Secondary Legal Trauma: Shifting roles in the classroom in regard to newcomer education

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ABSTRACT

Over 400,000 asylum-seeking Central American children have resettled in counties across the U.S. since the start of the decade. Scholarship and media tend to treat unaccompanied, asylum-seeking minor integration as a homogenous and shared experience, ignoring differences in pre- and post-migration events and the consequential trauma. Likewise, the diverse experiences of receiving communities and stakeholders within them have been under examined. To advance our understanding of how the rise in resettlements of Central American asylum-seeking children shapes communities, this preliminary study focuses on the experiences of public-school teachers, among the most significant institutional agents in the lives of newcomer children. This preliminary study draws on four in-depth interviews with public school teachers in Harris County, Texas-- the U.S. county that resettles the greatest number of asylum-seeking children per year, to examine how asylum-seeking children's pre- and post-migration experiences shape educator's perceptions and experiences of their role in school.

The rates of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors in the United States have risen exponentially over the last decade, reaching 18,411 in 2010. At the height of the humanitarian crisis in 2014, the numbers reached upwards of 68,541, and now over 76,000 in the past year of 2019. Another 23,000 asylum-seeking children have been apprehended by Customs and Border Protection in Fiscal Year 2020.[1] The rise of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors entering the United States is in large part due to the rise of Central American migration, specifically from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.[2] Studies have explored the trauma associated with the migration journey as tripartite: pre-migration trauma, in-transit trauma, and post migration trauma; all of which have a direct impact on newcomers' prospects for incorporation as they come of age.[3] Unauthorized legal status exacerbates trauma and places children at higher risk for emotional and psychological desolation, academic detachment, and familial disruption,[4] all of which can disrupt socioemotional development, school going, and educational attainment.[5]

While scholars and policymakers scrutinize the effects of U.S. migration policy and practices on the lives of asylum-seeking children and their families, there is a growing focus and shifting research towards those who work on behalf of the immigrant community. As a result of U.S. policy on asylum-seekers, those who work towards the advancement of asylum-seeking children's integration, are experiencing the consequences of the current immigration policies. This paper distinctly traces the experiences of U.S. public school teachers, as schools are a primary institution for socialization. I draw on the case of educators in Harris County, Texas which is amidst the greatest number of children formally resettled in the U.S. by the Office of Refugee and Resettlement since 2014. I examine the position of service providers who cater to the needs of a socially vulnerable and underserved population of asylum-seeking, Central American children in the U.S., at the professional and personal levels.

Unaccompanied minors are forced to flee their home countries due to political unrest, violence, and a number of other push factors that influence a child's susceptibility to pre-migration trauma.[6] Furthermore, the current immigration policies and practices make it so that upon arrival to the U.S., migrants experience what is termed as

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[1] U.S. Border Patrol Total Unaccompanied Alien Children Apprehensions by Month FY 2010 - FY 2018.
[2] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Education Week.
[3] Diana Franco, 2018. "Trauma Without Borders: The Necessity for School-Based Interventions in Treating Unaccompanied Refugee Minors." Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal (2018) 35: 551–565.
[4] Sarah A. Maclean, Priscilla O. Agyeman, Joshua Walther, Elizabeth K. Singer, Kim A. Baranowski, Craig L. Katz, 2019. "Mental Health of Children Held at a United States Immigration Detention Center." *Social Science & Medicine* 230 (2019) 303-308.
[5] Diana Franco, 2018. "Trauma Without Borders: The Necessity for School-Based Interventions in Treating Unaccompanied Refugee Minors." Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal (2018) 35: 551–565.
[6] Diana Franco, 2018. "Trauma Without Borders: The Necessity for School-Based Interventions in Treating Unaccompanied Refugee Minors." Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal (2018) 35: 551–565.

"Legal Violence," where the progression of immigration law has been bridged with criminal law, making it so that immigrants are criminalized and experience further violence and trauma.[7] Violence that is experienced from pre-migration and in-journey events are further exacerbated by the current immigration laws' violent consequences, which target immigrants, and this in turn is felt by untargeted, surrounding communities and populations that interact with migrants. The spill-over effect onto non targeted populations results in them experiencing Secondary Legal Trauma as a result of Legal Violence, inflicted upon by U.S. immigration practices and policies. My research with elementary public-school teachers in Harris County, TX, demonstrates that educators are prompt to enter this occupation because of their familial migration and personal education backgrounds. Teachers' personal attachment to the immigrant experience, as researcher Jody Velejo talks about when she discusses the immigrant narrative,[8] personalizes the experiences of Legal Violence, social discrimination, and ultimately, trauma that asylum-seeking students in their classrooms experience. Teachers' experience shows that the long lasting, traumatic effects of Legal Violence can manifest as physical and mental health illness and injury, as well as occupational strain.

In what follows, I detail the conditions that cause trauma among asylum-seeking children and the U.S.'s role in the re-traumatization of children through Legal Violence. Borrowing from the work of sociologist Stephanie Canizales, I detail the ways in which Secondary Legal Trauma is transferred and experienced at the personal and professional levels of stakeholders within the surrounding communities of asylum-seeking children. I then explain my research methods and introduce my study participants. After demonstrating how Secondary Legal Trauma outworks in the lives of public elementary school teachers in Houston, TX, I discuss theoretical and policy implications of this work.

The Trauma and Re-traumatization of Asylum-seeking children in the U.S.

Migrant children face perilous pre-and post-migration experiences that prompt their migration and shape their growing up experiences in the U.S. As researchers note, these experiences are oftentimes marked by trauma, as Central American child migration is motivated by conditions of violence, political collusion, government passivity, and exploitation across region countries.[9] Furthermore, researcher Elizabeth Kennedy's findings confirm that migrant children are fleeing to the United States with the primary reason for escaping home country

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[7] Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego, 2012. "Legal Violence: Immigrational Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants.", *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 11, No. 5 (March 2012), pp.1380-1421.
[8] Jody Agius Vallejo, *Barrios to Burbs: The Making of the Mexican American Middle Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[9] Stephanie Canizales (2015), Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A Humanitarian Crisis at the U.S. Border and Beyond, Policy Brief Center for Poverty Research.

gang and cartel violence.[10] She emphasizes the pressing need for the current administration to recognize migrant children's need for protection from violence and a call for halting deportation to their home countries, where dangerous circumstances prevail.[11] This appropriately outlines the push factors and motivations that drive migrant children out of their home countries, resulting in them fleeing to the U.S. to seek asylum.

Upon arrival in the U.S. Southwest border, Central American child migrants, unlike those arriving from Mexico, are able to request asylum and claim fear of home country return. Granted under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2008, requesting asylum can take up to two years, wherein children are held in federal custody or placed with a sponsor while awaiting court hearings.[12] As migrant children await court hearings, receiving communities and stakeholders within them, must learn to navigate this trauma as asylum-seeking children come of age in U.S. society. Unaccompanied child migrants' attempts to leave behind conditions of poverty, violence, and persecution, prompt them to take perilous migration journeys across multiple borders to reach the U.S.[13] Along this journey they may encounter uncertain migration outcomes as they rely on "coyotes," or immigration guides, sexual assault and gender-based violence,[14] hunger and extreme temperatures, and, in some cases, the loss of friends or companions along the journey.[15] The trauma associated with children's motivations for migration is exacerbated by the trauma of these migration experiences. Arrival in the U.S. does not always guarantee reprieve from isolation, depression, and the longing to be reunified with families.

Upon arrival, unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors are detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection immigration officials who, in accordance with the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) are responsible for determining a child's credible fear of persecution. According to TVPRA's mandates, children from non-contiguous border countries cannot be immediately turned away, while those from countries with which the U.S. shares a border can be immediately removed. Hence, children from the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are more likely than Mexican children to be taken into U.S. federal custody and be subjected to conditions within federal facilities. Once in the U.S., children's treatment is legally determined by

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[10] Elizabeth Kennedy (2014), *No Childhood Here: Why Central American Children Are Fleeing Their Home,* American Immigration Council.

[11] Elizabeth Kennedy, Ibid.

[12] Sarah Pierce (2015), "Unaccompanied Child Migrants in U.S. Communities, Immigration Court, and Schools", Migration Policy Institute.

[13] Carla Muñoz & Amanda Venta (2019) Referring Unaccompanied Minors to Psychiatric Residential Treatment: When is it Worth the Disruption to Adaptation and Shelter Integration? Residential Treatment for Children & Youth, 36:2, 137-156.

[14] Kavitha Cardoza, "How Schools are Responding to Migrant Children", 9 April 2019.

[15] Kavitha Cardoza, ibid.

the Flores Settlement Agreement, which designates a series of protections for unaccompanied migrant children.[16] While in custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Department of Human Health and Services is responsible for providing migrant children with educational services within the first 72 hours having screened each child, along with an educational assessment of each child.[17] Children are entitled to 6 hours a day of required scholarly activity that covers science, social studies, math, reading, writing, and physical education along with one hour of structured leisure time.[18] With that, if any child has any special needs, learning or physical disabilities, or medical/mental health specificities, they are entitled to an individualized education plan.[19]

Despite these mandates for protection and care of children, between 2014 and 2018, the Federal Government received over 4500 complaints about the sexual abuse of children in detention centers.[20] Hence, they are entering facilities that, though intended to aid and protect unaccompanied minors, can inflict greater harm. Indeed, studies show that there is a lack of accommodations and regulations to help ensure that the trauma of migrant children is not exacerbated even further during their time in these facilities. A recent interview based study asked 425 mothers about their children's emotional well-being and found that 32 percent of detained migrant children show signs of emotional distress and trauma.[21] A recent study in *Social Science & Medicine,* also revealed that 34% of detained children had diagnosable mental disorders and approximately 85% of children and parents admit that they felt as if their mental health was dramatically affected with constant feelings of despair and the persistent urge to cry.[22] In 2018, the Human Rights Institute described the conditions of facilities most commonly utilized by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) as "uncomfortably cold, with temperatures set so low that women and children recall huddling together for warmth."[23] While in custody, the duration of detainees stay can range anywhere from "72 hours or more in holding cells," however, CBP acknowledges that these "holding cells are not designed for overnight custody."[24] Furthermore, it is also reported that showers and accessibility to basic hygienic products, such as soap

[16] Matthew Sussison, "The History of the Flores Settlement," February 11, 2019, https://cis.org/Report/History-Flores-Settlement.
[17] Andrew Ujifusa and Corey Mitchell, "Educating Migrant Children in Shelters: 6 Things to Know", 20 June 2018
[18] Andrew Ujifusa, Ibid.
[19] Andrew Ujifusa, Ibid.
[20] Matthew Haag, "Thousands of Immigrant Children Said They Were Sexually Abused in U.S. Detention Centers, Report Says", 27 February 2019.
[21] Rhitu Chatterjee, "Lengthy Detention of Migrant Children May Create Lasting Trauma, Say Researchers", 23 August 2019.
[22] Rhitu Chatterjee, ibid.
[23] Human Right Watch "In the Freezer Abusive Conditions for Women and Children in US Immigration Holding Cells," 2018.
[24] Human Right Watch, Ibid.

or toothpaste, are not available.[25] Children's exposure to violence and compounded experiences of trauma are examples of what Sociologists Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego term *Legal Violence.*[26] Legal Violence is a result of the indistinct format of immigration law which is intertwined with criminal law, resulting in the criminalization of immigrants, further evincing them as a burden on American society.[27] While examining the interactions of U.S. immigration laws and the effect on migrants, there are multiple outcomes that result in Legal Violence hindering immigrants' integration into the U.S. There has been an increased number of deportations as a result of the stigmatization and criminalization of immigrants. In turn, this leads migrants to live in shame or fear of potentially being deported, and their overall conditions of living are violated, and assimilation is hindered.[28]

While scholarship, policy, and public media tend to discuss detention centers as homogenous, there is much diversity in the types of organizations asylum-seeking children are placed and detained in. Policy and media reports show that children's receipt of these rights is disparate while in care and often depends on the type of detention center or facility children are being held in. This is because the facilities that shelter migrant children range anywhere from faith- based organizations, geared toward a compassionate and long-term plan of care for refugee immigrant children,[29] to private for-profit facilities that specialize in dealing with adult prisons and detention centers.[30] As a result of disparities in the type of care migrant children receive while in detention, once placed in U.S. public schools after their release, teachers are prone to receiving newcomers whose trauma has gone unaddressed or even exacerbated during detention, resulting in Secondary Trauma, experienced by newcomers' teachers. As of 2014 there were a total of 145,643 unaccompanied minor court cases where out of those 145,643 only 46,564 were given removal orders.[31] Meaning that over 90,000 unaccompanied minors remained in the U.S. and were integrated within families, schools, and communities across the U.S.[32] This is important because it reveals that while some migrant children face removal orders back to their home country, many do not and it is imperative to examine their integration into U.S.

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[25] Human Right Watch, Ibid.
[26] Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego, 2012. "Legal Violence: Immigrational Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants.", *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 11, No. 5 (March 2012), pp.1380-1421.
[27] Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego, Ibid.
[28] Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy Abrego, Ibid.
[29] Catholic Charities USA, "Border Crisis," 2019.
[30] Lauren Camera, "Unaccompanied and Uneducated: The Billions Spent at the Border", 28 September 2018
[31] Sarah Pierce (2015), "Unaccompanied Child Migrants in U.S. Communities, Immigration Court, and Schools," Migration Policy Institute.
[32] Sarah Pierce (2015), "Unaccompanied Child Migrants in U.S. Communities, Immigration Court, and Schools," Migration Policy Institute.

communities, specifically schools, and the effects that has on not only the migrant children themselves, but the effects on their receiving communities.

Much of the literature on newcomers in the classroom refers to them as having congruent needs rather than taking into consideration the multiplex of needs in response to their experience with violence and trauma. When teaching English-language learners who have come seeking asylum, it is important to consider the trauma they bring to the classroom in order for teachers to appropriately meet their pedagogical needs.[33] Bringing traumatic stress to school directly affects academic achievement and the role of teacher-initiated support becomes crucial in alleviating the effects of trauma on learning.[34] Being that schools are among the first socializing institutions, after migration journeys or release from detention centers, an emphasis on positive student-teacher relationships in order to foster a sense of "connectedness, belonging, and community" for newly arrived students who are navigating their way through finding support and motivation for academic success, is pivotal.[35] Furthermore, researcher Sophia Rodriguez, in her work relevant to the relationship between newcomer's and their schools, investigates the role of school libraries as being a "hub" for newcomers to escape their hardships and find the assurance and belonging that the classroom fails to provide, within the library of their school. This is important because it supports the reality of newcomers' school experience being shaped by the lack of scholarly and socio-emotional support within their schools. Furthermore, there is an extensive lack of appropriate and accommodating curriculum, and limited social workers and mental health support within their schools.[36]

The Spillover Effects of Migratory and Legal Violence

There is a growing body of literature that details the experience that looks at how the spillover effects of those who are in shared communities or interpersonal relationships with those targeted by the law, are impacted. The research conducted by Joanna Dreby finds that the burden of deportation is translated as rippled trauma through a social pyramid that outlines all those affected by the burden of immigration laws and practices.[37] Trauma spills

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[33] Ramona Fruja Amthor & Kevin Roxas (2016) Multicultural Education and Newcomer Youth: Re-Imagining a More Inclusive Vision for Immigrant and Refugee Students, Educational Studies, 52:2, 155-176

[34] Jennifer Dods, 2015. "Bringing Trauma to School: Sharing the Educational Experience of Three Youths." *Exceptionality Education International* article 6.

[35] Sarah N. Newcomer (2018) *Investigating the Power of Authentically Caring Student-Teacher Relationships for Latinx Students*, Journal of Latinos and Education, 17:2, 179-193.

[36] Sophia Rodriguez, 2019. "'We're building the community; it's a hub for democracy.': Lessons learned from a library-based, school-district partnership and program to increase belonging for newcomer immigrant and refugee youth." *Children and Youth Services Review* 102 (2019) 135-144.

[37] Dreby, Joanna *"The Burden of Deportation on Children in Mexican Immigrant Families."* Journal of Marriage and Family, August 2012, Vol. 74, No. 4 (August 2012), pp. 829-845.

over into the communities and segments of others' social world and affecting those who are not directly targeted by the law. Asylum seeking children's learning and interactions with teachers looks disrupted due to the Secondary Trauma teachers deal with, and they often fall short of meeting the newcomers' needs, as they deal with the ways in which Secondary Trauma affects their health and wellbeing.

Teachers and schools being one of the first institutions of socialization, there is a risk of the transfer and exposure of trauma from migrant students to teachers. That being said, for bilingual teachers who may feel emotional ties or connections to the immigrants, whether this be due to similar migration or trauma experiences, the potential for re-traumatization for that of the educator becomes a risk. People have studied these things as they relate to children, but often miss the part of the discussion about vicarious exposure to trauma or how those working with traumatized populations are affected. In focusing on the experiences of teachers, I aim to explore how the role of the educator, serving newcomer populations, becomes affected by the pre- and post-migration trauma that migrant students experience and bring to the classroom.

In this study, I draw on Canizales' advancement of Legal Violence, Secondary Legal Trauma, to explore how asylum-seeking children's experiences of trauma affect the communities' they settle into and the personal and professional lives of the stakeholders charged with their integration and well-being. Canizales' research explores the effects of migrants' trauma and the profound second-hand trauma that service workers and advocates for the immigrant community experience as a result of the direct effect of the ever- changing and developing immigration policies and practices that outline the conditions of safety, health, and wellbeing of migrant children and families.[38] According to Canizales' studies, the role of legal trauma on the lives of those who work in addressing the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors is affecting their own well-being. Specifically, this study preliminarily explores how three teachers in Harris County, Texas have experienced newcomers in the classroom and how the child's trauma has affected their role as not only an educator but through the transfer of trauma, the effects on their personal lives.

[38] Canizales, Stephanie L. Forthcoming. *"Secondary/Legal Trauma: How Immigration Policies and Procedures Impact Individuals Working with Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Minors."* Immigration Initiative at Harvard.

Data and Research Methods

The preliminary data presented in this paper draw on four in-depth interviews conducted with elementary school teachers in a Houston, Texas public school district.[39] Three of the teachers interviewed teach within a newcomer program. The fourth teacher is a general bilingual teacher, where the class is not geared specifically towards newcomers. Newcomer programs offer the opportunity for immigrant students to have their linguistic and educational needs met with culturally relevant pedagogy; whereas in some cases this is not always achieved in traditional English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual programs.[40] I focus on teachers in Houston/ Harris County for several reasons. Houston has historically been a destination for Latinx immigrants in the U.S.[41] Between 2000 and 2013, Houston saw immigration at higher rates than that of the nation as a whole (59 percent vs. 33 percent).[42] In Houston, Latinxs makeup 44.8% of the total population.[43] Among them, Central Americans, more specifically Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras combined make up 15% of the Houston Latinx population.[44] The city of Houston is located in Harris County, the county receiving the highest number of resettlement of asylum seeking children in the U.S. since 2010, alongside Los Angeles, California.[45]

Interviews were initially conducted using a convenient sampling method. I later adopted a snowball sampling method. Given the COVID-19 Pandemic, interviews were conducted via Zoom between June and December 2020. Interviews were audio or video recorded with the participants' consent. All interviews lasted between 60 and 100 minutes and were conducted primarily in English with some Spanish slang or Spanglish occasionally surfacing in the conversation. No compensation was provided. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded thematically based on existing literature. For the sake of protecting the interviewees' identity, they have been assigned pseudonyms.

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[39] I do not include the name of the school district to protect the identity of study participants.
[40] Anonymous, "What Are 'Newcomer' Programs? What Are Their Pros and Cons?" January 13, 2016, https://www.colorincolorado.org/faq/what-are-newcomer-programs-what-are-their-pros-and-cons.
[41] Randy Capps, Michaell Fix, Chiamaka Nwosu, 2015. "A Profile of Immigrants in Houston, The Nation's Most Diverse Metropolitan Area." Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.
[42] Randy Capps, Ibid.
[43] "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Houston City, Texas," Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/houstoncitytexas.
[44] Randy Capps, Michaell Fix, Chiamaka Nwosu, 2015. "A Profile of Immigrants in Houston, The Nation's Most Diverse Metropolitan Area." Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.
[45] Canizales, Stephanie L. Forthcoming. *"Secondary/Legal Trauma: How Immigration Policies and Procedures Impact Individuals Working with Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Minors."* Immigration Initiative at Harvard.

Participant Characteristics

My sample of interviewees consists of four female, elementary school bilingual teachers, all of which are of Hispanic descent and were once newcomers in the classroom themselves. The teachers' national origin includes Nicaragua (1), Mexico (2), and Ecuador (1). In my sample, women are overrepresented, and this can be accredited and confirmed by the works of Dr. Glena Flores, University of California Irvine Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies, who, in her book *Latina Teachers Creating Careers and Guarding Culture,* ascribes to an empirical focus on the rise of Latina's entry into the teaching profession, more so in positions that focus on the immigrant population. Dr. Flores points out that the increasing number of Latinas entering the teaching profession do not do so out of the fulfillment of a vocational calling. Rather, they do so in an attempt to satisfy an obligation they feel to kin and community and emotional ties they feel to the immigrant population.

Unaccompanied Children in Classroom and Teachers' Shifting Roles

A commonality in all four of the interviews was the way each teacher expressed that their role went beyond just being an educator who executes lesson plans in the classroom. They express the ways in which their daily tasks differ from what the typical job description and expertise of an educator looks like. As newcomers enter their classrooms, they have unprecedented needs and concerns that often require teachers to step out their role in order to appropriately address the newcomers' needs.

In this paper, I will argue that as a result of newcomer students' migration trauma, teachers become recipients of Secondary Legal Trauma. Teaching newcomers has made it so that the teacher's roles in the classroom shift to include more than their indicated job description, as a result of newcomers' trauma. The effects of changing roles in the classroom has extensive consequences on their overall health and wellbeing, causing disrupted learning in the classroom and interferences with teacher's career and personal lives.

Findings

Becoming Language Educators

It's 7:15 am and the commotion of car riders and bus riders arrive at school in classrooms where for teachers like Ms. L, she prepares not just a day of lessons but a safe haven for children whose lives are consequently impacted by immigrational policies and practices. Ms. L has been teaching for over ten years and has stayed in elementary

school bilingual education throughout her time as an educator. She is a general bilingual education teacher in first grade. The motivations behind her role as a bilingual educator have much to do with her own experience as a newcomer in the classroom when initially coming over to the U.S. from Nicaragua. Ms. L is all too familiar with the experience of being a migrant child in a classroom where the responsibilities of being a student are incomparable to the reality of life outside of the four walls of a classroom. The weight of legality and migration on a young child's life greatly disrupt learning in a classroom. Being a Latinx immigrant herself, Ms. L is reminded of the challenges she endured as a newcomer trying to transition into a new way of life, where newness became a regular part of each day. When describing her experience as a newcomer, this is what she said,

> "When I enrolled there [her childhood elementary school], my kindergarten teacher had a very difficult time with me, and I don't think that she knew how to help me because of the lack of language, so she was frustrated, and she just didn't know how to help."

Ms. L's ties to her own newcomer experience is what seems to have driven her to be the bilingual educator she is today Ms. L expressed to me earlier in the interview that she did not initially envision herself being a bilingual teacher. She had aspirations to become a nurse. However, because of personal events that happened in her life, she has found herself doing the work she does today as a bilingual educator. Her emotional ties to once being that migrant student in a classroom that lacked a teacher to sympathize with the struggles she was experiencing as a newcomer, informs the work she does now as a bilingual teacher; fulfilling the role of the encouraging and understanding teacher she did not have when she was a newcomer student.

The next interviewee Ms. T has been a bilingual teacher for seven years. Something unique about her teaching experience is that in her first two years of teaching she taught first-grade general bilingual. However, she began teaching at a newcomer academy, where they teach particularly to newly arrived migrant students and the classroom environment is a little different than that of a typical bilingual class. Ms. T, once a migrant child herself, migrated from Monterrey, Mexico when she was in fourth grade. She describes her childhood growing up as somewhat difficult, saying: "my mom and my dad were never around because they were working, and my mom and my dad didn't speak English- to kind of help us or guide us... It was just survival for me and my brother." She remembers her time as a newcomer in the classroom as "being in the back table, doing small group with the teacher, trying to learn the language." Her connection with these newcomer students is emphasized throughout her interview as being one of the driving forces behind the continuation of the work she does. She, like Ms. L, did not have any initial aspirations to be a teacher either. The work she did before teaching was working at a bank and eventually, she

furthered her education to pursue the current educational career she has now teaching newcomers. Being a migrant child once, Ms. T is sensitive to the needs of her students and remains in this line of work because she knows what the struggles are like being a newly arrived student in the U.S. Her own experience and ties with the immigrant community inform the work she does educating migrant children and it is what drove her to pursue this career.

Teaching for over twenty years, Ms. C, a reading teacher at this newcomer academy, has also shared that her motives behind teaching newcomers has to do with relating back to her own experience arriving from Ecuador: "I was twenty-four years old with a baby in my arms and I did not speak English at the time." She has been nationally recognized by the Board of Education for her contributions in teaching newcomer students and although she has been offered multiple administrative positions because of her successes, she stays in the classroom and even goes as far as driving an hour each day to: "be with them [her students] and assist them. It's not easy, it's very demanding- draining, emotionally draining." Ms. C's attachment to her own migrant narrative is what prompts her to keep fulfilling her job in educating newcomer students. She expresses to me that when choosing the line of work, she wanted to pursue in the U.S., she could have gone with her early pursuits in the field of law. However, inspired by her own migrant journey, she chose to become a newcomer educator and has been doing this work since.

Lastly, Ms. A, also a newcomer academy teacher, is a fifth-grade bilingual, reading teacher. She migrated from Mexico to the United States when she was eleven years and says, "I came here just like my students and feel like that's why I feel so attached to what I do because I was literally them coming in- I was that newcomer." She has been teaching for three years and says that teaching is always something that she envisioned for herself. Her mother, also a teacher, inspired her choice in pursuing a career in education. Choosing to teach specific to the newcomer population, however, has much more to do with her own attachment to once being a newly arrived student in the United States. She entered this occupation knowing that her own experience as a newcomer would enhance the relation to her students and be the primary drive behind her career choice.

Changing Roles in the Classroom

With its aim to provide newcomer students with the necessary tools and resources, the newcomer academy where Ms. T, Ms. C, and Ms. A teach migrant students, caters to the specific needs of newly arrived students. These teachers are familiar with what being a newcomer is like, as they once were in their position, navigating through a new country, language, and classroom. The needs of migrant students are much different than that of general education students. Furthermore, the experience of teachers who teach newcomers in the classroom is

unquestionably unique and comes with certain challenges; challenges that may be out of the expertise of that of a typical educator. To understand their role as bilingual educators, teaching migrant students, I ask if the work they do each day teaching newcomers is in line with their job description on paper. Ms. C begins to explain, "no not at all [...] yes I'm their teacher. Yes, I help with their academic portion, but I mean, we're really more like counselors." It becomes evident that the responsibilities of bilingual teachers are more demanding in the sense that the classroom is not just a setting where the students learn but, where they are all coming from different migration encounters, countries, and educational experiences and the role of a bilingual educator is extended to go beyond teaching a simple lesson plan. Aside from providing the education aspect to newcomers, bilingual teachers are aligning their daily tasks to also be of emotional support to their students.

The week I interviewed Ms. T, she expressed to me that she had received three new students in that week alone. Newly arrived students with different educational backgrounds come into the classroom regularly. The dynamic of a newcomer classroom is expressive in the way that these teachers can attest to newcomers openly sharing about their migration and detention experiences. Throughout my time talking to these four teachers, the three newcomer program teachers expressed the transparency of migrant children when sharing their migration experiences. The fourth general bilingual teacher said there was a bit more hesitancy with some of her newcomer students in sharing those experiences. This disparity may be due to the environment a newcomer versus a bilingual classroom offers; the newcomer classroom has students who all have a shared experience being a newly arrived student and this may foster a greater sense of comfort in opening up about their migration experiences. I ask the newcomer academy teachers to share, in depth, some of the stories they remember throughout their time teaching. Ms. T broke down in tears as she told me about a young girl she had in class. The young girl shared with Ms. T the following:

> "I was in ICE and it was really cold [...] the food was horrible, we didn't get to talk to our Tias or talk on the phone [...] it took us forever to cross the border, once we did, we had to turn ourselves in and then I didn't see my mom."

Additionally, Ms. T had a student two years ago who, when migrating from Mexico, rode "La Bestia" (The Beast). This is a network of freight trains that transport numerous undocumented immigrants from Mexico to the U.S. This mode of transportation is rather deadly and extremely dangerous. This particular student "got into The Beast and she was retained. And when she was in the detention center, they were asking her so many questions." Ms. T quotes the young girl while telling me about this story:

> "She said, 'I didn't understand. They were rude to me. Me and my brother were separated [...] my brother was in one, in one, I guess cage and then I was in another [...] I was with some lady that took care of me inside there because I was by myself.' So, she was 10, maybe 11, no 10 the most. And she said, 'I was by myself' and she said 'I just remember getting those foil covers, foil blankets. We were cold, I didn't have any socks.' She said 'we didn't really go outside or did anything. We just waited and waited.'"

These are the experiences that migrant children carry with them to the classroom and they are "being forced to leave [their] house from gang violence and hunger," as Ms. T puts it. Migrant children leave traumatic situations, where as a result of the current immigration policies, their trauma is even further exacerbated during their time in migration and detention. Coming to the classroom having undergone a series of traumatic experiences, forces bilingual teachers to step outside of their respectful roles, and address the pressing needs of migrant students. Their work goes beyond the typical job description of a teacher. They are shifting their roles to become counselor-like mentors, helping newcomer students navigate their way through a classroom, while also considering the trauma their students have undergone. Ms. A talks to me about her newcomer students and says when you're an asylum-seeking youth,

> "you're saying bye to your parents or your mom and not knowing what's going on, when you're going to see them again. And then they come to school and we expect them to learn how to do this and go home and do your homework. But really, when they go home, they're lonely. They think about their parents and they're not there"

Ms. C, another teacher at the newcomer academy, puts the experiences of her newcomer students this way:

> "we're talking about little kids and they're eight, seven years old taking a long trip [migrating]. Because they are already away from their mom and dad, or sometimes dad is here and mom back at home- so it's a very emotional and traumatic experience for these babies and all that you can do is make them feel safe and protected."

The emotional weight and distress migrant youth carry is transferred to the classroom and disrupts learning in a way that makes it hard for an educator to disregard the affliction migrant youth endure as a result of in-journey and pre- and post-migration trauma. Additionally, learning is further disrupted, as many migrant youths take on adult-like responsibilities that shift their roles in having to multitask being a student and balancing new adult-like responsibilities. Ms. A tell the story of a young girl in her class and says:

> "I have a little girl from Honduras and she's here and she lives with Dad. Mom is in Honduras and her dad works all the time. So, she tells me that when she gets home, like she has to cook and she has this whole routine where she gets home, she does her homework and then she cooks to make sure when her dad gets home, and her uncle gets home- they have something to eat."

This instance informs the multitude of various circumstances newcomers endure. As a result, teachers must alter the curriculum to consider the ever-changing obligations of migrant students. Ms. A, when teaching, must take into consideration the altered needs of students like the young girl mentioned, and provide the appropriate type of support; support that may not be educationally relevant. To supplement the emotional weight and trauma newcomers carry, I ask if the teachers receive any additional training in preparing for the experiences these children have undergone. The answer from all of the teachers was a unanimous no. Ms. A explains to me,

> "We have to complete eighteen hours of bilingual training, and that's done throughout the summer, but it obviously focuses on education- so strategy, skills, and how to work with those bilingual students. But in the other portion of being a counselor, no."

There is not any supplementary training that prepares these teachers for the ways in which they step outside of their jobs as bilingual educators and confront newcomer's needs. Their role in educating newcomers evidently goes beyond just teaching educational material. Their part as a newcomer educator is stretched in a way that makes them not simply a teacher, but also an emotional support and advisor for migrant youth and their families. Ms. L, a general bilingual teacher, describes the extension of her role as an educator as "it's almost like you're a doctor, you're a parent, and you're a teacher." Ms. L does not teach at a school that is designed like the newcomer academy, where the environment is fashioned to cater to the specific needs of newcomer students. Ms. L's classroom is a general bilingual classroom, and she has a mix of newcomer students and English-language learners. She expresses that her students are more hesitant in sharing their migration experiences. With the mix of newcomers and English-language learners, newcomer students may feel that the transition into a formal classroom can be an experience that is quite intimidating. She has had a number of newly arrived students who lack the support of immediate community with other newcomers in the classroom, like at the newcomer academy, and this can be seen as a barrier in the process of integration and socialization. That being said, in my observations and comparison with Ms. L's role versus the role of the three other newcomer academy teachers, her position is seemingly more difficult. As a general bilingual teacher, it can be difficult to distinguish between newcomers and those who are simply English-language learners. I ask Ms. L if any of her students have shared with her any migration or detention experiences and her response was:

> "I have to set that tone, so the kids feel comfortable. They don't just right away share their differences or how they migrated or how their experience is. They're very, very shy. They're very to themselves because they still feel like they are part of an environment that's very different to them."

Ms. L points out that when she does receive a newcomer, there is the possibility of a new student arriving in the middle of the year from a country in which they have no previous exposure to a classroom or formal education. Ms. L shares the following experience:

> "I had one little boy that I believe was from Honduras, I believe, and he went to school in the mountains for just a couple of hours and the schooling was not really even a school, it was more like a little small room. And his experience coming to the United States, was the first day he was in my classroom was the best day, he said, in his whole life of school because having a full day [of school] to him was like, it's going to be a long day. But he got to transition to art, music, all the electives, plus the different things that they got to do in the classroom. It was a very different setting, a different climate for him that he said the school was awesome for him because he's never experienced that before."

This is not uncommon for her as she also had another young girl who was newly arrived from Cuba and did not know how to write her name. She had never attended school before. I ask if, for instances like this, where the learning environment of the classroom has to shift for these types of situations, if bilingual teachers receive additional training? Congruent with the responses from the other teachers at the newcomer academy, Ms. L answers no. She says that oftentimes "the focus [from the school district] is more about data and numbers" and it can take away from the time she feels needs to be spent building relationships with her students. Her response was also similar in regard to describing what her role looks like in comparison to her job description on paper. She says,

> "It's not just the academic part of knowing that you have to teach the general math reading subjects, you're dealing with more than that. You're dealing with little lives that are either in a new country and or you're dealing with little lives that have a very difficult lifestyle at home. You're almost like a parent and a teacher at the same time because you are teaching values to these kids that maybe have not been taught that. You're teaching ethics or values to them. You're teaching them how to socialize, how to build their self-esteem, and you're also building a relationship, which is the most important thing for them to trust you. And once you're done with all of that, then you work on the academic part of reading and math. So, no, it involves more. It's almost like you're a doctor, you're a parent, and then you're a teacher."

Given the exploration of the ways in which bilingual teachers are conducting their jobs in many different manners, I question whether or not any of these teachers have ever contemplated changing careers? Ms. L responds:

> "Yes, there have been moments that I have wanted to choose a different career path, [but] I am a second language speaker myself, and I feel like that's where my heart was because I knew that I was once in their shoes. And I don't think anybody can really compare themselves unless you walk through those shoes. So, I feel like I'm the person that has been through what they're going through. And I can relate to their experiences."

Like the other bilingual teachers, when teaching newcomers, these teachers must step outside of their established roles as educators and provide for migrant children's specific needs; needs that have to do with trauma within migration, detention, and life difficulties upon arrival to the U.S. Ms. C even shared with me "whenever I have given tutorials or support after school, more than one time, I [have to] take them home you know, because they do not have transportation." In this way, teaching newcomers gives these teachers tasks that they and even their administrators could not have anticipated. Re-thinking roles in the classroom is part of these bilingual teacher's careers in teaching newcomers. With no additional training on how to address the definite needs of newcomer students, bilingual teachers must take on several different parts that are typically outside of their area of expertise. These teachers have revealed a sense of reorienting themselves to help address the needs of migrant children in their classrooms.

Evincing Secondary Legal Trauma

Without even going into the details of the conversations I had, the simple fact that no interviewee was able to discuss their experiences in the classroom and interactions with students without crying or expressing emotional distress is evidence that Secondary Legal Trauma exists. As mentioned earlier when Ms. T cried as she managed to tell the story of her student who was held in harsh detention conditions, the persistence of Secondary Legal Trauma is exacerbated every time they receive a newly arrived student. Although, yes, these teachers are motivated by their own ties to their own migrant narrative, the re-traumatization of their own journeys is significant and lived on through their students. Ms. L, when explaining how her own migration motivates the work she does today, could not go into detail of her migration journey without choking up as she remembered enduring the challenges she faced as a migrant child. She is constantly reminded by newcomer children of the trauma she once endured, and the emotional distress she still expresses when talking about her own journey, confirms the existence of re-traumatization and the lasting effects of Secondary Legal Trauma.

Difficulties in separating work life from personal life, is a pattern worth observing in these interviews. For Ms. A, when asked if the work she does as a newcomer teacher has any effect on her personal, she answered with:

> "Yes, I feel like I've gotten better this year. I feel like there's some stuff in my personal life that has happened, and I realized that I can't just live in this world and worry about my kids [her students] all the time. Because, like, I come home and I tell my husband, I'm like, 'Oh my God, like I'm here cooking, and my kids are doing the same thing.' You know, instead of being kids.

> So, yeah, it's hard to separate your work life and all those stories that you hear. Maybe it would be easier if I didn't teach newcomers, but because I know what they go through, it's hard. It's hard. So, I come home, and I talk about it all the time."

Here, Ms. A describes that she feels the emotional baggage she brings home and the interference between work and her personal life could possibly be minimal if perhaps she did not teach newcomers. This furthers the evidence that this is a direct result of the traumatic experiences newcomers bring with them to the classroom. She has a difficult time leaving behind the stories she hears from her students, in the classroom and not bringing it back home with her.

You can expect with the evinced legal trauma teachers undergo, a strenuous relationship between self and work. Ms. C simply says, "we are exhausted." The mental and physical toll of Secondary Legal Trauma is persistent, and Ms. C describes it as:

> "Your brain is going a thousand miles an hour. You're constantly looking, in your mind, for anything that you can access, to help them out. It's exhausting, it's very demanding. It's basically doing two jobs at the same time. Actually, more than that. More than that. You know because you play the supporter, the family supporter, you do all kinds of things- it goes beyond. If you ask me, I will tell you that I leave my work and I'm still planning. I go home and I'm still planning, and I keep working, until ten, ten-thirty. You know, my family already knows that from Monday through Friday I gotta be like fourteen, fifteen hours invested."

The trauma that is transferred to teachers who teach newly arrived children inevitably takes a toll on their personal lives. Ms. T shares: "it's hard for us because we take a lot, a lot of their problems and we bring them home because there's no way to separate what you're going through at school." When asked what she felt like one of her most challenging experiences has been, she discussed a time in which one of her students during class had an uncontrollable panic attack:

> "I had a student who was from Mexico. He was a sweet kid, very quiet. His mom was in Mexico. He was staying here with his tia and he was new. He was doing well. He was quiet, didn't talk much. One day he, out of the blue, had a panic attack and was just like nonstop, like, couldn't stop crying. That was one of the days that I just didn't know what to do. He just was crying and emotionally distressed. And I was like, 'what is going on, que pasa?' His mom had cancer. Mom was in Mexico. He came here because he wanted to show mom that he could do better and better to go to school and better for him to help out somehow and go to school and have a career so he can support his family."

It is stories and walks of life like this that these students bring to the classroom, and there comes a point where it becomes more than just learning whatever the lesson is that day, these students have needed that lead teachers like Ms. T to say, "I feel like I do a lot more counseling and a lot more psychological work." Teachers who

teach newcomers take on roles that provide emotional cushion and guidance to help mend the traumatic experiences of migrant children. Nevertheless, they are reminded of their past struggles and the trauma that was once part of their childhood, persists through their career in teaching newcomers. They become recipients of second-hand trauma and their personal well-being and even health, consequently, takes a toll.

Ms. L has recently suffered from a TIA Stroke- a stroke that is stress induced. She was life flighted and lost her speech for 48 hours. Prior to this, Ms. L and one other bilingual teacher on their campus, were the only two teachers responsible for teaching both in person and virtual classes, due to the pandemic. The lack of bilingual education support within their district resulted in the only two bilingual teachers having to prepare double the amount of curriculum, while the general education teachers were allotted the individual task of either just teaching in person or just teaching virtual. With that, the situational circumstances that come with each newly arrived student, makes it even more of a challenge to teach newcomers appropriately during the time of a pandemic. Ms. L shared with me that at one point, the other bilingual teacher suffered from a panic attack at school because of the pressures of having to do double the work during the time of a global pandemic. Unfortunately for Ms. L, the stress of being a bilingual teacher during the time of COVID-19, resulted in her suffering from a stroke. As a result of Secondary Legal Trauma, bilingual teachers and stakeholders working on behalf of the immigrant community, such as Ms. L, put their health and well-being at a great risk. For these teachers, it is difficult to separate the weight and demand of the distress they feel at work from their personal lives.

Discussion and Conclusion

Children are fleeing from their home countries and because of pre- and post- migration events and interactions, they enter the U.S. society as traumatized beings and are expected to integrate appropriately. With schools being a preeminent institution of socialization for migrant children, teachers become stakeholders within the arrival of unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children, in numbers that are unprecedented. Teachers are then involved in the process of integration for newcomer children. While some teachers operate in settings that are specifically designed for newly arrived students, such as newcomer academies, others work within locally based public schools, teaching in general-bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. My research shows that teachers' obligation to their emotional and network ties to the immigrant community, drives the immigrant-focused work they have chosen to pursue. In catering to the needs of the asylum-seeking children, they are directly involved in the effects U.S. migration policies have on migrant children, and because of that, their roles in the classroom shift from

educators to counselor and psychological-like work; work that is outside of their area of expertise. The effect of this has proven damaging on their personal and overall well-being.

In my sample, women are overrepresented and this can be accredited and confirmed by the works of Dr. Glenda Flores, University of California Irvine Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies, who, in her book *Latina Teachers Creating Careers and Guarding Culture,* she explains that Latina women make up the fastest growing group of non-whites entering into the positions of educators, most especially in areas that are deemed to have a population where there are many Latinx children.[46] In part, Flores ascribes this to the fact that Latina teachers take their own experience of once being a student having to navigate through a racialized education system and in an attempt to bridge the gap between immigration restrictions and the students' pedagogical success, they take on the role of an educator who caters to the immigrant community.[47] The political, legal, social, and economic contexts of their students, motivates Latina teachers to become their students' protectors and save them from penalization as a result of a white-dominated education system.[48] That being said, a concept introduced by Jody Vallejo known as the *immigrant narrative,* can help understand the feeling of obligation to the immigrant community and the domination of Latina women entering the teaching profession as a means of repaying to their communities and previous generations' self-sacrifice in them achieving the social mobility they currently have undergone.[49] They feel constrained by the context of their social and migrant narratives and although, as expressed by three out of the four teachers, they didn't even envision doing the type of work they currently do, their structural positions in society and class ceilings keep them fulfilling this sense of obligation.[50] Future research should continue to focus on the gendered experiences of service providers working with asylum seeking Central American children. As more Latinas enter into positions that are a direct result of the class ceiling and their systematically influenced positions in society, future research should examine how Secondary Legal Trauma disproportionately affects in a gender-based sequence.

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[46] Glenda M. Flores, Latina Teachers: Creating Careers and Guarding Culture (New York: New York University Press, 2017).
[47] Glenda M. Flores, Ibid.
[48] Glenda M. Flores, Ibid.
[49] Jody Agius Vallejo, *Barrios to Burbs: The Making of the Mexican American Middle Class* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[50] Glenda M. Flores, Latina Teachers: Creating Careers and Guarding Culture (New York: New York University Press, 2017).