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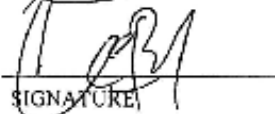
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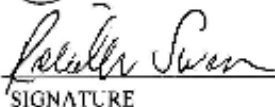
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The Guanac@ Diaspora: Experiences of Salvadorian Identities in Southern California

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	4
DEDICATION.....	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
INTRODUCTION.....	11
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	13
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
Lagrimas de Sangre Durante Los Ochentas.....	16
Mochila Llena de Sueños.....	21
La Vida en la USA.....	23
Parallel Salvadorian Literature.....	26
THEORY.....	27
METHODS.....	30
How do Salvadorian Identities Navigate the United States While Being Guanac@?.....	30
Recruitment.....	32
Semi-Structured Interviews.....	32
Participants.....	34
Data Analysis.....	36
Coding.....	36
Safe Guards.....	36
Reflexivity.....	37
FINDINGS.....	38
“My Mom Has PTSD and She Doesn’t Even Know it”.....	40
“I Always Felt Like Something Completely Different”.....	44
“Como Se Construye La Identidad Guanac@?”.....	47
“Que Significa Ser Salvadoreñ@ Para Ti?”.....	49
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS.....	51
SIGNIFICANCE.....	54
CONCLUSION.....	55
REFERENCES.....	59
APPENDIX I.....	65
APPENDIX II.....	67
APPENDIX III.....	69
APPENDIX IIII.....	70

ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of Salvadorian individuals and how they navigate life in Southern California. An in-depth exploration of the social impacts of the Salvadorian Civil War on both individuals who experienced it in first persona as well as their children who received the second-hand effects. Also, Mexican hegemony was explored in conjunction with dominance and power, which led to the constantly mistaken identity of interviewed participants. The low population count of Salvadorians in Southern California was widely excluded along with the yearning of cultural representation. Self-pride indicated a sense of self-fulfillment through resistance against wrongful labeling from the media and individuals in society. The significance of this study derived from the participants' constant fight to prove their dignity and resiliency.

Key Words: Salvadorian, Salvadoran, El Salvador, Salvadorian Civil War, PTSD, Mexican Hegemony, Mistaken Identity, Central America

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this thesis to my family, without them I am nothing. The sacrifice you have had to go through will be paid back tenfold. Thank you to my parents, Jose and Ana Elvi Ochoa, who crossed 3 borders from El Salvador to the United States to secure a path for their future children, my sister Katheryn and I, their names belong on that degree just as much as mine.

I want to dedicate this thesis to the men and women who shared their experiences with me and allowed for their story to be set in black and white. It is through them that this has been created a reality. Their words have marked places in my heart that I will forever carry and continue to fight every day for. The Salvadorian community is my community and without their participation in this research there is no other possible way for others to learn about us.

I want to dedicate this thesis to my daughter Victoria Belle. I began this program when she was just 3 months old...she has now turned 3 years old. I vividly remember rocking my 1 month old daughter at 2am in the morning and scrolling through my emails when I start sobbing uncontrollably. Tears of joy filled up my eyes because I couldn't believe what I was reading. All I could think about was, we did it mamas! So many times where I sat in frustration because instead of the words flowing it was the tears. So many times when I had to type silently in the dark to prevent you from waking up; it took me back to the place where I once rocked you as a newborn and now you lay beside me as a full grown toddler.

I did not always have the answers, but I just knew I had to keep pushing. I am a single mother, working full time, while pursuing higher education, in other words I had no choice. I thank my family for their endless support over and over again. As mentioned previously, I did not always have the answers, therefore I do not know if it is "correct" to also dedicate this thesis

to myself. I dedicate it to myself because I did not allow for it to break me, I did not allow for it to steal my mental health. My sanity was always placed above anything and I thank everyone and anyone who rooted for me.

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Mami

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Dad

Dad, gracias for all the “*ponte trucha y hechale ganas*” just as I am about to quit and fold. The one person who makes me see the other side of things when I am blind as a bat. You showed me the significance of education and I am thankful. I thank you for showing me how to stand on my own two feet when the whole world is against me. I thank you for showing me the

importance of hard work and not giving in to my commands as a child. I did not understand a lot of things as child, I now have learned to understand why things were how they were.

Hermanita

Kat, my little *hermanita*, gracias for always being my laughter and showing me the meaning of simplicity. I look up to you in so many ways and you don't even know it. I love your strong decision making and wish I had your strength when it came to that. I know you will do great things and I can't wait to witness your glory. Oh and thank you for always being my backup singer on those fun rides to the store.

Mi Colochita

Victoria Belle, my one and only, I see you and I know I could never quit as long as those two beautiful *ojos cafeses* are staring back at me. You're my strength as I get up every morning and wonder how I will make it through another long day. *Mami* loves you and remember you have a whole team behind you. I owe you so many apologies as to why *mami* couldn't play with you, as to why *mami* couldn't take you to the park that one afternoon, or as to why I had to seclude myself on those sunny days. You are my motivation and I owe my life to you. As little as you are and as much as I carry you, you have no idea how much you have lifted me. Thank you for the nights you would stay up waiting for me to get home from school, those Mac and Cheese covered kisses were always my favorite. As a matter a fact you're standing right in front of me as I write this with tears in my eyes, I love you so much *mi colochita*.

Mi Pareja

Ruben Eduardo, my partner, having you present during the hardest times I have encountered meant more than you will ever know. Your calming *voz* on the drives will always be my favorite beat. Having someone beside me who was patient and understood why I was consistently stressed made all the difference. I applaud you for always playing the Devil's advocate (even when I hate it) and pushing me to stick to my true self. You make me want to be better not only for myself, but for others and driving me to see all possible angles in any given situation. Thank you for making sure I was always content, whether it came to food in my belly or iced coffee on stressful mornings...it's all in the details with you and that's my favorite *te adoro corazon bello*.

2016 El OG Cohort

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INTRODUCTION

It seemed to be a normal cloudy Saturday morning when I stumbled across knowledge that will leave me wondering how people walk around with smiles on their faces, but pain in their hearts. It is true what they say, you never know what you'll encounter and some are battling a war we know nothing about. We encounter various amounts of personalities throughout our lifetime, some leave bigger footprints than others. Bianca was born in the country of El Salvador then left at the age of 18, however her memory illustrated the following when questioned about events pertaining to the Salvadorian Civil War:

There was a time that my hometown was attacked...that was one of the scariest experiences of my life. It had to be like 2:00 in the morning that we heard the first bomb explode nearby. So at that moment you know the first thing we had to do is get under the bed and cover ourselves for protection. And suddenly within a minute we started hearing the gunshot like so close to us. The guerrilla had used our home as a shelter to attack from there, I think it took about four hours.

When everything was said and done, when it was over I had to run outside to see my other family members that were living in other houses. And the first thing that I noticed it was one of my neighbors carrying his brother on his shoulder who had been killed. One of the soldiers who had also been shot and killed was just like in a pool of blood and I had to run back to the house and tell my grandma what I'd seen from that experience.

The sound of bombings and gunshots in combination to witnessing pools of blood and bodies slumped upon someone's shoulders was one of the memories engraved in her mind. Just imagining how the invasion of privacy reaches high levels during wars and for Bianca, these high levels of invasion was normality. Surviving all of the odds and still standing to reveal these truths will lead anyone to fight against being wrongfully identified, no matter what you look like or what you sound like. Her experiences make her who she is today and survival is just the beginning of it.

Understanding how your intersectional phenotype and dialect work to place you in box where you don't belong is one of the things that makes you want to crawl out and scream to the world where you need to be placed. With all the cultural knowledge instilled from my *familia* and ancestors, I raise up my head and proudly speak the words "I am not Mexican I am Salvadorian, my parents are from El Salvador not Mexico." I often withheld from providing explanations I was not ready to give; I did not want to waste my energy explaining who I was and how I was different from them. Even after revealing the fact that I did not have a drop of Mexican blood in my body, they still continued to brand me with this nationalist label, there is nothing wrong with being Mexican, but that is not who I am.

There is no anger in my body when being confused for a Mexican person; the anger is guided in different directions, which relate to the confusion of often being labeled otherwise. Growing up Salvadorian in San Diego County is one of the aspects of my life which I hold to a high degree. The latter begs the question, how is it that I, like other Salvadorian folk, cannot relate to many of the Mexican-dominant group in my community? How is the constant pressure to compromise my Salvadorian identity a factor that promotes my resistance against one-dimensional notion that we are all the same? When people learn that I am of Salvadorian descent, people usually reply, "Are you from La Mara Salvatrucha¹?" Nevertheless, my response remains the same and the eye-rolling has become stronger. My cultural pride is something that I have encountered with other Salvadorians, the connection to the culture is carried through our blood. I will never back down as to who I am despite the negative connotation my ethnicity carries. My daughter has both Salvadorian and Mexican blood flowing through her veins and

¹ Mara Salvatrucha: Also known as MS-13, is an international street gang which originated in Los Angeles, CA during the 1980s predominantly made up of Salvadorian youth.

heart. As the mother of a daughter with mixed cultures, her upbringing will be just as similar to mine and her embodiment will remain a source of contentious politics.

The barriers that Salvadorians experience derive from the perception of others and how xenophobic ideologies mistreat outsiders. The 2016 presidential election held a stronger wall against those labeled as the “others” and enabled the discrimination against Salvadorians. The barriers faced by Salvadorian folk circulate around immigration, tribalization, and gang member branding; these are constant torments that are battled day-after-day. I stand beside my Salvadorian community because although there is a degree with my name on it, my skin is still brown and the fight continues. Being mistaken for Mexican is a struggle, which I faced growing up, the struggle now has evolved. Instead of fighting off the imagined Mexican identity on my forehead, I now have to fight off the dehumanizing label of animal, leaching immigrant, and Mara Salvatrucha gang member. My family immigrated to the United States with high hopes for their future children and as a scholar I am here to make the experiences faced with the Salvadorian diaspora visible by looking at Southern California as a case study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

My family is from El Salvador, the smallest country in Central America located between Guatemala and Honduras. There are 6.4 million people in El Salvador, a country known for its Pacific Ocean beaches, delicious food, and culture. The media holds a different point of view when El Salvador becomes a discussion topic. The ideology of gangs and violence permeates what they consider newsworthy, but no mentions about the remarkable things about El Salvador. The media’s gross misrepresentation of Salvadorian identity taints how society views the community by criminalizing the entire nation and population as a whole, does the, “bad hombre anyone?” The media depicts vivid images of savagery, whether it’s the threatening gang member

with facial tattoos or the job stealing welfare-leaching immigrant. Being branded with these pejorative labels creates serious social ramifications, while spoiling the way that Salvadorians may begin to view themselves as a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is no positive reason as to why a person who identifies as Salvadorian should hide who they are to accommodate our judgmental society. El Salvador is not a country that breeds gang members as the media outlets suggests, in fact, MS-13 was created in the United States as refugees were often alienated by the nation and Mexicans.

The Salvadorian Civil War pushed many Salvadorians to seek refuge in other nations, the national moral panic stemmed from people seeing their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters killed one by one. Escaping the war is the only thing, which seemed rational; the dream outweighed the risk of participating in the migration journey into the U.S. Fleeing a country as a refugee during violent times only to be seen as threat because you come from a certain country with an imaginary yellow caution tape around its perimeter, weighs heavily on those seeking asylum (President Trump, 2018). The Salvadorian Civil War produced terror to the people who witnessed the bombing and murders, which promoted the courage to survive these atrocities by migrating north. Once Salvadorians arrived to the United States they were portrayed as “economic immigrants,” instead of refugees seeking safety from the war (Machuca, 2010). Being tormented on both sides of the border is not the life anyone anticipates, so why is it acceptable to discriminate against those seeking a better life due to their country of origin? The experience of traumatic events where violence was and is still seen as the answer enables others to easily create a false perception of “animals” towards Salvadorian identities.

Being generalized as a whole in Southern California forces Salvadorians to navigate through the tribalization² of being portrayed as Mexican. Even the subtle changing the name of a pupusa³ to gordita establishes the hegemonic Mexican dominance. Salvadorians are being categorized as a whole due to checking off all the same boxes which include the physical traits of being Latinx along with speaking the similar language. The creation of an outer layer on Salvadorian identities prompts others to essentialize the entire culture by erasing cultural perspectives central to Salvadorians, as well as the elimination of knowledge. Why should certain cultures be put on the back burner to conform to other's normalcy? Pushing through the stereotype that all LatinXs are Mexican motivates Salvadorians to establish their separate identities. Being compared to another Latin American country strips the richness others countries have to offer and by over-generalizing creates a label misleading their identity.

Gang involvement is a common characteristic attributed to those belonging to the Salvadorian community. The expansion of gangs particularly La Mara Salvatrucha is one which began in Los Angeles. The formation of MS-13 took place in the streets of Los Angeles, California during the 1980s due to the marginalizing of Salvadorian individuals (Decesare 2001). The common misconception of El Salvador being the mass producer of gang members is incorrect, which often promotes the demonization of Salvadorians. The misrepresentation of identities causes harmful impacts on the lives that live in these bodies. Receiving mistreatment on behalf of this label that was slapped on by others who may not comprehend the effects they are causing relates to how Salvadorian identities are mistakenly characterized on a national level. The moral panic caused by the media perpetuates the image of a violent gang member when the

² Tribalization: The act of making or becoming a single unit.

³ Pupusa: A traditional Salvadorian dish.

word “El Salvador” emerges as a discussion item. The violent gang member who murders and steals, but does not disclose the accomplishments Salvadorians have achieved. In the literature to follow, I will be focusing on the U.S intervention in El Salvador, memory recollection of El Salvador, and the lives of Salvadorian identities now residing in the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For years, the country of El Salvador has dealt with numerous amounts of issues which have changed the lives of the majority of the population. Some issues drove people to leave the country while searching for peace and live with a lifetime of sorrow. Throughout this section, I discuss the country’s history of traumatic events during the 1980s, the lives of Salvadorians in the United States/deportation, dynamics in family relationships, and refugees. Learning about the history leads us to understand the trauma endured by the population. Understanding the trauma will assist in comprehending the migration to the United States. When combining the comprehension of trauma and migration, the Salvadorian identity becomes a survival mechanism used for coping.

Lagrimas de Sangre Durante Los Ochentas

Salvadorian Civil War

The Salvadorian Civil War was one of the bloodiest and long lasting tragedies the country endured. The war broke up families by separating fathers, mothers and their children. The war-related deaths totaled over 75,000 people and lasted 12 years from 1980 to 1992, costing approximately \$4.5 billion (McKinney, 2015). The United States provided foreign aid along with organization, training of elite military units (school of the Americas), supported through sophisticated weaponry, and used its influence to guide the political fortunes of El Salvador (D’Haeseleer, 2017). The majority of the people killed during the Salvadorian Civil

War were women and children; in some cases the same children were forced to fight in combat. The United States' purpose behind the influence and aid directed towards the civil war in El Salvador was to prevent the full control from either side of the government, which during the time were the left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary death squads.

The country was divided on which side was the correct one of the two; one side was and continues to fight for the well-being of the people while the other seeks for economic wellness of the elite. During the war, aid was being provided to displace civilians from war zones in El Salvador, a number of Salvadorian officials viewed the food and resettlement programs funded by the U.S. as a counterinsurgency tactic rather than a humanitarian gesture (Quan, 2005). The term counterinsurgency is defined as military or political action taken to suppress the activities of guerrillas or revolutionaries. The main goal of the right-wing agenda was to maintain control over the poor population to be able to govern the country freely. When the guerrillas (left-wing) rebelled against the military, war was inevitable. The Salvadorian Civil War is noted as one of the most gruesome carried out wars in history. A survivor of the war describes lakes of blood on the streets where people were tortured and slaughtered with knives like animals (Coutin, 1999). Another survivor vividly recites how her cousin was abducted by soldiers who broke his arms behind him, gouged out his eyes, broke his fingers one by one, skinned his head, then finalizing his death by slitting his throat and cutting out his tongue (Coutin, 1999). The violence that corrupted the country weighed heavily on the bystanders who lived with the constant fear of death knocking at their door.

Military death squads began to put the lives of civilians in danger, trying to hold the reigns of a country at the expense of young innocent lives. In order to survive the veil of death some civilians would hide out and sleep in *el monte*, the "wild," to avoid being captured by the

death squads (Anker, 1992). The military was heavily trained and organized by the United States in hopes to overturn the guerrillas who were composed of predominantly lower class civilians. In 1979, the elite population who represented the 1 percent of the Salvadorian population owned 77.3 percent of the land, the other 99.15 percent held the remainder of the 22.7 percent, resulting in 80 percent of the country living in extreme poverty and 60 percent not earning enough to provide a minimum diet for their families (Read, 2002). The individuals whose life depended on joining the military due to extreme poverty were manipulated to identify with the ideologies that went against everything they believed in. Evolving into a killing machine is not something one envisions growing up, but at an early age the mindset of these young innocent lives are molded in a corrupt manner.

The identity greatly shifts not solely depending on the work being performed, but the setting in which it is conducted. An eight-year old girl performing agriculture work on a farm owned by a Salvadorian elite cannot compare her life to another eight-year old girl who performs the same agriculture work for her family farm (Read, 2002). The treatment received on behalf of these two eight-year old girls is not identical which results in different characteristics being embodied from each of them. Their identity is quickly shifted due to the dynamic in which the work is being performed, this is also the case for the young children who are forced into militarization due to poverty levels. Having to earn a living during the civil war in El Salvador during the 1980s was heavily influenced by the war itself due to the measures each person had to take in order to survive the harsh realities. The identity of the child who was forcibly recruited to fight by the military, lost their innocence when the blood of other innocent civilians was shed. The trauma related experiences dealt by both sides of the spectrum created an identity for both by the actions taken and applied. As if the commence of the civil war and the disruption of lives

was not devastating enough, there was a massacre in the country's history that kept the blood flowing one particular warm December.

El Mozote Massacre

During the time of the Salvadorian Civil War another tragedy hit the country of El Salvador on December 11th, 1981. *El Masacre de El Mozote* also known as El Mozote Massacre was a military-driven heinous act that wiped nearly the entire town of El Mozote, a small town in the department of Morazan (Woodward, 1997). Through radio messages, awareness spread by the population in the village, they were warned that everyone in the area would be killed; the way to escape was to leave the town or barricade themselves within their homes. The killings were carried out as cruel and inhumane to all the town's civilians. The order was made by the Immediate Response Infantry Battalion of Atlacatl also known as BIRI which was composed of freshly trained mercenaries by the U.S. Special Forces instructors (Stanley, 1996). Men and women were separated then tortured and killed by the military, the goal was to leave no survivors. The method of leaving no survivors in the town stemmed from the ideology that there would be no supporters for the opposing team, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (guerrillas). The FMLN was composed of 5 leftist guerrilla organizations with only one goal in mind, which was and continues to protect the rights of the low-income population.

Rufina Amaya, one of the few survivors, reported to the government of the actions of the soldiers, one of the actions being separating the men and women, then raping the women villagers before killing them (Danner, 1994). One of the differences between the Salvadorian Army and the guerrillas was how the raping of women was highly unacceptable to the guerrillas and they took action (executed) if one of their own ever committed the crime of rape. Most of the recruiters of the FMLN during the El Mozote Massacre were women in which their main benefit

in joining their team meant the protection of women including rape within their camps (Cohen, 2016). Women were at a disadvantage when living as civilians in El Salvador not only because they were sexually abused, but also some had to witness the brutal killing of their kids. The soldiers tortured and killed even the youngest of the village, innocent newborn babies.

On December 10th, 1981 the soldiers arrived to the village of approximately 20 houses and ordered everyone out of their homes to lie face down in an open area. The men and women were searched and questioned about the guerrillas, then told to go back into their homes and lock themselves inside, if not they would be shot (Scott, 2011). The following morning, the 11th of December, the soldiers reassembled the population and separated them in groups of men, women, and children. The men were taken to a different location where they were interrogated, tortured, and then executed; the women were separated from their children at noon and machine-gunned down; finally the children who had been locked in a convent were machine-gunned through the windows (Scott, 2011). The ideology to leave absolutely no living person behind was highly enforced. After the death squads examined the entire population, the soldiers would set the buildings on fire to confirm no one made it out alive. Nearly wiping the entire population from existence resides in the memory of the few survivors and the soldiers who were ordered to carry out *Operacion Rescate*.

The trauma continues to live through the years by the stories told on behalf of those who experienced these tragedies. As described by Van der Veer, the experience of loss may eventually lead to feelings of overwhelming grief (Van der Veer, 1992). The grief never leaves the mind of the individuals who endured the years of violence caused by a war, who later than have to face reality in a different environment. The PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) symptoms exhibited by Salvadorian refugees such as hyper-vigilance, mistrust, and paranoid

behaviors are not signs of persecution delirium characterized by anxiety, but more regarding the realistic response to the situations lived in prior to migration which are vital for their survival (Martin-Baro, 1996). Escaping the violence as refugees is not unfamiliar for the Salvadorian community seeking salvation. The action of migrating to a different country is different for everyone, some carry the recollection of events while others do not.

Mochila Llena de Sueños

Migrating With a Memory

Leaving a country behind at an age when memory plays a major role while growing up is difficult for an individual whose recollection is at capacity with horrific images and events. The violence that took place in El Salvador during the 1980s and early 1990s led several people to flee north in search for safety. A case study conducted by Carranza (2008) affirms:

Pues yo lo que hago es encomendarlos al Señor porque yo se que ellos handan penando , pero yo no puedo hacer nada por ellos entonces yo despues trato de [Whenever I think of them I ask God to take care of them because I know they are not in peace and then I try to] not think about them. For me it is part of life you know. Yeah, I lived through a war and saw many horrible things; so what? Yeah, the memories are there but as I said, I just don't think about it. I try to go on with life like if those [horrible] things did not happen.

The woman expressed how she pleads to God for them because she believes they still roam among the living meaning they are not resting in peace. The woman's 4 brothers who wished to remain anonymous, were mutilated and placed on wood stakes for public display. *No pensar* (do not think) is a coping mechanism used among the Salvadorian community who faced repeated traumatic events. *No pensar* involves the acknowledgement of the loss, accepts the loss, then a cognitive shift that allows them to continue with their daily activities (Carranza, 2008). The coping mechanism is not to forget the tragedies that cloud their mind, but instead shift their attention to other thoughts. They acknowledge the horrific memories, but steer to the positive side of knowing they escaped the violence. Leaving a country later during a stage of your life

where remembering things is much easier, makes it more difficult to live your life in the years to come. Those who left El Salvador traveled thousands of miles with many memories installed in their minds. If they were to return, they could compare and contrast, here and there; but what occurs to who those who return back *home* with nothing but a birth certificate stamped with the El Salvador seal.

Returning With No Recollection

After migrating north in hopes to escape the war, some immigrants are faced with deportation and the impact of the effect. When people migrate to a different country at a young age and spend their life growing up somewhere aside from their native land, the new country becomes their new home. The reason for the transnational migration during the 1980s was caused by the violence of the war. After the young immigrants face deportation, they are placed back in their native land where they now deal with another type of war, *las maras* (Gutierrez, 2009). The youth who migrate to the United States at an early age do not have a recollection of the war let alone the country itself.

The cause of the violence has shifted from war to the violence between rival gangs, *La Mara Salvatrucha* and *Calle 18*. According to the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) there is evidence that the gangs gained access to weapons and explosives left behind from the civil war which continues to place El Salvador as one of the countries with the highest homicide rate at 60.07 for 100,000 habitants as of 2017 (El Salvador 2018 Crime & Safety Report 2018). Being in a space where bombings and stray bullets are not a salient feature of their lives, however, being able to be in the work force in the United States meant being to provide for family members, through remittances, back home in El Salvador. Those who managed to escape the political violence during the 80s to early 1990s were now sustaining the Salvadorian

economy through the remittance distributed to family members (Menjivar, 1998). Once deported, there are two disadvantages on both sides of the spectrum. The disadvantages weigh on the deportee for being thrown back into a place where they have no recollection of as well as the family members who depended on the remittance sent.

My Innocence Remained

Some of those who were victims of the violent effects of the war were not as fortunate to seek asylum. Those who remained in El Salvador have vague memories of the mass terror; some questioned the events which surrounded their memory while others used other forms of freedom. Having a television in El Salvador during the 1980s held a high significance in the community. Some children escaped the memory of violence through television if they had the means or if someone on their block invited them to join them. One of the children mentioned how she was so naive about soap operas and how she believed that was really happening at the same exact time (Alarcon, 2014). The innocence in the children of the war leaves them skeptical of what in reality occurred during the troubling times faced in the past. Until recently, the civil war was omitted from text books meaning information from the war was not accessible through education and had to be sought-after through other forms of media (Alarcon, 2014). By disabling the access to information, the community is left to resort to storytelling and the Internet. However, if the internet is not within their means of accessibility, they rely on the elders' recollection of their experiences as survivors of the terror. The age in which the individual happened to be during the civil war plays a factor in how they continue to navigate the realms of life. Their identity is born through every step taken and every situation encountered.

La Vida en la USA

Different Traits in Different States

The Salvadorian families who were fortunate enough to make it to the United States, whether documented or undocumented began to live a different life than the one lived in El Salvador. Those who immigrated here as a family describe life as more liberal, in a case study conducted by Mahler (1999), Margarita Flores, a Salvadorian immigrant expresses:

There (El Salvador), the man is in charge and the wife has to do what her husband says. Even today this is the custom. Here [in the United States] no. Here I work, I earn money, and I help him pay the expenses as much as I can, but I do with my money what I want. I administer my money, not [my husband]. We help each other and share the expenses. But I administer my own money. It's different in El Salvador because there the husband gives the wife the money. And if the husband says it's okay to buy a dress then [the wife] buys it, but if it is too expensive then he won't let her. Here women are different. They're more liberal.

The male role does not shift in which he is still the main provider in the family, the shift occurs among women. Women have obtained freedom not only from the violence, but also are in control of their earnings. My family is an example of this finding, my parents both work, however my father is the main provider and my mother is free to do what she desires with her income. Women have gained a new trait to their identity which have had not been possible in the native land.

The life of those who migrated north led a life of work and low wages, however the difference was held within not having to fear for their life day in and day out. The Salvadorian individual proclaims the attribute of a diligent hard worker, their roots of identity have been embedded in being part of the working class (Baker-Cristales, 2004). Their life in the United States is not glamorized through luxuries, but instead lodged with pride, a sense of Salvadoriness. In order to understand the presence of the Salvadorian community and the Salvadorian identities constructed in the United States, we must first deconstruct the historical events that led those individuals to migrate in different directions initially.

Trying to build a heaven while the world is still spinning: Refugees in the United States

Leaving a whole life behind is not the easiest of things to do. Many people who now reside in the United States were once fleeing the harsh conditions of their own countries. El Salvador is the focus of this research however, Vietnam and Cambodia both endured the same route to the United States. Similar to Salvadorian refugees, Vietnamese refugees also fled from their home country as the result of their disastrous war. The experience for Vietnamese refugees economically declined, individuals who were once professionals in their home country were now experiencing unemployment and dependency on the American Welfare system (Kelly, 1986). There are refugees who were lawyers, educators, and doctors in their home countries, but now have to take low paying jobs because their degrees and certifications are not credited in the United States. It is incredibly earth shattering to have to leave everything behind only to continue to struggle in an unknown world.

Although seeking haven may seem like the solution to all issues faced by refugees, there are some problems which they cannot run from. The society of Cambodia is traumatized due to the conflict endured. There are high levels of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among refugees, however there is a widespread and lasting trauma in those who did not have the opportunity to leave the country which has led to a 13.7% of attempted suicide (Margolis, 2007). When war occurs, trauma is one of the main issues the society is left with. They are left to search for answers themselves leading them to drastic measures. Kang San, a survivor vividly describes how it feels to remember the violence (Margolis, 2007):

When we talk about this, about the killing...it makes people remember the time when they were living, the time when they lost their sibling, lost their father, their husband, and then they may not be able to sleep properly.

Memories are deeply penetrated within the minds of these people and will never be forgotten. Triggers will always be present which will take them back to the place of paralyzing fear and violence. How does this benefit these individuals? These people whether living in their country or the United States will carry war testimonies within them and will continue to be survivors for the rest of their lives.

Parallel Salvadorian Literature

Research from past literature is closely related to the research which I have decided to explore. The Salvadorian identity can be defined by others in various ways. According to Beth Baker-Cristales, the wave of migration heightened following the Salvadorian civil war hoping to escape the violence and repressions (Baker-Cristales, 2004). She explains how many Salvadorians living in the United States struggled with the concept of being “Latino” and aligning themselves with others who also spoke Spanish, but in other instances distinguished themselves as solely Salvadorian (Baker-Cristales, 2004). In the United States, not only do Salvadorians have to battle against class, but also ethnicity issues and proving their *Salvadorness* unlike in El Salvador where the main issue is the battle of class (rich vs poor). The war left pain and sorrow, but it also left some with PTSD as Coutin highlights in her research. Milda Escobar, returned back to El Salvador, but was not able to reenter the United State due to legal issues. While being in El Salvador, she recalls how her family would attend FMLN meeting and how feeling scared from seeing people with weapons led her to develop a defense mechanism. This defense mechanism was executed by crossing her eyes and having the people with weapons believe she couldn't see very well to avoid being taken (Coutin, 2011). Escobar later expresses how although the war was in the past, it still was very present in her life. She began to

experience awful nightmares and thoughts of self-hatred which led to hate towards everyone else; she concluded that she had PTSD.

Both of these scholars shared related research to my area of study. They expressed how their identity is important to address and avoid the misrepresentation of the Salvadorian culture. One study recognizes the conflict of identity around other Spanish speaking individuals while the other study highlights the impact of PTSD. The participants in their study endured internal hardships which shaped their lives and for that pertaining reason the elimination of their identity cannot continue. By creating additional information revolving the Salvadorian community, the rest of the world can learn why and how identity is crucial.

The literature review demonstrates why the composition of the Salvadorian identities is significant. Due to the lives of these people being highly impacted from the violence of the war their identity cannot continue to be mistaken. Light has to be shed upon this community to end the wrongful labeling. Trauma cannot be forgotten and society needs to address this pain to those wrongfully targeted. The history which weighs heavily upon the shoulders of Salvadorians needs to be relieved through healing, which can only be done by bringing light to the issues pressing.

THEORY

The United States has played a vital role in the ruling of several countries with El Salvador being one of them. They provided ways in which they believed the country would be more successful in their opinion when in reality they created chaos then left El Salvador to clean up the mess. The people were highly affected by the U.S. intervention which led them to seek safety in other places, the main one being the United States. After leaving the pain and sorrow in El Salvador they are now in a new country trying to figure out who in reality they are in addition to the perceptions others have of them. The following two theories, the Global Capitalism

Theory and the Looking Glass-Self Theory describe in depth how the correlation between them results in the construction of the Salvadorian identity.

On a macro-level, there were several occasions in which the country of El Salvador was under the microscope and the leadership was working as a puppet for the United States of America. The strings attached were associated to the aid provided in the wars and the product being imported into the U.S. from El Salvador. Capitalism is an economic system in which the capital goods are privately owned, the production is based on a supply and demand, and the government has secondary power. The Global Capitalism Theory is similar, the difference is that global capitalism crosses borders and operates nationwide. Central America was used for its fruits and vegetables, by having the expansion of international markets in standardized products it served to increase the proletariat population amongst the labor aspect (Kohl, 2009). When the majority of the population is working class, it is easier to manipulate and control a country without any opposition. The product can be produced at a lower cost in respect to labor, therefore it is in the company owner's best interest to conduct business internationally.

The intervention caused in El Salvador from the United States created an astronomical series of events that pushed people away from their homes one of them being the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The United States CAFTA to El Salvador, which later went into effect in 2006. CAFTA, is the expansion of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) to Central American countries which allows for a free-trade zone with the elimination of tariffs for the course of 15 years. CAFTA portrayed both advantages and disadvantages within its agreement. A few advantages of CAFTA was the eliminations of tariffs and creation of jobs resulting in the possibility for economic stability (Beehner, 2015). Although the U.S. government believed there was only advantages, the agreement held disadvantages as

well. CAFTA holds a “rule of origin” clause stating 90% of the apparel produced in Central America must use fabric that originated from the United States in addition to the oppositions to CAFTA, healthcare workers feared being outsourced if their field became privatized (Beehner, 2015). The country was divided on whether this agreement would benefit or cause greater harm than it was already experiencing. With all the events which shaped El Salvador, it not only shaped the country as a whole, but the individual lives of the population.

On a micro-level, the perception one has about themselves differs than the one surrounding the mind of someone who encounters them. There are several factors that go into effect when coming to the epiphany of who you are in reality. The Looking Glass-Self Theory describes how people view themselves according to how others view them, as well as how people they interact with influence the way they think about themselves (Jacobs, 2012). The idea and perception an individual has over someone highly influences the way in which a person may go about doing something, for example if a teacher has a positive perception about a student, the student according to the theory will be influenced to think highly of himself or herself leading to being more successful academically. The concept of the Looking Glass Self Theory is not something we are born with, but instead is something we acquire through the interactions with others (Zhao, 2005). We are not naturally built to think negatively about ourselves however, the opinions others have about ourselves creates a perception that influences our own perception.

Historically, Salvadorians have had perceptions built upon them both positive and negative. The positive image, which circulates the Salvadorian identity, is based on the fact that they are hardworking-oriented people who are not afraid to work as previously stated by Magdalena (Hallett, 2012). The work ethic described is something employers comment on regarding their LatinX employees. When seen as a contribution rather than a leaching immigrant

as the media portrays, the morale inside the Salvadorian increases and provides a positive impact for the larger community. The negative perceptions about oneself derives from the common misconception that every Salvadorian is a gang member or immigrant waiting for an economic opportunity to prosper. I can speak on behalf of my family; I am a first generation college graduate who does not fit the common stereotype for Salvadorian person. My actions were influenced by the help and guidance of positive interactions held by myself and society (all encounters). The negative perceptions were also a factor in my upbringing and desire to prosper...I could never let them win.

Both of the theories discussed how they simultaneously work together to create what is known to be the Salvadorian identity. The macro-level issue helps us understand the bigger picture of why Salvadorians may carry trauma and pain while on the micro-level it shows us how they perceive themselves after the trauma. Without the macro-level issues there would not have been micro-level problems. The interventions caused by the United States flipped the country upside down leaving people with only one resource which is survival; the Salvadorian identity was built upon blood, tears, and *sobrevivencia*⁴.

METHODS

How do Salvadorian Identities Navigate the United States While Being Guanac@?

Here I am, a young Salvadorian girl living in Southern California. One sunny day as a group of my classmates and I gathered around the jungle gym, they exchanged a dialect which included the lexicon words “Mexican, Chicano, and Latino.” From all the exchanged words, the only identity politic I could identify with was Latina, a panethnicity, but I wondered how could I

⁴ Sobrevivencia: Survival

best describe to them who I was, or what my ethnic identity was at such a young age without receiving strange looks and push backs? With my olive skin, light brown frizzy hair, and thick eyebrows I am often labeled as a *Mexicana*. You have no idea how tough it was to refrain from my disapproving eye-rolling gestures when they misrepresented my identity. Which is why for this study, I used a qualitative research design to bring awareness to the experiences of members of the Salvadorian community. By using the qualitative research method, we can document and explore the experiences in other individuals or groups ascribed to a social issue (Cresswell, 2013). The qualitative research method allows us to interact with people who are facing a social problem. Through the qualitative method, questions, surveys, interviews, and observations could be done to come to an understanding of insight on their life. The questions administered to the participants in this study were open-ended questions that allowed for extra follow up questions to be involved which allowed for a broader understanding.

The ideal candidate for my study was a person who identified as a Salvadorian and was 18 years or older. The public's ideology and misrepresentation on the Salvadorian community in the United States shaped the questions used in this research. I conducted a total of 10 face-to-face interviews, which ran for approximately 60 minutes. Our face-to-face interaction allowed me to read the participants' non-verbal communication, such as body language. The body language demonstrates expressions which cannot be displayed through the methods of surveys. I asked questions about their lives growing up as a Salvadorian individual, I also inquired whether they were born in El Salvador or not. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my research study since it involved human subjects and sensitive material, at the core I needed to make sure my participant's anonymity was protected. Due to the sensitivity of the information, I informed my interviewees that all responses will be confidential and names and locations will be

changed. All of the data was stored in an encrypted file on a password-protected computer. My advisor and I were the only persons permitted to access these files. The interviews were audio-recorded to allow for accuracy in the data collection. After the transcribing the raw data, the information was destroyed. The checked off information sheet forms will be kept for approximately 3 years in a locked safe in my advisor's office. After this time has been completed all forms will be paper shredded.

Recruitment

This study incorporated individuals who identified with being Salvadorian. For this study, the primary type of recruitment was by making a flyer and posting it on social media, which in this case was Facebook. The flyer included a few indications, and if the individual believed they fit the description of the Salvadorian identity needed for the study, they were encouraged to follow the instructions to meet with me. I allowed for my social media post on Facebook to be shared to allow for participants who do not attend CSUSM or are not in my network an opportunity to participate in the study. I also encouraged my participants to inform their friends or relatives who they believe would be interested in participating in the study to contact me. This form of participant recruitment is called, snowball-sampling, which is defined as the technique where gathering research subjects through the identification of the initial subject who is used in the study (Lewis 2004). A couple of participants shared their experience with other fellow Salvadorians who fit the criteria and believed they would be interested in participating. While snowball sampling may be beneficial, there are limitations within this method. One of the disadvantages of snowball sampling is the researcher having no control over the sampling and the distribution of population.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The use of social media allowed people outside of my social networks to reach me via Facebook. Interested participants contacted me from the shared post and stated how they were eager to learn more about what my study entailed. Once the connection was developed, I informed them that I will email them the information with all the requisite information they may need regarding the research. Ninety percent of participants wanted to continue with the research project, which left me with a 10% margin of folk that lost interest. Although the majority of participants were gathered via social media, 3 of the participants were invited to participate via snowball sampling strategy. Due to the inconvenience of location and proximity, 6 out of the 10 interviews were conducted through video calls. The calls were scheduled at a date and time that worked best for the participants. Most of the participants that were not currently in the area opted for the video call. Nothing compares to face-to-face interaction because for example if the participant was constantly tapping their foot giving off a sense of nervousness, that is something I would not be able to pick up on a video call. The longest interview ran for approximately one hour, however, the interviews averaged approximately 30-minutes in length. As previously stated, the information sheet was given to participants before the interview began and we discussed any issues before the interviews began.

The interview consisted of 23 questions that were separated between 2 subsections, which were topics related to El Salvador, and self-identity. All questions were generally asked in chronological order, except for those that required a follow-up questions depending on the respondents' answers. After completing the questionnaire, I asked participants if they would like to share additional information with me, which was not included in the interview schedule; the audio recording would then come to an end with that closing statement. Most of the participants did not have additional information they wished to add aside from the questions asked.

The interviews were conducted in two ways which was based off if they were able to personally meet or not. Some participants stated they had personal reasons as to why it would be easier to do a video call as oppose to interacting in a face-to-face interview. If a video call was chosen, the video call was made on my laptop and then recorded on a password protected cellular phone. Due to not meeting in person, the information sheet was still emailed prior to the digital encounter and asked to send me an email which stated they gave consent to being audio recorded during the interview. If the interview was conducted in a face-to-face setting, participants were emailed the information sheet prior to the interview. When the interview took place at a location and time of their convenience, two copies of information sheet were brought to the interview. One of the copies of the information sheet was where they gave consent (by checking the box or signing if they preferred) and the other copy was for them to keep for their reference. Once the interviews were concluded I provided each participant with a gift card as an incentive for taking the time to participate in my study. If the interview was digitally recorded, the gift card was emailed directly to the participant and once again thanked for their time.

Participants

The participants in my study possessed a mixture of different traits. 50% of the participants were born in El Salvador and 60% identified as full Salvadorian. The participants who decided to complete this study were eager to have something they could connect to and wanted to know more about it almost immediately. The participants asked what drove me to do this study and I explained how more research needed to be available to prove our representation. One participant stated how they believed it was significant to know more about the traumas of El Salvador and how more schools should include it in the curriculum taught. Just as the participants took away from the study, I gained more information to help supplement my

research. In the following chart, I have categorized the participants by their pseudonym, place of birth, and ethnic identity.

Participant	Place of Birth	Ethnic Identity	Age Group
George	El Salvador	Salvadorian	40-50 Years Old
Carmen	USA	Salvadorian/Mexican	20-30 Years Old
Angela	El Salvador	Salvadorian	40-50 Years Old
Camila	USA	Salvadorian	20-30 Years Old
Adriana	El Salvador	Salvadorian	40-50 Years Old
Bianca	El Salvador	Salvadorian	30-40 Years Old
Isabella	USA	Salvadorian/Guatemalan	30-40 Years Old
Andrea	USA	Salvadorian/White	20-30 Years Old
Linda	El Salvador	Salvadorian	40-50 Years Old
Stephanie	USA	Salvadorian/Mexican	20-30 Years Old

Figure 1: Table of participants

Data Analysis

The interview process from connecting with participants to obtaining the audio-recorded interview took time to complete. The system used to transcribe the interviews was Trint, which is an online automated transcription service that facilitated the transcription process. The files were uploaded using the pseudonym assigned to the participant and transcribed automatically within a few minutes. After Trint transcribed the interviews, I reviewed them for accuracy and created edits to errors. Listening to the audio recordings repeatedly allowed for accuracy and elimination of lost narratives. Once the interviews were transcribed, and coded I identified various themes. The following four themes emerged from this work: war testimonies, Mexican hegemony, identity construction, and self-Salvadorian pride.

Coding

After transcribing, I coded all of the data collected using in vivo coding and emotion coding. Both of these coding methods helped identify the themes presented in my research and facilitated the analysis process. The in vivo coding was used to find themes throughout my data by identifying certain words or phrases which continuously highlighted throughout the interviews. The reason for using in vivo coding is due to the fact that it maintains the integrity of the narrative told by the interviewee. Emotion coding was the second coding method used in my process to identify themes. The emotion coding method is significant in my research because of the heavy topics which were demonstrated in the interview questions. Emotion coding allowed me to identify emotions manifested on behalf of my participants. The two coding tools both allowed for the narrative of my participants to remain whole and maintain its richness.

Safe Guards

The safety of the participants is the main focus of the study, and I did not allow any space for discrimination. I was highly considerate to avoid the misinterpretation of the interviews as one that will wrongfully label them. Protection of identity was provided to the participants to eliminate the possibility of linking them to the study in any manner. Information sheet forms were administered to the participants before the start of the interview process through email which stated the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalties. Due to the possibility of any of the participants being undocumented, verbal consent was provided to protect the individual to any linkage to the study. The names of the participants were changed to a different name (pseudonym) or were given a choice to remain anonymous. An information sheet was distributed stating they had the right to refuse any question or end the survey whenever they felt they no longer wanted to continue without consequence. The participants decided if they wanted to sign or mark the box on the information sheet acknowledging what the study entailed and by signing or marking the box they agreed to proceed on forward. In the information sheet, it stated the interviews will be recorded and that is where their “pseudonym” will be disclosed. All audio files were erased when transcriptions were completed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my password protected computer once the research has been submitted to the library. My main priority is to protect the identity and confidentiality of my participants. Once again, I emphasized how they are able to stop the interview at any time if they do not feel comfortable continuing.

Reflexivity

This study stems from the troubles encountered while growing up Salvadorian in Southern California. From the position that I stand behind, I am both an insider and outsider. I am an insider throughout this research due to being a member of the Salvadorian community. I

was raised in a traditional Salvadorian home that portrayed similar customs, which both of my parents experienced during their childhood. I grew up listening to the oral traditions my parents carried with them throughout the years, I sensed their pain during the silent moments. However, I am also an outsider just by the fact that I am pursuing this research in higher education. My privilege stands behind my education, my citizenship, and my light phenotype. Not everyone shared the same upbringing as I nor am I oblivious of the privileges I hold in my possession. I will emphasize that I am there to hear their point of view. Being a part of the Salvadorian community allowed for the comfort level of my participants to increase due to the fact that we shared a similar cultural background. With my native language being Spanish, a couple of my participants were able to be included in the study which otherwise would not have been possible if I was not bilingual. I did not permit for my participants to think the study

When an individual conducting the interviews belongs and can connect to the participants it brings a different atmosphere to the conversation. There were moments when the participants would pause halfway through their response because they would forget certain names of events and would look at me for the answer. I would look at them and respond with a smile, their reciprocated smile confirmed that they knew I knew what they were thinking. My identity shaped the way in which the interviews evolved, there was laughter and conversations even after the recording came to an end. There was a participant who extended out an invitation for an event occurring in December 2019. I highly believe being part of the same population as my participants helped shape my research by allowing participants to be freer in expressing themselves.

FINDINGS

The beginning of my journey in pursuing the experiences of Salvadorian folk who are living in the United States was not as I originally envisioned or even expected. The themes which emerged were war testimonies, Mexican hegemony, identity construction, and self-Salvadorian pride which circulated across the board had a slight resemblance to my predictions before the interviews. However, new ideas developed. Some of the predictions I had revolved around the infamous Mara Salvatrucha in the sense that the interviewees may have the urge to want to speak upon, Interviewees who identified as Salvadorian led the findings associated with my study are 18 years or older, and live or have lived the majority of their life in Southern California. The reason for choosing the location of Southern California for my particular study emerges from the Salvadorian population being the United States' largest immigrant group after Mexica, Filipino, Indian, Chinese, and Vietnamese (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). Living the majority of my life in Southern California, I often felt as if my identity never fit within the boxes as everyone did. Living in Southern California as a Salvadorian girl, now woman the constant pressure to fit in clouded my mind. My reason for choosing the Southern California region for my study derives from the fact that I grew up in it, but also because I had a strong sense that I was not the only one running into these barriers. Some studies have been conducted in the United States which revolves around the migration of Salvadorians which also include vital information, however, every region expresses different results. As mentioned previously, in this region, Salvadorians are not a common sight and, my goal is to bring out their story through their experiences. The Southern California region includes 8 counties: Imperial, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. Los Angeles, California is known as the largest city in Southern California, which coincidentally is a popular area for Salvadorian migration.

Most participants included in my study were residents of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a global city, which includes many different types of immigrants and contains a vibrant cultural vibe. While my interviewees loved their city, they often felt invisible; their identity was not widely represented and believed my study would shed light upon it. Going to Los Angeles provides a broader lens on the different Latin countries this world contains. Mexicans comprise the largest ethnic group in Los Angeles which is a total of 31.9% of the population according to the 2010 Census (Los Angeles Population). While Salvadorians constitute a total of 6% of the Los Angeles, making them the second largest ethnic group leaving a 25.9% difference between the Mexican and Salvadorian populations that cause a gap and requires understanding.

My study interrogates the experiences of Salvadorian people and their culture. Every Latin American country has its own customs and beliefs, which can differ immensely even when the language amongst each other is similar. Throughout my study, the questions that were presented and answered by the participants provided an insight into their lives and how certain historical events affected their everyday lives. In the following, I will present the four themes that emerged during the interview which were war testimonies, Mexican hegemony, identity construction, and self-Salvadorian pride.

“My Mom Has PTSD and She Doesn’t Even Know it”

The Salvadorian Civil War was a 12 yearlong traumatic event, which caused constant heartache for the younger and older generations. The historic Salvadorian war shattered many lives. Participants often described grievance and heartbreak after losing a parent, a sibling, and/or child. George, a school counselor described how he felt about the Salvadorian Civil War while living in El Salvador as a child:

It's been one of the biggest conflicts that had happened in my country for many people was unknown...they just only saw two different sides the military and the rebels. It started with a cause or why things were being done slowly it started with a good purpose, escalated to the point where um people were just part of it because they had to. Unfortunately too many people, too many innocent people died. People that had nothing to do with it. People that had dreams to become something better than that. And to move forward in their life to get their different generations with them. And yet their life falls short at a very early early age for many.

As described by George, most of the Salvadorian people were unaware of the root causes of the

war, but most participants knew that it was a struggle between the military and the guerrillas.

From George's perspective, the war began with a positive outlook by trying to fight for the rights

of the people but that later continued to change with people being involved in the conflict

because it was their civic duty. According to the Center of Justice and Accountability, over

75,000 combatants and innocent lives were claimed in the Salvadorian Civil War (El Salvador,

CJA). The dreams of those who lost their lives in the war will never have a chance to see how

their lives would have taken course due to the price they paid...with their own life. Innocent

lives being taken should not be the result of social change however, this tragedy ripped apart

families and claimed their dreams.

When anything relating to events in war, specific memories are triggered, and it does not

always come from a 1st person's point of view. When I met Carmen, she was excited to

participate in the interview, and I as well since she would be my first participant in the study.

Although Carmen has never lived in El Salvador, when bringing up the subject of the

Salvadorian Civil War she introduced her mother into the interview with the following:

I know my mom. She is just 50 right now and when she was a kid she would tell me stories about when she would leave her house walking home from school and they would shut the school down for a while because there was guns and shooting and everything outside so she'd go walking home and see dead bodies everywhere on her way home. And that's all I know of what she experienced.

Experiencing death at any age is traumatic, but experiencing death at a young age can cause a greater impact. As Carmen described her mother's experience during the war, witnessing dead bodies was normalized. Seeing dead bodies on your way home should not be the norm for a developing mind or any individual. The participants shared the concept of "children of the war," however, the children grew up to become adults who would subsequently instill their trauma to their offspring. Although Carmen did not endure social trauma of the war directly, she lived through it by listening to her mother's oral history. The constant shooting and visualization of guns drawn is not an ideal childhood nor should it be the way to remember one's home country. The historical brutality in El Salvador is something that is carried out throughout the years; some years are more remembered than others and could create an effect of paranoia.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is also known by the acronym of PTSD to refer to an anxiety disorder which occurs after the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event as defined by Mental Health America (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder). Military combat is one of the main reasons for PTSD, and recently the Salvadorian citizenry's experience in the war which has become the base for gang violence has been researched by the Heartland Alliance International. (Heartland Alliance International, 2016). As mentioned previously, Carmen highlighted how her mother witnessed lifeless bodies on her walk home, however, she also shared the following reflection about her mother:

She's told me, it's more recent than it was a long time ago. I never noticed it before but now I feel like she has a lot of paranoia and sometimes should just be in the kitchen washing dishes and she'll feel like somebody is watching her through the windows.

Or something's going on and she doesn't know why she's so scared all the time. And we talked about it. I thought maybe it's because of what happened. Your childhood, you have a lot of trauma. Scary what you went through and grew up and all of a sudden you moved from one place to another.

The constant fear of having someone watching your every move creates a heightened sense of anxiety that does not allow for peace of mind. The desire for clarity is wished from civilians of the war, although they were not physically involved in combat, the witnesses of the killings altered their lives.

A country engulfed in a civil war does not promote a safe environment for anyone, let alone developing young minds. When conducting interviews, I had the pleasure to interact with Angela, a woman who grew up in El Salvador, but has lived her adolescent and adult years in the United States. The civil war back home was brought into the equation, Angela remembered the most about this crisis:

Recuerdo tener alrededor de 10 años de edad, cuando lo único que oírías son disparos. Había tantos que ni siquiera sabían en qué dirección iban. Mi madre tuvo que enviarme a mí y a mis hermanos a una ciudad diferente solo para asegurarnos de que sobreviviéramos. Todavía recuerdo los cuerpos alineados en nuestra calle, uno tras otro, tal vez unos 20 cuerpos.

I remember being around 10 years old when all you would hear is gunshots. There was so many that you didn't even know the direction in which they were coming. My mother had to send my siblings and me to a different town just to make sure we survived. I still remember the bodies lined up on our street, one right after another maybe about 20 bodies.

The body language Angela exhibited during the interview revealed that she ran through her memory trying to piece the image of war together. As I witnessed her non-verbal communication, I thought to myself that this is her life and although she is trying to dig through her memory to trace back, it is evident that this is something she will never forget. Just as Carmen's mother, Angela experienced the same trauma of being exposed to such harsh realities of war at such an early age.

Children living in war zones and PTSD have been discussed and studies have found how children during the Cambodian war were affected similarly. Prior research demonstrates how

children exposed to the stress of extreme violence will experience mental health disturbance years later whereas children who experienced the war but were not residing with a family member were more likely to show PTSD and psychiatric symptoms (Osofsky, 1999). Being sent away from her hometown for the simple yet complicated act of survival was one of the many things Angela remembered. Doing this must not have been the ideal road to embark on, but it was most likely their only resort to the remaining alive. Angela explains how even though her country has endured an abundance of sorrow and pain, she still cannot wait for the day she returns. The vibrant smile shown between all the heartache demonstrates her love for life. Through all the sorrow endured, why would anyone want their survival identity mistaken when it is extremely significant to know who went through it all.

“I Always Felt Like Something Completely Different”

Living in Southern California while being anything else than Mexican, in this case being Salvadorian, is difficult for others to comprehend due to our close proximity to the San Ysidro Port of Entry (borderlands region). Our social contexts could be one of the reasons for our common mistaken identity, but after receiving clarification why must people continue to label us as the “other”? People are often labeled as a racial category based on their phenotype, but generalizations often result in mistaken nationalist identities. George arrived in the United States specifically to Southern California at the age of 15 and dealt with mistaken identity from his peers; he described the following scenario, which took place in high school:

The first part [people think you are] Mexican or Mexicans. You know in high school the first thing [people think you are just like everyone]. Even though my accent was different from the way they [Mexicans] spoke Spanish. They later started their migration, started coming here at least to Southern California and most was in L.A. but over here in this area [North County] not many people were here from El Salvador.

And so they didn't know. They didn't know much about it. Some were saying that I was from Spain because we use the *vos en vez de tu*⁵. But in general when they hear you speak Spanish a Mexican will guess you're Mexican. You know, you Mexican this and you Mexican that, so I played a joke every time and I said you know yeah those damn Mexicans huh and they will question it, wait a minute you're Mexican. No I'm not, I'm Salvadorian, oh and where is that at? You know they wouldn't even geographically speaking know or have an idea where El Salvador is [in the globe]. So you had to go back and explain a little bit about what was going on.

Salvadorians in Southern California as George highlights was a rare sighting unless you were in the Westside of Los Angeles where most Salvadorian immigrants reside. During the 1980s Salvadorians fled to the United States seeking safety from the war violence and began establishing a community amongst the citizenry. Salvadorians hold a degree of pride in their nationality and take offense when mistaken for a different nationality. It is shocking to others to be corrected about one's identity, but this is one of the methods in addressing the underlying issue of grossly misrepresenting someone's identity. As George mentions, some of his peers were not able to identify El Salvador on the world map, this demonstrates the lack of awareness about other Latin American countries. When people hear the word LatinX, their first assumption is to assume an individual is from Mexico, when in reality there are more than 15 other Latin-American countries. With the accessibility to technology in today's modern time, misconceptions of Central-American countries belonging to Mexico shouldn't occur, but represent a dominant discourse in the American media.

The media is a way to become informed of breaking news or ideologies in a general and prompt matter. Most people trust in the broadcasted information because it may be the only method of staying on top of current events, but what happens when information is distorted and misrepresented? Fox News is a news channel that provides breaking news as they occur. Fox

⁵ Vos en vez de tu: Second-person singular pronoun used in El Salvador

news aired content describing Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador as 3 Mexican countries. Society forgets how the world is quilted from a variety of different countries and tend to homogenize Latin American countries through a Mexican hegemony lens. This is an error that should have never been done and now it has become a mockery. Could it be the countries lack of importance to the globe? Or could it be the lack of knowledge about these specific countries? As the media portrays the individuals from these countries as animals, rapists, savages and overall bad people; the answer to the previous questions could be a little bit of both. Categorizing Central American countries as “Mexican” promotes a hegemony that enables others in society to blindly embrace these misconception.

Mistaken identity is not something that should be seen as a simple error with all the information and knowledge available. It can be offensive and should be seen in a different light other than just a standard error, even after being corrected. Stephanie is a student who identifies as a mixed Salvadorian-Mexican Latina and was intrigued to participate in my study. When asked if she had been wrongly identified and how had it made her feel she responded strongly by her elevated tone of voice:

My mom is from Mexico my dad is from El Salvador. [People would say] You know it's the same thing. [I responded] No it's not the same thing it's two different completely different cultures. I'm like no and this was a white person saying that. And so there's been times where I do say oh no I'm Latina you know, [People would say] oh it's the same thing. And even like some of my friends when I was in high school I always felt like something completely different. And that did upset me because you're not acknowledging the separate culture, the separate identity and just kind of putting all of these different categories or different places or locations into one category.

I remember one time a professor told me that usually people want to know where you're from because they're uncomfortable without being able to identify you.

Categorizing all Latin American countries under one umbrella erases the culture embedded in the roots of the people. Stephanie acknowledges how she was not as upset over the mistaken identity

until she began learning about it in school. Stephanie explains how now she corrects people she encounters when they label her otherwise. She emphasizes how her professor deconstructed the idea of why people are so uncomfortable when they are not able to pinpoint “who” you are. In a region where the Salvadorian community is scarce, what and how can the culture be learned and seen? How do you construct who you are based on the resources within your reach? Having your own culture far from reach creates a nostalgic feeling making it difficult to construct one’s identity.

“Como Se Construye La Identidad Guanac@?”

Learning about one’s history can be a difficult task when the cultural context restricts your expansion for knowledge. Some of the participants involved highlighted a nostalgic feeling towards the representation of the Salvadorian culture throughout their lives. George expresses how he wishes there were more places to visit nearby that could give him a taste of home. He states:

...But not as authentic as it used to be you know because unfortunately here in this area one of the biggest issues was the food you know like that and back then there was no restaurants and there was not a place where you can get the food. We had to drive all the way to L.A. to try to go and get pupusas, however, they were not as good. But hey they were pupusas!

So you had to travel two and a half hours to be able to go up there and to be able to kind of get something related to your culture that you feel empowered because you got something from over there, throughout the years things like that advanced.

Same thing like going dancing you know for music as much we love *cumbias* as you know, there’s no places over here. You would actually go up all the way to L.A. to be able to have some type of connection in that sense.

Food is a way of expression, whether it is prepared in a fancy restaurant or someone’s home. The feeling of connection provides happiness and fulfillment as George explains, it did not even matter if they were good tasting or not; the representation found within those pupusas was grand.

Music is another form of expression; *cumbias* is a popular genre of music in El Salvador. Being able to get together with others who share the same cultural background can be enough to cure the feeling of being homesick. While he was eager to find somewhere to belong to, others were yearning to become more in touch with their Salvadorian culture.

Family is a great way to learn about one's ancestry. However, when communication is unavailable it becomes difficult to gather the knowledge desired. Stephanie states how she has continuously searched for answers from her father, but the answers always remained vague. "To be honest not much, I know for like for the most part, my dad is from El Salvador in Central America. As far as like the entire culture I ask a lot about it, but I get the very basic we eat pupusas it's very poor...", this ideology promotes the reason as to why is it significant to have Salvadorian representation readily available to individuals like Stephanie. Stephanie also explained how she had never visited El Salvador and always wished she could go with her father year after year. Her father's reasoning for not allowing them to come along is due to the belief in the level of violence in El Salvador. While being a Salvadorian Mexican Latina, she also desires more representation for her Salvadorian side due to always being surrounded by her Mexican side of the family. The pure joy of knowing a glimpse of your culture installs a sense of wholeness within you.

Another method of learning about one's identity is through education. History is out there; can it be tampered with and changed? Yes, the truth will prevail, but not always, especially given in light of recent political realities. History is contested, and the story remembered is deeply shaped by power. Andrea, currently a graduate student is ambitious in learning furthermore into her Salvadorian identity throughout her program.

I think I would think about it a lot because like I'm mixed race. So like my dad was white. My mom is Salvadorian and so because of that I feel like I'm motivated to find out more

about my Salvadorian heritage in a way that like my younger siblings I don't see they totally feel the same way just yet. And I think part of that is like a growing up in Southern California. Obviously like I said like everybody assumes you're Mexican. And so that was super confusing to me as a kid. I was like I don't think I'm Mexican but everybody's telling me I'm Mexican. And so the more that I was like trying to unpack that and realizing like no like I'm not Mexican I don't fit into that community.

The motivation to seek your own identity through education is an accomplishment. Andrea has demonstrated one form of how she will personally pursue her satisfaction for identity search. However, education is not always based on the foundation of an institution, the learning of one's culture can also be found through storytelling. According to Andrea her inclination to learn about her heritage derives from the constantly mistaken identity she encountered as an adolescent. Although the full understanding and knowledge about the Salvadorian culture is not always available, the admiration of the people, culture and nation finds its way to shine through.

“Que Significa Ser Salvadoreñ@ Para Ti?”

Words can be used for any enhancement, when conducting my interviews certain words mentioned tended to trigger pride within my self-identity. Listening to the participants answer the questions about El Salvador made me aware of how potent our stamp is in this world. When asked the question “What does it mean to be Salvadorian to you?” The body language displayed signs of happiness, pride, and smiles. The participant was excited to address this question, and it was my pleasure to administer the study. Camila, was raised in Southern California specifically Los Angeles and she describes how she feels about her Salvadorian identity:

I feel really proud about that like. It's I think there's a lot of joy and a sense of resistance that comes out of being Salvadorian. For me at least it's something to like take joy in because it's like immediately when someone starts using Salvadorian Spanish I could immediately identify them as Salvadorian like I know you're Salvadorian!

Resistance is a strong word to utilize when speaking about the Salvadorian identity, fighting back the backlash from society when describing your identity is enough to break anyone. The constant fight against the media and the perception society has of us Salvadorians is daunting. The constant fight against Mexican hegemony is exhausting. However, the most tiring fighting is the one against the feeling of an imposter syndrome. The imposter syndrome can be defined as a psychological pattern which makes you feel doubt within your inner self and creates emotions of thinking you are a fraud. Feeling a connection with another fellow Salvadorian feels like an accomplishment. The reason why it feels like a victory is due to the significant dominance of other nationalities.

The country of El Salvador is the smallest country located in Central America and is known to be smaller than the state of Massachusetts. Although the size of the country is small, the pride within is enough to make others think otherwise. Bianca shares her thoughts about what it means to be Salvadorian to her:

It means that we will have live a different experience. It means that if we talk about food it means we eat pupusas. It mean that we don't say *tu* we say *vos* it means that we're different. Basically I think if I have to sum it up we're very different. We are proud of being a Salvadorian regardless of what happened to us. We are still very happy to represent El Salvador in any way we can. And if we can represent (what) in a positive way. We will do it. But El Salvador is very small. The way that we talk about El Salvador. We make it sound like it's one of the biggest countries in Latin America. So that *pulgarcito*, it's in our hearts.

When Bianca states “regardless of what happened to us,” she implies the pain and suffering many Salvadorian as herself have endured; pain and suffering caused by the civil war and gang violence. The way El Salvador is spoken about can create an illusion of a more significant area that meets the eye. The word *pulgarcito* is a Salvadorian lexicon term that is often used to refer to El Salvador due to its size, and a *pulga* is a flea. No matter the distance traveled pride is carried in the hearts and not in our hands.

The fight continues to unravel; Isabella explains her admiration for her roots and why she feels so strongly about what it means to be Salvadorian to her:

It means to be a fighter. You know I've been asked oh you must be crazy because you're Salvadorian. I don't know if I'm crazy because I'm Salvadoran and I think that we just...it's in our blood a little differently maybe because of the civil unrest. Maybe, because of the great poverty? Also because like I said so many around us are Mexican and that alone is enough for me to be very proud to be Salvadorian.

Crazy is a common word I have heard upon people discovering my own identity; they immediately make the connection to the Mara Salvatrucha due to the misinformation stored in their minds. However, Bianca made the connection as to why maybe she has been labeled as crazy, and it derives from the civil unrest El Salvador has experienced in its history. The pain has bled through the streets of El Salvador and just as Isabella, a Salvadorian woman who was raised in Southern California, stated, "so much that it has gone through, so you know it makes me proud that it's still there." The people from El Salvador make it possible to move forward despite all the agony that it has gone through. The resistance makes a full circle in providing a sense of relief for the people have been desperately yearning for.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The participants in my study consisted of both men and women who identify as Salvadorian and lived in Southern California. The participants in my study were all asked the same questions however, the answers all varied. Some participants felt more passionate about identity issues while others felt more passionate in painting the scenery of El Salvador. Emotions ran high for some while others displayed different emotions (nostalgic), for example questions pertaining to the war made one of my participants wonder if it was okay to share personal details, I advised it was adequate. The interviews consisted of a series of questions

which aimed at getting answers focused on life as a Salvadorian while living in the United States as well questions revolving around the country of El Salvador.

There was a total of 10 individuals who were willing to be involved in my research. There was 9 women and 1 man who took part in the interview process, all which were of different ages. Having the gap in gender caused a limitation in my analysis due to how interpretations of issues differs between genders. The different themes which emerged from the study were: war testimonies, Mexican hegemony, identity construction, and self-Salvadorian pride.

The body language and tones alternated between the questions. The questions regarding the war made the participant hesitant to answer, they were unsure if they were allowed to share. I encouraged all of my participants that they were able to discontinue the interview at any time without any consequences. I did not have any of my participants wanting to stop the interview on the contrary some mentioned how it has inspired them to search their roots further.

The war testimonies which were presented by my participants discussed the feelings felt by themselves or their parents during the era. They painted a vivid picture with their words and led the conversation by stating the actions which took place during the war. The results from the war stories demonstrated how some individuals live with PTSD even when not directly fighting in combat. PTSD was present amongst the civilian who lived through the war in the 1980s, the bullets flying shaped the minds of the kids they once were.

The dominance of one culture was present throughout my interviews and for once it was not the Mexican culture. Although it was not the center of the conversation, when the question regarding what other nationality they were mistaken for Mexico made its presence. More than 50% of the participants interviewed stated how they were often confused for Mexican due to

their phenotype and Spanish fluency. My interviewees explained how even after they made the clarification they were still labeled as Mexican despite their efforts. Being labeled as a whole which most of them took lightly, they stated how they will continue to fight for their existence.

The third theme that raised throughout my research stemmed from identity construction; the way they built their identity and set it aside from the rest. My interviews shared a nostalgic feeling when speaking in regard to their relationship with the culture itself. They expressed how they wished there was more representation of the Salvadorian culture as there is of the Mexican culture. One participant stated how the closest he can get to “home” is to travel 2 hours to the city of Los Angeles for some similar tasting authentic food. Another participant explained how she desired to know more about her heritage but her father spoke very little about it. Salvadorian representation is scarce in the region of Southern California as oppose to other cultures.

Lastly, the fourth theme present in my study revolved around the pride felt inside by the simple fact of knowing they were Salvadorian. Due to the low numbers associated with the culture, the participants felt the need to always make their nationality a statement. Their body language displayed pride when asked the question “what does it mean to be Salvadorian to you?”, the smiles widened and the voices elevated. They stated how it being Salvadorian meant you were a fighter, it meant you had to fight for your existence and show everyone Salvadorians aren't as they portray on the media. When people hear you're from El Salvador they think differently about us, according to Adriana “we have to work twice as hard just because we are Salvadorian”. Just as we have to work twice as hard, the pride is twice as much. When you have experienced war, identity becomes incredibly important, as it becomes rooted in ideas of struggle and survival. This is why it's significant for people not to be confused as Mexican, because it

eclipses this story of struggle and survival. When you survive great tragedy, pride in one's identity helps cope with the trauma of war.

My participants shed light upon my understanding that I am not the only one who deals with certain traumas and how I am not the only one facing the fight against Mexican social dominance. It is satisfying to know I have inspired other Salvadorian individuals to research their own roots and that is not only a benefit to them, but also myself. I will continue my research further in efforts to continue to install the same fire in others in hopes my study touches lives but most importantly hearts.

SIGNIFICANCE

The research and knowledge of the Salvadorian community are not as expanded nor studied as heavily as other cultures within the Latino community. There are different aspects, which construct the identity of Salvadorian individuals, but the identity as a whole was not discussed. Historically, the research of Latin countries is directed primarily to Mexico, leaving the study of El Salvador behind. When El Salvador is discussed, the center of the conversation is dominated by the topic of gangs. Various other sections are not brought into the conversation, such as the experiences of the Salvadorian community in general. As initially stated, El Salvador is known for its scenic ocean beaches and mountain landscapes while the media also frames a picture of being a deadly country.

My purpose for this case study is to shed light on all the different experiences involved in the Salvadorian community. The limited knowledge of the community allows others to build up their perceptions that negatively affect those individuals. Being part of the Salvadorian population drives me to push through the marginalization placed upon us, we are more than the negative labels neatly placed on our foreheads by outsiders. Magdalena, a Salvadorian migrant,

formally living in Southern California, expresses she is not afraid of work and how her contribution to the United States increased the life expectancy of one of her former employers from 6 months to 4 years by incorporating a different diet (Hallett, 2012). We are not strangers to hard work; we are more than the gang members and “illegal aliens”. The experiences discussed in this case study will highlight the significance of exposing the positive identities across the Salvadorian population.

CONCLUSION

The motive for this study, for this research, for this thesis was pulled from the love I hold for my *familia*. From the beginning of this journey, I knew the heart of my study would derive from the struggles my people have endured, and that was enough to keep me pushing. My daughter is a mixed Latina; she is both Salvadorian, Mexican, and full of *fuego*. She lights my life like no other and is one of the main reason this story needed to be told. The future generations need to understand that there are people who can relate to them and they are not alone. The Salvadorian population is not as common as one may think, finding others who share the same cultural background as you are a breath of fresh air. I can sit here and reflect on the countless of times I wish I found someone whom I could share my struggles with, in other words, find another me.

The future holds many possibilities for my research, and I know I would love to continue this study further. A few implications I would have for my future study revolve expanding the location of the region and publishing social media posts on different sites. The number of interviews conducted revolved around the time I had available to finish this thesis, the desire to hold more interviews was present. When time is more than possible after this study is completed, I will continue to pursue the research of Salvadorian folk. As I have previously mentioned, I am

a single mother of one child, and I want to devote time to her upbringing more than anything at this precise moment. The time to research will always be there but she will only have one childhood for a short time. Just as time was a significant factor when completing this study so was the region. The region chosen for my research was directly chosen due to being raised it and felt it was necessary. By expanding the location for my study, it will allow for participants with the same background to have some input that will share some similarities as well as differences. The second implication was to place my recruitment for participants in different areas, as opposed to just Facebook. By putting it in various social media networks, my audience (participants) changes which can alter the dynamic of the study results.

I plan to pursue my education in the future, but most importantly I owe the time to my family at the moment. The idea to pursue my Ph.D. has always been the plan even when the road seems long. The gain is indefinite. I would want to receive my Ph.D. in sociology and continue doing research geared around the Salvadorian experience. I would bring my research to the country of El Salvador, and see how it can be applied. My study concluded 4 different themes which entwined with each other, but that was centered towards people currently living here in the United States. My future research aims to do the same, but with Salvadorian individuals living in El Salvador. The questions asked will remain the same as it did for this study and I will compare and contrast the findings. The results will be intriguing to discover and the experience obtained will be life-changing.

With the research that has been done I plan to branch out and build a community for the Salvadorian individuals. The area to find comfort within your own culture is difficult when finding anyone who is just like you is hard to conquer. I will begin by starting an online page that will allow for Salvadorian folk to speak about their pressing issues and by creating this it will

allow for other members to interact if they relate. Another goal is to begin community events where the Salvadorian culture is celebrated like for example a festival where foods are served and traditions are placed on display for the public to witness. This is a method that will facilitate building relationships with other fellow Salvadorians by staying attached to the roots itself. It will enable for traditions to carry on for generations to come and prevent them from being eliminated. The reason why my research is significant is that there is a strong Mexican hegemony that overpowers the Salvadorian *cultura*. We need a space on this universe to present our existence and resistance to nationalists who believe they are superior to us. No country is above another; every country is significant because every human is significant.

The contribution of my work to the understanding of the Salvadorian identity is derived from war testimonies, struggle, immigration, and survival. The story of the identity taken on by my community is similar to those from other countries who were affected by war trauma, pain is universal and can be felt through generations. My work digs deeper beyond the surface of what it means to feel pain, pain does not have to be a personal attack when intergenerational trauma exists. My work adds a contribution to the literature regarding refugees and the means of survival. My soul was engraved in every word mentioned because I understood the significance behind the misrepresentation of the Salvadorian community because I lived it.

From the start of my childhood, I knew I wasn't like the others, I knew my identity set me apart. This research will allow us to interpret some of the issues and traumas our Salvadorian folk has tolerated. *Mi hija* will have something to turn to when she feels a backlash from her peers; she will not have to sit and wonder whom she can relate to like her *mamá* once did because she will have this piece to guide her. The liberation of identity is something everyone

should have the power and *ganas* to do and I have every intention to keep the *ganas* flowing; the resistance is our existence, and I am here to continue in *la lucha*.

“Sumerge la jarra en el agua lo suficiente y finalmente se rompe”

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APPENDIX I

Interview Questions

El Salvador

- What do you know about El Salvador?
- Have you ever lived in El Salvador? If yes, for how long?
 - How would you describe El Salvador to me?
 - What do you remember the most and why?
- Have you ever visited El Salvador? If so how frequently?
 - How would you describe El Salvador to me?
 - What do you remember the most and why?
- Have you ever heard of the word Atlacatl?
- What do you know about the Salvadorian Civil War?
- What do you know about the El Mozote Massacre?
- Have you heard any stories about those historic events?
- What do you think about La Mara Salvatrucha or Salvadorian gangs?
- How does the current wave of migration in the caravans make you feel? If you have social media, how do the posts pertaining to this make you feel?
- How does Trump's perception on El Salvador make you feel?

Identity

- How is it that you define yourself as a Salvadorian?
- How long have you lived in Southern California?

- While living in the region have you ever experienced the questions “what are you?”
- Have you ever been mistaken for a different ethnicity?
 - If so, what were you mistaken for and how did it make you feel?
- How did you learn about your Salvadorian heritage?
- What practices or traditions do you associate with being Salvadorian?
- What does it mean to be Salvadorian to you?
 - Does it make you proud to be Salvadorian?

APPENDIX II





APPENDIX III

Social Media Post

Hello everyone! I am currently working on my Master's thesis at the California State University of San Marcos (CSUSM) and I am looking to interview people who identify as Salvadorian and live in the Southern California region. If this is you or thinking someone you know may be interested, you are encouraged to reach out to me! I can be contacted through this post or by email at ochoa035@cougars.csusm.edu

If you have any questions regarding this request, please let me know.

Thank you all so much!



APPENDIX III

The Salvadorian Diaspora: Experiences of Salvadorian Identities in Southern California

Informed Consent

My name is Ana Ochoa and I am Graduate student in the M.A. Sociological Practice Program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM). You are invited to participate in a research study of Salvadorian individuals and their experiences in the United States. You were selected as a possible participant because you identify as Salvadorian and are 18 years or older. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later on in this form. This study will conduct a research on the experiences of Salvadorians navigating through Southern California.

STUDY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to discover the experiences of Salvadorian individuals living in the United States and analyze how they navigate through life.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

If you agree to participate, you will be one of the 10 participants who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following: If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to take part in an interview. During the interview you will be asked questions. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and place you feel comfortable with and is convenient to you. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. I will ask you for permission to audio tape this interview, you may say no without consequence. No real names or identifying information will be used in this study, so your identity will be protected. But if you do agree, we can use a fake name; this is solely up to you. Once the interview is done, you can ask me any questions.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:

1. Time: The interviews may take longer time than expected.
2. Sensitive or sad experiences or memories: You may remember experiences (intentional or unintentional) that may bring back memories that are sad or sensitive.

SAFEGUARDS:

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

1) Safeguard for “Time”: You will be reminded that you may stop, reschedule, or reconsider doing the interview without any consequence at any time. Also, I will keep track of time while the interview is in progress.

2) Safeguards for "Sensitive or Sad Experiences or Memories": You will be reminded that you may stop any discussions at any time. You may also exclude any stories that you address is not necessary for the study. I will provide a Resource Guide that will have information for you, where you may access affordable counseling services.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your responses and information will be anonymous and confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to protect any linkage between you and the research. The data will be stored in an encrypted password protected computer. All consent forms will be stored in my advisors office (Dr. Xuan Santos) in a locked safe. The only individuals allowed access to the data will be my advisor and myself. The interview will be recorded on my phone or then completely deleted after it has been exported to my laptop. The data will be retained for a period of 3 years after the study has been completed in a locked safe in Dr. Santos office. After paper records will be shredded and digital files will be erased.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:

There are no direct benefits to participation in this study, however, your participation will help get a better understanding among the role of Salvadorians in the United States through your life events, feelings, accomplishments, and perceptions.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- If you have questions about the study, please contact me by email or phone at ochoa035@cougars.csusm.edu (760) 208-7937 or contact advisor, Dr. Xuan Santos at xsantos@csusm.edu or (760) 750-8031. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

PARTICIPANT’S CONSENT:

By checking below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

I give permission for my interviews to be audio taped.