

Cornered by reality: Circuit minors

Arrinconados por la realidad: Menores de circuito

José A. Moreno Mena* y Rosa María Avendaño Millán**

Received: May 26, 2014. Accepted: November 18, 2014.

Abstract

The present study examines a category of migrant children named "circuit minors". This category includes unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents who cross the border continuously for various reasons and are typically associated with criminal gangs and human and drug traffickers. The aim of this paper is to highlight the problem and consider the risks and the state of social vulnerability in which this population lives. These categories of children and adolescent migrants are identified through a review of the literature, newspaper archives, and official statistics. The study draws on interviews with key informants to characterize this population. We conclude that there is a need to review existing frameworks for the protection of migrant children and to create an action protocol for officials who have contact with these children to ensure their best interests.

Keywords: migrant children , Northern border, human rights, vulnerability, risk.

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza un segmento de la migración infantil al que se le ha llamado "menores de circuito". Se trata de niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes no acompañados que cruzan la frontera por diversos motivos y se les relaciona con bandas delictivas, de trata, traficantes de humanos y drogas. El propósito es hacer visible el problema y reflexionar sobre los riesgos y el estado de vulnerabilidad social que vive esta población. Mediante revisión bibliográfica, hemerográfica y de estadísticas oficiales, así como entrevistas a informantes clave se identifica y caracteriza a esta categoría de migrantes. Se concluye que es necesaria la revisión de los marcos actuales de protección a los niños migrantes y la creación de un protocolo de actuación de las autoridades que tienen contacto con ellos a fin de velar por el interés supremo del menor.

Palabras clave: niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes, frontera norte, derechos humanos, vulnerabilidad, riesgo.

Introduction

Recent studies on the migration of Mexican children and adolescents¹ (CA) have often noted the existence of a category of migrant children that the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF, for its acronym in Spanish) has named "circuit minors" or circuit CA (DIF-Sonora, 2013; DIF-Tamaulipas, 2013),

* Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales. Address: Blvd. Benito Juárez s/n, Unidad Universitaria, Edificio de Vicerrectoría, 3º piso, Col. Ex ejido Coahuila, C.P. 21280, Mexicali, Baja California, México. Email: jmoreno@uabc.edu.mx

** Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Mexicali, Baja California, México. Email: rosyaven@hotmail.com

¹ A recent article by Cabrera and Valdez-Gardea (2013) mentions the phenomenon indirectly when they refer to children who are in charge of transferring migrants from the Sonoran Desert.

while the national press commonly uses the term "polleritos" or "recruiters" (Pérez, 2012).

In both cases, the terms refer to children and adolescents who live on the border and cross into the US continuously and without documentation for different reasons. A decade ago, certain analysts began to detect the existence of this group of CA and the risks they faced; however, Mexican and US government institutions responsible for child protection have chosen to ignore their fate, despite that fact that these children are at greatest social risk due to the type of activities in which they are involved.

The present study has several aims: the first is to demonstrate the phenomenon of migrant children through studies and statistics; the second is to reflect on the risks and the state of social vulnerability of these children; and the third is to offer certain recommendations to help implement public policies for their care. To this end, we have analyzed official documents and reports of civil society organizations, repatriation statistics, key informant interviews, newspaper archives, and the relevant scholarly literature. We have assumed that migrant CA is the category with the greatest social vulnerability because these children are abandoned by the institutions of the Mexican government, are thrown into a life of crime as a consequence of the social reality in which they are trapped, and are provided with no opportunities to develop holistically as human beings. We understand the concept of social vulnerability "as a social condition of risk, difficulty, disabling and invalidating, immediately or in the future, for the affected groups, in providing for their wellbeing—regarding their livelihood and quality of life—in socio-historical and culturally determined contexts" (Perona, Crucella, Rochi and Robin, et al., 2000, paragraph 17).

The study is divided into two main sections. The first section considers the state of affairs of CA, situating circuit minors in the literature and statistics; the second section considers the risks and violence prevalent on the northern border to which they are subjected and interventions with circuit minors. Finally, we conclude by putting forward certain proposals for the protection frameworks that should be available for these CA.

Studies on CA and circuit minors

Studies on the migration of Mexican children and adolescents into the United States are scarce in academic analyses. Ramos Tovar (2009, pp. 37-38) argues that research on the subject has focused more on labor and the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants, their networks, places of origin and destination, remittances, and, recently, the incorporation of women.

In our case, the corresponding studies on unaccompanied Mexican children and adolescents (CA) have focused on migration since the 1990s. Concern over the soaring increase and vulnerability of these children began to be a topic of discussion for international institutions, drawing the interest of academics. According to Mendez (2000), De la Rosa developed one of the first studies on the subject in the 1990s. This author, using data from "Casa del Migrante" ["House of the Migrant"], a non-profit organization located in Tijuana, described the migration process of minors on the US-Mexico border, establishing a characterization of the unaccompanied children treated at this center.

Subsequently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted a survey in several border cities where CA were being repatriated (1993) to create a profile of migrant children.

In 1998, the Mexican Human Rights Academy, Albergue del Desierto [The Safe House of the Desert], and the Support Center for the Migrant Worker (1998), along with other civil society organizations in Baja California, presented a diagnosis on CA in the City of Mexicali⁸² in a book entitled *La esperanza truncada [The truncated hope]*. At the time, Mexicali was the most important border town of northern Mexico for the repatriation of CA and constituted the point of reference for the migration of this population.

In 2001, Lopez and Villaseñor (2001) wrote essays related to CA in which they emphasized the risks faced by the minors at the time, especially death.

Circuit minors were invisible in the overall migration data, which was at times related to female migration. Thus, it was impossible to have reliable data on the number of CA who crossed into the United States of America (US) through northern Mexico or were housed at the border waiting to cross.² Mexican consulates located in the border states were the only ones that had relevant data because they were directly involved in the repatriation process with civil society organizations supporting migrant CA. The notable latter organizations were those that cared to systematize data on the population of children. They were pioneers in disseminating information that would help the authorities to develop policies of care for migrant children (Mexican Human Rights Academy, Desert Inn, and Support Center for the Migrant Worker, 1998).

The official data that civil society organizations and academia required was lacking; thus, in 2001, the National Migration Institute (INM) began to disseminate its statistics on Mexicans repatriated from the United States. These statistics included gender and age, where the breakdowns of CA were reported by the consulates. In this statistical data, some omissions continue to persist to the present, especially regarding CA who have not crossed and are under the protection of civil society organizations.

An important reference for understanding CA was the study conducted by Gallo³ (2004) on eleven cities located on the northern border of Mexico for the purpose of analyzing the inter-institutional procedure for migrant children and adolescents traveling unaccompanied by family. The analysis included current regulations related to child migration, which set the tone for various government institutions to begin reconsidering the issue. It also made recommendations aiming to improve migration management and to harmonize the regulatory framework with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Subsequently, given the growth of CA repatriated through the state of Sonora, a researcher at the Colegio de Sonora [The College of Sonora], Valdez-Gardea (2013), convened the First International Conference on Migration and Migrant Children in 2007. To date, there have been four meetings that have generated a large amount of materials and inputs on the subject of CA. In addition, these meetings have helped to address different perspectives on this population.⁴

Two recent studies should be noted for the variety of topics covered. The first was conducted by Ramirez Garcia Munoz and Enciso, et al. (2009). These authors distinguished different migratory routes of CA and concluded that the migration of

² The invisibility of CA migration has been studied in other countries. For example, Torrado (2012) has identified the phenomenon in migration from Africa to Spain.

³ The study was conducted under the framework of the inter-institutional project Attention to Border Children, which began in 1996 under an agreement between the National System for Integral Family Development and the United Nations Children's Fund. They were subsequently joined by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and the National Migration Institute.

⁴ In this regard, see Valdez-Gardea (2008) and Valdez-Gardea (2013).

children, just like that of adults, follows clearly established migration routes, connecting the place of origin to border cities where the crossing will be attempted or completed. One of the most interesting aspects of this study was that it provided elements to characterize migrant children by proposing categories to classify them, given that, in the authors' estimation, those used hitherto were inadequate.

The second study, conducted by the Appleseed Foundation (2011), was a detailed investigation into the procedures and practices carried out by US and Mexican authorities for the repatriation of CA. The study focused on those procedures that undermine the interests of the child, and it made a number of recommendations to children protection systems from the two countries in the field of public policy.

Who are the circuit minors?

In the various studies on migrant children, several terms are used to refer to CA. Sometimes, they refer to unaccompanied migrant minors, at other times, to unaccompanied migrant boys and girls or to both as synonyms. According to Ramirez et al. (2009), the Program for Unaccompanied Minors in Europe prefers to use the term "separated boys and girls" rather than "unaccompanied", as had been previously established by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 1989), to identify children who are part of migration flows crossing or attempting to cross the northern border in the hands of people who are not their parents or customary caregivers. According to Ramirez et al. (2009), the fundamental argument of the Program for Unaccompanied Minors in Europe was that this concept provides a better definition of the main problem that the children face, i.e., CA do not have the care and protection of their parents and guardians, and consequently, they suffer the effects of that separation socially and psychologically. Even though they arrive "accompanied", their custodians are not necessarily appropriate or able to assume responsibility for the care of these children.

In the present study, we prefer to use the definitions provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the High Commissioner (1989), which in Article 1 defines a *child* as a person under eighteen years, unless, under the applicable law, he or she has attained majority before that age; and the term *unaccompanied migrant child or adolescent (CA)* refers to a child crossing the border alone, with peers, or with people who are not relatives and who abandon the child to fend for him- or herself at the crossing points, where he or she is apprehended by US immigration authorities (Hernandez, 2012).

Included in this category of migrant children are boys and girls who migrate alone to the border with the intention of crossing into the US either for family reunification, labor issues, or other reasons. This category also includes children who were intercepted in US territory and were repatriated alone or with friends. From that vision, the category would also include so-called "circuit minors", who appear sporadically in certain academic studies.

In 2012, the Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional [Binational Defense and Advocacy Program] (PDIB), a network of civil society organizations, presented an *Amicus Curiae*⁵ before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights following the classification of CA in circuits:

⁵ *Amicus Curiae* is a Latin phrase that literally means "friend of the court" and its goal is to open the possibility for third parties who are not part of the dispute, but who have a demonstrable and justifiable interest in solving it, to promote a voluntary presentation that contains a technical opinion by which they provide elements that can be legally transcendent when the judge rules on the matter of the dispute (Nexus, 2012). The information provided may consist of a written legal opinion, an unsolicited

These children cross into the US, recurrently and without documentation, for reasons that have nothing to do with finding work or family reunification. They can be classified into two groups: one type of CA originates in Mexican border towns and often cross the border as a life experience, their decision to cross constituting a symbolic reward: the gaining of experience, the demonstration of maturity and/or courage. The second type includes children and underage adolescents who are involved in human trafficking networks to guide the passage of migrants across the border or who are involved with organized crime groups engaged in drug trafficking. (Binational Defense and Advocacy Program, 2012, p. 11)

The PDIB (2012) has suggested that circuit minors cross the northern border to know what they can achieve when crossing, which will be satisfactory even if repatriated because the decision to cross constitutes a symbolic reward: the gaining of experience, the demonstration of maturity and/or courage. Already in studies by López (2003) on migrants from Michoacán, they mention the "rite of passage" that many children and adolescents undergo, that is, "reaching the age to go to the North." As noted by Lopez (2003), in the process of socialization, children learn the elements of migration by accessing a symbolic capital that allows them to participate in migration experiences, knowledge, understanding, and lifestyles, which serve as framework to act. Even if they have never been to the US, they already have references from other adolescents who have emigrated and from their parents.

Le Goff (2012) has reported that some CA travel motivated by the adventure and the desire to "know the other side", as if it were a learning rite of adolescents. Vilaboa (2006) indicates that 3.2% of CA respondents in their study said that their attempt to cross without documentation to the United States was to go for a "walk". According to the PDIB Binational Defense and Advocacy Program (2012), another way in which circuit minors enter this scenario occurs when children and adolescents become involved—either by choice or by force—with human trafficking networks to guide the passage of migrants across the border or with organized crime groups engaged in trafficking drugs into the northern neighboring country and, similarly, when children are deceived or recruited to provide sexual services to adults.

The activities that often take place or that circuit minors are required to perform include:

[...] locating potential victims in the very same shelters arranged by Mexican authorities or operated by civic society organizations to care for migrant CA, prior to being returned to their place of origin, or in the crossing points established by coyotes and smugglers, in order to be labor or sexually exploited. Some of these, under 18, are charged with recruiting children, who are persuaded to escape the shelter and offered passage across the border, only to be left in the hands of criminal organizations. (Pérez, 2012)

This is why the phenomenon of CA has led to a new character, not only in the framework of undocumented migration but also within organized crime: as a result of their association with these groups, they are addressed contemptuously as circuit minors, recruiters, and "polleritos" (Pérez, 2012) or also "coyotitos", guides, and hawks.

testimonial, or a juridical report on the subject matter. In that case, it appears as a testimonial of a civil organization.

As we see, the existence of circuit minors represents a reality that cannot be hidden. In the literature on CA, we can visualize the following classification proposed by Ramirez et al. (2009):

Children who cross the border to meet their family, usually accompanied by a relative, friend, or delivered to a coyote for crossing.

Children between 12 and 13 years from a poor family. Groups of children who are generally the eldest in their families and thus feel pressured and rush to start contributing to family expenses.

Children who leave their families in a spirit of adventure and leave school or children who have problems in the family with parents, stepparents, or guardians.

In this classification, a type of CA appears in the last paragraph that corresponds to circuit minors.

In another study, Méndez (2000) found that the network of YMCA Homes⁶ for Migrant Children (CYMM) also made an effort to classify CA into different categories that could help identify the problems associated with them. It identified the following three categories:

Temporary migrants. Children with strong family ties living in homes inside the United States.

Nomadic migrants. Children without a family or those who in some cases do not provide sufficient information to track them and thus refer them to any adult person. Therefore, they cannot be reintegrated into a family environment and are those with a higher tendency to cross again into the United States.

Cross-border migrants. Children living in Mexican border cities who do not have a defined family. Generally, they have been raised in street environments, without the care and protection of families. The reasons for their crossing are uncertain, and they do not wish to return to their homes or relatives (p. 17).

In this YMCA classification, one can also note the presence of circuit minors in the categories of cross-border children and nomadic children.

Various scenarios occur with migrant children, noted by Mancillas (2009), who states that there are migrant children in transit, alone or accompanied, and cross-border children, with constant movement at the border: in order to gain experience or for fun, as part of cultural dynamics. They are defined as:

... the "polleritos", who are minors who help other migrants to cross the border. Returnees are those who were discovered by US authorities and returned to Mexico. The fourth condition is that of border children, who are migrants or returnees who have settled temporarily or permanently at the border. They may be devoted to hoboism or to being "street children". Some even live in drainage tunnels on the border between Nogales, Sonora, and Nogales, Arizona (Mancillas, 2009, p.231).

⁶ Young Men's Christian Association.

In 2006, at the "Unaccompanied migrant children in the northern border: repatriation, protection, and care" seminar, held at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Tijuana, the subject was discussed:

Two types of migrant children are considered: those from the south, whose main interest is to cross into the US, and those living in the region who, in fact, are used to serving as guides for crossing undocumented people into the US. (EL Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2006, p. 9)

Meanwhile, in a study conducted in the city of Nogales, Sonora, Vilaboa (2006) found that 1.6% of CA interviewed were border residents, most of whom did not indicate reasons for having tried to enter the US; while another 1.6% said that they crossed because they had trafficked in drugs.

Visibility of circuit minors in statistics

Official statistics have regularly omitted the issue of circuit minors because the characteristics of CA were not recorded, even when, in the 1990s, there was an upward trend in the presence of children in migration, a trend that was also associated with the increased involvement of women in migration flows. According to data from the Center for Migration Studies of the National Migration Institute (CMS), the repatriation flows from the US to Mexico grew very rapidly starting in 1995, increasing from 853,000 repatriations to more than one million repatriations in 2000. However, subsequently, there was a decline, ranging from 525,000 to 600,000 per year. From 2010 onwards, the annual average changed to 350,000 (Center for Migration Studies of the National Migration Institute, 2008).

As of 2001, the National Migration Institute (INM) made public the CA repatriation statistics data classified by gender and age. According to the data corresponding to the 2001-2005 period, the number of CA deportees (annual average) amounted to 49,387, which represented 8.47% of all migrants repatriated, including adults. This means that eight out of 100 repatriation events were related to persons under 18 years of age. From 2006 to 2011, it declined to five out of 100 repatriations.

Table 1. Repatriation of Mexicans from the United States- Adults and CA from 2000 to 2012

Year	Grand Total (adults + CA)	Total FN	CA	Percentage CA
2000	1.150,906	116,938		10.2
2001	791,256	63,756		8.1
2002	583,408	47,585		8.2
2003	559,949	52,535		9.4
2004	511,028	39,420		7.7
2005	536,767	39,910		7.4
2006	514,779	37,575		7.3
2007	564,609	35,744		6.3
2008	559,361	32,151		5.7
2009	590,792	25,271		4.3
2010	445,877	19,425		4.4
2011	396,564	15,167		3.8
2012	233,661	10,697		4.6
2013	332,865	16,971		5.0

Source: Center for Migration Studies of the National Migration Institute, 2000-2013.

For 2012 and 2013, according to the figures from INM, repatriations generally continued decreasing; consequently, the reported number of CA also decreased. As shown in Table 1, 233,661 deportations were recorded in 2012, and of that total, 10,697 were CA repatriations; in 2013, total deportations reached 332,865 events, of which 16,971 were CA.

When the data are disaggregated by sex (see Table 2), until 2003, two-thirds were male CA, while one-third were female CA. However, that situation changed in subsequent years, reaching eight out of ten male CA and two out of ten female CA in 2013.

Table 2. Repatriation of Children and Adolescents, 2000-2012. Percentages by sex

Year	Quantity	% Male	Quantity	% Female	Total
2000	75,133	64.3	41,805	35.7	116,938
2001	42,707	67.0	21,049	33.0	63,756
2002	32,437	68.2	15,148	31.8	47,585
2003	33,977	64.7	18,558	35.3	52,535
2004	28,326	71.9	11,094	28.1	39,420
2005	29,026	72.7	10,884	27.3	39,910
2006	27,947	74.4	9,652	25.7	37,575
2007	26,750	74.8	8,994	25.2	35,744
2008	24,484	76.2	7,667	23.8	32,151
2009	19,630	77.7	5,641	22.3	25,271
2010	15,791	81.3	3,634	18.7	19,425
2011	12,601	83.1	2,571	17.0	15,167
2012	9,019	84.3	1,679	15.7	10,697
2013	14,625	86.2	2,346	13.8	16,971

Source: Center for Migration Studies of the National Migration Institute, 2000-2013.

Data from the Center for Migration Studies of the INM, 2000-2013, also allow us to see how the migration of adults and CA moved from one state to another, based on how border controls operate and the risks involved in crossing through increasingly inhospitable places. From 2000, CA deportations moved to the state of Sonora, where Nogales became the most important city in this regard; it was only in 2007 and 2008 that it was not the most prominent area for the repatriation of children, as Baja California was the most important. In 2012 and 2013, Sonora and Tamaulipas were identified as CA deportation areas, as reflected in the statistics of attention from the consulates of those entities (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of CA served by the Consular Network of Mexico, according to the border region between the US and Mexico, 2012 and 2013

US- Mexico border	2012		2013	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Texas-Tamaulipas (A)	4,930	36.6	6,880	43.0
California-Baja California (B)	1,534	11.4	1,327	8.3
Texas-Coahuila (C)	919	6.8	1,008	6.3
Texas-Chihuahua (D)	657	4.9	646	4.0
Arizona-Sonora (E)	5,414	40.3	6,155	38.4
Total	13,454	100.0	16,016	100.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the Consular Network in Mexico on Borders.

(A) Group data from the Mexican consulates located in the cities of Brownsville, Laredo, and McAllen, located in the state of Texas; cities which in turn are on the border with Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo, and Reynosa, respectively, in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas.

(B) Group data from the Mexican consulates located in San Diego and Calexico, California, which are on the border with the cities of Tijuana and Mexicali, respectively, in the Mexican state of Baja California.

(C) Group data from the Texas cities of Del Rio and Eagle Pass, which are on the border, respectively, with the cities of Ciudad Acuña and Piedras Negras in the Mexican state of Coahuila.

(D) Group data from the Mexican consulates located in El Paso and Presidio, Texas; which are on the border, respectively, with Ciudad Juárez and Ojinaga, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

(E) Group data from the Mexican consulates located in Douglas, Nogales, and Yuma, Arizona; cities close to the borders of the state of Sonora, respectively: Agua Prieta, Nogales, and San Luis Río Colorado.

From the limited available information on CA, it has been observed that circuit minors in CA represent a significant number in migration flows. This is an issue that deserves attention because there is the potential risk that the number of this type of CA may be increasing. There are examples that illustrate the number of circuit minors crossing the Mexican border with the United States and that serve as a reference for the dimensions that the phenomenon has reached. For example, in the US-Mexico border city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, the System for the Development of the Municipal Family stated that the phenomenon had decreased compared to previous years, but in 2008, it recorded an average of twenty cases per month of such CA originating or residents from the city, and some cases had been admitted to the United States up to fifteen times; it also said that until November of that year, it had a record of "89 boys ranging in age from 15 to 17 years old, out of a grand total of 530 migrant children who have crossed into the United States through the border at Piedras Negras" (Pulgarin, 2010, p. 1). That is, 16.5% of children and adolescents served by the local agency were circuit minors, a significant figure even considering that this phenomenon is decreasing in this border town.

However, in April 2008, the INM delegation of the state of Chihuahua confirmed the existence of children, known as "polleritos", who assisted in the smuggling of undocumented persons into the United States across the border from Ciudad Juárez. At the time, the only mention was of the existence of adolescents between 14 and 17 years of age who participated in crossings or who served as guides (Chaparro, 2008). However, in August 2012, this institution had already identified at least 97 minors who recorded several unauthorized entries into the United States and frequent returns to Mexico ("Enquiry on Mexican Migration," 2012).

Furthermore, Hernández (2012) found in the records of the Support Center for Border Children (CAMEF) in Matamoros that in 2011, 61.2% of the children were

from the state of Tamaulipas (where Matamoros is located), although the figure did not record the number of CA originating or based in Matamoros (who would be the proper circuit minors in that city). This issue is important because it gives an idea of the number of children and adolescents originating from the entity who frequently try to cross into the United States without documentation and are at risk of being co-opted by organized crime.

The 2013 data published by the Center for Migration Policy and Legislation from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte shows that of all of the children and adolescents repatriated to Mexico, 4,981 originated from any of the six Mexican states bordering the United States; of the total number corresponding to the northern border, 5.6% were accompanied by an adult and 94.4% were CA traveling alone when arrested by the Border Patrol (see Table 4).

Table 4. Children and adolescents repatriated from the United States who originated from the northern border states of Mexico, 2013

	Baja California		Sonora		Chihuahua		Coahuila		Nuevo León		Tamaulipas		Total F. N.	
	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%
Accompanied														
12 to 17 years	24	0.5	12	0.2	36	0.7	15	0.3	28	0.6	70	1.4	185	3.7
Up to 11 years	17	0.3	3	0.1	25	0.5	10	0.2	18	0.4	19	0.4	92	1.8
Subtotal	41	0.8	15	0.3	61	1.2	25	0.5	46	0.9	89	1.8	277	5.6
Unaccompanied														
12 to 17 years	249	5.0	2,343	47.0	468	9.4	350	7.0	69	1.4	1 188	23.9	4 667	93.7
Up to 11 years	4	0.1	5	0.1	3	0.1	3	0.1	1	0.02	21	0.4	37	0.7
Subtotal	253	5.1	2,348	47.1	471	9.5	353	7.1	70	1.4	1,209	24.3	4 704	94.4
TOTAL	294	5.9	2,363	47.4	532	10.7	378	7.6	116	2.3	1,298	26.1	4 981	100.0

Source: Data from the Center of Migration Policy and Legislation-COLEF (2014). Map with ranges of repatriated minors by the United States by originating state during 2013.

These data provide a more real dimension of the number of CA coming from the border states of northern Mexico and crossing into the United States without documentation. That their residence is near the border helps them cross multiple times, potentially converting them into circuit minors. Table 4 shows that the border states of northern Mexico that "contributed" the most CA repatriated in 2013 were Sonora with 47.1% and Tamaulipas with 24.3% because, as a whole, 71.4% of children and adolescents from the northern border originated from these two states.

To better visualize circuit minors in CA statistics, it is generally necessary to examine migratory motivations for attempting to cross in an unauthorized manner into the US. This is important for understanding the context in which circuit minors are immersed because, as with most other CA, most of them also started their migratory journey in search of employment opportunities to improve their economic situation. Their hopes dashed and needing to survive, they became involved in

illegal activities. Thus, it is important to note that in recent years, it has been documented that the main motivation for CA migration to the US has stopped being family reunification. Currently, CA migration is mostly based on economic and labor needs.

The consular network from the Directorate General for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) conducted a statistical survey of the 2012-2013 period. It started by asking those CA who had been served questions on the main motivations for migration. In the results listed in Table 5, of the 13,454 CA served by the Consular Network in 2012, 69.1% said that their motivations were work-related, whereas only 10.1% reported family reunification. In 2013, of a total 16,016 CA, 58.8% answered that work-related reasons for unauthorized crossing were the motivation and 9.6% answered family reunification. In both cases, the percentages decreased compared to the previous year, due mainly to work-related motivation, which fell by more than 10 percentage points; nevertheless, finding work and reuniting with family continued to be the two main reasons for crossing into the United States.

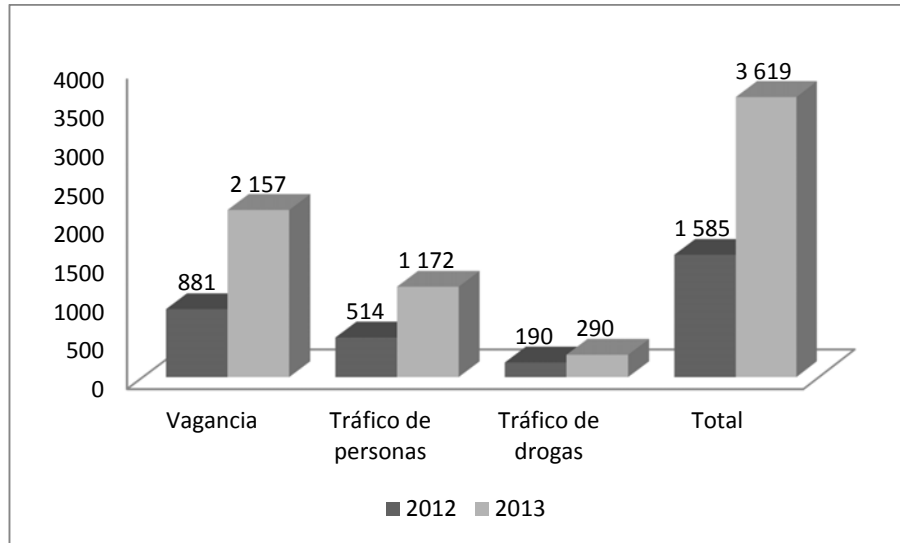
Table 5. Main reason for migration manifested by CA 2012

Main reason for crossing	2012		2013	
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
Labor	9,295	69.1	9,421	58.8
Family reunification	1,355	10.1	1,533	9.6
Studies	671	5.0	747	4.7
Visit	157	1.2	86	0.5
Vagrancy	881	6.5	2,157	13.5
Tourism	61	0.5	64	0.4
Adult accompaniment	42	0.3	52	0.3
Lives in the US	36	0.3	7	0.0
Human trafficking	514	3.8	1,172	7.3
Drug trafficking	190	1.4	290	1.8
Other	189	1.4	421	2.6
Not available	63	0.5	66	0.4
Total	13,454	100.0	16,016	100.0

Source: Data from the Consular Network of the Directorate General for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (2013).

The most compelling data shows that the phenomenon of circuit minors is increasing. As shown in Figure 1, out of the total 13,454 CA arrested and repatriated from the US, 6.5% claimed "vagrancy" as their reason for having crossed into the neighboring country. That same reason almost doubled in 2013 to 2,157 CA, representing 13.5% of the total.

Figure 1. Number of repatriated CA reporting vagrancy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking as the main reason for crossing into the United States, 2012 and 2013



Source: Data from the Consular Network of the General Directorate of Protection of Mexicans Abroad of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Mexico (2013).

Additionally, when we add the items of human trafficking and drug trafficking in 2012, then 5.2% (704) of unaccompanied children and adolescents claimed that they crossed into the United States for these reasons. However, in 2013, those individuals who identified the same reasons totaled 9.1% of CA. When we group the items of vagrancy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking, we find that in 2012, they totaled 11.7% of CA listed by the Consular Network, but the following year, in 2013, they amounted to 22.6% of total repatriated CA. The figures show that in only one year, there was an exponential increase in the number of unaccompanied children and adolescents who crossed into the United States and could be characterized as circuit minors. These data illustrate not only that the phenomenon is increasing but also that we face a worrying situation that requires urgent public policies aimed at preventing migrant CA from continuing their exposure or swelling the ranks of circuit minors.

Risks and the situation of vulnerability for CA on the northern border

On the northern border of Mexico, migrants of different profiles, such as those who come with the intention of crossing into the United States, those who are deported, and Central Americans, encounter the virtual and physical wall that has been built since the well-known immigration control program "Operation Guardian" began in the first half of the 1990s in the Clinton administration and was extended with the policy of *security* of subsequent presidents, motivated by the events of September 11, 2001, in which terrorists destroyed the twin towers in New York. The new vision that prevails in the US government groups migration together with terrorism and drug trafficking as a matter of national security (Moreno, 2013). The above, coupled with the war fought by the government over the past six years against drug trafficking and organized crime (having not changed much with the current government), has cast the regions through which migrants regularly transit in a state of extreme violence and insecurity. It can be said that a risk context, where children are the most vulnerable group, has been institutionalized (Bustamante, 2001; Ruiz, 2004).

On the northern border of Mexico, migrants converge with similar needs in a space that has become hostile. They are caught in a complex terrain where they interact with criminals involved in human trafficking and drug trafficking, "polleros, drug traffickers, and migrant smugglers" who try to subject them to extortion, kidnapping, and even murder, as has been the case of the slaughter of 72 people in August 2010 and the subsequent discovery of clandestine graves in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Added to these criminal groups, local police take advantage of their vulnerability and most of the time act in collusion with the criminal gangs. Today, migrants are caught between a rock and a hard place, on one hand, facing violations of their human rights by the Border Patrol, local police, and the Mexican Army and, on the other hand, facing the threat of organized crime, which sees migrants as a prized commodity (Moreno, 2013). It is in these environments of intra-border conflict, in which CA show the highest levels of vulnerability, where they also must face:

[...] a world that severely alters the developmental possibilities of their full potential and leaves them exposed to situations that severely damage them. These situations are family abandonment, labor or sexual exploitation, their absence from educational institutions, or being involved in risk groups pushing them into a spiral of increasing harm (Petit, 2003, p. 17).

In that scenario, CA are those most susceptible to the violation of their rights, given that they travel alone or those accompanying them are not necessarily the most appropriate for their protection. For that reason alone, they are exposed to high risk situations in which their physical integrity is defenseless against the networks of human trafficking, drug trafficking, and sex trafficking. In this regard, Ramirez et al. (2009) note that there are still a number of risks to the physical integrity of repatriated CA and to those in transit at the border, such as the risk of falling into the hands of human traffickers; abuse, mistreatment, and discrimination; failure to comply with agreed-upon schedules in local arrangements and memoranda of repatriation; failure to have adequate space to provide care; the violation of the right to information when their parents are detained and they are unaware or uninformed of their whereabouts; and the lack of intergovernmental coordination between the states of origin and those at the borders. Migrants on the northern border are frequently kidnapped, and CA are no exception ("Authorities Rescue", 2010). Previously, Gallo (2004) warned that in the northern border region:

One of the groups most susceptible to the violation of their human rights are migrant children and adolescents crossing the border or attempting to cross irregularly and unaccompanied by adult family members [...] in addition to the search for a better life, these children usually cross the border with the desire to join family members already present in the United States ... in these displacements, they may be involved in the commission of crimes, be engaged in networks of sexual or labor exploitation, suffer accidents and even die. (p.10)

In its second report of 2013, PDIB also notes other types of risks to CA as a result of the repatriation process. One risk is family separation, which infringes on the right to family unity, and another risk is separation through lateral repatriations. These risks undermine the personal integrity and safety of CA, increasing the risk of being placed in unsafe borders and unknown areas, primarily in the states of northeastern Mexico, such as Coahuila and Tamaulipas (Binational Defense and Advocacy Program, 2013a).

Alluding to the US Border Patrol, Perez says:

Many of the CA detained at the border risked dangerous journeys to the United States seeking a better opportunities for life, economic conditions, and education. Some migrated to escape intolerable circumstances in their homes and, by the time they cross the border, many come to the United States having been victims of human trafficking or having been manipulated by criminal groups in Mexico. (Pérez, 2012, p.12)

In this context, circuit CA are in an even more vulnerable condition, having become cannon fodder. They are recruited for money or are simply forced under threat to guide people or carry drug consignments across the border, as described by the general coordinator of the YMCA Homes for Migrant Children, Uriel Gonzalez:

In addition to being used as guides, young people crossing the border by the mountainous area of Baja California are at risk of being co-opted by Mexican drug cartels. They are paying a toll, not in cash but in kind. The drug trafficking groups are forcing migrants, including minors, to be drug smugglers into the US. That immediately changes the purpose and penalty of entry. They stop being migrants entering irregularly into a country and become drug traffickers. (Reform Agency, 2009, paragraph 6).

For organized crime gangs, the advantage of engaging this population of migrant children is that these CA are not subject to criminal prosecution for their activity as guides for people or drug smuggling when they are detained on US soil, and they are only repatriated to Mexico (Binational Defense and Advocacy Program, 2012).

This situation had already been noted in certain forums, such as the 2006 seminar Migrant Children, where there was a warning about the existence of

[...] a Practice that allows the child to be returned by immigration authorities while trying to enter the United States many times in violation of immigration laws, without being detained permanently.

The implementation of this measure alone has generated an unexpected social phenomenon: minors have been used as a tool of the industry of informal or illegal migration because they enjoy a sort of legal immunity at the border; children and adolescents are used within the structure of organized crime gangs such as human smugglers or traffickers of prohibited goods. (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2006, p. 9)

In some cases, circuit CA are used as witnesses in criminal investigations of human trafficking and/or drug trafficking when they are detained in the US. However, once their involvement in these legal proceedings ends, they are repatriated to Mexico, a life-threatening situation given that they may be victims of retaliation by members of the criminal networks they were involved with, transgressing the principle of non-refoulement in relation to migrant children.

Social vulnerability of circuit minors

As shown, the risks to CA on the US-Mexico border are objective, ranging from those due to the climate, deserts, and rivers to those owing to other human beings. A break should be in order now to address the social vulnerability of circuit minors. Initially, we noted that these children are immersed in a social reality that traps them and prevents their development. They are ignored by a state that is not conducive to opportunity and has no policies regarding prevention, much less protection. Thus, we must examine the family environment of these children.

There is a lack of studies focusing on the family environment of circuit minors. However, through the experience of shelter managers receiving migrant children (González, 2014), it is possible to realize the complexity of this issue. In some cases, the families of circuit minors are separated by the border that divides Mexico from the US, and the father figure is absent. Parental organization is almost always focused on the maternal figure. However, the opposite case, where the father and children were deported while the mother remained in the United States, may also be true.

In other cases, the mother is also "absent" due to work-related reasons, health, or abandonment. In another scenario, the family of origin is in constant conflict and domestic violence is a facet of everyday life. Returning to Scandizzo (cited by Bulgach and Flores, 2011), minors undergo a process of self-conditional expulsion, "an attempt by the child to solve the stress state posed by staying at home" (p. 307). This is not an abrupt process but a gradual one in which the child interacts with the field outside of the home as a place of socialization and subsistence. This child falls into the subcategory of children separated from their families, defined by UNICEF as a Child in Danger, one "who lives at home but is likely to run away from it" (Elizaguirre, 2006, paragraph 2).

However, there are also relatively integrated family environments, with both the father and mother, under severe economic deprivation, where children begin to develop life strategies that help them to become independent from the predominant family financial support and provide them with a certain status within the family (Oropeza, 2014). According to the YMCA Homes Network, it is known that circuit minors, in some cases, spend their income to support their families and also pay their own expenses:

[...] in our organizations, there was a repatriated child who received appropriate attention and, talking to him, we came to know of his activity as a guide; subsequently, we were able to contact his mother to carry out family reunification and to talk to her about the great risk posed to the child because of that activity; she said that she understood. However, the child brought home US\$500 a week and they could not do without that income. (Binational Defense and Advocacy Program, 2012, p.11)

In connection with this, Perez noted that regarding the issue of circuit CA, there is also another phenomenon: that of parents who use their child as a smuggler of other children, for which the father receives 300 to 500 pesos for each crossing the child makes (Pérez, 2012). In such cases, adults encourage children to get involved in palliative strategies, with the aim of expanding an alternative income source. Due to these situations, the activities of circuit minors have also become part of their culture of survival, as these CA, not having any other options to survive, have been co-opted by criminal gangs and are engaged in repeatedly crossing into the United States to carry out various activities for groups to which they now belong.

If a precarious family environment forces minors to seek monetary resources to meet their and their family's needs, the neglect of the authorities compounds the problem. Some public servants on the Mexican side have dared to acknowledge that for both the migration institutions and those responsible for giving shelter to circuit minors, the situation is serious. In this regard, the Child Protection Officer (OPI) of the National Migration Institute (INM), Patricia Fragoso, has noted that "it is an issue that requires bilateral negotiation because, when US officials detect who has crossed, where, and how many times, even though they know it is the same person and he or she is identified by different names in each detention, they do not tell us" (Pérez, 2012, p.12).

The issue has also become more complex due to the different approaches taken by Mexican and US authorities, as the study conducted by the Appleseed Foundation (2011) warned, because while the Mexican government, through the National Migration Institute, has endeavored to retain CA to assess the conditions under which they decided to migrate and the risks of family reintegration, the DIF has chosen to hasten reunification rather than conduct a thorough assessment of the minor's reasons for crossing the border or evaluate the environment of the specific household (Appleseed, 2011). However, the US approach prioritizes returning the children to their country of origin, without investigating whether they have been victimized in their places of origin or whether they have been arrested several times, without regard to the superior right of the child. They are simply returned as the Appleseed Foundation describes (2011). Therefore, unaccompanied children and adolescents, who are detained in an attempt to cross the border into the United States and who are deported without regard to the dangers they face upon return and without protective measures and procedures, are at serious risk.

The problem of circuit minors should be viewed from a transversal perspective because it involves all three levels of government. Due to their complexity, government agencies have failed to meet their responsibilities, especially those related to keeping children out of the reach of trafficking networks and ensuring an environment free of violence, as the rights of the child establish.

In an interview on the subject of trafficking minors conducted by a media outlet, Moreno García⁷ notes that some uneasiness was caused in the above-mentioned agencies with respect to defining who should be responsible:

Migration had for a long time the burning issue in their hands. On one hand, the US was pressing because we had no protocol for action. On the other hand, DIF no longer accepted them. Additionally, US immigration authorities inform the consulate before they report to us. Unfortunately, I think nobody wanted to take the matter into their own hands. (Gutiérrez, 2012, paragraph 25)

Similarly, in the Mexican consular system, there is not clear authority responsible for addressing the problem:

The Mexican consul, Remedios Gomez, located in San Diego, California—one of the main entrances to the US used by undocumented migrants and also a receiving point for deportations—stated that the problem of child guides is beyond the purview of their office: "The consulate is not responsible for investigating who the child guides are ... The US authorities have these records (who are those repeating the crossings) ... It is not in our power to be looking for this information. (Gutiérrez, 2012, paragraph 27).

Even worse, in the case of circuit minors, despite the risk they face in Mexico, the main institution responsible for protecting them, serving them, and helping them seek opportunities for proper and safe reintegration with their families or society shirks its responsibility and has even refused to receive these children in its shelters, as noted by one OPI in a media outlet:

The National System for Integral Family Development (DIF) has told us that they do not want to receive and directly handle these repatriated children because they endanger their staff and other children in the shelter.

⁷ Former Deputy Director of Migrant Protection of the INM in Baja California, 2003-2010.

There have been cases when they have received a child, and within hours, a very violent person appears, accompanied by a group surrounding the shelter, and, identifying himself as a family member, demands the child, and they have to let the child go. (Pérez, 2012, p.12)

Additionally, the DIF National System has not been concerned with establishing a care policy that protects and provides greater security for circuit minors. This claim could be confirmed through the answer given by the DIF in response to a request for information about these CA that was made through the Federal Institute of Access to Information (IFAI) in July 2013, which was answered as follows:

The requested information is nonexistent in the archives of the Directorate General, since, pursuant to the provisions of Article 29 of the Organic Statute of the National System of Integral Family Development, the authority is responsible for, among other things, establishing, promoting and implementing policies and guidelines, as well as programs and projects on the prevention and care of social risks, and issues affecting vulnerable children and adolescents, promoting studies and research on the causes and effects of social vulnerability affecting children and adolescents; and implementing programs and activities of the Agency, aimed at preventing risks to girls and boys at an early age, with an emphasis on social and educational aspects. In this context, therefore, this Administrative Unit, pursuant to current regulations, is not required to obtain the information requested, and therefore, is unable to provide it. (Binational Defense and Advocacy Program, 2013b, p. 1)

Indeed, there is a serious omission, not only due to the lack of information on repatriated circuit minors or those treated in shelters, but mainly because the Mexican government system for family development evades its responsibility as a protective institution of Mexican children and its responsibility to implement programs and actions aimed at preventing risks to girls and boys at an early age. The response to the PDIB civil society organization makes clear that the prevailing attitude is that the involvement of these CA in illicit activities and their potential co-optation by and collaboration with criminal gangs do not entail a social risk and do not constitute a situation of social vulnerability affecting children and adolescents in Mexico.

Conclusions

As shown, circuit minors are nearly invisible in the CA studies that were reviewed in the present work. However, they are indirectly identified in the typologies made by the authors. CA data are not recorded properly in official statistics and generally go unnoticed. This prevents the design of specific public policies for this population. Although they constitute a category of CA, the institutions responsible for serving children neglect them and do not attend to their situation. However, their existence and the particular problems they face should be recognized.

In the present study, we aimed to make the phenomenon visible, and to do so, we examined primary sources, such as interviews, and secondary sources, such as official statistical records. In the latter, the specificity of circuit minors has been built taking some items from interviews conducted by the network of Mexican consulates in the US, and we have seen a significant increase in this type of minor.

We also conclude that circuit minors must be defined as an at-risk category due to their situation of being on the road and their association with different actors related to the violence in the border environment. Before they are seen as criminals, these children should be considered victims because they are being

exploited and driven to live underground. In addition, they are accumulating criminal records in the US and Mexico, which in the future could be used to give them longer sentences if arrested as adults. As a population with permanent social risk, they should receive special treatment, which is where the Mexican state must intervene. The DIF state systems in coordination with the federal system must take responsibility and must not evade circuit minors.

All circuit minors are handled at some point by the National Migration Institute (INM), the systems for the development of the family managed at the state level, the Mexican consulates in the United States, and the authorities of the neighboring country, without having reached any agreement, to date, on how to proceed to prevent their return to the circle of violence and crime once they have been detected in the US and repatriated to Mexico. This is where a focus on human rights is needed with respect to the treatment that these migrant children and adolescents are to be given.

By leaving school and pursuing illegal activities, it is also true that this child population is being condemned to lose the opportunity of a job and a decent life in the future. Unfortunately, the situation of these children becomes more complex when the family itself intervenes and, out of economic necessity, becomes part of the problem by endorsing the actions of these minors. Therefore, we should work with the families of these children, understand their economic situation, and establish programs to help replace the income provided by illicit activities.

The current frameworks for the protection of migrant children used by the consulates, the National Migration Institute, and the federal DIF system should be revised. It is also necessary that the organizations receiving and developing the entire process of rebinding migrant children establish a protocol for circuit minors to ensure the best interests of the child.

On one hand, the Mexican government must develop public policies aimed at protecting this vulnerable category of CA. Support to the families of circuit minors should be prioritized so that they have the opportunity to study and develop in healthier and more harmonious environments that enable them to avoid involvement with criminal organizations. On the other hand, those that use CA as instruments of crime should be punished to the full extent of the law, taking care not to victimize the children and their families.

References

- Agencia Reforma. (September 6, 2009). Reclutan 'polleros' a adolescentes. *El Siglo de Torreon*. Retrieved from <http://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/458822.html>
- Appleseed Foundation. (2011). *Niños en la Frontera: Evaluación, Protección y Repatriación de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Mexicanos sin Compañía*. Retrieved from the website of the United Nations Children Fund: [http://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/Reporte_Ninos_en_la_Frontera_\(Espaol\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/mexico/spanish/Reporte_Ninos_en_la_Frontera_(Espaol).pdf)
- Authorities rescue 61 kidnapped migrants in northern Mexico [Autoridades rescatan a 61 migrantes secuestrados en norte de México]. (November 8, 2010). *Reuters, últimas noticias*. Retrieved from <http://mx.reuters.com/article/topNews/idMXL2N0IT1RT20131108>
- Binational Defense and Advocacy Program [Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional.] (2013a). *Segundo informe sobre violaciones a derechos*

humanos de migrantes mexicanos detenidos en los Estados Unidos, 2011-2012. Mexico: Iniciativa Frontera Norte.

Binational Defense and Advocacy Program [Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional.] (July 2013b). *Solicitud al DIF por medio del Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información (IFAI)*. Mexico: Mimeo.

Bulgach, G. and M. Flores. (2011). Niñez y adolescencia en situación de calle. Un análisis Transversal desde el género. In A. J. Arias, G. B. Garcia and A. Bazzalo (Eds.), *IV Encuentro Internacional de Políticas Públicas y Trabajo Social. Aportes para la reconstrucción de lo público. Carrera Trabajo Social*, (pp. 305-325). Retrieved from [http://trabajosocial.sociales.uba.ar/jornadas/contenidos/home.htm](http://trabajosocial sociales.uba.ar/jornadas/contenidos/home.htm)

Bustamante, J. (2001). Un marco conceptual de referencia acerca de la vulnerabilidad de los Migrantes como sujetos de los derechos humanos. In T. Fernández (Ed.), *Los rostros de la violencia* (pp. 19-53). Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

Cabrera, A. and D. Valdez-Gardea, G. C. (2013). La niñez migrante: un sector que demanda mayor atención pública. In G. Cordova, J. Dutral, E. Lara and J. G. Rodríguez (Eds.), *Desarrollo Humano Transfronterizo: retos y oportunidades en la región Sonora-Arizona* (pp. 349-369). Sonora: Colegio de Sonora, Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Universidad de Sonora.

Center for Migration Policy and Legislation, El Colegio de la Frontera [Observatorio de Legislación y Política Migratoria, El Colegio de la Frontera] (2014). *Mapa de rangos de menores repatriados por Estados Unidos según entidad de origen durante 2013*. Retrieved from <http://observatoriocolef.org/Mapa/77>

Center for Migration Studies of the National Migration Institute [Centro de estudios migratorios del Instituto Nacional de Migración]. (2008). *Repatriación de mexicanos de Estados Unidos, cuadro 5*. Retrieved from http://www.gobernacion.gob.mx/es_mx/SEGOB/Repatriacion_de_mexicanos_2008

Consular Network of the Directorate General for the Protection of Mexicans Abroad of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs [Red Consular de la Dirección General de Protección a Mexicanos en el Exterior de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores.] (2013). *Repatriación de menores no acompañados 2012 y 2013*. Retrieved from https://www.sre.gob.mx/proteccionconsular/images/stories/documentos/Estadisticas_PME/NNA2013.pdf

Chaparro, A. (April 18, 2008). Desmienten al INM, no "hay niños polleritos". *Organización Editorial Mexicana*. Retrieved from <http://www.oem.com.mx/esto/notas/n667757.htm>

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. (6 June 2006). *Memoria del Seminario Niñez migrante no acompañada en la frontera norte: repatriación, protección y atención*. Tijuana: Colef, Unicef, Coalipro, Sin Fronteras.

Elizaguirre, M. (2006). Niños de la calle. In C. Pérez de Armiño (Ed.), *Diccionario de acción humanitaria y cooperación al desarrollo*. Retrieved from <http://www.dicc.hegoa.ehu.es/listar/mostrar/155>

- Enquiry on Mexican Migration: links between minors and networks of 'polleros'. [Indaga Migración mexicana nexos de menores con red de 'polleros'.] (18 August 2012). *Noticias la Información & el Acontecer in Camargo, Chihuahua*. Retrieved from <http://internetchihuahua.com/Ig2/?p=4831>
- Gallo, K. I. (2004). *Niñez migrante en la frontera norte: Legislación y procesos*. Mexico: DIF, UNICEF.
- González, U. (April 25, 2014). *Entrevista a Uriel González/ Entrevistador: J. A. Mena*. [Interview with Uriel Gonzalez /Interviewer: J. A. Mena.] Copy in possession of the author.
- Gutiérrez, M. G. (November 26, 2012) No son niños polleros, son víctimas. *Animal político*. Retrieved from <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2012/11/no-son-ninos-polleros-son-victimas/#axzz32QXhW43P>
- Hernández, O. M. (2012). Migración, masculinidad y menores repatriados en la frontera Matamoros-Brownsville. *Trayectorias*, 33-34(14), 76-94.
- Integral Family Development, Tamaulipas [Desarrollo Integral para la Familia, Tamaulipas]. (2013). *Operatividad y Normatividad 2013-2016*. Retrieved from <http://www.gomezfarias.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/MANUAL-DE-OPERATIVIDAD-CAMEF-2013-v2.pdf>
- Integral Family Development, Sonora [Desarrollo Integral para la Familia, (DIF-Sonora)]. (30 August 2013). *Procedimientos para Atención a Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes Migrantes, Repatriados No Acompañados*. [Procedures for providing Care to Unaccompanied Repatriated Migrant Children and Adolescents.] Retrieved from <http://transparencia.esonora.gob.mx/NR/rdonlyres/D9A57471-CBB0-4E4A-B95D-7A25BA7D1CD5/99606/64APVP14Atenci%C3%B3naMenoresMigrantes1.pdf>
- Le Goff, H. (January, 2012). Niñas, niños y adolescentes migrantes extranjeros no acompañados en México. *Rayuela: Revista Iberoamericana sobre Niñez y Juventud en Lucha por sus Derechos*, (5), 129.
- López, G. (Ed.) (2003). *Diáspora michoacana*. Zamora, Michoacán: Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, El Colegio de Michoacán.
- López, G. and Villaseñor, B. (2001). Los menores en el flujo de migrantes. *Migración: México entre sus dos fronteras* (pp. 115-123). Mexico: Foro Migraciones, Sin Fronteras I.A.P.
- Mancillas, C. (2009). Migración de menores mexicanos a Estados Unidos. In P. Leite and E. Giorguli (Eds.), *El estado de la migración. Las políticas públicas ante los retos de la migración mexicana a Estados Unidos*. Mexico: CONAPO.
- Mendez, J. (2000). *Presencia de menores en la migración internacional: un estudio exploratorio del perfil sociodemográfico de los menores repatriados por la Ciudad de Tijuana 1999* (Tesis de maestría). El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, B. C., Mexico.
- Mexican Human Rights Academy, Desert Inn, and Support Center for the Migrant Worker. [Academia Mexicana Derechos Humanos, Albergue del Desierto y

- Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador Migrante.] (1998). *La Esperanza truncada, Menores deportados por la garita Mexicali-Caléxico*. Mexicali: Author.
- Moreno, J. A. (September 1, 2013). Bienvenidos al infierno. *México Social*, (38), 26-29. Retrieved from <http://mexicosocial.org/index.php/secciones/especial/item/342-bienvenidos-al-infierno>
- Nexos. (January 12, 2012) ¿Qué es una opinión *Amicus Curiae*? [Blog post] Retrieved from <http://eljuegodelacorte.nexos.com.mx/?p=1630>
- Oropeza, M. (March 15, 2014). Entrevista a Mónica Oropeza/Entrevistador: J.A. Mena) [Interview with Monica Oropeza/Interviewer: J.A. Mena]. Copy in possession of the author.
- Perez, C. (December 29, 2012). Los polleritos, otro fenómeno de riesgo para los menores migrantes hacia EU. *La Jornada*. Retrieved from <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2012/12/29/politica/012n1pol>
- Perona, N., Crucella, C., Rocchi, G. and Robin, S. (2000). *Vulnerabilidad y Exclusión social. Una propuesta metodológica para el estudio de las condiciones de vida de los hogares*. Ponencias Congreso Internacional de Políticas Sociales, Concepción, Chile. Retrieved from <http://www.ubiobio.cl/cps/ponencia/doc/p15.4.htm>
- Petit, J. M. (2003). *Migraciones, vulnerabilidad y políticas públicas. Impacto sobre los niños, sus familias y sus derechos*. Santiago de Chile: CELADE, BID.
- Programa de Defensa e Incidencia Binacional. [Binational Defense and Advocacy Program.] (February 17, 2012). *Solicitud de opinión consultiva sobre niñez migrante ante la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Amicus curiae*. [Request for Advisory Opinion on migrant children before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Amicus curiae.] Tijuana, B. C: Author.
- Pulgarin, M. (November 4, 2010). Disminuyen casos de menores "de circuito". *Infonor Diario Digital*. Retrieved from <http://www.infonor.com.mx/index.php/norte/10-norte/33246-disminuyen-casos-de-menores->
- Ramírez, S., García, JO, Muñoz, RG and Enciso, PJ (2009). *Más allá de la frontera, la niñez migrante: Son las niñas y niños de todos. Estudio exploratorio sobre la protección de la niñez migrante repatriada en la frontera norte*. Mexico: Caminos Posibles Investigación, Capacitación y Desarrollo S. C., SEDESOL, INDESOL.
- Ramos, M. E. (2009). Entre la tristeza y la esperanza: reconstrucciones identitarias de los mexicanos en Estados Unidos. In Author (Ed.), *Migración Identidad, Emociones, Familia* (pp. 37-70). Mexico: Fondo editorial Nuevo León.
- Ruiz, O. (2004). Violencia Sexual: El caso de las migrantes centroamericanas en la frontera sur. In T. Fernández de Juan (Ed.), *Violencia contra la mujer en México* (pp. 85-95). Mexico: Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos.
- Torrado M-P., E. (September 2012). Las migraciones de menores no acompañados desde una perspectiva de género. *Dilemata. Revista Internacional de Éticas Aplicadas*, (10), 65-84.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos]. (1989). *Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ohchr.org/spanish/law/crc.htm>

Valdez-Gardea, G. C. (Ed.). (2008). *Achicando futuros*. Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora.

Valdez-Gardea, G. C. (Ed.). (2013). *Memoria digital del IV Encuentro Internacional Migración y Niñez Migrante. Migración y Retorno: Retos para la familia migrante*. Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora.

Vilaboa, E. (2006). *Caracterización de la niñez migrante en la Frontera norte de México. Los casos de Tijuana y Nogales México*. Sweden: Corredor Bilateral para la Protección de Derechos Humanos, Save the Children.