language, and her traditions she identifies as Mexican. She came to the United States at the age of 16 to reunite with her mother. Her transition to the United States has not been easy. Even though Luciana is a U.S. citizen, she does not feel like she belongs here. Upon first arriving in the United States, she thought her life would be different and that she would be able to adapt. She quickly discovered that this was not the case. As a non-English language speaker, she encountered many obstacles both in and out of school that ultimately forced her to go back to Mexico to live with her grandmother. Flores (1997) posits that "being a citizen guarantees neither full membership in society nor equal rights," (255). He argues that even with citizenship, Latinas/os are treated as second or even third-class citizens. Luciana learned this the hard way.

As we were talking one day, Luciana told me she does not like to speak in public and allows her mother to speak for her since she has a better understanding of the English language. She expressed to me that she feels embarrassed to try to speak English in public "*porque me trabó. Como que todavía sigo en veces buscando las palabras en el momento*," [because I get confused. Like I find myself looking for the right words in the spur of the moment]. Because she has felt the stigma associated with not speaking English, she prefers to avoid encounters with English speakers. She said, "*Me da miedo como por ejemplo pensar de que vaya a hablarle a alguien qué habla inglés y no sepa cómo hablarle por eso*

todavía no me he animado." [For example, I am afraid to think that I will speak to someone who only speaks English and then I don't know how to talk to them that is why I don't dare do it]. For Luciana, her citizenship status does not protect her form feeling discriminated against, excluded, and unwelcomed. Like other participants in the study without U.S. citizenship, she faces similar obstacles integrating into the United States based on linguistic differences. Adolescent arrivals view their linguistic practices as a status that overshadows their possibilities of fully incorporating into the dominant culture. The examples of Karla and Luciana presented above show that not even a light skin complexion or a U.S. citizenship status makes participants feel like they belong. Participants view their linguistic practices as a dominant force posing as an obstacle to their integration.

A Master Status

Hughes (1945) proposed the concept of "master status" in delineating that individuals possess a variety of statuses but one may become more salient and overpower others in a particular moment of time or within a particular context. As individuals, we all fall into different social categories such as race, gender, and class that define who we are and are treated by other members in society. A master status is therefore the status that becomes the dominant attribute defining a person's identity and shaping lived experiences. This is not to say that the other statuses or as Hughes calls them "auxiliary traits" disappear, but they take a back seat to the master status. The master status, as Hughes argues, is not static and may become a subordinate status when another status overpowers the conditions and situations an individual undergoes.

In his work with undocumented youth, Gonzales (2016) applies the master status framework to define the experiences of undocumented immigrants of the 1.5 generation, or

DREAMers. He argues that for DREAMers, being undocumented becomes a master status as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. He states:

> It frames their lives in such a way that years lived in the United States, acculturation to American norms and behavior, and educational attainment are all inconsequential to their everyday routines as undocumented immigrants. This is the case because much of what they need to carry out adult lives—driver's licenses, jobs, valid forms of identification—require legal immigration status (15).

A master status shapes experiences and in this case, stigmatizes a population with many other positive traits that are disregarded and ignored based on political, social, and cultural discourses.

Although adolescent arrivals share many experiences with the above-mentioned population, they face different obstacles based on their life-stage of migration and context of reception. As adolescents, their worldviews and familiarity are based on the countries where they were either born or raised. For participants in this study who immigrated to the United States during a harsh political climate that constantly attacks differences, their language practices come to shape their experiences in the host country. As evident in the testimonies of participants, language plays a fundamental role in their integration or lack of integration processes in the United States. The racialization of language heavily shapes their experiences. Because language and identity are interconnected and because of the heighten level of scrutiny on immigrants during the current political climate, the negative stigma associated with speaking Spanish goes beyond linguistic practices to identity associations. In the case of members of the 1.5-generation, Gonzalez and Burciaga (2018) argue that being undocumented is a master status. Unable to legally incorporate into the United States, members of the 1.5-generation face many exclusions that come to define how they are both perceived and treated in the United States. Language discrimination is so prevalent in the lived experiences of adolescent arrivals regardless of their citizenship status that it comes to

act as a master status since it is strongly correlated with a Latina/o identity, which due to racialization practices is translated to a Mexican or undocumented immigrant identity. It is important to acknowledge, that just because language as a proxy for identity is a master status for participants, it does not dissolve other social categories or traits. The intersection of social categories such as race, class, and gender heavily influence their experiences. However, due to the harsh current anti-immigrant climate that seems to have unleashed an English-only movement, participants see language as the primary trait shaping their experiences.

"I felt like I was a rare insect because everyone would stare at me": Linguistic Antagonism

Because of their age of migration, adolescent arrivals are obligated to enroll in U.S. schools upon arriving in the United States. As if living in a country unfamiliar to them was not scary enough, they are faced with the harsh reality of attending schools that require them to speak a new language—English. Without the linguistic capital to fully incorporate themselves in these educational institutions, respondents confess feeling scared and worried about this experience.

Julisa, who came to the United States to reunite with her mother, told me upon reflecting on her first day of school, "*Me sentía que yo era, como un bicho raro porque todos se me quedaban mirando*" [I felt like I was a rare insect because everyone would stare at me]. Julisa is one of the few participants who reported being excited to attend school since in her humble hometown in Mexico she was not able to continue her education. She was raised with her grandparents and in order to attend school, she had to travel a great distance by foot to get there. Her grandparents would get very worried about her well-being and decided to take her out of school instead. She was saddened by this because she claims she loves learning and going to school and wanted to keep studying. When her mom finally told

her she would be bringing her to the United States, Julisa was more than thrilled to have the opportunity to once again attend school. However, the experience of being in school was not what she expected it to be. Once she set foot in her new school, she felt intimidated and discriminated against for not speaking English.

Ochoa (2004) contends that schools are a reflection of society at large and as such tend to reproduce dominant ideologies. In today's political climate where people's languages are constantly policed, it is no surprise that participants experienced the same treatment in school. Language became a mechanism of exclusion used against respondents to *other* them and make them feel inferior for not speaking the dominant language of instruction.

Schools are argued to be the great equalizer (Cremin 1951) where everyone is entitled to a free and quality public K-12 education regardless race, class or gender. *Plyler vs. Doe* extended this to include students regardless of their citizenship status. This case dramatically shaped the lives of undocumented immigrant children who undergo their formative years in U.S. schools and are socialized within what Gonzales (2016) describes as "the principal institution for both educating these children and integrating them into the fabric of US society" (90). But as research shows, this is not always the case. In her study, Valenzuela (1999) presents the concept of subtractive schooling, which speaks to how schools fail to acknowledge the cultural capital that students of Mexican descent bring to the classroom. Participants reveal many instances in which their cultural capital was not valued and instead was a factor used not only by students but also by teachers to humiliate them.

Mariana for example, was born in the United States. Due to a family emergency, her mother moved back to Mexico when Mariana was only nine months old. She grew up in Mexico and considers herself to be a Mexican. Her father stayed in the United States

working all the while. When Mariana was 14 years old, her mother decided to join her husband in the United States and brought Mariana and her younger brother with her, leaving behind Mariana's older sister in Mexico. Mariana is a U.S. citizen and does not speak English. She does not consider herself to be American and dislikes living here because she feels like she does not belong. Others, she says, remind her of this all the time. Mariana recalls times when while speaking Spanish with her friends, U.S.-born peers have tried to belittle them by calling them names. She elaborates on this:

> Mariana: *Algunas personas han llamado a unos de mis amigos como Mexicanos. Osea no es una palabra mala pero para ellos si lo es. Que se devuelvan a México y así pues entonces yo pienso que si hay discriminación por eso.* [Some people have called my friends, they have called them like Mexicans. It is not a bad word but for them it is supposed to be an insult. They tell them to go back to Mexico and well that is why I believe there is discrimination here].
> Liliana: *¿A ti una vez te han dicho eso?* [Have they ever told you that?]
> Mariana: *Si, una vez.* [Yes, one time.]
> Liliana: *¿Y que fue tu respuesta?* [And what was your response?]
> Mariana: *Pues llore. Aunque me dijo que ahí venía la migra, que me fuera pero pues yo no estoy aquí como ilegal. Estoy legal aquí entonces solamente lloré porque solamente me dio tristeza de que me dijera eso.* [Well I cried. He told me that the border patrol was coming that I should leave but I am not here illegally. I'm here legally but I simply cried because I was sad that he told me that.]
> Liliana: *¿Y quién te dijo eso?* [And who told you that?]
> Mariana: *Era un niño que venía aquí…era Americano.* [It was a kid that came here…he was an American.]

Mariana looked sad as she told me this story. Her eyes got watery as she relived the events of that day. She believes that if she spoke English this encounter would not have taken place. In her eyes, speaking Spanish sparked the racist reaction of the U.S.-born peer. Although Mariana refers to this incident as an act of discrimination due to language, she goes on to explain that based on her appearance, or phenotype, others are quick to assume she is not a U.S. citizen even though she is. Mariana however was set in blaming the fact that she does not possess the mainstream language to navigate life in the United States as to

why she is seen and treated as a foreigner. According to Castles and Davidson (2000), even though someone might have U.S. citizenship, they might not be recognized as such based on their racial or ethnic traits. This is what Mariana describes in her story. Flores-Gonzalez (2017) finds the same to be true for participants in her study of U.S. Latinos who are citizens but do not identify or feel American. Because Mariana does not speak English she feels like an outcast regardless of her citizenship status. She does not feel American in the slightest way and finds it hard to adjust to life in the United States because of her language practices. Even though she faces obstacles because of language both in and out of school, since most of her days are spent in school, she feels unwelcomed there because she cannot communicate with other students and teachers. She expressed her feelings in the following way:

> Liliana: *¿Tú crees que te has podido incorporar a los Estados Unidos?* [Do you think you have been able to incorporate yourself to the United States?]
> Mariana: *No*. [No.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué no?* [Why not?]
> Mariana: *Pues porque no me siento bien aquí.* [Well, because I don't feel good here.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué es lo que no te hace sentir bien?* [What makes you feel like that?]
> Mariana: *Pues porque casi en todas mis clases hablan puro inglés y cómo que no sé lo que dicen ellos.* [Well, because almost everyone in my classes speak only English and like I don't know what they say].

Language is a huge factor in the integration or lack of integration for adolescent arrivals such as Mariana. Because they are not able to effectively communicate with English speakers they prefer to avoid engaging in conversations with them. Sometimes, avoiding these encounters is not by choice. As students, adolescent arrivals are in classes with English speakers and being called upon by the teacher can be stress inducing. Carlos recalls being in this situation. He told me he hates it when others *"se reían, que se burlen pues así de uno*" [laugh, that they make fun of us]. When their peers laugh at them for mispronouncing a

word or for simply not understanding what they are told, participants confess feeling isolated, excluded, and unwelcomed.

Language and Peers

Participants constantly shared stories of feeling like 'outsiders' due to their linguistic practices. Language to them is a barrier difficult to overcome. They understand the importance of learning the English language but because of their age it is more difficult for them to learn the language. In his research, Rumbaut (1997) found that age of migration is critical for learning and feeling comfortable with the English language. He argues language acquisition is a function of age. For those who arrive in the United States prior to the age of six, it is easier to learn the language and speak it fluently. However, those that arrive later in life (after puberty he argues) may still learn it, but not with such ease and will likely develop an accent. As adolescent arrivals learning the English language has therefore become a difficult task.

Not speaking English, according to Janet, is an obstacle young people like her encounter daily and one that distances them from English speakers. This seemed to be the common trend among participants who brought up the discrimination they experience in the United States as a result of language practices. Janet remembers vividly the racism, as she called it, that she faced for not speaking English:

> Janet: *Cuando recién llegué me miraron bien cómo 'Hey, hola' y ya después cuando se dieron cuenta que no hablaba inglés me miraban bien raro como 'Hey, no le vayas a hablar a ella' y así.* [When I first got here they were nice and would say like 'hey hi' and later on when they found out I didn't speak English, they would look at me weird like 'hey, don't talk to her,' and like that.]
> Liliana: *¿Cómo te sentías?* [How did you feel?]
> Janet: *Me sentía mal porque nomás me miraban y como a veces me querían hablar pero a veces nada más me hacían una cara como de 'No, olvídalo, tú no hablas inglés' y se iban.* [I felt bad because they would just look at me and like at times they wanted to talk but sometimes they would just make a

> face at me like saying, 'No, forget it, you don't speak English,' and they would leave.
> Liliana: *Eso te hacía sentir como que no...* [That would make you feel like you didn't…]
> Janet: *Cómo me hacía sentir como que no soy parte de aquí como si me hubiera quedado mejor de donde yo era.* [Like, it made me feel like I don't belong here like it would be better if I had just stayed where I came from.]

Janet was made to feel like she did not belong in her school. They made her feel ashamed of who she was and of the language she spoke. Little by little she gained the confidence to fight back and to let others know that she was proud of her heritage and of her language. But this took time, and even though she says she does not care about that now, a year after living in United States, she laments that she does not feel like she belongs in this country.

Other participants took a different approach when laughed at or criticized by peers for not speaking English. Because as Anzaldúa (1987) presents, language is akin to identity, some participants confronted encounters of discrimination where they felt attacked for not speaking English by defending themselves. Isaac, for example, says he had a hard time adjusting to school because he never felt like he belonged. He eventually dropped out and attended adult school for a few months before deciding that he was just wasting his time and needed to work in order to survive. He too, confessed that students would make fun of him for not understanding English and this infuriated him. He told me, " *No pues no hacía nada. Nada más me enojaba hasta que los paraba. Les decía que se calmaran o si no les iba a pegar*" [Well, I wouldn't do anything. I would just get mad until I would stop them. I would tell them to calm down, if not I was going to hit them]. Pablo, like Isaac, is not afraid to turn to violence if necessary to stop those that discriminate against them. He said, "*Como cuando uno llega a la high school que no hablas inglés y algunos se burlan de ti te quieren hacer menos. Pero nomás cuando te perro y te la pelan los güeyes.* [Like when you first go

to high school and you don't speak English and some people laugh at you, they want to make you feel inferior. But I just jump them and then have those dudes eating off my palm]. Both Isaac and Pablo never actually got into a fist fight at school but they came close to it. Language, in the case of participants, is a weapon that others use to belittle them and remind them that regardless of citizenship status, skin color, gender, or class they are foreigners in this country.

Language and Teachers

Negative encounters, or instances of discrimination as respondents refer to them, do not only involve students but teachers as well. It is perhaps more hurtful to adolescent arrivals when they feel attacked by teachers who they believed would be there to help them. Sandra, is someone many would categorize as a good student. She does not like to miss school, she is always prepared, and she does her work to the best of her ability. From the moment I met her, she complained about a teacher who she says does not speak Spanish. The teacher often gives packets to the Spanish language speakers to complete while he teaches his class. I asked her once how he grades said packets and she told me that he just checks to see if they wrote anything. If they did, he gives them a passing grade. I asked if she learns anything from those packets, and she told me that she feels they are a waste of time because when she does not understand what she is reading, she cannot ask the teacher for help, so she just got used to filling in whatever information comes to her mind. During one of our talks, she recalled the first time she met that teacher:

> Sandra: *Un maestro de historia dijo que si no hablabamos el idoma, que era estupido. Lo dijo en ingles y pues nosotros no entendemos todo pero entendimos la palabra que dijo.* [A history teacher said that if we didn't speak the language, then we were stupid. He said it in English and well we don't understand everything but we did understand that word he said].
> Liliana: *¿Se los dijo a ustedes?* [And he said that to you?]
> Sandra: *Si, porque estabamos Gabriela y yo. Estabamos aparte porque nos separaron porque nos daban paquetes en español y ya como que les dijo a la*

> *clase a los muchachos que si hablan ingles.* [Yes, because Gabriela and I were there. We were separated from the rest because they separate us so we can do packets in Spanish and like he told that to the rest of his class, to the students that do speak English].
> Liliana: *¿Y tu que dijiste? Que pensaste?* [And what did you say? What did you think?]
> Sandra: *Pues nada. Yo nomas pues pense cosas entre mi.* [Well, nothing. I just thought things in my head.]

Sandra told me that story as she giggled. She said she did feel bad but decided not to dwell on the situation and move on. She confessed that she felt hurt and saddened when she heard the teacher express himself in such a way about her to the other students. At first, she was in disbelief, but then came to understand that it was the teacher's loss for not taking the time to get to know his students.

Schools are the fundamental institutions where immigrant youth are taught how to be "American" despite their unfamiliarity with U.S. culture. Through the concept of participating in power, Stanton-Salazar (1997) illuminates the importance of teachers knowing how to work with students from diverse backgrounds. It is dependent on the teacher he argues, that all students can be made to feel like they belong in a school setting. Luciana, who was also given similar packets to complete in class, feels that students like her are cheated of a quality education for not speaking English. She said, "*Me hace sentir un poquito triste porque me gusta mucho esa clase de historia y me gustaría entenderle y participar porque la calificación que nos da a todos es una A por nada mas hacer los paquetes,"* [I feel a little sad because I really like that history class and I would like to understand it and participate because he gives us all an A for just completing the packets]. In order for students to feel that they belong in the system, they must be allowed to be active participants in their education. Unfortunately, that is often not the case for adolescent

arrivals whose linguistic capital does not include the dominant language of instruction in the United States.

Daniela too, loves school and wants to get the best education she can in order to accomplish great things. Her life in Mexico was marked by financial struggle and she is determined to be successful and help improve her family's economic situation. Daniela is very optimistic and is the only participant who told me that her experiences in the United States have all been positive. When she told me the following story, she did it not as a way to complain about the ill treatment she received from her teacher but as a way to demonstrate how she copes with situations that could discourage others but not her. She said:

> *Una maestra siempre nos menosprecia ….en una ocasión le pregunté que cómo se hace una operación y estaba hablando con otro alumno y me dijo de manera grosera 'Hay que quieres?' y lo único que hice fue darme la vuelta y hacer mi trabajo sola porque no vengo a dar lástima. Sólo estoy aquí para aprender.*
>
> [A teacher always treats us badly….in one occasion I asked her how to do a mathematics equation and she was talking to another student and she rudely told me, 'What do you want?' and I just turned around and continued doing my work by myself because I'm not here for people to pity me. I am here to learn.]

Luckily for Daniela, she was able to overlook the teacher's response and move on with her work. She was not willing to let this encounter bring her down or even ruin her view of the education system. She credits her mom and sister for instilling in her the drive to rise above all adversity. But others have not been as fortunate. Jasmine for example, could not hold back her tears as she recalled an encounter she had at school with one of her teachers. She told me she was in class one day, and the teacher allowed for the rest of the class to discriminate against her.

Jasmine: *La otra vez nos hizo unas preguntas y yo no entendía lo que me dijo. Entonces estaba un señor que nos estaba traduciendo lo que ella decía. Entonces como yo no le entendía un chavo dijo algo y todos voltearon y me vieron y se soltaron riendo.* [The other time she asked us some questions and I didn't understand what she told me. So, there was a man that was translating what she said. And since I didn't understand, a boy said something and everyone turned around to see me and they all burst out laughing.]
Liliana: *¿Se comenzaron a reír?* [They started laughing?]
Jasmine: *Aja.* [Yes.]
Liliana: *¿Y tú que hiciste?* [And what did you do?]
Jasmine: *Pues nada.* [Well, nothing.]
Liliana: *¿Lloraste?* [Did you cry?]
Jasmine: *Si, se me salieron las lágrimas.* [Yes, my tears rolled down.]
Liliana: *¿Y te vieron?* [Did they see you?]
Jasmine: *Aja.* [Yes.]
Liliana: *¿Y nadie se acerco a ti?* [Did anyone approach you?]
Jasmine: *No. Pero también la maestra se río.* [No. But the teacher also laughed.]
Liliana: *¿También la maestra se rió?* [The teacher also laughed?]
Jasmine: *Sí.* [Yes.]

Jasmine's parents did not find out about the incident until a relative called from Mexico to tell them about it. Apparently, Jasmine had told a cousin in Mexico what had happened to her in school and he took it upon himself to call her parents and inform them. He felt compelled to do that because Jasmine called him crying and saying she wanted to go back to Mexico and that she hated living in the United States.

I spoke with Jasmine's mom one day and she told me she and her husband had gone to the school to talk to the principal who assured them the teacher would be reprimanded and that something like that would never happen again. Jasmine however, told me that she never felt comfortable in that class again and could not wait for the year to be over so she did not have to see that teacher again. Raul, the only other Spanish speaker in the class when the incident occurred, talked to me about this incident. He told me the following:

Bueno, yo me senti poquito mal porque aunque no me hicieron eso a mi, me senti mal por la persona que le hicieron una burla. Yo me senti como que

ellos me hicieron la burla a mi porque no sabia hablar ingles. Yo no se hablar el ingles.

> [Well, I felt a little bad because even though they didn't do that to me, I felt bad for the person they laughed at. I felt as if they had made fun of me because I didn't know how to speak English. I don't know how to speak English.]

Contrary to Jasmine, Raul likes living in the United States. Although he is content living here, he feels saddened that others make it hard for immigrant youth like himself to incorporate themselves into the United States culture. When he saw what happened to Jasmine in class, he remained quiet. Not able to speak English himself, he was not able to defend her. He did not even try to console her for he did not know how to react. He felt as if the teacher and the students had laughed at him too since he was in the same situation as Jasmine. Because of this, he just sat quietly in his desk all the while holding back his anger.

Not only do respondents report feeling discriminated against by students and teachers because they do not speak English, but they are also made to feel invisible. Julisa, for example, who was excited to attend school at first, felt her presence was not important when she kept attending class and her teacher did not even notice she was there. When Julisa attended her first physical education class she was unsure who her teacher was since P.E. was held outdoors and there were several classes taking place at the same time. She lined up in a class instructed by a male teacher. He called roll but he never called her name. Julisa, unable to speak English, decided to keep quiet. The next day her ELD teacher[9] asked her about her P.E. class. Julisa informed her that it was a bit uncomfortable for her because the male teacher did not speak Spanish. The ELD teacher instantly knew that Julisa had attended the wrong class because the P.E. teacher she was assigned to was a female. That

day when she got to P.E. class, she went straight to line up in a class instructed by a female teacher. She stood there as the teacher called roll and again Julisa never heard her name called. It was not until a few weeks later that she told the ELD teacher about her situation that the ELD teacher asked another student to help her.

> Julisa: *Entonces una amiga que tenía allí me ayudó y le dijo que si yo estaba en su lista. Entonces ella me dijo que como me llamaba entonces descubrí que ella me estaba diciendo por mi nombre en ingles.* [A friend of mine who was there helped me and asked the P.E. teacher if my name was on the roster. She asked me what my name was and that is when I discovered that she had been calling out my name but she was pronouncing it in English.]
> Liliana: *¿Entonces la maestra te miraba y nunca preguntaba quién eres tú?* [So the teacher would see you and never ask who you were?]
> Julisa: *Aja.* [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Nunca te pregunto?* [She never asked you?]
> Julisa: *Es que a mí me daba miedo. Yo me escondía entre los demás. Yo decía 'que tal si viene y me pregunta algo,' y yo no quería que ni me mirará y que me dijera nada.* [It's because I was afraid. I would hide among the students. I would say, 'What if she comes and asks me something?' and I didn't want for her to even see me or ask me anything.]

Julisa confessed feeling afraid to let the teacher know who she was for fear of being asked any further questions and being put on the spotlight. She preferred to go unnoticed and this caused her to be counted as absent even though she was present every single day. Neither the first male P.E. teacher nor the female P.E. teacher bothered to check up on her and inquire about her name or why she was in class when supposedly she was not on their roster. Julisa takes the blame for not knowing that the teacher was calling her name but pronouncing it in English. In order to avoid an embarrassing situation that would put her on the spot for not speaking English, Julisa preferred going unnoticed. It is incidents like these that make adolescent arrivals vulnerable to the decisions of those in power. Julisa minimizes the teacher's actions by taking the blame. Without the linguistic capital to fend

[9] The ELD teacher is fluent in Spanish and she is the only teacher participants report feeling comfortable with. She helps them with their schedules and guides the students as they learn

for herself, Julisa, accepts this situation as is without calling attention to the injustice committed against her for not speaking English. Without sufficient credits to graduate, at 17 years old, Julisa was told by school officials that she would not be able to graduate in a year so that it was best if she dropped out of high school and tried to get her GED through an adult school instead. Julisa, who was excited to continue her education in the United States since she did not have that opportunity in Mexico, told me she felt like a failure when they told her to drop out. She wishes she could have graduated from high school and obtain her diploma.

Beyond High School

During my field work, I was able to witness first-hand how adolescent arrivals are treated by those in power because they do not speak English. One day, Pablo who was one of two participants his age who graduated from high school, was having trouble enrolling in classes at a local community college. He was supposed to take ESL classes and did not know how to register or how to choose his classes. He called me up one day and asked for my help. I offered to go with him to the community college to speak with a counselor who could guide him and explain to him what classes he needed to take. He agreed and we met up the following week. The following is an excerpt from my field notes on the events of that day:

> I met Pablo at the cafeteria and we walked over to the student services building. It was a short walk there so we did not get to really catch up. We just had enough time for him to fill me in on the trouble he was having registering for his classes. Once we got to our destination, we noticed that there was no one in line so we went straight to the front desk to ask for help. We spoke with a man in his mid 30's who appeared to be Latino. I asked him if he spoke Spanish so that he could better assist Pablo. He informed us that his Spanish was limited and told us to speak with the lady that was next to him. She looked at us, glanced us up and down and told us she would help us in a bit. After a few minutes, she asked how she could help us. I asked her if

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to navigate the school.

> she spoke Spanish so that she could better assist Pablo and she did. Pablo took this as his opportunity to ask her questions and she was very helpful. She explained the process and course of action for ESL students. She looked over his schedule and then asked him if he thought he would be able to pass his classes. She asked this in a condescending way as if doubting that a student such as Pablo would be able to pass his courses. He looked confused and simply nodded yes. She then told him that he needed to speak to someone in the ESL office. We thanked her for her help and headed to the next office. Once in the ESL department, a young woman asked us if we needed help and upon telling her yes, she directed us to her office. She looked over the possible classes he could take and made a schedule for him, but he was not comfortable with it because he works evenings and cannot attend school at that time. They discussed this for a while and then she asked him what program he was interested in enrolling and before he could answer anything she suggested he enroll in a mechanics program. Bothered by this, I chimed in and told him he had options and that maybe he could look into doing a program with computers or something like that and he smiled from ear to ear and said he would love something like that. But he also said mechanics would be an option.

Upon reflecting on the day's events with Pablo and the assistance he received in the community college, I could not help but get mad at the way he was treated. Both counselors were in a position to motivate Pablo and guide him into taking courses that would be beneficial for him and his career in the long run. However, instead of doing that, their questions and suggestions revealed the low expectations they had of him. The first counselor who asked him if he even thought he could pass his classes did so signaling she questioned his abilities and his potential. To this day, I wonder if she would say this to a student with a different phenotype who spoke English. These types of microaggressions, or subtle insults, often go unnoticed especially to participants who are not sure what to make of them and simply go along with what is being said. However, when I witnessed this, I was in disbelief at the problematic words coming out of her mouth. Her statement, although, taken lightly by Pablo, was full of assumptions—assumptions about his lack of potential for either being brown, for being an ESL student, or simply for not fitting the role of a typical mainstream student.

The ESL counselor also made problematic assumptions about Pablo too. Without knowing his interests or his strengths she was quick to suggest that he would be fit to complete a program in mechanics. At first, he was pleased to hear that there was a program that he could enroll in, but after I suggested a program in computers, he got excited to know that he had options. Adolescent arrivals like Pablo, that are learning to navigate their surroundings without speaking English, can be easily swayed in one direction if that is what is presented to them as the only option. I have known Pablo for over a while, and I know he has the determination and will power to go far in life if given the opportunities and resources to do so. Instead, these counselors were just perpetuating a cycle of oppression where those deemed incapable are treated as such without fully reaching out to them to offer help and guidance. The current political, anti-immigrant climate has empowered this type of mentality and produced obstacles, in this case, based on language practices, that hurt any possibilities of upward mobility for these youths. The messages Pablo received from his counselors can be seen as fomenting a form of internalized oppression if participants such as Pablo begin to believe all the distorted messages that are said about immigrant communities and settle for the path of least resistance instead of taking charge of their life course. Undermining the potential of adolescent arrivals simply for not speaking English can be detrimental to their futures.

“They stare at you as if they hate you”: Perceptions of Mexican Americans

Participants in this study arrived in the United States aware that they would encounter obstacles as they learned to settle into their new homes. However, they did not image that some of these obstacles would come from their co-ethnics. In fact, many were taken aback to discover that the ones treating them as different, unwelcomed, and unwanted were those that looked just like them. Isaac, for example told me that Mexican Americans

“*se te quedan viendo como si te tuvieran odio*,” [They stare at you as if they hate you]. He informed me that he does not associate or interact with them because he knows they do not want anything to do with him. He continued, “*se sentían grandes nada mas porque sabian ingles y todo eso,*” [they felt superior just because they knew English and all that]. In school, he says he got into a lot of trouble for always getting into arguments with Mexican American students that he felt disrespected him by either shaming him for not speaking English or calling him names for being a Mexican immigrant.

Like Isaac, other participants attested to this treatment too. During an afternoon visit to a local gym that most participants frequent, I met up with Karla. When I asked her about her relationship with Mexican American students she quickly responded the following:

> Karla: *Los que son de aquí, de aquí, de aquí son como buena gente porque pasan y te saludan*,” [The ones that are from here, from here, from here, they are nice people because they pass by and greet you.]
> Liliana: *¿Cuando dices los de aquí, de aquí, de aquí, te estás refiriendo a los americanos blancos?* [When you say those from here, from here, from here, are you referring to white Americans?]
> Karla: *Ajá. Los que son de aquí son buena persona, solamente algunos y los que son nacidos aquí pero son de papás Mexicanos como que se creen que son Americanos y ya quieren hacerle mala cara a alguien y dicen que no hablan español.* [Yes. The ones that are from here are good people, some of them and the ones that are born here from Mexican parents, they think they are Americans and want to treat us bad or they say they don’t speak Spanish.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué crees que hacen eso?* [Why do you think they do that?]
> Karla: *No sé, porque creo que se quieren sentir más que los demás porque saben que uno también viene de familia mexicana y ellos sí saben [ingles] y nosotros no. O porque son nácidos simplemente aquí nada más.* [I don’t know, I think because they want to feel superior because they know that we come from Mexican families too and they know [English] and we don’t. Or just because they are born here.]

Karla reveals that her relationship with Mexican American students is not a good one regardless of sharing similar historical backgrounds. She and others reveal that they have much more positive encounters with Caucasian American peers. Marco, age 16, emphasizes on this:

> Liliana: *¿Quién es más amable, los americanos blancos o latinos nacidos aquí padres inmigrantes?* [Who is nicer, white Americans or Latin students born from immigrant parents?]
> Marco: *Pues, para mí, que es como los güeros. Se portan bien y te saludan y te dicen 'Hello,' aunque no te conozcan te dicen 'Hi,' y así. En cambio los que son nacidos aquí nada más ahí pasan y nunca te dicen nada.* [Well, for me, I would say the white Americans. They are nice and greet you and tell you 'Hello,' even though they don't know you they say 'Hi,' and like that. But the ones that are born here they just pass by you and don't say anything.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué crees tu?* [Why do you think that happens?]
> Marco: *Nose. Tal porque ya hablan inglés ya se creen de aquí.* [I don't know. Maybe because they speak English and they think they are from here.]

Both Karla and Marco claim that Mexican Americans act the way they do because they want to disassociate themselves from being seen as Mexican. Due to racialization practices, where being Mexican becomes synonymous with being "illegal," participants see Mexican Americans as not wanting anything to do with them.

Portes and Rumbaút (2014) contend that social networks act as pull factors encouraging Mexican immigrants to migrate to the United States. Immigrants might therefore come to this country envisioning support systems among co-ethnics who are willing to give a helping hand. However, this is not always the case. Gutierrez (1995) posits that economic competition and white ideologies sometimes result in Mexican Americans differentiating themselves from Mexican immigrants and holding hostile perceptions of them. In his historical account on the relations between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, Gutierrez (2005) explains that Mexican schools in the United States heavily influenced intraethnic relations in the mid-20th century. He argues that schooling created conditions and attitudes by which U.S-born Mexican American students developed a sense of difference from their foreign-born counterparts.

The majority of participants in this study acknowledge the tension that exists between them and Mexican Americans. They base this on their daily encounters both in and

out of school. During one of our weekly lessons on language and identity, I asked students if language was important in their lives. The discussion turned into one that addressed the tensions between them and Mexican American students in their school. The following is an excerpt from that day as written in my field notes:

> Students said that they feel ignored at school. They do not feel like they are a part of the school and therefore they know they do not belong there. They began telling stories about their experiences. Ironically, the students agreed that white Americans or "gringos" as they called them, were for the most part nice to them and friendlier than Mexican American students. They began giving examples of how most Mexican-Americans would pretend not to speak Spanish. One student shared that one day a Mexican American student had told him that he did not speak or understand Spanish. To this, he angrily responded with a threat saying that he would make him speak Spanish. Afraid of him, the Mexican American suddenly began to speak Spanish. The entire class laughed as he related this story.

These are the type of incidents that participants expressed occurred daily in their lives. Their encounters with Mexican Americans are seldom positive ones. In her study of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, Ochoa (2004) seeks to understand how some later generation Mexican Americans discriminate against recent Mexican immigrants while others learn to identify, empathize, and support them. Matute-Bianchi (1986) finds that the students in her study adhere to an oppositional identity. She finds that the observed school failure among students of Mexican-descent in comparison to the Japanese American students is a reactive process that stems from their collective identity of belonging to a disadvantaged group in society, much like Ogbu (1978) argues. She created a typology to highlight different identities in her study[10]. Valenzuela (1999) too argues that students

[10] Matute-Bianchi presents five categories of Mexican descent students at the school where she did her fieldwork: 1). Recent-Mexican immigrants who identify as Mexican and speak primarily Spanish; 2). Mexican oriented students, who might have been born in Mexico and brought to the U.S at a young age. These students are bilingual students and are most likely to be involved in Mexican themed organizations at school such as soccer teams; 3). Mexican American students who were born in the U.S. to Mexican parents. These students are the

interact among those who share similar backgrounds, language, and social practices and whose friendships are made possible by the way the school is structured in terms of classes. Much like in these studies, participants in this study, kept to themselves and tried to avoid encounters with Mexican Americans even though at times it was hard to do so.

As students, adolescent arrivals have daily encounters with Mexican Americans within the school context and in their community. Carmen, age 17, does not understand why Mexican American students act the way they do. One breezy afternoon we were sitting in a patio table outside of her apartment just catching up. She was telling me that she cannot get used to living in the United States. Carmen is a very shy girl. She is short, about 5 feet tall, and has dark brown skin. Her black straight hair reaches a little below her shoulders. Carmen rarely wears makeup but when she does she wears dark red or hot pink lipstick. Today it was dark red lipstick. She was not wearing her usual dress attire which consists of blue jeans and combat boots. Instead she was sporting a loose pink top with loose grey shorts that fell to her knees and fluffy black slippers. She looked very casual. As we talked about her life in the United States, she addressed the issue of language and Mexican Americans. I asked her what she thought about the relations between U.S-born and foreign-born youth and she responded with the following:

> Carmen: *Algunos maestros no saben hablar en español y entonces le dicen a alguien que sí sabe hablar español que me ayude o me explique. La persona viene y me dice 'Nada mas tienes que hacer esto y esto' y ya.* [Some teachers don't know how to speak in Spanish so they ask someone who does speak Spanish to come and help me. The person then comes and just tells me 'Do this or that' and that's it.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué te parece eso?* [What do you think about that?]

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most Americanized and speak mostly English; 4). Chicano students who identify as Mexicano and are the ones most alienated from the school; and finally 5). Cholo students who are associated with gang related activities. Students who belong to each of these categories do not identify with students in the other categories and they tend to criticize one another within the school context based on where they hang out in school, the classes they take, and their involvement in different extracurricular activities.

Carmen: *Pues me pareció mal porque yo me imaginé que ellos también pasaron por lo mismo y deberían de comprender y ayudarme. Nada más vinieron y me hicieron lo mismo que tal vez a ellos le hicieron.* [Well I didn't appreciate it because I imagine that they too went through what I'm going through and they should be more understanding and help me. They just came and did to me the same as others probably did to them.]
Liliana: *¿Tú estás hablando de estudiantes que son como...* [You are talking about students that are….]
Carmen: *Que son racistas.* [That are racists.]
Liliana: *¿Tú crees que son nacidos aquí de padres inmigrantes?* [You think they are born here of immigrant parents?]
Carmen: *Que son nacidos de padres inmigrantes. Entonces por eso digo porque si saben hablar español y no te quieren ayudar sabiendo que tú no sabes nada de inglés y que necesitas ayuda y nomás te dicen 'Ah has esto' pues uno se siente mal porque bueno si yo hubiera podido ayudar a alguien, bueno algún día tal vez que yo sepa y conozca a alguien que no sepa hablar inglés. Tal vez yo le ayudaría porque así como yo pues se sentiria igual que yo cuando yo no podía hablar el inglés. Entonces debería de ayudarlo.* [That are born of immigrant parents. That is why I say that if they know Spanish and they don't want to help you knowing that you don't know any English and that you need help and they only tell you 'Oh do this' well one feels bad because if I could help someone, like someday I might know someone that doesn't know English. Maybe I would help them because just like me, they would feel like I did when I didn't know how to speak English.]

Carmen envisioned her life in the United States to be very different than that of her present reality. When she decided to immigrate to the United States to reunite with her father and get a better education, she did not consider the obstacles she would confront with others that looked just like her, but who, unlike her, mastered the English language. She was prepared to receive ill treatment from white Americans but never did she imagine that she would have a problem with those that she considered her co-ethnics. As such, she has a hard time making sense of their attitudes and does not understand why they try to keep their distance.

Similar to the participants studied by Tomas Jiménez (2010), Carmen describes how tensions exist between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. Jiménez found that the influx of Mexican immigrants to the United States results in a replenished ethnicity for

Mexican Americans. He argues that the presence of new waves of immigrants come to shape the ethnic identity formation of later generation Mexican Americans. Jiménez shows that Mexican Americans have achieved a significant degree of structural assimilation which in turn has weakened the salience of Mexican identity in the upbringing of future generations of Mexican Americans. One of those weakened ties is the use of the Spanish language. Telles and Ortiz (2008) find that English is dominant by the second generation. Spanish on the other hand, is barely, if ever used, by the fourth generation. Without the language to communicate, intraethnic relations suffer. For later generation Mexican Americans, as indicated by Jiménez's study, there is ambivalence regarding how they feel about how others view them "noting both the threat that poor, mostly unauthorized immigrants pose to their status and the increased social, political, and economic clout that comes from the growth of the Mexican-origin population" (30).

Experiences such as the ones described by participants prove to be harmful to participants who as a result learn to dislike or even hate co-ethnics for shaming them. In negotiating their liminal status, adolescent arrivals make sense of the treatment they receive based on the political and social contexts. Because of the anti-immigrant and xenophobic messages they constantly hear, adolescent arrivals understand that Mexican Americans might not want to associate themselves with immigrants in order to distance themselves and avoid being categorized as immigrants themselves. Dowling (2014) finds that Mexican Americans will identify as white in the census not because they have assimilated into the U.S. culture but as a defensive strategy against being seen as immigrants themselves. Speaking Spanish has become synonymous with being an immigrant and perhaps not speaking it might be a defensive strategy used by some Mexican Americans similar to what Dowling argues. Participants, like Janet recognize this and find this way of thinking

problematic. One day she had an encounter with a Mexican American boy who assumed she did not understand a word of English and insulted her by calling her derogatory names. Not one to keep quiet, she responded to his remarks in Spanish and the following transpired:

> Janet: *El dijo* 'Oh sorry I don't speak Spanish.' *Y nomas lo miré y pues eso me enojo y dije 'Tus papás son Mexicanos. Te he escuchado a ti hablar español con tus papás.'* [He said, 'Oh, sorry I don't speak Spanish.' I just stared at him and got mad so I told him 'Your parents are Mexican. I have heard you speak in Spanish with them.']
> Liliana: *¿Por qué crees tú que quieren dar esa imagen que no hablan español?* [Why do you think they want to give the image that they do not speak Spanish?]
> Janet: *Les da pena.* [They are ashamed.]
> Liliana: *¿Pero por qué?* [Why?]
> Janet: *Porque son gente estúpida la verdad. No, no sé porque tienen que decir que no hablan español sí si hablan español. La verdad si yo fuera nacida aquí así como ellos me daría orgullo decir 'yo hablo español.'* [Because they are stupid. I don't understand why they have to say they don't speak Spanish. Truth be told, if I were born here like them, I would be proud to say 'I speak Spanish'.]

Janet did not appreciate being called names by a fellow peer whom she knew he spoke Spanish and to make matters worse, assume that she would not understand him when he insulted her in English. She decided to take her chances and respond to him in her own language and managed to get her point across. Janet, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, is outspoken and will go after anyone who tries to make fun of her, her identity, and her language. Pablo also shared similar experiences that almost resulted in a physical altercation. These experiences have led him to believe that the reason they act the way they do is simply because of power. He said:

> *Se sienten como con más poder porque son de aquí ciudadanos. Saben que si ellos hacen algo no les pueden hacer nada a lo contrario de mis amigos los que no tienen papeles. Ellos aunque hagan algo no los pueden echar porque son nacidos aquí y uno en cambio pues haces algo malo y tu mal record y una, dos, tres, cuatro, cosas que hagas y vas para México, vas para tu país de nuevo y siendo aqui ciudadano, nacido aquí pues hagas mil cosas no te pueden echar.*

> [They feel like they have more power because they are citizens of this country. They know that if they do something, they can't get deported unlike my friends who are undocumented. If they do something they can't be deported because they were born here but for us if we do something bad, it goes on your record and then one, two, three, four, things and you go back to Mexico or to your country of origin. But if you are a citizen, you were born here, you can do a thousand things and you will never get kicked out.]

Without the necessary legal protection, Pablo feels immigrants, such as him and his peers, do not have much power in the United States. In making sense of the treatment and attitudes of Mexican Americans towards Mexican immigrants, Pablo realizes that legal citizenship makes a huge difference in terms of power. He feels powerless and dislikes being looked down upon for being an immigrant. Isaac too echoes Pablo's sentiments. He told me Mexican Americans go through life "*como sintiendose muy gallos pues no tienen alguien que les ponga el alto*," [feeling that they are all that because they don't have someone to put a stop to them]. He feels that Mexican Americans have the privilege to discriminate against them knowing full well that they have nothing to lose.

Carolina, who has also had her share of negative experiences with Mexican Americans, wishes things could be different. Both she and her sister Jimena were constantly attacked in school when they first arrived. A female student used to call them derogatory terms in English and they claim the teacher never did anything to stop this behavior. Upon reflecting on this, Carolina told me, "*Yo siento que como que hay unos que son como racista porque se burlan de uno o se aprovechan para decirnos cosas en inglés porque saben que no sabemos o así. No sabemos defendernos.* [I feel like there are some that are like racists because they laugh at us or they take advantage and tell us things in English because they know we don't know the language. We don't know how to defend ourselves.] One day, Carolina got fed up with the situation and finally decided to do something about it. She did so by responding to the student's comments in her native language. She said she did not

hold back and let her have it. For doing this and defending herself, Carolina got in trouble with her teacher. The teacher's actions infuriated both Carolina and Jimena for they had complained to her so many times before about being verbally attacked by the student and the teacher never did anything about it. It was at that moment that the sisters understood something important about their position not only is school but in society. In her study, Bejarano (2005) finds that "structural discrimination manifests itself through youth discriminating against one another through social hierarchies on campus" (126-27). The three-layered stratification identified in her study was Mexicans at the bottom, Mexican Americans in the middle and Whites at the top of the social ladder.

Instances such as the ones exemplified in the testimonies above, occurred not only in school but also outside. Encounters with Mexican Americans in the community were also reported by participants as common occurrences. These encounters however were not with people their own age but with older members of society whom they came into contact with while going about their daily activities. One day while shopping with her family, Jimena needed help and approached a sales person whom Jimena categorized as Mexican American and whom she believed spoke Spanish. The sales person however was not very helpful. Jimena had the following to say about that event:

> Jimena: *En veces que voy a la tienda y si hablan español y dicen que no hablan español pero yo les hablo puro español. Yo no les digo nada en inglés y pues ellas supuestamente no me entienden pero si lo hablan.* [Sometimes I go to the store and they speak Spanish but the say they don't and I still speak to them in Spanish. I don't say anything in English and they supposedly don't understand but they do speak Spanish.]
> Liliana: *¿Y estas personas de que tú hablas son Mexico Americanos?* [Are these people Mexican Americans?]
> Jimena: *Aja. En la cabeza se les mira el nopalon.* [Yeah. You can see the humongous cactus on their forehead.]

Jimena's reference to the "nopalon" or cactus on her forehead refers to a common Mexican expression used to describe someone who phenotypically looks Mexican. This incident reveals what participants come to suspect about some Mexican Americans, that they do in fact speak Spanish but are either ashamed to speak it or simply do not want to be associated with Mexican immigrants who are constantly attacked by those in power, the media, and community members who have internalized these messages. By devaluing their language, the Mexican Americans that come in contact with participants are making a clear statement—that there are differences between them and language is a boundary that shall not be crossed. The current political climate full of disparaging messages about immigrants, their customs, and their language has intensified this sentiment resulting in what participants see as self-deprecation on behalf of Mexican Americans who want at all cost to disassociate themselves from being seen as Mexicans. The intraethnic tensions that adolescent arrivals experienced initially upon immigrating to the United States and continue to experience prove to be difficult to overcome and more so within an anti-immigrant political climate. Ochoa (2004) posits that there is work to be done to not only fix these relations but more so in "deconstructing dominant ideologies, restructuring community arenas, and redistributing power to allow for coming together in a manner not constrained or structured by hierarchical relationships." (231).

"I don't belong here": Adolescent Arrivals, Language, and Incorporation

The testimonies of adolescent arrivals reveal the difficulties they encounter in the United States because of language. The current political and social context of white supremacy, anti-immigrant discourse and policy, and nativist rhetoric, influences the integration of adolescent arrivals in the United States. As a master status that overrides other social categories of adolescent arrivals especially during the current political climate, language as a

proxy for identity negatively shapes their experiences and perceptions. Participants are not blinded by the many ways they are excluded both in school and in their communities. In fact, they are aware of their position as foreigners. Common responses from participants upon being asked if they feel at home here, were in agreement with what Felipe responded, *"No pertenezco aqui,"* [I don't belong here.]

Even as we have learned from those that are U.S. citizens, their experiences based on language inform their perceptions and understandings that they are not welcomed here. The barriers created by the current political climate with the "re-entrenchment of borders and citizenship" (Negron-Gonzalez, 2013) complicate matters for adolescent arrivals who immigrated to the United States in hopes of bettering their opportunities. Aside from living with uncertainty about their futures, adolescent arrivals must learn to navigate their surroundings lacking the necessary linguistic capital to do so. Their language practices therefore impact their incorporation processes in the United States. In examining this aspect of their lives, their testimonies reveal how by negotiating liminality they learn that language is a powerful mechanism of exclusion used to disempower them.

Most participants reported feeling like foreigners in this country because of language. Paulina enjoys living in the United States and has had for the most part positive experiences living here. She however, says she does not feel like this is where she belongs. Paulina, who is doing well in school and volunteers at a local library, also told me language poses an obstacle in her incorporation process in the United States. She said:

> Liliana: *¿Te sientes que eres parte de los Estados Unidos?* [Do you feel like you are a part of the United States?]
> Paulina: *Pues, creo que todavía no ha llegado a ese punto.* [Well, I believe I haven't reached that point yet.]
> Liliana: *¿Por qué?* [Why?]
> Paulina: *No sé. Es como que todavía me siento nueva aquí.* [I don't know. It's like I still feel like I'm new here.]

> Liliana: *¿Qué es lo que tendría que pasar para que tú sintieras que perteneces aquí?* [What would need to happen for you to feel like you belong here?]
> Paulina: *Quizá que hable el idioma fluido porque aún para hablar inglés aún tengo que pensarlo.* [Probably that I speak the language fluently because I still have to think about it before speaking in English].

Paulina, understands that not knowing the English language is critical to her integrating into life in the United States. She describes how lacking the linguistic capital to navigate her surroundings makes her feel like she is still new. Paulina and her family plan to make the United States their new home. Because of this, she wants to learn the English language. She understands that this is difficult for an adolescent arrival. She came to the United States as a teenager and English is completely new to her. She struggles with this but is destermined to give it her all. Her sister Gabriela, on the other hand, reported not liking living in the United States because her grades, her education, and her social life, have suffered because of not knowing English. The number one thing she cited for making the transition from Mexico to the United States a difficult one is language. She said, *"Pues, es muy diferente aquí porque allá sólo se hablaba un idioma [español],"* [Well, it's very different here because over there we only speak one language [Spanish]]. Gabriela also reported feeling like she does not belong here. Unlike her sister Paulina, Gabriela is not hopeful about her future here in the United States.

Scholars argue that learning the English language is dependent upon immigrants interacting with English-language speakers (Rumbaut 1997). The findings for this study reveal that there is a lack of interaction between adolescent arrivals and English-language speakers making it difficult for them to learn, practice, and speak English. Participants confess that they feeling alien to this country because of language. In order for them to feel more like members of the United States, they claim they would need to be English-language

speakers. Jasmine, for example said that for her to feel welcomed here she needs to "*aprender bien el inglés como hablarlo bien*," [learn English well and speak it well also]. Participants realize that without the mainstream language, they cannot fully feel incorporated. They often find themselves in situations where they cannot get the assistance they desire because they do not speak English. Carmen told me, *"Aquí casi hablan más inglés que español entonces si quieres ir a veces a las tiendas, tienes que hablar inglés porque si no hay alguien que hable español te va a costar,"* [Here they speak more English than Spanish so if you want to go like to the stores, you need to speak English because if there is no one there that speaks Spanish it is going to cost you]. Carmen's words point to how participants view their situations in the United States. There is an understanding that not knowing or speaking English has devastating consequences.

The context of reception is also critical for adolescent arrivals in this study. Although they understand language is a barrier in their incorporation process, they also acknowledge that this becomes intensified within the harsh anti-immigrant climate exacerbated by Trump and his administration. Carlos for example, like many of the participants, is adamant that he does not belong here. Despite the fact that his parents have lived in the United States for over fifteen years, and despite the fact that he desires to establish a life here, and does not see a bright future for himself in Mexico, cannot get used to this country. He said, *"Yo no soy de aquí. Yo no soy de aqui. Yo no me siento que soy de aquí,"* [I am not from here. I am not from here. I don't feel like I am from here]. When asked why he disliked the United States and could not get used to the idea that for better or for worse this is his new home, he responded, *"No se. La politica, lo del presidente y todo eso,"* [I don't know. The politics, about the president and all of that]. The intensity of the current political climate informs the perceptions of adolescent arrivals. Karla, for example,

also says she does not feel comfortable here. When asked where she is truly happy she responded, *"En México porque pues soy de allá. Allá crecí."* [In Mexico because I am from over there. I was raised there]. Although happy to be with her mother and brother here, she confesses that she feels no social or cultural attachment to the United States. Carolina like Karla, does not feel the United States can ever be her country. She said, *"Yo siempre digo que este no es mi país y no es mi país y no lo va a hacer porque el mío es allá donde yo nací,"* [I have always said that this is not my country and it is not my country and it will never be because my country is the one where I was born]. Participants arrived in the United States during a harsh political climate where they were treated as the scapegoats for a broken immigration system. They have never felt welcomed and because of this long for a place to belong.

Pablo is one of the participants who was able to visit his hometown during the summer of 2017. Upon asking him how he felt in Mexico after being away for almost a year he responded, *"Llegando a México, desde que iba en el pinche avión ya sentía que iba para mi casa. De venida, sentía que venía a otro pinche lado. Pero de ida, sentía que yo iba para mi casa."* [When I got to Mexico, from the moment I was in the damn plane, I felt like I was going home. Coming back, I felt like I was going to another damn place. But going, I felt like I was going home]. Whether or not the United States can ever be a home for adolescent arrivals is yet to be seen.

Conclusion

The narratives presented in this chapter highlight the role language plays in the lives of adolescent arrivals during the Trump era. While research on immigrant youth (Abrego 2006; Flores and Chapa 2009; Gonzales 2010, 2011, 2016; Gonzales and Chavez 2012; Perez 2009, Negrón-Gonzales 2013, Rincon 2008; Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez

2017) has documented the role citizenship status plays in their incorporation process in the United States, less attention has been paid to how language both shapes and influences the integration and perceptions of immigrant youth. Because of the life-stage of migration and context of reception, adolescent arrivals in this study demonstrate nuanced understandings of the experiences they encounter. This study finds that adolescent arrivals face numerous barriers associated with their immigrant status, regardless of citizenship, but language is perceived routinely to be associated with negative experiences that inform their perceptions of not belonging.

This chapter examined the concept of "master status" (Hughes 1945) through language. Because as individuals, we fall into multiple categories (race, class, gender, etc.), understanding that the intersection of these informs one's lived experiences, is essential. The objective of treating language as a proxy for identity as a master status is not to minimize other categories but to highlight how language becomes intensified within the current anti-immigrant political climate as illuminated by the experiences of adolescent arrivals. Based on their experiences and the current political climate participants learn to see language as the primary trait shaping attitudes, perceptions, and treatment.

The narratives in this chapter show how adolescent arrivals perceive modes of incorporation in the host country. Lacking the linguistic capital to navigate their surroundings, adolescent arrivals negotiate their position in a liminal stage as best as they can. Unlike members of the 1.5-generation who migrated at a young age and therefore possess the linguistic capital to be active participants in society, adolescent arrivals do not. The concept of negotiating liminality is utilized in this chapter to understand how language practices influence the integration processes of adolescent arrivals.

In examining aspects of this meaning-making process, I highlight how language becomes a master status in the lives of adolescent arrivals. Their testimonies bring to the surface the hardships they encountered upon first realizing the importance of language. Unfamiliar with the English language, participants confronted instances of discrimination that came to inform their experiences in the United States. Language was also taken by participants to be a weapon used against them by co-ethnics, or Mexican Americans, who police boundaries of inclusion to disassociate themselves from new immigrants through language practices. Participants learned to distance themselves from Mexican Americans who instead of lending a helping hand, proclaimed that they did not speak Spanish. Others participated in more overt behavior by mocking adolescent arrivals for not speaking English and making them feel unwelcomed. Ultimately, language created barriers for adolescent arrivals that were difficult to overcome and resulted in them not feeling like they belong in the United States. Language as a master status defines the experiences of adolescent arrivals as the leading ethnic marker that hinders their possibilities of successfully incorporating into the United States.

Chapter 5

Strategies of Survival: Creating Spaces of Belonging

No sabía cómo se manejaba todo porque obviamente no entendía. Me sentía como ahogada. Que no podía salirme de ahí y pues yo quería salir corriendo porque no entendía nada, no tenía una amistad. Y cómo que pues si no hablaba ingles nadie se iba a acercar a ti porque no sabes y ya cuando entré en el salón de Ms. Anaya fue cuando ya me sentí más a gusto.

I didn't know how things operated because obviously I didn't understand. I felt like I was drowning. That I couldn't get out of there and I wanted to run out of there because I didn't understand, I didn't have a friend. And if I didn't speak English then nobody is going to approach you because you don't know anything so when I entered Ms. Anaya's classroom that was when I felt comfortable.

-Karla, age 17

Adolescent arrivals find themselves in a catch 22 situation because of their age of migration. As high school-aged students they are entitled to a free public education in the United States and thus are able to participate in similar experiences as their native-born counterparts. However, because they are high school-aged students, they arrive in the United States without the cultural and social capital to navigate their new surroundings. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is the accumulation of cultural knowledge and skills that allow privileged members in society to effectively navigate situations and institutions. Social capital refers to the social networks or connections certain members in society have that give them membership status in a group. Unfamiliar with the cultural and social

settings of their new environment, adolescent arrivals constantly struggle to fit in, gain acceptance and feel welcomed in their new home.

There are certain forms of cultural capital, such as knowledges, styles, and preferences that are valued more than others in a hierarchical structured society (Bourdieu and Passerson 1977). Cultural capital is argued to act a gatekeeper for social incorporation that either enables or limits the mobility of certain members in society. Bourdieu (1977) argues that the upper classes posses the most valued knowledges and capital in society. Some scholars refer to these valued knowledges as dominant forms of cultural capital (Lamont and Lareau 1988). They are dominant because they conceptualize power and high status. It is through formal schooling that Bourdieu and Passerson (1977) argue the dominant cultural capital reproduces a stratified class system. By default then the non-dominant forms of cultural capital are perceived as insignificant. This framework argues that without the dominant culture capital, certain members in society are unable to get ahead and thus remain at the bottom of a social hierarchy. This is widely used to explain why disenfranchised communities fail to experience upward mobility. This framework however fails to acknowledge the power of alternative knowledges that transform from the so-called non-dominant forms of cultural capital to empower marginalized communities.

The assumption that communities that lack the dominant cultural capital do not have the necessary skills, abilities or knowledges for positive integration and mobility serves as a mechanism used to silence these voices and experiences. Yosso (2005) challenges the belief that those who lack the dominant culture capital have cultural deficiencies. Yosso contests these assumptions through a concept she calls community cultural wealth. Communities deemed to lack the dominant culture capital, foster what Yosso calls a set of community

cultural wealth through six forms of capital[11]: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. More so, scholars argue that it is important to understand how cultural resources not only convert into capital in society but more specific how this happens in disenfranchised communities (Carter 2003).

The experiences of adolescent arrivals in this study demonstrate that as recent immigrants navigating a new land, acquiring a sense of belonging is a difficult task. In negotiating their liminal status, adolescent arrivals resort to their own set of community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005) to make spaces for themselves where they not only feel comfortable but also valued and welcomed. In doing so, adolescent arrivals demonstrate that the capital they posses, although not the dominant form of cultural capital highly valued in society, is nonetheless a form of capital that lets them navigate their current situations allowing them to improve their experiences, build community, and create spaces of belonging.

Karla was exited to begin a new chapter in her life in the United States. At 17 years old, she envisioned herself surrounded by friends and enjoying being a high school student. She remembers arriving in the United States during the summer months of 2016 and dreaming of going to school. She recalls saying "*mami ya quiero entrar"[Mommy I want to start already].* This all changed however once she actually started school. Unaware of how to navigate her new school and unfamiliar with the English language, Karla felt like a

[11] Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain homes and dreams even amidst adversity and troubled times, navigational capital refers to the ability to maneuver different social institutions, social capital refers to network of community resources, linguistic capital refers to language abilities and knowledge in more than one language, familial capital refers to cultured knowledges nurtured by one's family, and resistant capital refers to skills obtained through oppositional behavior.

foreigner and longed to go back to her hometown in Mexico. She says she does not belong here.

One day, after school let out, I joined Karla at a local gym that she tends to frequent in the evenings. We were sitting in the computer room talking about her experiences in school when she confessed to me that it is very difficult for her to adapt to her new environment. When I questioned her about this she replied *"Siento porque llegúe mas grande y cómo es muy dificil para mí acostubrarme a todo. Siento como que tuve que venirme mas chica para haber agarrado todo. Si no, no me hubiera venido porque es difícil para mí"* [I feel because I came here older it is difficult for me to adjust to everything. I feel like I should have come here when I was younger so that I could have easily adapted. If not, I wouldn't have come because it is difficult for me]. Karla is not alone in feeling this way, the majority of participants in this study reported feeling like they do not belong in the United States but make the best out of it because they understand the circumstances that brought them here in the first place.

Carmen for example told me she is not happy here and wishes she was back home with her mother and siblings whom she misses dearly. When I asked her why she felt this way she said, "*Porque no tengo casi a nadie y pues aquí esto no es mi mundo. Este no es mi país. Aquí pues tengo que aprender nuevas cosas"* [Because I barely have anyone here and well this is not my world. This is not my country. Here I have to learn new things]. Carmen like Karla expresses feelings of not belonging. She describes feeling like an outsider in a world unfamiliar to her. Leaving her family behind to reunite with her father whom she barely knows in search of a brighter future, turned out to be a much different experience than what she imagined it to be. Instead of feeling happy and excited to be in the United States after enduring a turbulent border crossing (see Chapter two), she feels lonely and

miserable. Similarily, Carlos says he is well aware he does not belong in the United States *"porque no soy güero, no soy Americano"* [because I am not white, I am not American], he says. Carlos feels like an outsider because he is not American. Aware of his immigrant status and the stigma associated with being an immigrant in the United States, especially during the Trump era, he feels like a foreigner. As exemplified in their accounts, both here and in the previous chapter, notions of not belonging inform the subjective realities of adolescent arrivals.

The goal of this chapter is to document how adolescent arrivals use their cultural capital resources in creating mechanisms of survival as they learn to adapt to a new environment. In doing so, I highlight the safety nets that result from adolescent arrivals negotiating their liminality. The focus is on the strategies of resistance that allow adolescent arrivals to survive amidst a hostile political climate that constantly attacks their immigrant communities. I investigate how the shared commonalities among adolescent arrivals including age of migration and contexts of reception allow for community building and the creation of spaces of belonging. Johnson (2013) argues that "spaces have social meanings" that serve particular functions such as maintaining memories and upholding community values. The current debate on immigration heavily shapes the adaptive experiences of adolescent arrivals in this study. It is precisely this socio-political moment of the time that leads adolescent arrivals to join forces in claiming spaces of belonging as an act of resistance to the anti-immigrant discourse that surrounds their daily existence in order to survive in unfamiliar territory.

Spaces of Belonging: Safe Havens

Sandra and Pablo anxiously waited for school to let out for the summer months to travel to their beloved Mexico and participate in the *fiestas patrias de su pueblo* (hometown

festivities). All year long they had told me they would be going home in the summer by themselves. Because of their work schedules, their parents had to make trips to Mexico on their own and now it was Sandra's and Pablo's turn. Their mom and younger sister had visited Mexico a month before and their dad was there now and would come back a little after Sandra and Pablo got there. Both Sandra's and Pablo's eyes gleamed with excitement as they narrated stories of what they planned to do during their visit. Sandra and Pablo came to the United States with their parents and younger sister because of financial woes in Mexico. After an uncle helped the family get their residency, they embarked on an international journey leaving behind their home, family, and friends.

The summer could not get here fast enough for Pablo who was eager to be reunited with his girlfriend. One of the hardest things he ever had to do, he says, was leaving her behind. He told me he always misses her "*mucho, mucho, mucho*" [a lot, a lot, a lot]. Although they keep in touch through social media, he says that is not the same as being there with her. When I asked him why, he replied, "*porque pues ya no hablas igual. Ya no estas con las personas diario"* [because well you don't speak the same way anymore. You are no longer with them on a daily basis]. The distance, he says, makes it difficult to sustain the same relationship they once had. Which is why Pablo could not wait to go back home and spend time with her.

One day, as I was helping out in their English class[12], Pablo was sitting next to me working on his English language workbook. He looked frustrated with the material and kept complaining that he did not want to do the work. He put down his pencil and instead began

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[12] Although Sandra is classified as a sophomore and Pablo is classified as a senior, they are both enrolled in the same English Language Development class. The school district groups ELL students based on time in the United States and not ability. The English class therefore consists of students who have been in the United States for less than a year. The English class is composed of students who range from 14 to 18 years of age.

talking to me about his upcoming trip. I listened a bit to him and then directed him back to his work. He worked quietly for a few minutes before putting down his pencil again. He looked at me and said that he would not be participating in the senior trip to Disneyland because the trip fell on the same day he was to fly back to his hometown. He smiled from ear to ear and then said he was also not going to prom. I asked him if he was not going to prom because his girlfriend was not here and he said no. He said he actually wanted to take a friend to prom but decided not to because he had asked for extra hours at work to pay for the taxi that would be taking him and his sister to the airport. He then elaborated that his father had already gone to Mexico to attend to some family affairs and therefore would not be here to take them to the airport. Because of this they had asked a family friend who was a taxi driver to give them a ride. This taxi driver, he informed me, usually drives the family around whenever they need to get to places that are too far to walk to. The taxi driver would charge Pablo and his sister $350 to take them to the airport. I was in disbelief. Pablo said that was more than his weekly checks so he would have to work a lot of hours just to pay for the ride. I told him of alternate ways to get to the airport such as taking an airport shuttle but Pablo did not feel comfortable with that claiming that he did not know how to buy the tickets and that it was all just too complicated for him. During the course of the year, I had gotten the opportunity to meet Pablo's family. His parents were hard working individuals who were truly invested in their children. His mother welcomed me to their home upon first meeting me and she often referred to me as *la maestra* [the teacher]. I therefore knew she would not object to my offer to take her children to the airport. I told Pablo that if it was okay with his parents I could drive them to the airport. Not expecting that, Pablo quickly sat up straight and said he would tell his parents that same night. The next day when I saw

Pablo he greeted me with "*ya esta*" [It's done]. He did not have to explain. I knew exactly what he meant.

On the day of the trip, I saw Sandra in the doorway of her apartment from a distance as I approached their home to pick her and Pablo up and take them to the airport. Both Sandra and Pablo looked anxious to hit the road. After we got all of their luggage into the car, they began to say their goodbyes. Their father was not there because he was already in Mexico. Their mother had asked to get out of work early from the hotel where she works at to see her kids off. As she gave each of them her blessing, her eyes filled with tears. She kept kissing them and giving them last minute recommendations. Sandra and Pablo did not cry but instead gleamed with joy at the thought of soon being in Mexico again. When they were already seated in the car, I told their mother to call me if she needed anything during the time her children were to be in Mexico. She said she would and said "*los voy a extrañar mucho*" [I will miss them dearly]. With that we drove off.

Once in the airport, Sandra and Pablo were all smiles. Neither of them could contain the happiness they felt and it showed. I, like their mother had done a few hours before, began giving them last minute recommendations about their trip. Just then Pablo asked how much he owed me for giving them a ride. After informing him that he did not need to pay anything, it was his turn to be in disbelief. He was so grateful and said, "*cuando regresemos los vamos a invitar a comer pozole en mi casa*" [when we get back, I am going to invite you all over for dinner at my house]. I simply replied, "ya esta" [it's done].

The Home

The home is a place that transmits a sense of belonging. The home however does not necessarily have to be a house but can encompass something much wider such as a country (Castles and Davidson 2000). In this sense, the home comes to signify a form of solidarity

with those inside it and exclusion for those outside of the home. Castles and Davidson posit that in the case of immigrants who leave their home countries to reside in another country, there exists the need to construct a place where they can feel at home again. The quest for this is not always easy and in fact is more difficult to achieve that one can imagine. To feel at home is to accomplish what Hage (1997) calls home-building. Home-building refers to a feeling of being at home, in one's comfort place, by way of four key feelings: security, familiarity, community, and a sense of possibility. Adolescent arrivals, at their young age, navigate their surroundings to ultimately create spaces where they feel secure, are familiar with, are able to build community and in the process develop a sense of hope in the possibility of tomorrow.

One day in July, I got a text from Pablo. It was an invitation for my family to join them for dinner the following Tuesday at 4pm. My family and I had all been to their home before. Their apartment complex stands out from the rest in the tightly cramped section of the city where working class families tend to rent. Most of the participants live in this area of town. Their apartment complex is a white Spanish-style structure with colorful paintings on the window hedges that give it a nice look. Three families actually live in their apartment. Pablo and his family occupy two of the rooms upstairs, his father's aunt and her daughter who has two small boys occupy one room upstairs, and a young couple from Spain occupy a small bedroom downstairs. They all share the living room and kitchen area.

Unable to find parking in their complex parking lot, we parked outside on the busy street. We walked to the apartment with books we were gifting to their baby sister and dessert. Sandra was waiting for us at the front door. She was wearing jeans and an army colored button down long sleeve shirt. Her hair was up in a ponytail and she was wearing makeup but no lipstick. She stepped outside to greet us. I noticed that Sandra had gained a

bit of weight since I last saw her. I asked her about her trip and she was quick to say that she was sad to come back because she was having so much fun.

Just as we began to sit down in the dining area, Sandra's mother came downstairs. Her hair was wet. She told us that she had just gotten out of the shower. She was wearing cotton pants and a blue and white blouse. She quickly embraced us and seemed genuinely happy to see us. Just then her husband came down. He sat next to me and quickly began talking about his trip to Mexico. He was explaining to us the process of going to Mexico and going through inspections at the airport. He said that in Mexico the agent kept questioning him about why he was visiting Mexico and wanted to know what day he would be leaving. He said he kept telling the agent that he was going home where he owned lots of land and had a house. Not satisfied with his response, the agent kept drilling him about his trip. He then informed us that upon his return, he was asked if he had touched any animals while in Mexico. Afraid of what would happened if he said yes, he simply said no, knowing full well that during his entire trip he attended to his horses and other ranch animals. He and Sandra then engaged in a conversation about the differences in their trip experiences as they came back. Just then the mom interrupted their conversation as she began to serve the food. The meal was a deliciously, hot, green pozole[13]. Sandra's mom said she had taken into consideration my daughter and had therefore chosen not to make it spicy. My daughter however complained that the *pozole* was spicy. Sandra's mom quickly took the plate away from her and threw out the soup and just left the meat and the hominy on the plate. My daughter preferred it this way and devoured it without saying anything else.

As we were eating, Pablo came downstairs. He came around the table to hug us and told us he had just gotten out of the shower. I told him that I heard he was happy to be back

and he groaned. We all burst out laughing. Pablo said he did not want to come back. His mom confirmed this by saying that she used to call both Pablo and Sandra regularly to tell them to come back already and they would both tell her that although they missed her dearly, they did not want to come back. Both Pablo and Sandra told stories about their trip. Most stories revolved around parties and dances they attended. Their entire visit was a big party and they were always surrounded by family and friends. Pablo would rarely go home to eat, Sandra recalled. He was always out and about doing his own thing. On some days, they would only see each other during a dance party.

The dances in their hometown were the main attraction during their visit. Sandra explained that the *bandas* (music bands) would march down the streets and stop at random places, play two or three songs, and then continue on their way until they made it to their final destination, a dance hall. She said this is what usually happens during "*las fiestas del pueblo*" (the hometown festivities). Sandra then revealed that she had a boyfriend in Mexico too. This was news to me because she had never talked about him. She said that her boyfriend would pick her up at her house everyday and together they would walk to the dance halls. Their dad chimed in to the conversation to say that in Mexico they have so much freedom. During these celebrations he said, residents tend to kill a cow and everyone in the town comes to eat and then goes on their way and when they get hungry, they come back to eat again. The parents and teenagers, he said, delight in the food and dances while the children enjoy playing outside without having to worry about getting into trouble. He added, "*alla no se preocupa uno por pagar la renta o los biles*" (over there parents don't worry about rent or paying the bills). On the other hand, he said, "*aqui los jovenes se sienten*

[13] Traditional soup from Mexico made from hominy and meat, typically pork or chicken. It is usually garnished with shredded cabbage, chile peppers, radishes, and lime.

atrapados por eso creo que prefieren estar en Mexico mas que aqui" (here the students feel trapped and that is why I think kids prefer to be in Mexico rather than here).

Pablo who was dressed all in black and looked like he had just recently cut his hair sat down and announced that he had invited some friends for dinner. I made a joke about how he had turned a quiet dinner into a party and everyone laughed. As if prompted, the friends showed up just then. It was Sergio, Sebastian, and Leonardo. All three of them are also participants in this study. They all attend the same high school as Sandra and Pablo. The three of them walked into the dining area huffing and puffing and sweating up a storm. They came on their skateboards and looked tired and relieved to finally be there. Sergio was wearing a sweater and shorts. It was very hot inside the home and before sitting down he quickly took off his sweater. Leonardo was wearing his usual black muscle shirt. He likes to work out and takes good care of his body. Although he is the shyest in the group, he likes to flaunt his muscular arms. Sebastian was wearing a black t-shirt and black pants. He stands out from his friends. At only 16 years old he is about six feet tall. He, however, is a child at heart. He loves video games and is not one to go out to parties or mingle with girls. He once told me that he does not know how to approach girls so he therefore steers clear of them.

They boys sat down and Pablo got up to serve them food. I had joined Pablo and his family for dinner before and although Pablo is always saying things that make him come across as *machista* and sexist, just as "*la mujer debe cocinar*" (it's a woman's duty to cook) or "*eso es cosa de mujeres*" (that is a woman's job) in his home, he breaks the traditional gender roles. He heats up the *tortillas*, serves the food, and cleans up afterwards. At first, the boys were shy and hesitated to eat or even talk. But after a few minutes they got comfortable and joined in the conversation as they devoured the homemade *pozole*. We

talked about school, jobs, summer, games, girlfriends, and a number of other typical teenage topics. The laughs soon came to an end when Pablo's dad asked if anyone had heard the news about the immigrants who had died inside a tractor-trailer in Texas that weekend. The boys all nodded yes. The 18-wheeler had been abandoned in a Walmart parking lot in San Antonio with over 100 undocumented immigrants inside. Dozens of the occupants were severely injured and nine were found dead (Karimi, Sutton and Yan 2017). Sebastian said he was lucky because he himself had come to the United States in a similar fashion. There was silence around the table.

Pablo's dad then asked the boys if they had jobs. Leonardo replied with "*No, todos somos mojaras*" (No we are all wetbacks). They all laughed. I realized at that moment how comfortable the students were in this environment. They must have felt a connection with everyone in the room to share such personal experiences. The boys took over the conversation and as if only the three of them were there, began analyzing the tractor-trailer incident. They all agreed that the journey must have been excruciatingly difficult for all the immigrants involved and tried to figure out how they were able to reach San Antonio inside the 18-wheeler without being detected. Sebastian and Leonardo came to the conclusion that all of the immigrants must have crossed the border separately and then once in the United States got in the trailer. The rest of us just sat around the table nibbling at what was left on our plates and listening to the boys talk. The dining table became their space. They took ownership of the place, the conversation, and the time. They shared their experiences and with this managed to make a safe haven for themselves; a place where they felt comfortable, welcomed, and most importantly a space where they felt they belonged.

Negotiating liminality is a multidirectional process (See Figure 1). For example, making sense of the current political climate can result from first responding to the anti-

immigrant discourse and vice versa. Participants in this study therefore learn to survive the harsh political times on their own terms. Finding common grounds on which to build community is essential in participants learning to navigate their new environment. By actively acknowledging their precarious situations of being adolescent arrivals, participants learn to cope with their realities. As evident in the dinner scene described above, adolescent arrivals feel comfortable sharing personal experiences amongst each other because they can all easily relate to one another. By claiming these safe spaces, adolescent arrivals manage to go from being outsiders to being insiders. The presence of "outsiders"—in this case my family and I—did not disrupt their sense of belonging because through their experiences they learn to choose who gets to participate in their inner circles and who stands outside of them.

The creation of safe places based on commonalities and understandings are a type of community building that fortifies ties among adolescent arrivals. Negrón-Gonzales (2013) finds that the act of making undocumented status public, "often brings undocumented students in community with other undocumented students, and that this community-building unintentionally and inadvertently brings the students into a process of dealing with their fear and shame" (1288). Similarly, I find that adolescent arrivals negotiate their liminality by forming alliances with those that find themselves in similar situations and together creating spaces of belonging where they are free to be themselves without being judged, harassed, or made to feel ashamed. Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster (2012) articulate that in order to understand what a space of belonging is we first need to define space. Space they state "is a dynamic and a changing entity that is affected by social and power relations, as well as by cultural codes" (204). Those who inhabit these spaces give meaning to them by the act of simply doing, practicing, and exercising their daily routines or activities. De Certeau (1984)

argues that those at the lower end of the power structures use tactics as a reaction to the structures themselves. According to de Certeau, tactics are simply a way of "making do" by engaging in everyday, mundane activities that by the simple act of doing them allow the powerless to claim spaces and make them theirs.

Towards the end of the night, Leonardo, who had recently graduated from high school, said he was not interested in going to college because the teachers only speak in English and he feels like he is wasting his time. He said he wanted to give up in high school but decided not too and now he is unsure about college. I offered to go with him to help him as he settles into his classes but he just smiled. He said he is getting paid $15 an hour at the place where he works installing carpets and tile. Proud of his hourly wage, he turned to Pablo and asked him how much he was getting paid at the Mexican restaurant where he works. Pablo responded that he earns $11 an hour. Leonardo replied "*diles que te suban*" (tell them to go higher), to which Pablo shot back "*pues no hay segundo piso*" (well there isn't a second floor). Once again, laughter filled the room.

It was then time for us to go. We thanked everyone for their hospitality, a delicious meal, and a wonderful time. Pablo's mom got up and gave me a piece of Mexican coconut candy they had brought from their trip to Mexico. Everyone hugged us and then we were on our way. As we drove off we saw the three boys in the distance as they took off in their skateboards in the darkness of night.

Room 86

We arrived at El Valle High School at 8:40 a.m. There was a lot of traffic that morning and getting to school on time was beginning to seem impossible. As part of a language program initiative from my university, I had signed up to teach a class on language and society at the high school. Two undergraduate students had signed up to be mentors and

help me in the classroom. I picked them up early at the university campus but I was beginning to think that I should have picked them up earlier. When we finally arrived, I parked across the main building and sped walked to the office to sign in.

The campus is breathtaking. The main building is a two story-high, old architecture style building that gives the campus an elegant look and feel to it. El Valle High School is a 40-acre urban campus located in the southeast region of San Eugenio. It is the third oldest high school in the state of California and thus rich in history. Although the current school was built in 1924, it was founded in 1875. El Valle High is said to reflect the socio-economic status of the community it serves (School Profile 2015). Data collected in previous years by the school district demonstrates that 95 percent of the students that graduate from El Valle go on to pursue a higher education either in a four year institution or a 2 year college. In addition, El Valle is known for its diverse programs and academies unique to it such as the Multimedia Arts and Design Academy and the Visual Arts and Design Academy, none of which cater to the participants in this study.

In the latest Annual Pupil Enrollment Report 2013-2014, El Valle High had a student population of 2,176. Of these, 56% or 1,223 were identified as Hispanics. The White (non Hispanic) student population was registered at 38% of the total student body population or 817. African Americans make up 1.2% of the student population at El Valle, Asian Americans make up 2.2%, and American Indian or Alaskan natives, and Pacific Islanders combined make up 0.8% of the student population.

With a population of 88,410, San Eugenio is described as a wealthy city. According to U.S. census figures, the median household income is $71,160 and the per capita income in the last twelve months was $41,525. In addition, the poverty rate in San Eugenio is 13.7 percent. These statistics however do not reflect El Valle’s student body. In order to measure

socioeconomic status, I rely on the school's free or reduced lunch program of which almost 50 percent of El Valle's students benefit. In addition, 55 percent of those that graduate from high school become first generation college students. El Valle High is located in the center of a residential neighborhood only less than 200 yards from an upscale amphitheater. The school is located at the foothill of the riches of San Eugenio yet far from being a part of that community.

At the front office, was a dark skinned Latina woman attending to students who constantly came into the office inquiring about schedules. She had dark black, straight hair and was not wearing any makeup. She did not smile and her demeanor was non-inviting.

"Good morning!" I said as I approached her. But before I could say anything else she looked straight at me and said, "take a seat." Both mentors and I looked at one another and did as we were told. I found her tone to be rude and disrespectful. If she acted this way towards us, who she knew were visitors to the school, I could only imagine how she treated the students. She did not bother to say, "I will be with you shortly," or "What can I help you with?" or not even, "Give me a minute." She just went about her business and never bothered to look up at us again.

It was Thursday, the fourth day of class. Both of the mentors who were joining me that morning and I, sat down in a bench in the office looking around as students stormed in and out of the room. After a few minutes, we noticed a dark-skinned boy wearing a bright red shirt and blue jeans, walk in and approach the woman. He whispered something to her that I could not make out and she just pointed to the bench we were sitting in and motioned him to also take a seat. Just then another boy walked into the office. He was much taller than the previous student and was also dark-skinned. He walked into the office nonchalantly with a huge smile on his face, and as soon as he saw the boy in the red shirt, the following

dialogue entailed.

> "*Tu eres el de Guatemala*?" [Are you the one from Guatemala?]
> To which the boy answered "*Si*" (yes).
> "*Me dijieron que viniera por ti. Vamos con Ms. Anaya*".
> When I heard this, I quickly jumped in, "*Nosotros tambien vamos a ir con Ms. Anaya*." [Hey, we are also going with Ms. Anaya].
> The taller boy asked us if we too were students and I said, "*No, somos maestras*" [No, we are teachers].

Both boys smiled and walked out of the office. I assume the woman in the office heard our conversation because she then handed us our visitor passes and waved us good-bye. As we walked over to Ms. Anaya's classroom (we had to ask students along the way because we had no idea where her classroom was located) one of the undergraduate mentors kept ranting at how furious she was that no one had told the student the name of the boy he was supposed to take to class. All he knew was the country the student was coming from. "That is so problematic!" she kept saying. Before going up the hill that would take us to Ms. Anaya's classroom, we saw the two boys sitting in a bench underneath a tree. I asked them why they were not in class and the taller one (whom I later found out was named Pablo) said they were waiting for us. We all walked together to class engaging in small talk about the school and the weather. It was then we learned that Pablo was from Michoacán. I do not recall asking him, but he made sure we knew that.

Ms. Anaya is the English Language Development teacher for level 1 students. This means that all of the students in her class had been in the United States for less than a year. The classroom was rowdy when we walked in that first day. Students were laughing and talking and seemed to be having fun. When she saw us, she quickly got up from her desk and told the students to quiet down and headed to the front of the room to greet us. Ms. Anaya is a young teacher, around her early-thirties. She has pearl-white skin and wears very little makeup. She comes across as being shy and she always dresses in pants, long sleeve

blouses and denim or cotton jackets, regardless if it is hot or cold. She always wears her brown wavy hair loose, which she constantly tugs behind her ears. One thing hard to miss about Ms. Anaya is her sweet smile that makes everyone feel welcomed in her class. To her students however the one thing they adore about Ms. Anaya is her ability to speak Spanish and thus communicate with them.

Adolescent arrivals report constantly feeling like outsiders, even those who are U.S citizens. This is a consistent theme that continuously arises as students reflect on their experiences in the United States. As discussed in chapter four, language plays a huge role in students feeling as if they do not belong. Exclusion is something adolescent arrivals learn to navigate as they seek ways of creating spaces of belonging where they can feel comfortable even if it is just temporary. Ms. Anaya's classroom, as we will learn in this section, is a space that the participants managed to turn into a safe haven among the entire campus. Sebastian recalls the first day he met Ms. Anaya:

> *Llegué a primer periodo que tenía con Ms. Anaya y dije yo, 'Ah no habla español de seguro.' Y ya cuando la oigo hablar con uno dije yo 'Ah, mira si habla español. Me salve.' Y ella me estaba hablando en inglés y no le entendía. Le dije 'No le entiendo. Háblame español.' Y me dice ella 'Oh, soy tu nueva maestra. Me llamo Ms. Anaya.' Y le digo 'Oh okay. Hola Ms. Anaya.' Y ya me asignó mi asiento y todo.*
>
> [I got to my first period which was with Ms. Anaya and I thought, 'Ah, she doesn't speak Spanish for sure.' And then when I heard her talk with a student I said, 'Oh, look she does speak Spanish. I'm saved.' And then she starts talking to me in English and I didn't understand her. I told her, 'I don't understand you. Talk to me in Spanish.' And she says, "Oh, I am your new teacher. My name is Ms. Anaya.' And I tell her, 'Oh okay. Hi Ms. Anaya.' And then she assigned a seat to me.]

Sebastian smiles as he remembers that day. After feeling lost in school that morning, since he had no idea where he had to report to, he was relieved to come across a teacher that was not only accommodating but that spoke his same language. At first, he thought he

would only encounter English-speaking teachers at El Valle High School and the thought of that scared him. For the time being, he felt safe in Ms. Anaya's classroom and grateful to have a place where he felt comfortable. Sandra, like Sebastian, feels it is important to not only have a teacher but also a place that students like them see as a safe learning environment. She had the following to say about this during one of our conversations:

> Liliana: *¿Y como es la clase de Ms. Anaya? [And how is Ms. Anaya's classroom?]*
> *Sandra: Pues alli es muy diferente porque alli todos estamos aprendiendo ingles y todos pues no la llevamos bien porque también hablamos el mismo idioma que todos entendemos*. [Well, there it is very different because there we are all learning English and we all get along well because we all also speak the same language that we all understand.]
> Liliana: *¿Te sientes agusto en ese lugar?* [You feel comfortable in that place?]
> Sandra: *Si.* [Yes.]
> Liliana: ¿Por qué? [Why?]
> Sandra: *Pues por lo mismo que todos hablamos el mismo idioma y nos podemos comunicar entre todos.* [Well, for the same reason that we all speak the same language and we can communicate with each other.]
> Liliana: *¿Es importante que Ms. Anaya hable español?* [Is it important that Ms. Anaya speaks Spanish?]
> Sandra: *Si porque ella nos está enseñando ingles pero al mismo tiempo como para ayudarnos nos esta diciendo que hacer en español para entender más bien lo que tenemos que hacer.* [Yes, because she is teaching us English but at the same time to help us better she explains things in Spanish so that we are able to better understand what we are supposed to do.]

As Spanish-speakers, participants feel excluded from many spaces in and around their school campus. This exclusion forms part of their daily lives. Creating spaces of belonging therefore results from the desire to feel welcomed and acknowledged. Flores (1997) posits that "When Latinos claim space they do so not for the purpose of being different, but rather simply to create a place where they can feel a sense of belonging, comfortable, and at home." Rosaldo and Flores (1997) call these spaces "sacred places." These places, they argue, have distinct qualities that make them specifically Latina/o in every sense. The processes of creating these places naturally occur as Latinas/os interact with one another and

build community. Although Rosaldo and Flores are speaking of cultural citizenship, how groups come to form themselves, how they define themselves, and most importantly how they claim rights for themselves, participants in this study are creating spaces, not as a way to claim rights, but more so as a way of just existing. Marco, for examples shares how being in Ms. Anaya's classroom makes him feel.

> Liliana: *¿Cuando llegaste a la clase de Ms. Anaya que te pareció?* [When you first arrived at Ms. Anaya's classroom, what did you think of it?]
> Marco: *Pues me pareció bien porque allí todos hablan español y nos entendemos todos*. [Well, I thought it was cool because in there everyone speaks Spanish and we all understand each other.]
> Liliana: *¿Qué significa esa clase para ti?* [What does that class mean to you?]
>
> Marco: *Para mí es como que si yo estuviera en México y me pudiera comunicar con todos mis compañeros y así. También las otras clases pues casi no me comunico bien con ellos porque hablan inglés.* [To me it is like if I were back in Mexico and I could communicate with all of my peers. In my other classes, I hardly communicate with others because they speak English.]

Just as Marco states, Janet also claims to feel at home upon setting foot in Ms. Anaya's classroom. Being able to communicate not only with the teacher but also with other students allows participants to feel comfortable and in doing so create a space where they are free to think, speak, and act as they wish. Janet provides the following account when asked about Ms. Anaya's classroom.

> Janet: *Cuando llegué con Ms. Anaya, pues todos hablaban español. Me sentía bien agusto en esa clase.* [When I arrived at Ms. Anaya's class, well everyone spoke Spanish. I felt comfortable in that class.]
> Liliana: *¿Es la primer clase en donde todos hablaban español?* [Is that the first class where everyone spoke Spanish?]
> Janet: *Si.* [Yes.]
> Liliana: *¿Y esa clase qué significó para ti? Cómo te sentías en ese lugar?* [And what did that class mean to you? How did you feel in that place?]
> Janet: *Me sentí mejor. Sentí como un alivio. A veces nomás esperaba pasar mi primer clase para poder ir donde Ms. Anaya y no quería irme ya de esa clase. Me sentía más agusto en esa clase. En esa clase era la única que molestaba, hablaba bien, y así.* [I felt better. I felt relieved. Sometimes I would just wait for my first period to pass so that I could go with Ms. Anaya and I didn't want to leave that class. I felt comfortable in that class. In that

class, it was the only place where I would play around, talk, and do other things like that.]

Having a physical space, such as Ms. Anaya's classroom that provides a sense of belonging is important as evidenced by the testimonies of the participants. However, as Gottdiener (1985) posits, just as important is having a space where creative expressions flourish and take form. As previously described, language plays a central role in the lives of adolescent arrivals and as such forms the glue by which their experiences are linked. It is no wonder that having a space where they are free to express themselves in their native tongue makes participants feel welcomed and accepted. Bejarano (2005) contends, "criticizing and teasing someone about their language is the worst assault to one's identity" (133). Having experienced negative encounters based on their lack of English proficiency, for example participating in mainstream classes that employ a sink or swim approach, taints the perceptions of adolescent arrivals who must learn to fend for themselves against all odds. Having a safe space where they feel included gives participants an opportunity to be themselves.

Ironically, what makes the students feel comfortable and included, translates differently to the teacher. To her, the students are "acting up" and "misbehaving." She constantly tells them that maybe in their home countries it was okay to misbehave, to laugh loud, to whistle, to sing, to get up from their seats without permission, among other types of what she calls deviant behavior, but not here. The students take this with a grain of salt and continue being themselves because to them this is the only place in school where they feel like they belong. Everything in their school campus is in English; school announcements, school propaganda, advisories, and meetings. None of these things speak to the needs and experiences of recently arrived immigrant youth. This is the only class where they feel accepted. What the teacher sees as "acting up" is just their way of showing their joy and

excitement to be in a space where others share similar experiences, speak the same language, and truly get one another. Once students advance to the next ELD level class, the majority still not speaking any English, they constantly visit Ms. Anaya's classroom and moan and groan when they are told to leave.

Room 86 is a special place for participants. In learning to navigate their liminality, they learn the importance of creating safe spaces that allow them to freely express themselves and build community amongst those who share in their experiences. As recently arrived immigrants, they share a bond that unites them and which functions as a boundary that separates them from the rest of their peers in school. Veronica recalls how she felt when she first arrived at school. "*El primer día que entré me sentí bien nerviosa pero cuando llegué al salón de Ms. Anaya todos me empezaron a hablar"* [The first day I came here I felt very nervous but then when I arrived at Ms. Anaya's classroom everyone began talking to me]. Just as Veronica describes, the majority of participants report not knowing what to expect in school and being in Ms. Anaya's class gave them a sense of comfort and tranquility in knowing that they were not alone. Daniela, elaborates on this:

> *Ay pues excelente! Siempre como desde el primer momento que llegue, encaje con ellos porque ya no me sentí como tan aislada porque pues también yo creo que cuando llegaron ellos se sintieron igual. Entonces todos nos entendemos allí.*
>
> [Oh well its excellent! Since the first moment that I arrived, I got along with them because I no longer felt so isolated because well, they too, I believe, felt the same way when they first got here. Therefore we all get each other there.]

Room 86 is like any other classroom in a high school campus. It is space where students come together to learn. In this classroom in particular, the topic of instruction is English. Students enrolled in this class are taught elementary English and there is a big emphasis on the importance of learning the language in order to succeed in the United Sates. As recently

arrived immigrant students, participants understand the importance of learning the language. But as adolescent arrivals who share the experience of immigrating to the U.S. as teenagers, who are aware of the anti-immigrant rhetoric exacerbated by the political climate of the time, and who experience discrimination as a result of this, they are relieved to have found if only a niche in the 40-acre campus where they are free to enjoy themselves, even if it is only for an hour and thirty minutes a day.

The Gym

Most participants hang out at a local gym after school. I often hear them as they make plans to meet there and get together. The day I was scheduled to interview Karla for the first time for this project, she told me I could meet her at the gym and we could do the interview there.

I drove down the busy downtown streets of San Eugenio. I typed in the address Karla gave me on the maps application on my phone and was following the directions. When I got there, I almost missed the place. It sits on the corner of a busy street in a residential area. I saw older kids walking alongside what appeared to be their younger siblings in the sidewalk. There was a man near the gym looking under the hood of his car trying to fix it and then there were a couple of moms walking by with their little children near them. The scene outside the gym had a familial feel to it.

I almost missed the gym because it looks like a house. It is not your traditional building that you imagine when you hear the word gym. In fact, nothing about this place resembled a gym in any way. From the side, it looks like a three-bedroom home. From the front it looks like a fire station. There is a garage door in the middle of the building that makes it seem as if in any minute a fire truck will come rushing out of there. The actual entrance to the gym is a small door to the left of the garage door. The only indication of that

place being a gym are the small red letters painted just above the garage door that read "The Y: Youth and Family Center".

There is no parking lot and I had trouble finding parking in the nearby streets. I kept driving in circles and I finally found a spot to park in the street behind the gym. As I was parking, I noticed a young boy walking by. It was Samuel, a participant in this study. He was walking down the street with a smirk on his face. I thought about saying hi but I was too busy parking. As I was walking to the gym, my phone rang. I thought it was Karla but it turns out it was Pablo who was also at the gym and had heard I would be going there. He was shooting hoops by himself and as soon as I told him I was approaching the gym, he began to wave his cap through the fence and kept asking me if I could see him. As soon as I said yes, he hung up. I got to the front of the building and saw two young boys standing outside. I had never seen them before but I figured they were also members of the gym. I walked in and Karla came to greet me. She told the guy at the front desk that I was there to interview her in the computer room. I told him I had her parent's permission to interview her. He did not seem to care and just told me to sign in.

The inside of the gym was also not what I expected. It was small. In fact, I could almost bet it is a house turned into a gym. The entrance resembles a small foyer. There is a huge office desk in this room where a young boy usually sits at. To enter the gym you just need to show your membership card to whoever is behind the desk. For those of us like me who do not have a membership, you just need to sign in. The foyer leads into what I believe used to be a living room. In here you have two huge wall mirrors and a few exercise machines. As you walk in, to the right is a shelf with weights. In front of the shelf is a bench press station with only one bench and next to this is a cycling exercise machine. On the opposite side of the room is a wall mirror facing two Star Trac elliptical machines.

There is an open doorway at the back of this room that leads you into a small hallway. To the left of the hallway is a small computer room with six computers and a shelf full of crayons, board games, and other activities for young children. To the right of the hallway is a bathroom, a kitchen area and a back door that leads you into the backyard turned into a basketball court. At the end of the hallway is the entrance to an actual garage. The students rarely visit this area. This is where community classes such as zumba lessons are offered. In this part of the gym, you mostly see older women sporting yoga pants and t-shirts.

Karla led me to the computer room where Janet was doing homework. I sat next to her and we began talking about school. Just then, Karla, who had told me to wait for her in the computer room walked in with a hot dog and said "*ya llego la comida*" [the food is here]. I asked Janet what that was all about and she explained that around 4 or 5 in the evening they bring food for those at the gym to eat. The food is free and they all love and enjoy that. Janet invited me to walk with her to the kitchen so she could grab something to eat and sure enough there was a huge tray of hot dogs and what looked like coleslaw. I later asked the young man at the front desk who brings in the food for the students to eat and he informed me that it is courtesy of the school district.

During our interview, Karla told me she pays $10 a year to be a member at the gym. She gets the student rate she told me. Before and after the interview, I observed the participants who were at the gym. I noticed that only some of the boys lifted a few weights every now and then but other than that I did not see anyone exercising or using the exercise machines. Most of the time they were either goofing around, talking with each other, or eating. Although Karla was dressed in exercise clothing, I never saw her actually doing exercise. She told me that the gym was a place where they go to have fun or as she put it "*es mas relajo*" [Its more playing around]. During her senior year in high school, Karla got a job

at a local pizza place and stopped going to the gym. That place however as she explains was a special place for her and her friends.

> Liliana: *¿Qué significa ese lugar para ti?* [What does this place signify to you?]
> Karla: *Pues es donde iba a hacer ejercicio y pues también iba a convivir.* [Well, it's a place to do exercise and also to hang out.]
> Liliana: *¿Cuánto rato pasabas allí?* [How much time did you spend there?]
> Karla: *De cuatro a siete.* [From four to seven].
> Liliana: T*res horas.¿Y de esas tres horas cuánto tiempo era ejercicio?*[Three hours. And from those three hours, how much time did you exercise?]
> Karla: *A veces eran las tres horas y a veces pues me sentaba y me ponia a platicar o me ponia a comer porque traian comida.* [Sometimes all three hours and sometimes I would just sit down to talk or eat because they bring food].
> Liliana: *¿Osea era un espacio donde te sentias a gusto?* [So it was a space where you felt comfortable?]
> Karla: *Sí.* [Yes.]

Janet also echoes Karla's sentiments of the gym. She too sees the gym as a place they managed to make theirs by claiming the space and making it a "sacred place" (Rosaldo and Flores 1997). She told me that just like Karla she spends anywhere from three to four hours daily at the gym. "*Siempre después de la escuela siempre vamos todos los días*" [Everyday after school lets out, we always go to the gym]. The gym is a place that provides comfort and security for participants allowing them to enjoy the space and just have fun. "*Ahí nosotros hacemos nuestro desmadre pues*" [there we do as we please] is how Janet describes the gym. To her, the gym is a safe haven.

> Liliana: *¿Qué es el gimnasio para ustedes? ¿Qué significa? Muchos ustedes lo han tomado como un espacio...* [What is the gym for you all? What does it mean? Many of you have taken it as a space…..]
> Janet: *Es como un espacio para nosotros. Ahí siempre pues vamos todos y allí siempre andamos molestando mientras hacemos ejercicio y siempre andamos hablando español siempre muy rara la vez hablamos en inglés.* [It's like a space for us. We always go there everyday and we play around with each other, messing around while we exercise and we are always speaking in Spanish we rarely speak English.]
> Liliana: *¿Y si hacen ejercicio o que hacen más?* [And everyone exercises or what else do you all do?]
> Janet: *A veces molestamos más qué hacer ejercicio todos. Nos ponemos ahí*

> *nomás a veces ponen banda y ahí nomas se ponen a bailar en veces. Es como, no sé. Es como un espacio de tiempo libre para nosotros allí.* [Sometimes we just play around more than do exercise. We all, sometimes they put *banda* music and some of us sometimes dance. It is, like I don't know. It is like a space of free time for all of us there.]

Janet, like her other peers that frequent the gym on a daily basis, sees the gym as her favorite hangout location. She enjoys spending time at the gym because it provides her with the comfort she is looking for. In this space she is able to speak the language of her choosing without being judged, she is able to do the things she likes to do, and most importantly she gets to hang out with people that she can relate to and that are able to relate to her experiences.

The adolescent arrivals in this study came to the United States for various reasons. Because of their age of migration, they participated in the decision making process of coming to the United States. Not one of them came here because they did not like their life back home. Those that made the decision to migrate on their own either wanted to reunite with their parents, wanted to financially help their families, or were seeking better opportunities. Those that came here with their parents are aware of the reasons why their parents made the decision to migrate whether it was financially motivated or seeking safety. Being away from home is not easy for participants who constantly recall their beloved home country. Felipe for example says he was happier in Mexico because "*ella es más divertido porque estás con tu familia, como tus amigos de la infancia"* [It is more fun over there because you are with your family, with your childhood friends]. Felipe highlights the importance of being surrounded by people he knows and trusts; his family and friends. His statement portrays the need to be around people that accept him and who make him comfortable to be himself.

Mariana too, emphasizes the need to be among family and friends. Although Mariana is a U.S. citizen, she has yet to feel a sense of belonging in the United States. She feels like an outsider most of the time and misses being in Mexico. She says "*pues allá todos los fines de semana con mi abuelita, los hermanos de mi mamá y de mi papa, siempre nos reuníamos y hacíamos comidas pero aquí no. Aquí nomás todos trabajan y no tienen tiempo para eso"* [Well over there every weekend with my grandmother, mi mother's siblings and my father's, would all get together and we would make food, but not here. Here everyone works and there is no time for that]. Mariana acknowledges that life in the United States is very different to the way of life in Mexico. With the decision to immigrate, her weekly routines were interrupted. Places and feelings of belonging eroded as she settled in the United States. This is perhaps one of the hardest things participants have to adjust to. In doing so they create places and spaces that fit their needs and that provide a sense of belonging. The gym fits these characteristics and has become a space where participants go to unwind from their daily struggles. Pablo exemplifies this in the following account:

> *Me gusta ir. Para mi es el único lugar donde me desestreso. Porque a veces en mi casa todos están dormidos o cansados de la escuela, trabajo, lo que sea y pues no puedo llegar y haciendo ruido porque también yo sé que ellos están cansados.*
>
> [I like to go there. For me, it is the only place where I can de-stress. Because sometimes at home everyone is asleep or tired from school, work, or whatever and well I can't just can't get there and start making noise because I know they are tired.]

Pablo underlines the importance of releasing stress. Stress can be detrimental for immigrants negatively impacting both their mental and emotional well-being. As if migrating in itself was not a difficult task, adolescent arrivals are also confronted with a hostile context of reception. The harsh political environment exacerbated by Trump and his administration is taking a toll on immigrants, in particular of Mexican descent, as they are

continually attacked in political debates, in the media, and in daily encounters in their communities. The anti-immigrant sentiments generate fears and uncertainty among adolescent arrivals. Fitting in is therefore not the only thing adolescent have to worry about. Their situations are much more complicated. All of this can have a negative effect on the mental health of adolescent arrivals. Gonzales et al. (2013) posit that both the social and political climates can be detrimental for immigrant youth. Moreover, Vaquera, Aranda and Sousa-Rodriguez (2017) argue that "migration itself can act as a desembedding mechanism, decreasing immigrants' sense of ontological security" (301). Without a sense of belonging, immigrants find themselves in a difficult situation that can have lasting mental and emotional consequences. Finding spaces of belonging therefore is not only a mechanism of security but a safety net that helps adolescent arrivals deal with their circumstances. Being surrounded with peers they can relate to helps adolescent arrivals build close friendships. Sergio, spends anywhere from three to four hours at the gym. He confesses that he comes to the gym to "*hacer relajo*" [have fun] but he also recognizes that it allows him to "*desestresarme porque no todo es escuela y estar encerrado estudiando"* [distress because it shouldn't just be about only school and studying all the time].

A gym is a place to exercise. It is equipped with the tools necessary to enhance body strength and fitness. It provides customers with a space to workout and be in shape. The gym at the Eastside of San Eugenio provides more than just that. It is a safe haven for many of the adolescent arrivals that frequent it on a daily basis. Upon talking to Sebastian one day, at the basketball court behind the gym, he told me he did not want to go to the gym at first but his friends kept insisting until one day he finally agreed to go. He, like all the participants, does not drive. He was therefore happy to discover that the gym was just within walking distance from him, which made it all the more convenient.

Además de que está cerca de la escuela. Cuando salía me venía para acá. No había problema. Ya le decía a mi mamá 'mamá voy al gimnasio. Llegó aquí a las 6' y me salía 'Okay mijo' y ya está bien.

[Also it is close to the school. When I would get out, I would come over here. There was no problem. I would just tell my mom, 'mom, I'm going to the gym. I will be home at six,' and she would say, 'okay, son,' and that was it.]

The gym is now a place where he meets his friends daily. Here they have fun, catch up on the latest gossip, mess around, and if they have time, they exercise. In their quest for building community, they have made this space a place to exist. The gym closes at 7:30 in the evening. Just around the time the sun starts going down. Little by little the students leave. Tomorrow they will meet here again to pick up where they left off today.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I document mechanisms of survival that adolescent arrivals adhere to as they learn to adapt to living in the United States. For many of them, coming to America was not an easy decision, but one that was ultimately met with the hope of finding a new home. As scholars argue, contexts of reception are fundamental in understanding the incorporation processes of immigrants. For adolescent arrivals who migrate to the United States amid a hostile political environment that threatens their existence, the obstacles they face as they try to incorporate prove to be challenging to say the least.

The age of migration of adolescent arrivals sets them apart from other immigrant populations. As such their experiences are also different. In trying to negotiate their liminality, adolescent arrivals reveal the importance of building community with those that share in their experiences and with those whom they can relate to. This, as exemplified in this chapter, leads to the development of spaces of belonging that allow adolescent arrivals to be themselves without the fear of being judged, harassed, or discriminated against. The

process by which these spaces become safe havens for participants occurs naturally. These places emerge from their desire to feel welcomed.

The home, room 86, and the gym are all examples of how adolescent arrivals manage to create spaces of belonging. The structures themselves are not as important, as are the social experiences that transpire in each of them. These places, although very different in environment, shape, and structure, have one thing in common. They are spaces turned into "sacred places" by adolescent arrivals who constantly battle anti-immigrant discourses aimed at disempowering their communities. In developing their safety nets, adolescent arrivals are learning to cope with power structures that obscure their possibilities of integrating. The construction of spaces of belonging enables participants to negotiate their liminality and make spaces of endless opportunities. These spaces serve to provide adolescent arrivals with a feeling of belonging and a will to persist against all odds.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Paving the Road for Inclusion and Incorporation

Juan de León Gutiérrez is a 16-year-old boy from Guatemala. For the past two years his family has struggled to survive the consequences of a five-year drought that has put an end to the family's harvest of corn and beans. For the Gutiérrez family this means that they can only have one meal a day—if they are lucky. Starvation and poverty pushed Juan to embark on an international journey in search of work to help his parents and six siblings survive (Chavez, Mendoza, and Shoichet 2019).

Juan is an adolescent arrival who migrated to the United States on April 4, 2019 via a *coyote* or human smuggler. Upon crossing the U.S. border near El Paso, Texas he was apprehended by border patrol agents and transferred the following day to the Office of Refugee Resettlement and placed in a shelter in Brownsville, Texas. Juan is like the many other adolescent arrivals introduced in this study. Like them, he decided to leave his hometown in search of better opportunities. His was not a quest for ambition, in search of riches and unattainable dreams; he was only hoping to find a job that could allow him to send money back home so his family could eat.

In other circumstances, Juan, like the participants in this study, after being released to a sponsor, would be required to enroll in high school and the path that follows would most likely resemble that of the adolescent arrivals we learned about. But this was not the case for him. On April 30, just a little over three weeks after he left his hometown of Tizamarte in the eastern area of Chiquimula in Guatemala, Juan died. After complaining of a headache and having a fever while in the ORR shelter, Juan was taken to two hospitals

before being transferred to a children's hospital where he underwent surgery for a severe infection. His death became the third fatality involving a Guatemalan child in U.S. custody since December 2018.[14]

In this dissertation, I examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals as they learn to not only adjust but also survive a new culture in a new land. Adolescent arrivals form part of an immigrant population that we know little about. They are childhood arrivals but unlike those that came to the United States prior to the age of 12 and who form part of the 1.5-generation, adolescent arrivals are those that because they are older, participated in the decision making process to migrate to the United States. Their experiences, rendered for the most part invisible amongst a sea of literature on other immigrant-aged groups, are not only different but also unique and complex in a myriad of ways. In analyzing how adolescent arrivals navigate structures during an intensified anti-immigrant political climate, I ask the following questions: 1) How do the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? 2) How do language practices influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? and 3) What are the strategies adolescent arrivals develop and resort to as they learn to survive amidst the hostile climate of animosity against immigrants in America, particularly Mexican immigrants? My findings reveal that age of migration coupled with a hostile environment shapes the processes and conditions by which adolescent arrivals learn to survive. Caught in an in-between age between child and adult, an in-between location between home and host country, and an in-between identity between belonging and not belonging, adolescent arrivals face numerous challenges to incorporate into the United States.

[14] In December 2018 two Guatemalan children died in government custody. Felipe Gómez Alonzo, 8 years of age, and Jakelin Caal Maquin, 7 years of age, died after crossing the border and suffering health complications while in U.S. custody.

The current political climate that confronts adolescent arrivals in the United States sets the tone for the political and social contexts that now shape their experiences. The participants in this study migrated just a few months before the election of Donald Trump to the presidency. Although the hostile anti-immigrant climate was not developed or created by Trump and his administration, they are responsible for exacerbating it. Reports indicate that Trumps aggressive agenda on immigration issues is like no other (Pierce 2019:1). After taking office he quickly took to signing two executive orders pertaining to immigration enforcement. The first one deals with securing the border and the second one with enhancing immigration enforcement in the interior of the country. Meanwhile, Congress has remained for the most part, silent on any legislation related to immigration.

The southwest border with Mexico remains a main concern for Trump and his administration. He has vowed to put an end to illegal immigration and continues to promise to build a wall along the entire southern border. In addition, the situation with asylum seekers who have arrived in the border in high numbers in the last months has prompted Trump to take drastic measures. In October 2018, a migrant caravan that began in Honduras traveling by foot through Guatemala, Mexico, and then the United States further angered Trump who is adamant about ending illegal immigration. The more that 4,000 people in the caravan were alleged to leave their countries due to poverty and violence. Although some planned to stay in Mexico a huge majority saw the United States as the final destination. Trump responded to the situation by threating the governments of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala to suspend foreign aid to them if they did not put an end to the caravan. Unable to control the large masses, there was little the governments in the three countries could do. Trump therefore threated to close the southern border if the Mexican government did not stop the caravan (Semple 2018).

There are numerous policies and orders that Trump has undertaken as a form of enhancing security measures at the border. Among these are the deployment of 4,000 troops to the border, border patrol personnel increases, the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy which refers all immigrants apprehended crossing illegally to the United States for prosecution, among others. The zero-tolerance policy is perhaps a major point of contention that resulted in family separations as children were taken away from parents who were transferred to the Justice Department for prosecution. Although the Department of Health and Human Services reports that there were 2,737 children under its care who had been forcibly separated from their parents, it was later reported that there could be thousands more (Pierce 2019).

In the interior of the country, Trump has also turned to drastic measures to deport unauthorized immigrants. A major change from the previous presidential administration is to prioritize the removal of all unauthorized immigrants living in the interior of the country as opposed to focusing on removing those with criminal records. Some states such as California have implemented sanctuary policies to protect immigrants, but Trump has threated to deny federal grants to those states that do not comply with his orders (Pierce 2019). The attack on those who help protect immigrants from federal agents is also being felt at the local level by community members as a result of Trump's 2018 initiative to prosecute those "harboring" at least three undocumented immigrants or more. The old statute targeted individuals harboring five immigrants or more. There have been numerous cases reported of individuals who now face criminal proceedings for lending a helping hand. The latest case is that of Teresa Todd who stopped to render aid to three undocumented individuals that were asking for help along the road in Marfa, Texas. Todd is a county attorney and she quickly phoned law enforcement friends to ask for help. Soon after, a

county sheriff stopped her and apprehended the three immigrants and detained Todd for the crime of harboring an undocumented immigrant. It is unknown at the time whether Todd will be prosecuted (Nathan 2019). Although Todd has declined to comment on her case, she did have the following to say about the entire situation, "It's a tough time to be a Good Samaritan." Like this, other incidents have transpired. The number of cases dealing with the harboring or smuggling of immigrants rose from 3,441 to 4,532 in the last three years. Most of these cases occurred in 2018 (Nathan 2019).

Adolescent arrivals are not exempt from the changes in immigration policy under Trump. For starters, in 2017, Trump ordered that immigration judges have the authority to remove the 'unaccompanied child' designation initially assigned to minors by either CBP or ICE officials. The designation of 'unaccompanied child' can be revoked at any time during court proceedings if an immigration judge determines that the minor no longer meets the requirements of an unaccompanied alien child (Pierce 2019). In addition, family sponsors also run the risk of being arrested under policy changes that demand that the Office of Refugee Resettlement share information about possible sponsors with ICE. From July to November 2018,170 possible sponsors who intended to take an unaccompanied child under their care, were arrested as a result of the information shared of them with ICE (Kopan 2018). With the implementation of new policies that aim directly at punishing those that seek to care for their family members, including adolescent arrivals that venture into the United States out of necessity, the lives of UAC are in severe danger. These policies are also a form of family separation as most youths come to the United States to reunite with a family member that will serve as their sponsors. Without, the help of a sponsor, the immigrant youth become a displaced population.

Summary

The goal of each substantive chapter in this dissertation was to highlight how by negotiating liminality adolescent arrivals are able to navigate their new surroundings given a political climate in which immigration issues take center stage. By examining the experiences of adolescent arrivals through life course theory and focusing on age and life stage of migration, I capture how structural and historical forces not only shape but also dictate modes of incorporation in the host country. Adolescent arrivals who hold no pre-existing social of cultural attachments to the United States, their notions of incorporation look different than those of other immigrant populations.

The thesis of this study raises the question "What exactly is incorporation?" According to Gordon (1964) it is a process that ultimately leads individuals to see themselves as fully immersed in every aspect of American life. When this is accomplished, the social equilibrium disrupted by immigration is restored. Warner and Srole (1945) argue that the speed with which immigrant groups fully incorporate or assimilate is dependent on their position in an ethnic-racial hierarchy based on factors such as language and religion. Assimilation theory as it stands, however, is widely criticized. Revisiting the canonical accounts of assimilation as presented by Gordon (1964) and Park (1950), Alba and Nee (2003) argue the importance of using this theory to examine contemporary immigrant incorporation. According to them, Park never defined a single mainstream and therefore the mainstream could encompass different groups in different social classes. However, without set guidelines to define the mainstream, assimilation theory remains weak in its coherence and applicable content.

Among the many theories of assimilation, there is one that delineates the various trajectories of incorporation by immigrants—segmented assimilation theory. Portes and Zhou (1993) offer that segmented assimilation describes diverse possible outcomes for

second-generation immigrants— upward assimilation, downward assimilation, and upward mobility combined with persistent biculturalism. Understanding that there are different trajectories for immigrant incorporation is important in analyzing the experiences of adolescent arrivals. Haller, Portes, and Lynch (2011) posit that first-generation immigrants are an intensely mobile population that either return to their countries of origin or act as birds of passage that come and go across time. Likewise, scholars have argued that first-generation immigrants only reside in the United States and do not think of themselves as attached to it (Glazer 1954). Their children however, second-generation immigrants, have a legal status and an affiliation to the United States since they were born and raised here. Adolescent arrivals, because of their age of migration straddle the possibilities of forming a life in America. Adolescent arrivals in this study migrated with the hope of making the United States their new home. There are many that like them have migrated in previous time periods and have successfully managed to form a life in the United States. Participants in this study however migrated during a unique historical time period that greatly shapes their modes of incorporation. The dehumanizing rhetoric promoted by Trump and his administration is dangerous for adolescent arrivals. In understanding their trajectories it is necessary to do so by examining the political and social contexts in the United States.

The reasons for why adolescent arrivals in this study migrated to the United States vary from participant to participant. Their quest to migrate is heavily motivated by structural forces that are out of their control and which limit their opportunities in their countries of origin. They form part of what Golash-Boza (2015) calls the age of mass deportation due to the neoliberal cycle of global capitalism. She argues that mass deportations are basically a mean of controlling surplus labor created by the structural changes in the labor markets not only in the United States but also in the various countries of

origin. Even though global capitalism has enabled the virtually unimpeded flow of goods across international borders the same cannot be said for the flow of labor itself. In fact, the entrenchment of borders marked by heightened levels of security measures aimed at controlling the flow of immigrants entering the United States constantly jeopardize the lives of immigrants seeking to participate in the U.S. labor market. Once in the United States, those who survived the dangers of border crossings—even those that had some type of authorization to enter the United States—because of an anti-immigrant climate that shapes current political matters find themselves at the lower ends of a social and economic hierarchy that make them a vulnerable population (Golash-Boza 2015).

Due to racialized practices, finding support systems during turbulent political times when immigrants are constantly attacked becomes a challenge as exemplified in the testimonies of adolescent arrivals in this study. Because of their age, adolescent arrivals constantly experiences negative encounters with their American-born peers of Mexican descent. Dowling (2014) argues that the desire to disassociate from being seen as immigrant and by default "illegal" due to racialization practices motivates many Mexican Americans to use 'whiteness' as a defensive strategy to assert their American identity and avoid being seen and treated as immigrants. The Latino threat narrative (Chavez 2008) depicts Latinas/os as invasive intruders and other perceptions and ideologies that negatively impacting the lived experiences of those who like participants in this study are seen as foreigners. Moreover, adolescent arrivals who lack the linguistic fluency to navigate their new life in the United States in English, experience language as a barrier. Upon arriving, they quickly learn that knowing the English language is a way of claiming rights and being able to participate in the host country for it helps establish some sort of legitimacy to belonging in the United States (Bejarano 2005). As adolescent arrivals their experiences in the United

States revolve around a school setting since that is where they spend most of their days. Ochoa (2004) contends that schools are a reflection of society at large and as such tend to reproduce dominant ideologies. It is through their experiences as adolescents that participants learn to make sense of their position within the U.S. context.

The goal of each substantive chapter was to highlight how by negotiating their new found liminal status in the United States, adolescent arrivals learn to make sense of their situation as immigrants, as English Language Learners, and as individuals with precarious citizenship status among other factors that limit their opportunities to integrate in the host country. As the findings reveal, incorporation for the adolescent arrivals in this study is also multifaceted. The results of this community ethnography that centered the lived experiences of adolescent arrivals testifies to the plight of immigrant youth who entered the United States with big hopes and dreams of a brighter future. To participants incorporation does not mean erasure of their culture. They are proud of being from their home countries. At their young age, their worldviews are formed based on their experiences living in their countries of origin. They take great pride in their customs, traditions, and most importantly their language. However, they do wish to make the United States their new home even if their heart is somewhere else because they understand that there is no future for them where they are from.

In this work, I make contributions to the current literature on immigrant youth. One contribution is the concept of negotiating liminality that exemplifies the process by which adolescent arrivals learn to make sense, understand, navigate, and ultimately respond to the anti-immigrant climate that surrounds their existence. Using this concept as a theoretical lens through which to examine the experiences of adolescent arrivals, I capture the intricacy of their lived experiences as they negotiate their new surroundings. I argue that adolescent

arrivals are stuck in what van Gennep (1960) describes as a liminal stage unable to fully transition to the next stage in life. Unlike members of the 1.5-generation who are also argued to be stuck in a liminal stage due to unresolved citizenship status, participants in this study are stuck in this in-between stage for factors that go beyond citizenship status and which become intensified during these turbulent political times. Each substantive chapter highlights how by negotiating liminality, participants are able to survive the consequences of being adolescent arrivals and in the process learn to create moments and spaces of belonging that come to define to them what incorporation both looks and feels like. In their quest to adjust to the host country adolescent arrivals demonstrate that a sense of belonging is an essential component of incorporation. A sense of belonging for them however, far from resulting from being accepted by American standards, involves creating spaces of belonging with those that share commonalities, accept their conditions, and welcome their differences.

The stories presented in chapter two highlight the international journeys made by adolescent arrivals. Through their narratives we learn that migrating to the United States was not an easy decision to make but one that they came to understand as being their only hope for a better future. As adolescent arrivals, their experiences are not those commonly associated with youth their age. In the process of learning how to come of age, they must also tackle the task of learning to survive. For the adolescent arrivals that migrated to the United States clandestinely, their journeys were marked with hardships and despair. Persistence was a common element participants shared as they never gave up even upon being apprehend, arrested, and transferred to shelters awaiting to be released to a family sponsor. For those that were able to migrate to the United States via legal means, their journeys although less arduous, were still marked with the sadness of leaving behind the

only place they knew to be home to try and make a living in a foreign place that constantly attacks them and their communities.

How do the current political and social contexts influence the integration of adolescent arrivals? This question is examined in great detail in chapter three. In this chapter, I interrogate how adolescent arrivals perceive the current political climate in an attempt to better understand how they learn to make sense of their position and situation as newly arrived members in society. I do this by analyzing their perceptions of the current political state of affairs, of Trump, and of the anti-immigrant discourses. Through the concept of *negotiating liminality*, I argue that adolescent arrivals develop survival strategies that allow them to make sense of what is going on as they navigate their new worlds. Through this concept we learn how adolescent arrivals make sense, come to understand, navigate, and ultimately respond to a political climate aimed at attacking vulnerable populations by instilling fear. As they develop their personal epistemology based on their experiences (Briell, Elen, Verschaffel, and Clarebout 2011), adolescent arrivals become aware that their vulnerability both shapes and influences their experiences in the United States.

In chapter four, the role of language and identity is analyzed in the life of adolescent arrivals. Language as evident in the lived experiences of participants, takes center stage in their lives. This chapter explores how the lack of fluency in English prohibits adolescent arrivals from fully participating in the host country. Language as a proxy for identity is a master status in the lives of participants. A master status becomes such when it overrides other social categories (Hughes 1945). Due to racialization practices not only on race and ethnicity but also on language, participants feel the repercussions of being English Language Learners who only speak Spanish in a time when language practices are heavily policed. The

anti-immigrant rhetoric exacerbated by Trump and his administration has many pushing for an English-only movement, which has resulted in numerous attacks on Spanish-speakers. In addition, this chapter explores how adolescent arrivals perceive their Mexican-American peers. Adolescent arrivals confess that conflict more than anything best describes their relations with Mexican American peers who belittle them for not speaking English among other things.

Finally chapter five addresses the strategies of survival adolescent arrivals resort to as they learn to survive amidst the hostile climate of animosity against immigrants, in particular immigrants of Mexican descent. For participants who prior to migrating to the United States were unaware of the political context that would confront them, they not only had to navigate being an immigrant in a foreign land but they also had to learn how to navigate a harsh and brutal political climate in the making. They arrived in America with high hopes of integrating and in search of a better tomorrow. Once they arrived however, they realized the road toward their hopes and dreams presented a different picture. In learning to navigate this context, they learned how to fend for themselves and make spaces of belonging where they felt welcomed, appreciated, and most importantly wanted. It is in these spaces created that they are able to flourish as they build community with others that share in their similar experiences. Spaces of belonging are a way adolescent arrivals feel incorporated in a society that constantly makes them feel as strangers in a new land.

Together these chapters highlight how adolescent arrivals negotiate their liminal status and learn to accept the consequences of their decisions. As members of the 1.25-generation, their experiences are argued to be most similar to that of members of the first-generation (Rumbaut 2004). However, as evident in this study, adolescent arrivals share many similarities with members of the 1.5-generation due to having to enroll in U.S. schools

upon arriving. Their experiences however, although similar in some respects, are also very different in other aspects. For example, because adolescent arrivals were either born or raised in another country and migrated as adolescents, they do not feel socially or culturally attached to the United States. As adolescents they find themselves in the cusp of being adults and no longer children. Their experiences are therefore heavily marked by their age of migration.

Support Interventions for Adolescent Arrivals

This study provides a glimpse into the lives of one of the most vulnerable populations deeply impacted by the nativist sentiments promoted by the Trump and his administration. Because the data for this study was collected before, during, and after Trump was elected president its timeliness is significant for it allows an examination of the changes this particular population had to endure. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of immigrant experiences. By centering and focusing on the experiences of adolescent arrivals, we can begin to implement, develop, and create policies aimed at improving the conditions and integration of members of this particular immigrant population.

The experiences of members of the 1.25-generation or adolescent arrivals have been for the most part rendered invisible in the literature since their experiences are conflated with that of childhood arrivals who migrated as children under the age of 12. As exemplified in this study there is a great need to examine the modes of incorporation of adolescent arrivals, their adaptation processes, and integration or lack of integration into the United States.

Only by understanding their experiences and listening to their narratives can policy makers and other stakeholders provide support through intervention programs designed to facilitate their transition to the host country.

The 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision invited the cultural integration of undocumented immigrant children by asserting that all children regardless of citizenship status are entitled to a free education within the public school system (Olivas 2012). The lives of these children become complicated, however, as they transition to adulthood. Most of these difficulties result from laws that protect undocumented immigrant children during their K-12 education but deny them opportunities to succeed as adults (Gonzalez 2016). Although adolescent arrivals benefit from the *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court decision, as they are able to enroll in U.S. high schools upon arrival, this is only short-lived. Gleeson and Gonzales (2012) posit that schools shelter undocumented youth and prepare them for a college-bound degree but this is not the case for adolescent arrivals who because of their age of migration are not fully protected by this ruling. As adolescent arrivals they migrate to the United States on the older side of the age spectrum and thus do not get to fully benefit in getting an education. In fact, as previously stated, most are advised to withdraw from high school and enroll in adult classes. Once in an adult education program, they are on their own and due to financial constraints many drop out to join the unskilled labor workforce.

The stories that unfold in this study reveal the need to invest educationally and politically in adolescent arrivals. They migrated to the United States because they saw no other option for prosperity in their countries of origin. They embarked on an international journey, some against their will, for better opportunities. If given the resources and opportunities, adolescent arrivals intend to stay in the United States indeterminately. It is thus imperative that in order to avoid the formation of an underclass, we invest in their futures. Interventions that need to take place to best assist adolescent arrivals can begin at the local level in our educational system. Schools can enhance the programs assisting English Language Learners that enter the United States between the ages of 13 and 18,

because as research shows, it is much more difficult to learn a new language as children get older (Rumbaut 1997). Schools need to become more accommodating to the needs of adolescent arrivals. Diversity trainings could also help instructors better understand the experiences of their students, in particular those whose entry into the United States was marked by apprehensions. Schools need to recognize the crucial role they play in the incorporation processes of adolescent arrivals in order for them to feel motivated to continue seeking opportunities that will not only benefit them but their families both here and in their countries of origin.

Policies outside of the education realm can also help alleviate some of the burdens adolescent arrivals face. Many of the policy changes impacting UAC under the current administration are detrimental for adolescent arrivals. The increased security measures at the southwest border are proving not to deter immigrants from coming to the United States, but instead are only making immigrant journeys more dangerous. There is a dire need for policy makers to understand the experiences of adolescent arrivals. It is only by learning from their narratives that support programs aimed at assisting this vulnerable population can begin to exist. It is my hope that this study can inspire many to advocate for adolescent arrivals. Investing in this population is two-fold—it enables them to more effectively navigate their new life in the United States having the skills and abilities to successfully enter the labor market and their incorporation into the workforce will greatly contribute to improving the U.S. economy.

Juan de León Gutiérrez died in his attempt to make his dreams a reality. As an adolescent arrival, he risked it all in hopes of helping his family survive. As I wrap up this last section of the present work, the news of yet another death involving an adolescent arrival surfaced. Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez, 16 years of age from Guatemala died

in U.S. custody just a little over a week after arriving in the United States. He is the fifth child that dies after being detained at the U.S. border.[15] The tragic deaths of children and adolescents after crossing the border are creating awareness nationwide to the plight of youth who leave their beloved countries of origin and view the United States as a safe haven. We, as a nation, are failing them in the process. But there is still hope. Policies can be changed, created, and implemented. There is much work to be done but one step at a time we can begin to pave the road for adolescent arrivals in their mission towards inclusion and incorporation.

[15] Prior to the death of Hernandez Vasquez, a two-year-old boy died in a hospital in El Paso, Texas after arriving at the U.S. border with a parent and being detained.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Negotiating Liminality