

This is the submitted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Social Service Research on 25 Jul 2022, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/01488376.2022.2096746>.

Access to this work was provided by the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) ScholarWorks@UMBC digital repository on the Maryland Shared Open Access (MD-SOAR) platform.

**Please provide feedback**

Please support the ScholarWorks@UMBC repository by emailing [scholarworks-group@umbc.edu](mailto:scholarworks-group@umbc.edu) and telling us what having access to this work means to you and why it's important to you. Thank you.

**Factors Predicting Education as a Primary Need for Unaccompanied Immigrant Minors:  
An Exploratory Study**

Robert G. Hasson III, PhD, LICSW, Assistant Professor  
*Providence College*  
*Providence, Rhode Island, USA*  
*rhasson@providence.edu*

Caitlin Corbett, student  
*Northeastern University*  
*Boston, Massachusetts, USA*  
*ccorbett@friars.providence.edu*

Antonia Diaz-Valdes, PhD  
*Society and Health Research Center, Universidad Mayor-Chile*  
*Santiago, Chile*  
*aediazva@gmail.com*

Kerri Evans, PhD, Assistant Professor  
*University of Maryland Baltimore County*  
*Baltimore, Maryland, USA*  
*kerrieva@umbc.edu*

Thomas M. Crea, PhD, Professor  
*Boston College School of Social Work*  
*Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA*  
*thomas.crea.2@bc.edu*

Dawnya Underwood, MSW, LMSW, First Deputy  
*Heartland Alliance International*  
*Chicago, Illinois, USA*  
*daunderwood@heartlandalliance.org*

## **Abstract**

Some unaccompanied children (UC) who migrate to the US receive post-release services (PRS) to help them adjust to the US and access community-based supports. Upon their arrival to the US, UC report what their primary need(s) and the focus of services to their PRS caseworker. This paper examines factors that are associated with UC who reported education services as a primary PRS need. The study includes a sample based on administrative data shared by a major non-profit in the US that provides technical support for PRS for UC throughout the US ( $n=851$ ). Among the findings, older UC have higher odds of reporting educational services as a primary need and UC placed with their mothers have lower odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need. The results can inform the ways in which education professionals assess the needs of vulnerable immigrants, including UC.

## **Introduction**

Unaccompanied children (UC) are a vulnerable group of immigrants in the United States (US) who have no lawful immigration status, are under 18 years old, and who do not have a parent or legal guardian in the US or a parent or legal guardian in the US is not available to provide physical custody and care (Administration for Children and Families, 2021). Increasing numbers of UC have migrated to the US in recent years, rising from 13,625 referrals to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in 2012 to 69,488 referrals in 2019 (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2021). Research shows that UC experience various types of trauma before arrival to the US, including exposure to community violence in their country of origin (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2014) and sexual exploitation during their migration journey (UNICEF, 2016).

After apprehension at the US border, US officials support UC and facilitate placement with sponsors in the US. UC sometimes receive community-based services called Post Release Services (PRS) when 1) a home study is deemed necessary to assess safe placement, 2) if the child is placed with a non-relative sponsor, or 3) if the child and sponsor would benefit from additional support to facilitate their placement in the US. The number of UC receiving PRS in the US has risen in recent years, from 8,618 in 2015 to 15,160 in 2020 (ORR, 2021). There is limited research on these youth's needs upon their arrival to the US, and this gap in research limits the ability of policy makers and practitioners to support UC after their placement in host communities. This study aims to address this gap by examining factors associated with a primary PRS need that UC report upon their arrival to the US: educational services.

## **Unaccompanied Migrant Children in the United States**

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of UC arriving to the US. Of the 15,381 unaccompanied children who were referred to ORR for support with placement in the US in 2020<sup>1</sup>, most were between 15 and 16 years old (37%), followed by 17 years old (35%), 0-12 years old (16%), and 13-14 years old (12%). Since 2012, the overwhelming majority of UC have migrated to the US from the Central American Countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In 2020, nearly half of all UC arrived from Guatemala (48%), followed by Honduras (25%), El Salvador (14%), Mexico (6%), and other countries (8%). Since 2012, most youth migrating to the US identify as male, with 68% of all UC referred to ORR in 2020 identifying as male (ORR, 2021). Research indicates that many children experience complex trauma during their arrival to the US (UNHRC, 2014).

UC are a vulnerable group of immigrants because of the factors that influence their migration to the US, trauma they experience during their migration journey, and trauma experienced at the US border and after their apprehension by US Border Patrol. According to research conducted by UNHCR (2014), there are various factors influencing a child's migration to the US. In one study of 404 UC apprehended in the US, 70% reported that their reason for migrating to the US was either community violence in their country of origin, abuse in their home, pervasive poverty, or the prospect of reunifying with family who live in the US (UNHCR, 2014). One primary reason for migration to the US is community violence, and research indicates 66% of children from El Salvador, 20% of children from Guatemala, and 44% of children from Honduras reported experiencing community violence prior to their migration to the US (UNHCR, 2014).

---

<sup>1</sup> While the total number of UC in 2020 was significantly lower than prior years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Title 42 Expulsions, the demographics in this paragraph are representative of overall trends.

There is a growing body of research on the mental health needs of UC in the US. In a study of 30 unaccompanied youth from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico who resettled in Texas, Berger Cardoso (2018) found that more than half of the sample met criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (56.7%), nearly one-third (30%) met criteria for major depressive disorder, and nearly one-third (30%) of the sample reported experiencing suicidal ideation in the previous year. This research included qualitative data analysis that revealed youth experienced various traumatic experiences including family separation, community violence, and widespread poverty (Berger Cardoso, 2018).

Research also indicates UC experience unique symptom profiles of PTSD. In a sample of 149 UC resettled in the US, Hasson III and colleagues (2020) found that 8.1% of youth met criteria for PTSD. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that reactivity symptoms are especially unique to the experiences of UC who are exposed to trauma. For example, getting angry easily and exhibiting behavior outbursts and having difficulty paying attention are two specific reactivity symptoms that unaccompanied youth who experience trauma struggle with managing. The results of this line of research suggest that trauma experienced by UC manifests in symptoms that may not be readily captured by existing diagnostic frameworks.

Upon arrival to the US, there are various pathways through the US immigration system that UC must navigate. While there are important differences in pathways to services for these youth who arrive to the US (e.g., Hasson III, Berger Cardoso, & Crea, 2019), the focus of this study is on a sample of UC who received Post Release Services in the US.

### **Post Release Services**

Post Release Services (PRS) are case management supports that help UC navigate communities after their reunification with a sponsor in the US. ORR refers youth for PRS if a

home study was required, if the youth was released to a non-relative sponsor, or if ORR determines the youth and sponsor would benefit from additional supports to facilitate safe adjustment to the community. PRS provides an array of supports for UC, including placement and stability support, accessing legal services, education services, and health and mental health services (ORR, 2018).

PRS are provided in two different levels, which differ depending on the child's needs. Level one services provide UC and their sponsors with support accessing various community services (i.e. education, legal, or health or mental health services) providing services. Level two services support additional safety and permanency needs by engaging with children and sponsors once per month, conducting ongoing needs assessments, and facilitating access to higher level therapeutic services. For most UC, PRS last for 90 days. However, for UC who meet criteria for the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), PRS remain in place throughout a UC's legal proceedings, or when the UC turns 18. A UC's legal case is closed under three conditions: if the UC is granted voluntary departure, receives an order or removal, or obtains an immigration status (ORR, 2018).

Research identifies the importance of PRS for UC, and also highlights important gaps that UC must navigate. Roth and Grace (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 19 UC who were receiving PRS in the US and found that connecting youth with education services was not as difficult as connecting them with legal or mental health services. However, some schools exhibited resistance when PRS workers tried to enroll UC, and this resistance was related to legal documentation barriers. This resulted in PRS workers helping youth and families access necessary documentation and also educating school communities on the importance of education for UC. An additional main finding from this research is the importance of location, and

specifically how access to community supports was more challenging in rural or suburban locations where transportation challenges can impede access (Roth & Grace, 2015). This is important context, given the vital role of education for immigrants in the US, including UC.

### **Education for Forced Migrants**

Education is an especially important facilitator of integration for immigrants in the US. Part of this dynamic centers on the positive correlation between education level and income level, which helps drive social mobility for immigrants in the US (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2015). Education provides immigrants tools for integration, such as language skills. More broadly, school settings help promote integration for vulnerable immigrants, such as a refugee children, because they help establish social connections and relationships that enhance social capital and promote social mobility (Anger & Strang, 2008). In addition, education-based mental health services can help vulnerable immigrants, such as UC, cope with and manage symptoms related to migration-related trauma (Franco, 2018).

There are notable differences in education levels by country of origin, with immigrants from Asia and Africa having higher education attainment, and immigrants from Latin America and Caribbean nations having lower education attainment (Citation, year). These differences, in part, help explain the challenges some immigrant groups in the US experience in terms of social mobility across generations. Furthermore, among men ages 25-59, Mexican immigrants have the lowest education attainment of 9.4 years and more than half (55%) have less than a high school education (Citation, year). Education attainment for men from Central America is also low, compared to other immigrant groups, at 9.8 years, and nearly half (48%) have less than a high school education. This body of research shows similar trends for adult immigrant women as well (NASEM, 2015).



UC are a population of immigrants who face unique barriers to accessing education in the US, such as providing correct documentation for school enrollment (Evans et al., 2020). Other immigrants, such as refugees, face similar barriers to accessing education opportunities. Anselme and Hands (2010) found limited legal protections as well as limited services to address education gaps as a result of forced migration as two notable challenges refugees face when trying to access education. Similarly, Menjívar (2008) found that grey areas in legal eligibility influence perceptions of education access for immigrants in the US. This uncertainty regarding legal status is part of why immigrants from both El Salvador and Guatemala have some of the lowest education levels among immigrants in the US.

A growing body of research highlights how these barriers contribute to differences in education outcomes for UC from Central America. For example, in a study of 193 children who discharged from the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program, Crea and colleagues (2017) found that URM from Guatemala, compared to URM from other countries, have more than eight times the odds of being enrolled in K12 education settings, whereas URM from Honduras, compared to URM from other countries, have 76% lower odds of being enrolled in a college setting. In addition, longer lengths of stay in the URM program is associated with higher education attainment. Specifically, longer lengths of stay in the URM program are associated with greater odds of having a high school diploma or being enrolled in college. This research also found that legal permanency (i.e. having a Green Card) is associated with greater odds of having a high school diploma (Crea et al., 2017).

In similar research, Evans and colleagues (2018), examined education outcomes in a sample of 30 UC enrolled in the URM program. This research found that most URM (86%) had earned a high school diploma or GED by the time they discharged from the URM program, and

that half (50%) were enrolled in college at their time of discharge from the URM program. This research also demonstrates how URM perceive education as an important component to social mobility, as most URM in the sample (60%) reported wanting to continue their education after leaving the URM program.

UC experience unique challenges with accessing education, including family reunification, interruptions in their formal education due to migrating to the US, and mental distress related to trauma experienced prior to, during, and after their migration to the US. Furthermore, a growing body of evidence is highlighting how school districts in the US are responding to meet these needs and support UC in school settings. Pierce (2015) identifies a variety of supports implemented by some US school districts, including specialized programs to address social-emotional needs, bi-lingual parent volunteers to help UC sponsor families navigate school systems, and job skills-training programs for UC who will not earn a high school diploma by the time they turn 21 years old. Family contexts are an important part of education outcomes for immigrants in the US, and is a particular focus of this study.

### **Education and Immigrant Family Contexts**

Little is known about the impact of family context on education outcomes for UC, and this is an area of interest for the current study. However, a much larger body of research demonstrates the importance of family and parenting contexts in supporting immigrant students in education settings. Research indicates that family is central to the identity of Latino immigrant families, and individual identity is formed as part of belonging to a family system. Furthermore, an important characteristic of family for Latino immigrants is “familismo”, which recognizes the central importance of love, loyalty, and respect in family systems (Fischer et al., 2008; Suizzo et

al., 2012). Within family systems, parenting styles are associated with difference aspects of education outcomes for immigrant children.

Research shows that Latino adolescents who perceive their mother as having high academic expectations have a higher grade point average, compared to having mother's with low academic expectations (GPA) (Henry et al., 2008). Henry and colleagues (2008) found that parental involvement in students' lives (e.g. monitoring of activities, knowledge of peer relationships) is associated with greater student motivation and improved student achievement. This finding has been replicated in other Latino immigrant groups. For example, in research on Mexican immigrant parenting in the US, Suizzo and colleagues (2012) found that messages about the importance of school that parents communicate to their children is positively associated with children exhibiting determination in the context of school. This further leads to attaining a higher GPA, indicating positive academic outcomes. Similarly, Carlo and colleagues (2018) found that, among Mexican-American immigrant families, maternal parenting styles, compared to paternal parenting styles, are associated with higher levels of prosocial behavior and academic achievement among children. In addition, mothers who exhibit less involvement or are moderately demanding of their children is associated with children exhibiting negative prosocial behaviors.

Education attainment is an important component of immigrant integration in the US. However, much less is known about what factors influence the need for education support for UC in the US. The following research questions guide this exploratory study:

1. To what extent is age associated with education services as a primary PRS need?
2. To what extent is sex associated with education services as a primary PRS need?
3. To what extent is country of origin associated with education services as a primary PRS need?

4. To what extent is sponsor type associated with education services as a primary PRS need?

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The sample for the current study includes all unaccompanied children who discharged from PRS in 2019 from Heartland Alliance International partner agencies ( $n=851$ ). Data were derived from administrative databases from Heartland Alliance International. Caseworkers entered data into an electronic case management system, and data were shared with researchers using Excel spreadsheets.

### **Measures**

The dependent variable in the study is the primary PRS need “education services”. UC reported this if they needed support with accessing education systems. Education services was a dichotomous variable measuring if a UC reported education services as their primary need prior to beginning PRS in the US (1=Yes, 0=No). Additional variables in the study include length of stay in PRS (*months*), age (*years*), sex (1=male, 0=female), and three separate dichotomous variables measuring country of origin (1=El Salvador, 0=Other; 1=Guatemala, 0=Other; 1=Honduras, 0=Other). Finally, the study includes a variable for sponsor type, which measures the type of sponsor a UC resided with while receiving PRS (1=Mother, 0=Other; 1=Father, 0=Other; 1=Unrelated (ie.....), 0=Other). Additional relatives to which UC were reunified include aunt, uncle, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law, and these are accounted for solely in the “other” categories for analysis due to limited cell size of each.

### **Analysis**

Univariate and bivariate analyses are reported in a previously published technical report (Hasson III et al., 2020b) and will be summarized below. Univariate analyses included percentages, means and standard deviations, as well as frequencies. Bivariate analyses included chi square and independent samples t-tests. Binomial logit regression with clustering by state was used to explore the association between education services and various control variables including age, sex, length of PRS, country of origin, and sponsor type.

## **Results**

The total sample includes 851 UC who received PRS in 2019. The majority of UC migrated from Central America, specifically Guatemala (45.36%), Honduras (33.14%), and El Salvador (13.40%). A total of 16 other countries are represented in the sample, including Mexico (2.00%), Nicaragua (1.41%), India (1.29%), and Ecuador (1.18%). The remaining countries of origin in the sample each constitute less than one percent of the sample (Bangladesh, Bahamas, China, Nigeria, United States, Vietnam, Cuba, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Romania).

Of the total sample, 219 UC reported education services as a primary need, comprising 25.7% of the total sample. Most UC who reported education services as a primary need migrated from Guatemala (59.36%), followed by Honduras (23.74%), and El Salvador (10.50%). The majority of UC who reported education as a primary need were male (65.75%), and the mean age at their time of discharge was 16.29 years old ( $SD=2.71$ ). The mean length of PRS was 7.15 months ( $SD=3.62$ ). UC who reported education as a primary need resided with their mother (14.61%), father (13.70%), or an unrelated person (11.87%). A substantial number of UC also resided with a sponsor type classified as “other” (59.82%).

Binomial logit regression analysis yielded six main findings. Each additional month of PRS is associated with 26% lower odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need

( $OR=0.74$ ,  $CI=0.61 - 0.88$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Each additional year in age is associated with 33% higher odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need ( $OR=1.33$ ,  $CI=1.02 - 1.73$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Male UC, compared to female UC, have 60% higher odds of reporting education services as a primary need ( $OR=1.60$ ,  $CI=1.71 - 2.18$ ,  $p<.01$ ). UC from Guatemala, compared to UC from other countries, have 88% higher odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need ( $OR=1.88$ ,  $CI=1.15 - 3.07$ ,  $p<.05$ ). UC who are placed with their biological mothers, compared to placement with other sponsor types, have 55% lower odds of reporting education services as a primary need ( $OR=0.45$ ,  $CI=0.22 - 0.92$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Finally, UC who are placed with an unrelated sponsor, compared to other sponsor types, have 45% lower odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need ( $OR=0.55$ ,  $CI=0.33 - 0.91$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

### **Discussion**

Education is an important facilitator of upward mobility for immigrants in the US (NASEM, 2015) and supports integration for vulnerable immigrants including refugees (Anger & Strang, 2008). UC are a vulnerable group of immigrants who have been arriving in increasing numbers since 2012, with most arriving at the US/Mexico border from El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras (ORR, 2021). After arrival at the US border, some UC receive PRS upon their placement with a sponsor, to help with their adjustment to the US. Prior to starting PRS, UC are able to communicate to shelter staff their primary PRS need. This paper examines one such common primary PRS need – education services. Hasson III and colleagues (2020b) found that for UC who discharged from PRS in 2019, more than one quarter reported education services as their primary need (25.7%), making it the most commonly reported primary PRS need. This study focuses on factors associated with UC reporting education services as a primary PRS need.

The first research question focuses on the extent to which age is associated with reporting education services as a primary PRS need. Results show that older UC are more likely to report education services as a primary PRS need. Previous research on UC discharging from the URM program has found that each additional year in age is associated with lower odds of being enrolled in a K-12 education setting, and higher odds of being enrolled in a college program, at time of discharge (Crea et al., 2017). The results of the current study seem to suggest that older UC appear to recognize the need for support with navigating complex education settings, possibly including higher education settings. This interpretation aligns with the mean age of UC in the current sample (16.29 years,  $SD=2.71$ ), which approaches the age of transitioning to post-secondary education.

For the second research question, results indicate male UC, compared to female UC, have 60% higher odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need. Existing research on education outcomes shows that male UC, compared to female UC, are less likely to be enrolled in a K-12 education setting and more than two times as likely to be enrolled in a college program at their time of discharge (Crea et al., 2017). This highlights the differences between education settings, and how outcomes by gender might vary depending on the education setting. However, this research was on UC who discharged from the URM program, a distinctly different population compared to UC who discharged from PRS. The current study focuses on what UC report as their primary need upon arrival to the US border, and before starting PRS in their host community.

One interpretation of this finding is that male UC may be seeking education support as a means to escape community violence. Lorenzen (2017) examined the reasons UC from Central America migrate to the US and found that UC who reported migrating to the US due to a

combination of escaping violence and pursuing education opportunities were overwhelmingly male (95.7%). In addition, the majority of UC who reported migrating only in search of opportunities such as education were over age 15 years old (81.4%), which aligns with the mean age of UC in the current study (16.29,  $SD=2.71$ ). Furthermore, UC who flee their country of origin due to gang violence likely seek education opportunities as a way to avoid gang violence (Lorenzen, 2017).

The third research question focuses on country of origin, and results indicate UC from Guatemala, compared to UC from other countries, have 88% higher odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need. This finding demonstrates that, for UC from Guatemala, education services are a prominent component of their perceived needs. This aligns with a broad body of research highlighting how education facilitates integration for immigrants in the US (NASEM, 2015). Furthermore, this finding complements existing research that indicates UC from Guatemala, compared to UC from other countries, are more than eight times as likely to be in a K-12 education setting at their time of discharge from the URM program (Crea et al., 2017). One explanation for the finding from the current study is the unique cultural context of UC from Guatemala. In particular, UC from Guatemala often do not speak English or Spanish, but rather an indigenous language. Research indicates UC from Guatemala struggle with isolating from peers in school due to discrimination based on language ability (Capps et al., 2020). This could explain why UC from Guatemala report education support as a primary PRS need, as education can help promote skill building, such as language skills, that can facilitate integration. Moreover, an important area of future research is examining how PRS might support UC from Guatemala with managing distress from perceived discrimination.



The final main finding from the current study is that UC who are placed with their biological mothers, compared to other sponsor types, have 55% lower odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need. To date, there is little known research in regards to the role sponsor type has in the wellbeing of UC. However, there is a much larger body of research on parenting in the context of immigrant families that can help inform interpretation of this new finding. One possible explanation for this finding is that mothers of UC in the US understand the role of education in immigrant integration, and have high expectations for academic success for their children. In addition, mothers of UC, compared to other sponsor types, may exhibit greater involvement in their child's life, leading to less difficulty accessing education supports. This interpretation aligns with existing research in the context of Latino adolescents in the US (Henry et al., 2008). In other words, UC placed with their mothers may be less likely to report education services as a primary PRS need because their mothers already communicate high expectations for academic achievement and demonstrate high levels of involvement in their life. Finally, mothers of UC may promote prosocial behavior in ways seen in other immigrant groups (Carlo et al., 2018), however more research is needed to understand this dynamic.

### *Limitations*

This study has limitations that should guide interpretation of findings. First, the convenience sample of UC in the study were recipients of PRS. Therefore, results are not generalizable to UC who did not receive PRS or who navigate other paths through the US immigration system. The design of the study is cross-sectional, which limits the ability to examine education needs over time. The dependent variable, education services, as well as covariates, are based on administrative data, which limits the ability to assess reliability and

validity. Language ability is not included in the administrative dataset, which may help explain the extent to which UC might report education services as a primary need. Finally, a limitation of the current study is not knowing the education levels of UC as they arrive to the US border. Given the nature of the administrative dataset from which this study is based, this variable was not available and is an important area of future research.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

This study builds on previous research on education outcomes for UC in the US (Crea et al., 2017; Evand et al., 2018) and seeks to understand what factors influence UC needing education services after they arrive at the US border. Because older UC appear to be more likely to report education services as a primary need, advocates and service providers may need to help UC navigate challenging education settings, including post-secondary settings that older adolescents encounter. This finding complements existing research which identifies proper documentation as a barrier UC face when accessing education (Evans et al., 2020). This study suggests male UC, compared to female UC, have greater odds of reporting education services as a primary need. This finding could help inform the assessment strategies of school-based practitioners as they encounter UC in their school settings. Finally, it appears placement with mothers provides UC unique benefits for accessing education supports, which can inform policy development regarding UC placement after arrival at the US border. If placement with mothers is not possible, the findings of the current study suggest that practitioners should explore how mothers can support any education aspirations their children have upon arrival to the US.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, perhaps the greatest implications are for future research. Future research would benefit from assessing UC education levels and exploring the extent to which this is associated with perceived need of education services. A limitation of the

current study is an inability to control for a UC's current education level. Presumably, UC with higher education levels would be less likely to need education services, however this question could not be answered given the nature of the administrative data. In addition, future research would benefit from using qualitative methods to examine family dynamics that inform the need for education services. For example, the finding that UC who are placed with mothers have lower odds of reporting education services as a primary PRS need is an important finding, and future qualitative research can help add context to this finding to understand in more detail what contributes to this dynamic.

Education plays an important role in facilitating immigrant integration in the US and promotes social mobility for immigrants across generations (Ager & Strang, 2008; NASEM, 2015). Unaccompanied children have been arriving to the US in increasing numbers since 2012, as a result of expanded community violence and pervasive poverty, particularly in the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. This study focuses on this vulnerable group of immigrants, and sheds light on factors that are associated with reporting education services as their primary need upon their arrival to the US. Given the importance of education as a driver of social mobility for immigrants, and that UC in the US have a legal right to access public education, the findings can help inform the ways in which practitioners assess the needs of immigrant students. In addition, the findings can help inform policy for UC, particularly with regards to sponsor placement. This exploratory study, while building on existing research, also highlights important new areas for inquiry to continue supporting the needs of UC in the US.

## References

- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Administration for Children and Families (2021, March 17). *Unaccompanied children program information*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/unaccompanied-children-info>
- Berger Cardoso, J. (2018). Running to stand still: Trauma symptoms, coping strategies, and substance use behaviors in unaccompanied migrant youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 92, 143–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.04.018>
- Capps, R., Berger Cardoso, J., Brabeck, K., Fix, M., & Ruiz Soto, A. G. (2020). *Immigration enforcement and the mental health of Latino high school students*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Carlo, G., White, R. M. B., Streit, C., Knight, G. P., & Zeiders, K. H. (2018). Longitudinal relations among parenting styles, prosocial behaviors, and academic outcomes in U.S. Mexican adolescents. *Child Development*, 89(2), 577–592. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12761>
- Crea, T. M., Hasson III, R. G., Evans, K., Berger Cardoso, J., & Underwood, D. (2017). Moving forward: Educational outcomes for existing Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM) foster care in the United States. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 31(2), pp. 240–256.
- Evans, K., Perez-Aponte, J., & McRoy, R. (2019). Without a paddle: Barriers to school enrollment procedures for immigrant students and families. *Education and Urban Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124519894976>

- Evans, K., Pardue-Kim, M., Crea, T. M., Coleman, L., Diebold, K., & Underwood, D. (2018). Foster care outcomes for unaccompanied refugee minors: A pilot study. *Child Welfare*, 96(6), 87-106.
- Fischer, C., Harvey, E. A., & Driscoll, P. (2009). Parent-centered parenting values among Latino immigrant mothers. *Journal of Family Studies*, 15(3).
- Franco, D. (2018). Trauma without borders: The necessity for school-based interventions in treating unaccompanied refugee minors: *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 35(6), 551-565. <http://dx.doi.org.providence.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10560-018-0552-6>
- Hasson III, R. G., Easton, S. D., Díaz-Valdés, A., O'Dwyer, L., Underwood, D., & Crea, T. M. (2020). Examining the psychometric properties of the Child PTSD Symptom Scale within a sample of unaccompanied immigrant children in the United States. *Journal of Trauma and Loss*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2020.1777760>
- Hasson III, R. G., Díaz-Valdés, A., Corbett, C. (2020b). Primary needs for unaccompanied children receiving post release services in the United States. Providence, RI: Providence College. Available from <https://social-work.providence.edu/researchspotlight-hasson/>.
- Hasson III, R. G., Cardoso, J., & Crea, T. (2019). Unaccompanied refugee minors and migrant youth policy and practices in the United States. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Social Work. Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.1296
- Hasson III, R. G., Crea, T. M., & McRoy, R., Le, A. (2019). Patchwork of promises: A critical analysis of immigration policies for unaccompanied children in the United States. *Child and Family Social Work*, 24(2), 275-282. doi:10.1111/cfs.12612.

Henry, C. S., Merten, M. J., Plunkett, S. W., & Sands, T. (2008). Neighborhood, parenting, and adolescent factors and academic achievement in Latino adolescents from immigrant families. *Family Relations*, 57(5), 579–590.

Lorenzen, M. (2017). The mixed motives of unaccompanied child migrants from Central America's Northern Triangle. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(4), 744-767

Menjívar, C.. (2008). Educational hopes, documented dreams: Guatemalan and Salvadoran immigrants' legality and educational prospects. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 620, 177–193.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2015). *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*. Panel on the Integration of Immigrants into American Society, M. C. Waters and M .G. Pineau, Eds. Committee on Population, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi: 10.17226/21746.

Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] (2021, March 11). *Facts and data*.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/about/ucs/facts-and-data>

Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] (2018, September 5). Children entering the United States unaccompanied: Section 6: Resources and services available after release from ORR care.

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/policy-guidance/children-entering-united-states-unaccompanied-section-6#6.2>

Pierce, S. (2015, October). *Unaccompanied child migrants in U.S. communities, immigration court, and schools*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/UAC-Integration-FINALWEB.pdf>

UNICEF (2016, August). *Broken dreams: Central American children's dangerous journey to the United States*.

[https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/UNICEF\\_Child\\_Alert\\_Central\\_America\\_2016\\_report\\_final\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/UNICEF_Child_Alert_Central_America_2016_report_final(1).pdf).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Children on the run: Unaccompanied children leaving Central America and Mexico and the need for international protection*.

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/children-on-the-run.html>

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Differences for Education Services

	Education Services (N=219)		Other PRS Need (N=632)	
	Mean (SE)	% (n)	Mean (SE)	% (n)
<i>Months in Care</i> **	7.15 (3.62)		9.81 (11.11)	
<i>Age at Discharge</i>	16.29 (2.71)		15.51 (3.95)	
<i>Gender (male)</i> **		144 (65.75)		336 (53.16)
<i>Sponsor Type</i>				
Mother***		32 (14.61)		181 (28.64)
Father***		30 (13.70)		81 (12.82)
Unrelated***		26 (11.87)		91 (14.40)
Other***		131 (59.82)		279 (44.14)
<i>Country of Origin</i>				
El Salvador***		23 (10.50)		91 (14.40)
Guatemala***		130 (59.36)		256 (40.51)
Honduras***		52 (23.74)		230 (36.39)
Other***		14 (6.4)		55 (8.7)

Notes: \*p<.05, \*\*p<.01. \*\*\*p<.001



Table 2: Logit Regression Model for Education Primary Need  
Education Services ( $N = 851$ )

	OR (CI)
<i>Months in Care</i>	0.74** (0.61 – 0.88)
<i>Age at Discharge</i>	1.33* (1.02 – 1.73)
<i>Sex (male)</i>	1.60** (1.17 – 2.18)
<i>Country of Origin (Other)</i>	
El Salvador	1.20 (0.59 – 2.44)
Guatemala	1.88* (1.15 – 3.07)
Honduras	0.91 (0.51 – 1.66)
<i>Sponsor Type (Other)</i>	
Mother	0.45* (0.22 – 0.92)
Father	0.87 (0.58 – 1.33)
Unrelated	0.55* (0.33 – 0.91)
Constant	0.18
AIC	924.85
BIC	972.31

Notes: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$