Out of School and Out of Work in Choluteca, Honduras:

A Phenomenological Study

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from a no work and no school attitude, and why they decided to return to study at the Vocational School. Data was collected by individual interviews and included the students as active participants, using photovoice methodology.The most emergent theme of the study was the issues that contributed to the students being “ninis” (out of school and out of work). There were two major sub-themes of not studying and not working. These two themes, along with the ages of the students (15-17-year olds), are the three defining factors of being a “nini” in Latin American Countries. The sub-theme of not studying included the categories of economic needs, system failure, lack of student incentive, and student’s suggestions for improving their options for education. In the second sub-theme, the students’ lived experience of not working is described and interpreted.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the ninis of the Latin American Countries, to the young people who continue to hope for an opportunity to study and to find dignified jobs, to the teachers in Honduras who give tirelessly of themselves so that young people can continue to gain knowledge and gain skills that will prepare them for the life ahead of them, to my co-workers with World Gospel Mission, whom have been patient and supportive of me following my dream, and to my family who have provided the love and encouragement for me to continue, especially my wife and best friend Angie.

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Vita

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Agricultural and Extension Education

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

Most of the history of Honduras, since independence from Spain, has been a time of internal rebellion and turnover of multiple dictators. Honduras is a relatively young democracy, becoming a constitutional republic after elections in 1981 and the adoption of its constitution (PNUD, Honduras, n.d.).

Honduras has a total population of 8.7 million people (INE, 2016). Like much of the rest of Latin America, Honduras has a young population. By 2040, a large percentage of the population will be of working age which will create an unprecedented window of opportunity that could lead to a demographic dividend of economic growth for Honduras (Programa Estado de la Nación-Region, 2016; Fonseca, 2017). There is concern that Honduras may not be prepared to take full advantage of the anticipated demographic dividend of an increasingly younger work-force. Due to the present high rate of school dropouts among the youth, there may be a lack of an adequately prepared workforce at the time of the anticipated need. According to the Honduras government, only 31.7% of the youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are in school (INE, 2017).

Areas of Struggle for Honduras

Migration to the United States. The United States of America, through designation by the Secretary of Homeland Security, has provided "Temporary Protected Status (TPS)" to migrants from countries which cannot adequately handle the return home of their citizens. Honduras is currently one of ten countries that have been given TPS status by the United States (USCIS, 2018). Honduras was originally given TPS by

the United States in 1999 following the migration of large numbers of Honduras migrants who had fled the country as a result of the damages done by Hurricane Mitch in late 1998. Due to numerous additional factors relating to the available job opportunities for migrants in the United States and the continuing inability of the Honduras government to receive large numbers of returning migrants, the TPS has been renewed several times for Honduras (Rathod, Stinchcomb, De Luna, Castañeda, Menkos, Urbina, et al., 2017).

Food insecurity. Susceptibility to natural disasters contributes to a prevalent lack of food security (World Food Programme, 2017). Honduras has regularly been affected by natural disasters, such as flooding, drought, and hurricanes, and is among the top three countries worldwide that are most vulnerable to climate change effects (WHO, 2013).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2015) reported that the number of undernourished people in Honduras had remained nearly the same for the years 1990-2016. During the 2014-2016 period, approximately 12.2% of the population was undernourished. In recent years, there has been an especially high number of children fleeing Honduras and other Central American countries. As in general migration trends with other segments of the society, there are likely many reasons why this number is suddenly so high. Food insecurity is possibly one of the major determinants contributing to the migration of children from Honduras (Global Food Policy Report, 2015).

Agriculture. Closely connected to food insecurity are issues with the broader agricultural industry. There is great inequality of wealth and income in Honduras, with the problem intensified among farmers and agricultural laborers in rural areas (USAID,

2017). Historically, Honduras was the original banana republic, a derogatory term for countries that have been negatively impacted and taken advantage of by its dealings with large transnational fruit companies. Honduran oligarchs and transnational companies own much of the best agricultural land in Honduras. The growth of bananas and other agricultural exports from Honduras has come at a high cost to the country's workers (Kerssen, 2013).

Geographically, the city of Choluteca falls within the semi-arid Dry Corridor belt which includes nearly one-third of Central America (Food Policy Research Institute, 2017). The band of territory spreads mostly through El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, and has recently suffered from drought conditions due to the "El Niño effect," which has resulted in large crop losses. Combined with excessively high rates of crop failure, the prices of crop exports have remained low (Food Policy Research Institute, 2017). While Honduras agricultural exports have become more diversified in recent years, coffee is still one of the major exports which account for one-third of the country's total agricultural production. Coffee production has been unstable recently due to the spread of coffee rust disease throughout the region (The World Bank, 2015).

Many families in Choluteca live on small farms where they cultivate enough traditional crops to feed themselves with very little left over for sale. They continue to practice cultural methods of farming that are non-productive and harmful to the environment. The rural poor are most adversely affected by the weather extremes, are often treated unjustly, and suffer hunger and malnutrition. There are very few government programs to support and educate the impoverished rural population (FAO,

2015). Food insecurity is also one of the major issues contributing to the migration of children (Food Policy Research Institute, 2015).

Economy. Honduras is a lower-middle income country. There is great inequality of wealth and income among the population with over 66% of the people living in poverty (The World Bank, 2018). Approximately two-fifths of the population live in conditions of extreme poverty. The problem is even greater in rural areas among farmers and agricultural laborers (USAID, 2011).

Over the past 50 years, Honduras has had a low average per capita income growth rate of 1.2 percent. The 2014 per capita income of $3,300 was the third lowest among the Latin American Countries (LAC). Honduras has not recovered completely from the 2009 global economic crisis (World Bank, 2015, November 13). The labor market in Honduras is weak. While the minimum wage for workers in Honduras is higher than in neighboring countries, in 2013, two-thirds of Honduras' workers earned less than the minimum wage (World Bank, 2015).

Crime and violence. Violence in the Latin American region, in general, has been a major concern in recent years. "Every 15 minutes, at least four people are victims of homicide in the LACs. In 2013, the top 50 most violent cities in the world, 42 were in the region" (Chioda, 2017, p. xix). Within the LAC, three countries, including Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador make up what is known as the Northern Triangle, a particularly violent region. Beyond having a high per capita murder rate, the zone has a high level of domestic violence, low human development, lack of good governance, high level of poverty and poor availability of social services (Colburn & Arturo, 2016). For

several successive years, Honduras was reported by Human Rights Watch (2015) as the murder capital of the world. Violence has come about resulting from land disputes, drug wars, poor prison conditions, and deaths of members of the media, judiciary, and human rights' defenders.

The homicide rate in Honduras reached a high of 93.2 deaths per 100,000 people in 2011 (UNDP, 2017). Colburn and Arturo (2016) note that at present, Honduras' murder rate has dropped to 67 murders annually per 100,000 population. While the murder rate has dropped slightly in recent years, the country still suffers from high crime rates, and impunity for human right's abuses still abound. Those who are most vulnerable to violence include, "journalists, peasant activists, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals" (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Criminal activity by street gangs and drug trafficking rings have become more prevalent in recent years, especially in the larger cities of Honduras (BTI, 2016). Pine (2008) noted that violence has become a significant problem to the point that it negatively impacts every part of the culture in Honduras. "Violence, insecurity, fear, and death crop up every day as themes in conversation and dominate the news media" (Pine, 2008, Chapter 1, Section 2, para.1). Pine observes that violence has become normalized, and Hondurans are no longer shocked by the violence that is taking place around them. Many people in Honduras evaluate their self-worth based on the high amount of violence. For example, they often compare themselves to those who have found a more secure life by migrating out of Honduras.

According to Wolseth (2011), who lived among the gangs in Honduras, violence has left much of the Honduras population in a state of hopelessness. Wolseth also notes that children often find their identity with the gangs. Initiation rites into gang membership require them to commit acts of violence. Once children are in the gangs, it is tough for them to leave. The only way for Honduras youth to get out of the gangs is to join the evangelical church, move far away, or leave in a coffin. Human Rights Watch (2017) attributes the fear of violence from gang members to be one of the reasons that large numbers of children flee the country. Some estimates calculate that in the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras there are as many as 125,000 gang members (Cunningham et al., 2008).

Police abuse and corruption also continue to be significant problems in Honduras. Judges routinely face intimidation. Governmental investments in increased police and military forces, for security reasons, have often taken place at the expense of social programs, such as healthcare and education. The impact on the population is the creation of a sense that investment in the militarization of the country is coming at the expense of improving social services, including education. (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Education. The constitution guarantees access to education as an equal right to all Hondurans. High-quality education is needed for adequate development of the country's human capital. The education system in Honduras has a school year that lasts for a minimum of 200 days, and the levels of education consist of pre-school (pre-básica), elementary education grades 1-6 (first and second cycle), lower secondary school or junior high (third cycle), high school (secondary school or diversified middle school), and

the university (superior education). Children enter school at five years of age. The revision of the Fundamental Education Law of 2012 established, among other things, an expanded basic level of education from seventh to ninth grades. The first nine grades consist of three cycles (primary level of education) of three grades each, two cycles in primary and one in junior high. Grades 10-12 make up high school (bachillerato) (FEREMA, 2017; February 22, 2012; La Gazeta de Honduras, Secretaría de Educacíon, 2014).

High school students may choose between an academic and a professional technical option of study which prepares them to go into the job market or to continue studying at the university. The Department of Education (Secretaría de Educación) oversees the formal technical education sector. Technical professional education began in Honduras in 1890. Within the area of formal education, there are several options for youth to attend a high school in the technical professional area of study (the Bachillerato Tecnico Profesional) (Secretaría de Educación, 2006).

The professional technical high school program (BTP) offers 35 different options of study for professional technical careers (G. Arita, personal communication, May 26, 2018). According to Arita, following the BTP high school track gives graduates the option of going into the job market, preparation for university studies, or to enter into production as an entrepreneur (Secretaría de Educación, August 7, 2017). Among all graduates from high school in Honduras, 84.2 % study in only 6 career areas, those of Science and Humanities, Information Technology, Accounting and Finanzas, Computer,

Business Administration, and Primary School Teacher Education (Secretaría de Educación, 2017)

Honduras education reforms at the end of the 20th century introduced the philosophy of Competency-Based Instruction (CBI) into the national school system. Education began following the model which was being used in the neoliberal labor market where job production was driven by the need to produce the maximum amount of high-quality product most efficiently and effectively possible. The goal of CBI in education was to decrease school dropout and maximize the benefit to society through the reduction of poverty and inequality of educational opportunity (Rodríguez, 2017).

Education quality. Across Honduras, there is a call for improving the quality of Education to serve the needs of all sectors of the society better. There is an insufficient quantity of human capital in the number of people being properly educated to satisfy the needs of the job market throughout all business and industry, for proper development to occur across the country. Parents and professional organizations are unhappy with the unsatisfactory value of the education provided for young people (Ulloa, 2012).

In Honduras, 11% of the population is unable to read or write. Women reach an average academic level of 8.1 years of schooling and males average 7.8 years of school (INE, 2017). High school students have performed poorly on university entrance exams. In 2015, the Honduras youth who took the university entrance exam only scored an average 39% overall, with their scores on mathematics questions being the lowest (Informe, 2017). The quality of education varies across the country. Schools in urban areas have better educational results than those in rural areas (FEREMA, 2017). As of

2014, only 56.6% of all schools had electricity. In the department of Choluteca, the percentage is even lower, where only 455 schools, or 46.2% of all the schools, had electricity in 2014. Only 31.3% of the Honduras schools had any septic system. In comparison, 39.6% of the schools in the Choluteca department did not have any septic system (Secretaría de Educacion, Honduras, 2017).

Education inequality. There is concern over the inequality in education since the Educational system has not been meeting the demands for workforce preparation. In education in Latin American Countries (LAC), there are several different types of disparities in both access to education and quality of education available. There is a disparity among the population geographically where the population in urban regions has attained a higher academic level than those who live in rural areas. The quality of education varies greatly across the country. The wealthy can attend high-quality schools. Those who attend private schools score higher on standardized tests than those students who attend public schools (Solis & Godoy, 2010).

Latin America is one of the most inequitable regions of the world (Blanco & Cusato, 2004) and Honduras is one of the unequal countries in several aspects in comparison to its neighboring countries. Throughout the Honduras population, there is a high level of socioeconomic inequality. The poorest 10% of the Honduras population earns 0.7% of the national income while the richest 10% of the population receives 40.6% of the country's income. Quality healthcare is not equally available to all portions of the population. There is unequal access to the justice system (PNUD, 2012). The lower

income in the poorer population of Honduras is due to the lack of accessibility of a high school and university education (PNUD, 2012).

Unequal educational coverage. It is alarming that the number of high schools operating in Honduras has been decreasing in recent years. In 2016, the total number of high schools in the country dropped from the 2015 number of 6,602 to 5,599, a difference of 1003. According to the Secretary of Education (2017), Choluteca is among the country's departments that suffers a lack of sufficient school properties. There has been a promotion recently to increase the rates of primary school enrollment to remedy this by improving access to already existing schools. However, this has not translated into a correspondingly higher rate of school completion (Ashida, 2015).

Education drop-out. In part, efficiency in education is the ability of a cohort of classmates to stay together through the various school grade levels at the appropriate ages without high dropout levels. Graduation rates, dropout percentages, and repetitions of grade levels are all considered to be indicators of the level of efficiency in the Honduras education system. Honduras dropout rates within grade levels have improved in recent years, and at present, there is a low-grade repetition rate. These changes have occurred in part due to the recent implementation of new programs instituted by the government requiring flexibility in the evaluation of students. There have been repeated attempts by the Secretary of Education to establish the proper evaluation process for students (FEREMA, 2017). Choluteca is one of the departments with the highest dropout rates in Honduras (Secretaria de Educación [Honduras], 2017, November).

According to the Programa de las Naciónes Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) (2012), there is significant inequality of educational opportunity in Honduras. Many groups of the population do not have adequate access to educational opportunities. Dropout rates among school-age youth are high. There is also a notable difference in the quality of education offered by schools around the country.

Illiteracy is one major education problem in Honduras. The illiteracy rate is especially high (30.2%) among those over 60 years old. Among the general population, the illiteracy rate is 11.0%. The problem is worse in rural areas where the illiteracy rate reaches 17.2% of the population. On average, Hondurans have an academic level of 7.9 years of schooling per person. Honduras also has a problem with high dropout rates of youth from school. According to Honduras government statistics, 25.3% of the population between the ages of 12-30 years old are not in school and are not working (INE, 2017).

Honduras vocational education. Vocational education in Honduras evolved from the concept that high school was supposed to accomplish three goals at once: prepare youth to become good citizens, prepare them for the job market, and at the same time accomplish the goal of preparing them for entering the university (Honduras Secretaría de Educación, 2006). Ulloa (2012) contends that one of the major problems facing vocational education in Honduras is the large degree of fragmentation between the formal sector and the non-formal sector of vocational education.

While vocational education exists in both formal and non-formal settings in Honduras, non-formal vocational education opportunities are a limited alternative option

for youth to attend high school. The options available for non-formal vocational training are not sufficient to meet the demand that exists among the youth of Honduras. There are few opportunities for job preparation for those youth who are no longer in school and are out of work. Organizations have recommended that vocational education opportunities be increased in Honduras. The Education Department of Honduras has called for an increase of vocational education, especially in areas of the country where there is both a weak coverage of formal education and a high migration of people from the area (Secretaría de Educación, 2017). A 2011 United Nations Human Development Report made three recommendations for possible options on increasing economic equality. The report suggested that Honduras needs to increase good employment opportunities and increase salaries through the development of small and medium business development, develop policies that would stimulate national and international investment, and to increase vocational education opportunities. A 2008 study (United Nations, 2010) reported that 78.3% of those young people surveyed who were out of work and not studying had never received any technical or vocational training.

There are public/private and "for profit"/non-profit vocational education organizations that operate primarily under two Honduras education umbrellas (Ulloa, 2012). The two umbrellas include the *Instituto de Formacíon Professional* (INFOP), which is a Honduras government program and the *Centro Asesor para el Desarrollo de Los Recursos Humanos en Honduras* (CADERH), which is a non-governmental organization that specializes in certifying graduates from their network of vocational schools, as well as other workers (PNUD, 2009).

Workforce. There is a concern the workforce numbers are reducing due to the emigration of young people from Honduras. Approximately 95% of all emigrants from Honduras are of working age, and nearly half of the emigrants are between the ages of 20-29 years old. Those leaving Honduras to find work outside the country are increasingly coming from rural areas and are likely to have only a primary school education (Reyes, de Midence, & Narváez, 2007).

In 2015, an estimated 8% of the Central American population lived outside of their country of origin, with 82% of those living in the United States (Quinto Informe, 2016). From Honduras, there are over 500,000 calculated migrants, or approximately 13% of the potential Honduras workforce, working in the United States (Hernandez, Sousa, & Lopez, 2016). The amount of money sent back to Honduras, in the form of remittances by its citizens living in the United States, averages 2.5 times the country's monthly average per capita income. The amount of income from personal remittances equals 18.0% of Honduras' Gross Domestic Product (World Bank, 2018).

The money sent back from the States by family and friends living there is an additional factor that affects the way Hondurans live (Colburn, & Arturo, 2016). While the money sent back to Honduras by its workers in the United States helps to reduce the poverty situation for some, the migration of Honduras citizens has had a double negative impact. Migration has created a human capital drain on Honduras and has created a dependency situation for individuals and the country. Many people no longer work but are depending on the money sent to them. The workers in the States and people back in Honduras are dependent on the political fluctuations of the United States government in

making decisions that would impact their ability to continue working and sending money back to Honduras. The consequences have contributed to a lack of innovation (Hernandez, Sousa, & Lopez, 2016).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (2016) reports that 30% of the Honduras workforce is involved in agriculture. Also, approximately 60% of Honduras households are living below the poverty level, with 38.4% living in extreme poverty (INE, 2017). While unemployment has been at 5.3%, it is a concern that 40.2% of the workforce is underemployed (FAO, 2016).

Ninis. Only 31.7% of the Honduras youth between the ages of 15-17 are in school (INE, 2017). The multiple struggles in Honduras have a strong negative impact on the youth. With the combined problems of lack of work opportunities and high dropout rates from school, there may be as many as 25% of the Honduras youth population who are both out of school and out of work (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016). Often, the only opportunity they can hope for is a migration to another area for a better opportunity. These youth, who are not attending school and who are not working, are often called *ninis* (not studying/not working). When looking at the entire landscape of issues Hondurans deal with, it presents unique barriers for ninis to find success.

The Department of Choluteca

This study was in the Department of Choluteca, in the city of Choluteca. Choluteca is one of 18 departments in Honduras with a population of approximately 464,000 (177,000 urban/287,000 rural) (INE). Within the Department of Choluteca, there

are many cities, towns, and villages. The city of Choluteca is one of the larger cities in the department.

The City of Choluteca

The city of Choluteca has a population of approximately 152,000 people (INE). Twenty-three percent of the economy is made up of agriculture including crops and cattle, forestry, fish. Choluteca has a 53% poverty rate. Due to a weak economy, poor social conditions, and adverse climate conditions, Honduras is one of the Central American countries that are most vulnerable to disasters. Among Hondurans, the Choluteca population lives through periodic extreme weather changes, ranging from drought to torrential rainfalls, flooding, and hurricanes. Choluteca is among the top ten cities in Honduras with the highest disaster risk due to extremely heavy amounts of rainfall (Tot, 2015).

Problem Statement

The Honduras population faces many challenges. The rural poor are negatively affected by extreme weather changes. Agriculture production is not reliable for the small farmer. With the anticipated future demographic dividend of a larger proportion of the population nearing working age, it is even more imperative that Honduras increase the quality of its educational system (Programa Estado de la Nación, 2016). The economic cost associated with providing secondary education for the anticipated increase in the vast numbers of students requiring an education will be a financial challenge to Honduras (Cunningham, 2008).

The "nini" problem among Honduras youth is becoming increasingly serious. Many of the youth are not working (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016) and there is a high dropout rate from school by Honduras youth after the age of 11 years old. It is alarming that only 52.1% of 12 to 14-year-old youth in Honduras are studying in school. Among 15-17-year-olds, only 31.7% of Honduran youth are in classes. In rural parts of the country, the percentages are even lower (INE, 2017). There have been reports suggesting reasons why Honduras youth drop out of school, but it is not known why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras are both not in school and not working. Current research on the ninis of Honduras has not viewed the problem from the perspective of those youth who are directly impacted by being out of work and out of school.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from no work and no school attitude, and why they decided to return to school at the Vocational School. The following central research question guided the study: Why are youth in Choluteca, Honduras not in school and not working and then decide to re-enter school at the Vocational School?

Limitations of this Study

1. The time in the field was limited to two months. I could not research every aspect of Bronfenbrenner's theory during this short period.
2. The sample of participants in this study was limited to a specific group of six male and six female students between the ages of 15 and 17-years-old who attended classes at the Vocational School in Choluteca, Honduras. Findings from this phenomenological study were not transferable to other groups of students.

3. This study was limited to the ability of the participants to express their lived experience through the use of unstructured interviews, photovoice, and a focus group session.
4. The participants may not have felt completely willing to discuss their lived experiences with me as an outsider.
5. My influence as a missionary from another culture and my position of authority may have impacted the way the youth responded. To mitigate my influence on the responses made by the youth, I included the director of the school in all of the orientation seminars and the initial interviews. The director, well-known among all the students, helped establish a relationship of trust between myself and the student participants. The school director also helped clarify any questions from me that may not have been well understood.
6. The academic level of the participants ranged from six to nine years of education which may have limited their development of critical thinking.

Delimitations of the Study

1. All sessions were in Spanish. In addition to me being bilingual in English and Spanish, a native Spanish-speaking person collaborated in asking questions and helping clarify responses from the participants.
2. The participatory action research study involved student researchers in understanding the phenomenon deciding to come back to school after being out of school and out of work the previous year.

Basic Assumptions

1. Phenomenology requires collecting "rich" data that are subjective. The participants were encouraged to tell their stories reflectively. Interviews were not highly structured. The

results of this study may not be inferred from other students experiencing the same phenomenon.

2. Participants willingly completed the assignments given to them.
3. Participants responded honestly to questions related to the phenomenon studied.
4. Participants fulfilled the basic requirements of having been out of school and out of work the previous year and enrolled in classes at the time of the study.
7. As the primary researcher, though I come from a different cultural background than the students, I was able to understand their context enough to develop meaningful findings.
8. I cannot remove my background and experience from my understanding and interpretation of the findings.
9. The presence of multiple youths in the sessions and their interactions with each other during discussions may have allowed some youth to influence the discussion.
10. The research done with the youth did not place them at great risk.
11. The group studied has its characteristics and is not considered to be representative of other youth.

Definitions of Terms

- *At-risk youth*: Youth who participate in activities or are in an environment that might lead them to deviant behavior (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). Resnick and Burt (1996, p. 174) define the risk of problem behavior among youth as "the presence of negative antecedent conditions (risk antecedents), which create vulnerabilities, combined with the presence of specific early negative behavior or

experiences (risk markers) that are likely to lead, in time, to problem behavior that will have more serious long-term health consequences (risk outcomes)."

- *Competence (in vocational education and training)*: According to Clement (2012), competence in vocational education and training refers to "the capacities and dispositions which enable persons to act efficiently and safely in work and everyday life" (p. 519).
- *Coverage Rate:* The net coverage rate for school attendance is the percentage of young people at any given grade or age level as a percentage of the total population of that grade or age level.
- *Education System in Honduras:* The educational system in Honduras is made up of "pre-basic" (kinder), "basic" (primary grades 1-6 and junior high grades 7-9), "middle" (high school grades 10-11/12), and "superior" (university) (Secretaría de Educación [Honduras], 2017).
- *Nini:* The term "nini" is used to define a group of 20 million Latin American youth who are of the phenomenon of being out of work and not studying [ni trabajando, ni estudiando, in Spanish] (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).
- *Non-formal Education:* Non-formal education takes place in a context that is linked to an institution or organization, but is not certified or accredited by the formal education sector (Stecher & Maschke, 2013).
- *Remittances:* Remittances are sums of money sent back to the home family of migrants who are working in other countries.
- *School Dropout:* Dropouts are individuals who have not successfully finished upper secondary school and are no longer attending school.

- *Vocational Education and Training (VET):* Vocational education or career technical education and training is a high school education that prepares students with the skills necessary for entering the workforce immediately after graduation.
- *Youth*: Cunningham, McGinnis, Garcia, Tesliuc, and Verner (2008) define youth as a life-stage between the time when a person is moving from dependence on others and the time of independence. Youth may generally be determined to be between the ages of 12-24-years-old.

Significance of the Problem

Honduras faces multiple difficulties that impede young people from accomplishing their dreams of completing an education in their desired area of interest and then finding a satisfactory job that allows them to apply what they have learned. There is inequality in access to education, healthcare, and income. Poverty rates, violence, and migration out of the country are high. The country faces periodic climatic extremes. There continue to be issues of gender inequality. Job opportunities are limited. Children are working at an early age to help support their families.

It is a well-documented concern that so many youths in Honduras are out of school and out of work (Tornarolli, 2016; Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016; Hernandez, Sousa, & Lopez, 2016). As a group, the ninis of Central America represent an extreme situation of 'disempowerment' when combined with poor educational opportunities and job exclusion. There is a severe hindrance to their possible future employment and personal development (Quinto Informe, 2016, p. 378).

Since current research on the ninis of Honduras has not viewed the problem of being out of work and out of school from their perspective, the phenomenon needs to be understood through their lived experience. No one can do the research more effectively than those who are most passionate about the need for educational opportunity and obtaining a job once he or she has completed his or her education. No one can push for change better than those who are living the situation of being out of work and not studying.

This study will include the ninis as participant researchers, giving them an opportunity to voice their concerns and to become active in seeking solutions for themselves and for a generation of youth that follows. A phenomenological study is the beginning of an attempt to understand the lived experience of the ninis of Honduras. Understanding and interpreting is an evolving process (Laverty, 2003). By better understanding the phenomenon of Honduras youth who are out of school and out of work, further studies may continue to focus more in-depth on the problem, and new strategies may be developed to meet the existing needs. Continued studies may result in educational programs addressing the problem in the future. Employers may better understand the education needs.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

At-Risk Youth

Youth are at-risk whenever they participate in actions having a high potential for harming themselves or for harming others. Risky decisions by young people tend to lead to a long-term loss of productivity by those involved in them. According to Cunningham (2008), the at-risk category of youth involves those persons who are in transition from dependence to one of independence. For the World Bank Study, the ages of "youth" are between 12-24-years-old. Using this definition, more than half of the youth in the Latin American and Caribbean areas (LAC) are at-risk. Kronik (2013) contends that the issue of youth at-risk must be viewed from a broad systems approach which involves the individual's interaction with their environment. It is not possible to deal with one of the parts of the system without also changing other parts.

Risk as a Construct

Risk has to do with the probability of future difficulties. The risk is not the explanation for why those difficulties occur (Swadner & Lubeck, 1995; Natriello, 1986; Natriello et al., 1990; Pallas, 1989; Pallas, 1986, 1989; Rumberger, 1987). There is disagreement on how to define and measure dropping out of school. Catterall (1998) contends that risk, as a construct, should include attitudinal and performance measures on individuals rather than depend on demographic measures for groups of youth in the prediction of dropouts.

Impact of Risky Behavior

The problem of dealing with risky behavior among youth is costly to countries,

communities, families, and for the youth themselves (Cunningham, 2008). For governments, the cost of dealing with at-risk youth involves operational budget costs. Some of the costs are due to violent acts and lost production. There are costs to the justice system in trying and punishing deviant behavior. Lost opportunity costs result from decreased productivity, which limits economic growth, negatively affecting all of society. There are also direct costs to the families and the individuals who are engaged in risky behavior. The youth themselves face lost opportunity costs which may not be immediately recognized. In addition to the increase in costs, risky behavior increases the probability that negative consequences will result from that behavior.

The Ninis of Latin America (Who are they?)

Many countries in Latin America are also concerned with the large numbers of young people who are not studying and are also not working. They are commonly called "ninis" (ni estudiando, ni trabajando [not studying, not working]). Across Latin America, one in every five youth between the ages of 15 and 24-years-old, totaling more than 20 million people, are out of school and out of work (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).

Reasons for Concern

Hoyos et al. (2016) suggest three primary reasons why LAC governments should be concerned about students who are not studying or working. First, the youth who are not studying and are not working contribute to the problem of intergenerational inequality. In Latin America, nearly 60% of the youth who are not studying and not working come from impoverished or vulnerable family backgrounds. These youths come from the lower 40% of the income distribution. A more substantial portion of the "ninis"

are women (66%) who have not finished their secondary education and live in poor urban communities or otherwise vulnerable households.

Secondly, in some parts of the region where the number of "ninis" is high, they are at more of a risk due to the presence of organized crime. Lastly, a historic opportunity for developing human capital in the region could be lost if there is not a solution to deal with the high number of unschooled and out-of-work youth. Latin America is going through a demographic change in the working age of the population. The population across the region will soon have much higher percentages of working-age people in comparison to the percentages of children and the elderly (Hoyos et al., 2016). Honduras presently has a young population. Children and youth between the ages of 5-19-years-old (those who are of school age now) will be available to fill the jobs during the expected job market growth (Sistema Educativo Hondureño, 2017).

Not working. The main reason young people do not have jobs is that they dropped out of school to work in temporary or unstable jobs not providing them with a career opportunity. Since the youth did not continue studying, those who dropped out of school did not develop the skills and knowledge necessary for participating in the competitive job market. Lastly, the authors suggest that in regions where desertion from school is high, programs may be developed to better inform young people of the results of early dropout from school. Some schools may also be able to detect at-risk students and provide additional support for them at an early age (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).

Not studying. The problem with adolescents quitting before they graduate from high school may be just one event out of a long chain of events occurring over several years (Finn, 1989). In Honduras, the problem of dropping out of school begins to increase in middle school. The school attendance rate of 6-11-year-olds is about 93.0%, and there is little variation in school attendance between youth in urban areas and rural areas of the country. The problem intensifies with 12-14-year-olds with only 52.1% attending school. The urban-rural divide also becomes more pronounced with 66.2% of the youth attending school in urban areas and only 39.9% attendance in rural areas. Among the 12-14 age group, there are also differences in school attendance by gender. Male school attendance is 47% while 57.1% of females attend school. The 15-17-year-old attendance is only 31.7% (INE, 2017).

Not studying in Latin America. There is a concern across the LAC that large portions of the youth population are not in school (Cunningham, 2008; Informe de Progreso Educativo: Honduras, 2017). Cunningham (2008) found that youth in the countries studied were disproportionately involved in violence, substance abuse, joblessness, and teen pregnancy. He concluded that youth who dropped out from school have a lower life expectancy. Some of the stated reasons why Honduras youth leave school include financial needs (money/work), personal issues (getting married or becoming parents, helping the family), and school issues (don't like to study, inconvenient hours or location of schools). The environment that youth encounter at home and in school may play an important role in their decision not to continue their education (Cunningham, 2008). There are also significant differences in the percentage of

female (56%) to male (44%) enrollment at the secondary (media) level of education (Secretary of Education, 2017).

Not studying in Honduras. Instead of measuring the number of dropouts who are not in school, the Secretary of Education in Honduras uses the term "net coverage rate" to describe the percentage of the population of each age group that actively enrolled in classes. In the 2016 school year, 34.6% of 3-5-year-olds were in school, and 93% of 6-11-year-olds were attending primary school in Honduras. The rates for 6-11-year-olds were similar between urban (93.4%) and rural (92.7%). The coverage rate for 12-14-year-olds taking classes in secondary education was 52.1% attending classes with a marked difference in the rates between urban (66.2%) and rural areas (39.9%) of the country. At the secondary level of education, there was also a difference in the rate of school attendance according to gender. Among 12-14-year-olds in Honduras, females (57.1% of the population) were more likely to be attending school than males (47.0% of the population). Among the Honduras youth between the ages of 15 and 17, only 31.7% of the population was in school during the 2016 school year. Among urban areas, the percentage of 15-17-year-old population attending school was more than double (43.1%) than that of rural (20.2%) youth (INE, 2016).

Reasons for not studying. In a survey of 18-24-year-old Honduran youth, participants responded that the main reason they were not in school was either because they lacked economic resources (42.2%), they did not want to study (23.3%), they had family or health problems (10.6%), or there were no schools available for them to study (5.1%) (FEREMA, 2017). The low-income families are unequally affected by high

dropout numbers. Common problems that others may find ways to resolve are more drastic issues for the poor. In needy families, children are often required to work to help supplement family income or to stay at home from school and care for younger siblings while older family members work. The problem is also compounded by Honduras depending heavily on agricultural production and the use of child labor to work in the fields. An agricultural worker in Honduras makes a minimum salary of slightly more than $1.00 per hour (Secretaria de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 2018). Child labor in Honduras is a continuing problem that contributes to drop out of school (Umanzo & Arrazola, 2017). Often there is a lack of incentive for youth to attend school especially in situations where families do not view schooling as important (Ashida, 2015).

Dropping Out of School

Defining and Measuring Dropout Numbers

The term *dropout* is defined differently and measured differently around the world. In the United States and Canada, dropout refers to adolescents who do not obtain a high school diploma. In other countries, the term dropout is rarely used for statistical purposes, but there are similar concepts. One of the terms used in other countries is “not in education, employment or training” or NEET. According to Lamb and Markussen (2011), dropouts from school are commonly measured in one of three ways around the world. The event dropout rate is a percentage rate measurement of a particular group who drop out of school in a specified period. The status dropout rate is a measurement of the percentage in a population who are not enrolled in high school or do not obtain a diploma. The cohort dropout rate measures a certain age range or grade level over a period.

Impact of Dropping Out

Dropping out of school impacts both society as a whole and the individual who drops out. Individuals face economic challenges because they are the least educated in the labor pool competing for available jobs. Jobs are more difficult to find for school drop-outs. If they do find jobs, they are generally paid lower wages than high school graduates and generate less income over their lifetime (Catterall, 1987; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Secondary education is necessary for entrance into the university. Secondary education has become increasingly more important in determining economic distribution within the population and impacts other benefits such as healthcare (Lamb & Markussen, 2011).

Society is also negatively impacted when students drop out of school. By having a reduced income, dropouts do not contribute as much to the local, state and national economies as those who graduate from high school. They are instead more likely to require public assistance (Catterall, 1987; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). There are also indirect social costs to dropping out of school. School dropouts may have poorer physical and mental health, and they may be more involved in criminal activity (Owens, 2004). As a result of criminal activity, society incurs higher judicial and penal costs (Catterall, 1987).

Dropout Risk Status

Croninger and Lee (2001) define risk status under four different categories: 1.) those students who do not exhibit risk factors, 2.) those at risk socially, 3.) students at academic risk, and 4.) those who exhibit both social and academic risk. In a sample (n = 10,979) of 10^{th}-12^{th} graders, Croninger and Lee (2001) found that 11% of the students

dropped out of school before finishing the 12th grade. The researchers developed social-risk and academic-risk measures of the student's status.

Social-risk of dropout. The social-risk categories consisted of those students who were a.) living in families who lived at or below the poverty level, b.) speaking a minority language, c.) being a member of a lesser advantaged minority group, d.) living in a single parent household, or e.) having a head of the household who had not finished high school. Forty-four percent of those youth in the sample had at least one of the social-risk factors. Those who dropped out were more likely to have multiple social-risk factors as compared to those who graduated from school (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Academic-risk of dropout. Actual school behavior and performance may best define academic-risk of dropout. One or more grade retentions, excessive absenteeism, low levels of school engagement by students, perceived lack of support from school personnel (especially teachers) are all factors contributing to dropout by students (Catterall, 1988). In schools where faculty show interest in students and engage with them, there is less absenteeism and a lower probability of dropping out (Bryk & Tum, 1989).

Early academic problems can predict future school problems such as absenteeism and skipping classes (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Lee & Burkam, 1992). In the study by Croninger and Lee (2001), the academic-risk categories included those students who experienced academic difficulties before entering high school, such as those who: a.) had a grade average below C, b.) had been held back a grade, c.) did not expect post-high school education, d.) had been sent to the office during their first semester of eighth

grade, or e.) their parents were notified multiple times of school-related problems. Those who dropped out were found to be twice as likely to be at academic-risk as those who continued in school. Those who dropped out were also three times more likely to have at least three social risk factors (Croninger & Lee, 2001). For some youth, withdrawal from school is the result of a long process of disengagement from school activities (Finn, 1989; McNeal, 1995).

Reasons for Dropping Out

High school dropouts "tend to come from disadvantaged social and racial backgrounds, they tend more often to have become disengaged from school, are less motivated scholastically and more often experience personal difficulties and behavioral issues that place them at risk" (Lamb & Markussen, 2011, p. 2). Changing schools has been found to be detrimental to children and has a strong impact on dropping out (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996).

Researchers have suggested many different reasons students drop out of school before graduating. When asked why they are no longer attending high school, youth typically mention the most recent issues that they have experienced while still in school and do not take into account the entire history of issues that may have led to their decision to no longer go to school. They also tend to ignore or not to recognize environmental factors that may have influenced their decision to no longer go to school. While youth who drop out of school report a variety of reasons for withdrawing, these reasons do not identify the underlying causes of dropout (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Rumberger (2011) noted it is also difficult to determine what factors had the greatest

relative influence on their decision to leave school. Furthermore, while many suggested factors are contributing to the dropout of a young person from school, it is best to consider dropping out of school as a process that involves many variables over a long period.

Pull-out/Push-out of School

There are many complex factors affecting students' decisions to drop out of school (Kornick, 2013). Numerous theories attempt to provide models explaining student dropout. Some theories look at dropping out as just two dichotomous categories: those who drop out of school and those who stay in school through graduation. Jordan, Lara, and McPartland (1994) concluded it is helpful in understanding the reasons behind dropping out by using the terms of "push" factors that force students to leave school, and "pull" factors that diminish the commitment of students to continue with their formal studies. During high school, many different events or activities in a youth's life may turn into competing forces against their commitment to school.

With pull-out theories, the assumption is that youth make a cost-benefit analysis where they view school as only one competing aspect among other factors contributing to their decision to continue in school or to withdraw from school. In these cases, dropping out is viewed from a contextual perspective, taking into account the entire surroundings of the young person, including factors such as economic problems and other family struggles, job opportunities, peers, institutions, and religious and community organizations, as well as school (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). According to Fine (1986), students who pull-out of school feel that going to school conflicts with their other

commitments. Student absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of dropout (Bryk & Thum, 1989).

The push-out category, which influences school dropout, is seen as a contrast to the pull-out effect. Push-out comes from factors inside the school system, such as disciplinary issues, which discourages youth from finishing their high school education (Stearns & Glennie, 2006). Dropping out of school cannot be explained solely by individual personal characteristics of the student based on their social background and any behavioral issues they might exhibit (Lee & Burkham, 1992). School structure often plays a role, where some students have stated that they feel they have been thrown out of school (Fine, 1986).

Factors Predicting Dropout

Finn (1989) reported the majority of the scholarly literature covering dropout rates of youth in the United States focuses either on the characteristics of individual students or the institution. However, dropping out of school for youth is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by any one factor. Rumberger and Rotermund (2012) note that it is very difficult to understand the causes of dropping out of school. They outline several models as attempts to explain the issue of dropping out of school. As a result, they arrived at three general conclusions. First, the phenomenon of youth dropping out of school in the United States involves multiple factors that contribute to their decision to either stay in school or to leave school. Secondly, the overall context of a young person's life, both in school and away from school, plays an important role in their decision. Thirdly, dropping out of school is not a sudden event but rather a long-term process that may involve many years, starting as early as elementary school.

The current models do not adequately account for the excessively high numbers of youth who are not in school in Honduras. The high dropout rates would be understandable if the youth were leaving school for career jobs where they could expect steady employment.

Individual Factors. Most students begin their early education being similarly enthusiastic about school and optimistic in their hopes for academic success. Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey (1997) noted several themes that play important roles in creating eventual hopelessness that leads to impacting youth dropout from school. Diverse factors, such as the student's personality traits and personal development, the social impact resulting from involvement in the different institutional settings in which a young person is involved, and socioeconomic background are just some of the contributors to youth who drop out of school.

Much of the variation in dropout rate from school may be attributed to issues from the student's background (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). Rumberger (2011) identified four general categories of individual predictors of dropout from school. Dropping out is viewed as a process that potentially covers several years of education. Having an understanding of the different predictors of dropout and when they most likely might occur within the educational process gives educators the possibility of preparing interventions to prevent dropout.

The first and most important category that may predict dropping out is educational performance, especially in high school. Whether a student drops out or graduates may be affected by "failed courses; retention; poor grades and test scores; and

student mobility" (Rumberger, 2011, p. 160). The second predictor category for dropping out is student behavior while in school or out of school. Some of the behaviors critical to school success include engagement in academics or social school activities, course-taking patterns, deviance, peer influence, employment during school, goals, and self-perceptions. Ecksteing and Wolpin (1999) found that students who had jobs while in school have lower academic performance. Rumberger's third category is student attitudes, along with their beliefs and values which are related to the previous categories of behaviors and school performance. Student attitudes change throughout the educational process depending on their advancement through the development lifecycle. The fourth and final category is a student's background, including various demographics and health characteristics (Rumberger, 2011).

Institutional Factors. Research covering the schools as institutions has centered on efforts to develop intervention programs to keep older students in school or to find ways to get them to return to school successfully. However, very little research has been done on a systematic understanding of the human development processes that lead up to adolescents dropping out of school (Finn, 1989).

Dropout Models

Finn (1989) found youth often simultaneously exhibit negative behavior problems such as dropping out of school, disruptive behavior in school, class attendance problems, and delinquency. He identified two major models explaining why youth become what he terms as "early school leavers." Both theories consider early departure from school to be the result of a long-term developmental process that culminates in early withdrawal from

school rather than being a single sudden event in the lives of young people. Students retained in a lower grade are more at risk at dropping out of high school. The cumulative effect of failure in lower grades of school may be the initial issue that leads to youth eventually dropping out of high school (Sterns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007).

Frustration-self-esteem Model

According to the frustration-self-esteem model, later withdrawal from school begins with poor performance and builds on early school failure leading students down a path towards low self-esteem and a progression to problem behavior, which may finally end with the student either voluntarily dropping out or being pushed out of school (Finn, 1989). Schools may play a role in contributing to the student's frustration (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). Indirectly, school systems create policies and practices that discourage student engagement contributing to student frustration which encourages them to drop out voluntarily.

Frustration aspect. In early years of schooling, students sometimes get behind on basic required subjects such as math and reading. These subjects are the foundation for much of the later learning required of students. By not being proficient in these important subjects, students are unable to build on the basics when they move beyond the primary grades of education (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997).

Self-esteem aspect. School transitions, especially from elementary school to junior high, are a critical time in a student's studies, adding stress to the school experience, and have been associated with decreased self-esteem by youth. Cantin and Bovin (2004) noted a reduction of student self-perception of scholastic competence when entering junior high school. They concluded that the sudden change in self-perception

might have been due to both a change in environment and the increased academic demands that students faced.

Participation-identification model

The second and the newer model proposed by Finn (1989) is the participation-identification model which proposes that students who are more engaged in school are less likely to drop out. The model addresses variables of importance to active student engagement in school, as well as an associated feeling of identification with the school. Either dropping out of school or completing high school are both theorized to be long-term processes that begin as early as primary school.

Participation aspect. According to the model (Finn, 1989), greater participation in school activities gives youth a greater sense of connection or bonding to the school which results in fewer dropouts. Identifying non-participation in the classroom at an early age is important. Non-participation or withdrawal from the educational process may take a variety of forms, such as skipping classes, problems with behavioral issues outside the classroom, or disruption in the classroom. Students are more likely to finish high school if they regularly participate in a variety of school-relevant intra-curricular and extra-curricular events and activities. Non-participation, alternatively, leads to poor performance in the classroom, which then results in less connection with the school or bonding. The result is dropping out of school.

School engagement as participation. School engagement is "energy in action" (Ainley, 2012). Engagement is the manifestation of motivation (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Fredericks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) note that school engagement is a multi-faceted concept or meta construct that includes the closely related and intertwined behavioral,

emotional, and cognitive elements. Encouraging student engagement has the potential for resolving issues of alienation in the education system. The behavioral element of engagement has to do with following established norms and participation in academic, social, and extracurricular activities. It is imperative that researchers make a distinction between engagement in the classroom and engagement in the larger school community. Emotional engagement refers to the positive and negative affective reactions to school. Cognitive engagement is a personal investment in learning. It involves a commitment to incorporate the various efforts necessary to comprehend complex ideas and dominate difficult skills in school.

Lawson and Lawson (2013) applied a systems-oriented conceptualization of student engagement. They viewed student engagement as "the conceptual glue that connects student agency (including student's prior knowledge, experience, and interest at home, and in the community) and its ecological influences (peers, family, and community) to the organizational structures and cultures of school" (p. 433). Dropouts are often disengaged or disconnected from school life (McNeal, 1995).

Identification aspect. Models for dropping out of school identify some of the important factors relating to a student's decision to either continue in school until graduation or to drop out early. Many of these models, however, do not address issues where the school's influence as an institution directly impacts a student's participation in school and his or her identification with the school. (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). There are two aspects to the concept of identification with school. Students who identify with the

school develop a sense of belonging in the school environment, and view being in school as a positive experience (Finn, 1989).

Community Capital Model

Capital is not simply an economic resource. Referring to the concept of *"capital,"* Bourdieu's (1986) understanding of capital included a diverse "general economy of practices" (p. 15). He contended that it is "impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (p. 15). He specifically noted economic, cultural, and social capital as three fundamental forms of capital.

The role of the community capitals framework. "Capital is any resource capable of producing other resources" (Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016, p. 220). Flora, Emery, Fey, and Bregendahl (2005) developed the "community capitals framework" to explain the importance of the role of the seven different forms of capital (human, natural, political, financial, social, cultural, and built capital) in community development. These forms of capital exist in all communities and are inter-related to varying degrees. For communities to be healthy and sustainable, it is necessary to have an interaction and overlapping of all seven types of capital. An overemphasis in the use of one form of community capital as a community resource will be detrimental to the other existing forms of capital. A balance of all seven forms of community capitals will lead towards a healthy community (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016).

Cunningham (2008) concluded that LAC's lower levels of education among the population negatively impacts the ability of a country to develop the different forms of capital. Reduced education rates result in decreased democracy, less volunteerism, and

diminished cultural expression. Those who are less educated are also likely to have more health problems and a lower life expectancy. Without sufficient education, skills will become obsolete. Among the less educated, the problem tends to multiply as their children will be more likely to become involved in behavioral problems and will also be expected to have low educational attainment.

Natural capital. Natural capital is the foundation for all the other six forms of community capital. Natural capital has the potential to enhance all other capitals while the other capitals can potentially lessen natural capital (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016). Natural capital, in the form of land, is commonly transformed into financial capital through agricultural and timber production (Flora et al., 2016).

Honduras natural capital. Much of the best agricultural land in Honduras has been appropriated through land grabs by transnational companies and Honduran oligarchs (Kerssen, 2013). The growth of bananas and other agricultural exports from Honduras has come at a high cost to the country's workers. Honduras is considered to be the original banana republic, a derogatory term for countries that have been negatively impacted and taken advantage of by the dealings with large transnational fruit companies. According to Lopez Peralta, (head of the Namasigue, Choluteca Municipal Land Registry) the unavailability of good land combined with the young people in the region working at an early age in the melon production farms have led the youth in the region to lose all knowledge of how to grow their own food (J. Peralta, personal communication, April 27, 2015).

Cultural capital. Cultural capital includes people's worldview, values, and symbols (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016). According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital exists in three states. The embodied state includes "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (p. 17). The objectified state of cultural capital pertains to material goods or items. Institutionalized cultural capital involves the recognition of an individual's attainment in education institutions, often in the form of academic credentials, accomplishments, or degrees obtained. Cultural capital may be passed on to children from their parents in the form of goods, knowledge, and attitudes (Bourdieu, 1986). In some cases, cultural capital may be converted into economic capital.

The undervaluing of education, or not recognizing the importance of education by youth, is understood by some as a lack of cultural capital. However, investment by families in cultural capital may provide an increased scholastic yield from education (Riele, 2006). Bourdieu (1973) maintained that some students find an advantage in having cultural capital that is similar to "imperceptible apprenticeships" which help prepare them for higher levels of education.

Family culture may have a role in impacting family-school relationships. Parental personal involvement in their children's education, both at home and in school, reflects the values and importance that families place on the education of their children and may give students and educational advantage. The degree of parental involvement and the type of parental involvement in a child's education may be related to family background issues such as family networks and childrearing patterns (Lareau, 1987; 2011).

Cultural capital in Honduras. Culture plays a vital role in human development affecting diverse aspects of a person's life (Rogoff, 2003). Issues of inequality are a part of the Honduras culture that is negatively affecting education both in quality and access. The problem is pronounced between urban and rural areas and is greater among indigenous communities (Solís y Godoy, 2010). Culture affects the education system as well. Former practice ingrained in the system is hard to break. In recent years, there has been an extra effort to make system changes to improve education. For example, there are presently attempts by the Secretary of Education to establish a new "culture of evaluation" in the entire school system, based on accepted standards (Secretaría de Educacíon de Honduras, 2013). Among vocational education students in Choluteca, Oberstadt (2015) found that only 26.3% considered their cultural heritage to be very important.

Human capital. Community human capital consists of the combined abilities, knowledge and potential of the members of the community (Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016). Education is an investment in human capital (Owens, 2004) and the reduction in human capital accumulation by dropouts results in a loss in production for the public (Catterall, 1987). Honduras has a Human Development Index that ranks 129 out of 187 countries, which is next to last, ahead of only Nicaragua among the LAC (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2015).

The impact from the loss of human capital in Honduras. Reduced human capital in the form of lower education levels in Honduras correlates with reduced economic income. Those who obtain a primary education receive 14.4% more income

than those with no education. The trend continues throughout the education levels where those with a complete high school education earn 74.5% more income and those with a university education earn 108.1% more income than those who have not gone to school (Ramos, Solis, Hernandez, Redondo, & Hernandez, 2017). If Honduras is going to be prepared to meet the demographic bonus that is expected to take place soon, the country must invest now in quality education at all levels. According to demographer Manuel Flores (UNFPA, 2016), for the Honduras population to achieve future advances in standard of living, it is essential for the government to immediately begin investing the development of human capital through improving education in Honduras. According to Flores, there needs to be an increased investment of resources especially in improving the quality of education in the primary schools and providing increased access to secondary education across the country. Additionally, there needs to be a strong link between both the content and education methodology with the job market demands.

Of the many potentially risky decisions youth might make, there are both immediate consequences, as well as long-range consequences when youth drop out of school. High school drop-out rates in Latin America negatively impact the region with a decrease in workforce skills needed for a well-prepared workforce. Also, youth who are not in school are exposed to additional risks. Leaving school early negatively impacts the human capital development in youth (Kattan & Székely, 2017).

Education is the basis for preparing human capital. The Honduras Ministry of Education recognizes the need to make structural adjustments in education to meet the changing needs for human capital development. Budgets need to be rearranged to invest

more in the high school and university levels. The government is calling for strengthening both formal and non-formal types of education to meet the changing job requirements in the country (Secretaria de Educacion, 2017).

Social capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), social capital consists of the connections or social obligations that exist between agents and has the potential to become economic capital. The amount of social capital that an agent possesses depends on a combination of the number of network connections an agent can mobilize and the amount of capital possessed by those connections.

Like other forms of capital, investments may be made into building social capital. Social capital may be substituted for other forms of capital in some cases, or it may compliment them. Like human and physical capital, social capital requires maintenance, and its depreciation is not predictable. Social capital may be of use to a group of people. It is not only a personal good that is available to individuals. Social capital is distinct from other forms of capital in its characteristic of not being owned by any one single person. It is only available through establishing relationships with others (Adler & Kwon, 2000). Social capital is distinct from other forms of capital in that it exists in "the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 199).

Social capital plays an important role as one part of the family of capitals (Flora et al., 2005). Each of the different communities of a region has its existing account of social capital. Social capital may be described as the lubricant that contributes to making other forms of capital more effective (Putnam, 2000). Grootaert (1988) considers social capital to be the missing link to successful community development often, especially when not

considered alongside other forms of capital. Adler and Kwon (2002, p. 23) define social capital as "the goodwill available to individuals or groups." Social capital originates from the structure and content of people's social relations taking place between people. Robert T. Putnam (2000), in his book *Bowling Alone*, called attention to the changing role of social capital in America. Social capital is understood to make contributions to non-economic areas, such as issues of health. He further suggested that social connectedness, as a part of a person's social capital, is an important aspect contributing to well-being (Putnam, 2000). Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, and Prothrow-Stith (1997) noted that higher levels of social capital were associated with lower mortality rates. Social capital has both individual (private) and group (public) aspects. As a public good, some of the benefits will go to those who have not made any investment in the social capital (Putnam, 2000). Students with a social risk factor are two times more likely to drop out of high school than those students without a social risk factor (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Family social capital. Researchers have suggested that where there are high levels of social capital present in the family and the schools, young people may be expected to stay in school. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) concluded that increased family social capital contributes to keeping youth from dropping out of school. While both family social capital and school social capital were found to be positive predictors of academic test scores, family social capital has the stronger effect of the two variables (Durfur, 2013). There are several studies, which have indicated that higher social capital, either at school, at home, or both, is related to better academic achievement (Dufur et al.,

2013; Parcel et al., 2010). Putman (2000) makes the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital consists of intra-family connections which facilitate students' academic achievement. "Also high levels of parental monitoring of children's activities are shown to be associated with positive outcomes in academic performance and higher levels of psychological adjustment" (Lindfors et al., 2017, p. 2).

Social capital and education. Social capital is important in youth development (Putnam, 2001). In research done in Finland, Lindfors, Minkkinen, Rimpela, and Hotulainen (2017) concluded that the construction of social capital plays an important role in the school, having a positive effect on student academic achievement and the reduction of school burn-out. Social capital may be one useful tool that helps explain why some at-risk youth become successful and do not drop out of school. Some young people who face difficult life situations at home and are unable to access social capital in other locations are often able to be successful academically by turning to the schools for support and guidance (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995).

Coleman (1998) theorized that social capital in the home and the school contribute to healthy cognitive and social development making it an important determinant of academic success in the school. Social capital accumulation from within the family and the social capital existing in the adult community from the neighborhood surrounding a school impacts the academic outcome positively and contributes to a reduction in school dropout rates (Durfur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013). Social capital for children may be built both at home and in the school. Social capital ties between children and parents are strong, resulting from long-term, intimate relationships. The effect of

family social capital is stronger for academic achievement than that of school social capital.

The dark side of social capital. The role social capital plays in the community is complex and sometimes conflicted. For example, the association between social capital and violence may be understood as desirable in those situations where communities experience high-trust and bond together to fight crime and prevent violence (Hansen-Nord, Skar, Kjaerulf, Almendarez, Bahr, Sosa, & Modvid, 2014). On the other hand, solidarity bonds between individual gang members may contribute to social capital's "dark side" when they leverage it to participate in acts of violent crime (Portes & Landolt, 2000). Social capital has a risk of being dysfunctional, of not being cost efficient, or may have a negative impact at times (Adler & Kwon, 2000). Woolcock (1998) noted that social capital is a complicated concept that may exist in various forms. He cautioned against crediting the concept too extensively as a totally good asset without recognizing the potential negative aspects of social capital.

Social capital in Honduras. Dropping out of school negatively affects a young person's ability to access forms of social capital that would normally provide them with the resources necessary to prepare for adulthood (Natriello, 1996). Every location is different in the types of social capital that are readily available for use. They differ in the ways that social capital is accessed. The role social capital plays in the decisions of youth to attend school or to seek work in Choluteca, Honduras is different than in other locations.

> Mutual trust, volunteerism, networks or relationships, and reciprocity of favors are vital aspects of social capital. The people of Honduras are very trusting in

> some areas of their lives. There is often a willingness to invite strangers into their homes. On the other hand, in Honduras, historically, there is a reputation for mistrust among the people with strangers, multi-national corporations, the government, law enforcement, and the church. Storefront signs that state, 'We only advance credit to those who are at least 99 years of age and accompanied by your grandparent' or 'We will only give credit tomorrow' are examples of the reluctance of business owners to extend credit to patrons (Overholt, 2005, pgs. 13-14).

Political capital. Political capital is often a reflection of the dominant cultural capital and tends to support the existing status quo of the social unit. Those who hold the political capital in a community may not be the ones who are elected to office. Political capital is essential to deciding which community issues to attend to and how they become resolved. "Political capital consists of organization, connections, voice, and power as citizens turn shared norms and values into standards that are codified into rules, regulations, and resource distributions that are enforced" (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016).

Honduras has long been a country in political turmoil. Struggles between peasant farmers and multi-national corporations resulted in the early "land grab" that helped create the image of Honduras as the original "Banana Republic." Large corporations forced the farmers, known as *campesinos,* out of the best agricultural lands along the north coast. Recent land grabs have taken place at the hands of wealthy Honduran oligarchs who have obtained land to plant palm oil trees. Land grabs, usually by unscrupulous means, have historically been a way to consolidate power and control over the population (Kerssen, 2013).

Honduras continues to be embroiled in political instability. In 2009, former President Manuel Zelaya was removed from power by the military. He has since returned

from exile and is involved in Honduras politics in support of a left-wing government (New York Times, November 30, 2017). The current President, Juan José Orlando Hernández was originally elected to a single term in 2014 with only 36.9% of the popular vote (BTI, 2016). Amid many irregularities, President Hernandez won re-election for a highly contested victory (Malkin, 2017).

Financial /economic capital. Financial capital may be converted into money (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016). Hoyos, Rogers, and Székely (2016) suggest three primary reasons why governments should be especially concerned about students who are not studying and not working. First, the youth, who are not either studying or working, contribute to the problem of intergenerational inequality. In Latin America, nearly 60% of the youth who are not studying or working come from impoverished or vulnerable family backgrounds. These youth come from the lower 40% of the income distribution and are more likely (66%) to be females. Secondly, in some regions where the number of "ninis" is elevated, these youth are at a higher risk due to the presence of organized crime. Thirdly, if the high number of unschooled and out of work youth is not dealt with, a historic opportunity for taking advantage of developing greater human capital in the region could be lost. Latin America is going through a demographic change in the working age of the population. The population across the region will soon have much higher percentages of working age people, in comparison to the percentages of children and the elderly (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016).

Built capital. Built capital helps provide a foundation for other forms of capital and consists of physical items, such as transportation infrastructure, buildings, recreation

facilities, utility systems, schools and other buildings that have been constructed to support communities (Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016). Built capital, in some cases, may not be available to everyone. Some people may be excluded from access to built capital resources. Built capital may support the efforts of all the community when it takes an inclusive-access nature.

Role of Vocational Education

Early Vocational Education in the United States

The Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917 provided the first federal funding for developing an education program for teaching vocational education. The purpose of the programming was to better prepare graduates to find useful employment. The original act that was passed by Congress included support for developing vocational education in the areas of agriculture, home economics, and trades and industries. Dr. Charles A. Prosser was the first National Director of Vocational Education. Prosser developed a set of 16 theorems that were used to guide early vocational education programs (Moore, 2017). One of Prosser's basic tenants was to create a dual educational system that would consist of an academic component and a separate vocational component (Gordon, 2014).

In the United States (US), previously known as 'vocational education" has recently been called Career and Technical Education (CTE). The term Career and Technical Education replaced the term 'vocational education' which had begun to develop negative connotations. Internationally, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a commonly accepted term that encompasses the concepts of both job training skills and vocational education (Zirkel & Martin, 2012).

The distinction between academic and vocational secondary education. There is a general distinction between an academic secondary education component and the vocational secondary education component, as originally proposed by Prosser. The purpose of the academic component is to prepare high school graduates for entering the university, while the purpose of the vocational component of the education system in the US has historically been as job preparation for entering the labor market (Shavit & Muller, 2000). Career Technical centers vary in many ways from each other. There is no standard model. They differ on the degree of generalization or the degree of focus of teaching for a specific trade. They also vary to the degree of stratification, with the highly stratified school entering a vocational track at a very early age. Schools of low stratification place students in their vocational track at a later age. Lastly, vocational programs differ in their degree of connection in working with business and employers (Shavit & Muller, 2000).

In the late 20th century, changes began to take place in vocational education to focus not only on providing job skills but also to integrate academic subjects with vocational programs in high school. The hoped-for result was that students in vocational programs would no longer face the stigma of being lower level students than those in the purely academic track and that the vocational program graduates would also have an improved pathway to future employment both in job opportunities and earnings (Rumberger & Daymont, 1984).

Zirkle and Martin (2012) note that there are six broad areas of vocational instruction that exist in the US high schools. These include “Agricultural Education,

Business Education, Family and Consumer Sciences Education, Health Occupations Education, Marketing Education and Trade and Industrial Education" (p. 10). While there are several critical challenges presently facing CTE, those challenges have the potential to become opportunities.

There has been a great deal of negative public perception, where CTEs, viewed as lower quality education, was best suited for those students who could not make it in a more rigorous academic course. High school vocational programs were viewed only as a job-preparatory program and not always well-adapted for those students who wanted to pursue a college-preparatory program. Public perceptions reverse if changes are made to integrate the academic and vocational tracks. To change perceptions of CTEs and to meet the demands of the economy, it is necessary to offer multiple options for the preparation of high school graduates in career education (Zirkle & Martin, 2012).

There have also been curriculum issues with CTE. Vocational education suffered from not having a clear, consistent focus on the mission of its education program. There were multiple different missions among CTEs related to the different philosophies of education relating to job preparation, college-prep, as well as other post-secondary options for entering technical school.

The US is now placing more emphasis on traditional academic programs. With the addition of more academic course requirements for graduation, there is often difficulty in scheduling for students who want to take both college prep courses and vocational courses. Graduation requirements have become more stringent in recent years

requiring more core subjects and leaving less time to take vocational courses (Zirkle & Martin, 2012).

There are opportunities to improve curriculum to meet the need of students better. Some CTE programs are expanding beyond the purpose of only preparing graduates for the immediate job market and are diversifying their curricula to include options for both university-bound students, as well as second-chance opportunities for youth, and also retraining programs for adults. Many high school programs have joined with community and technical colleges to offer dual credit for high school and college. Other innovative changes in the curriculum include pre-apprenticeship programs and a broader vocational curriculum that does not tie a student into one specific area of study (Zirkle & Martin, 2012).

Funding of CTE courses and programs in secondary school has been costly due to the high equipment expenses, especially considering the recent changing technology needs. Public funding which comes from federal, state, and local sources has been reduced. There is more competition for the limited education funds. Private funding from business and industry has provided a small portion of the economic needs but has not offset the reduction in public funding. Teachers' pay has been low, and retention of quality teachers has often been difficult. While spending time in the classroom, it has also been a challenge for teachers to stay up-to-date with the changing technology. To make things more difficult for teacher training, the number of CTE teacher preparation programs have been declining in the universities (Zirkle & Martin, 2012).

The demand for skilled labor prompted the original federal funding for vocational education in 1917. In the post-industrial era, there is now a renewed demand for workers who are skilled in the use of modern technology. There are also new funding options for teaching the new technology, especially related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Private business and industry are also beginning to invest in high school career education. There are additional opportunities for the employment of teachers in career education. Many universities are finding innovative ways, such as distance education, to prepare teachers for career education (Zirkle & Martin, 2012).

Impact of vocational education on high school dropout rates. While there is no agreement among scholars, some researchers have suggested that a career technical education track may help decrease high school dropout rates. The school environment, with the mix of academic and vocational courses, can strengthen a student's motivation to stay in school. Non-college bound students who participate in vocational programs are more likely to finish high school. (Kulik, 1994; Plank, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2008).

Student groups. Intra-curricular career and technical student organizations (CTSOs) are a common part of CTE programs (Gordon, 2014). The CTSOs provide an opportunity to incorporate classroom activity with outside the classroom experiences, allowing youth participants to continue to develop career skills. The FFA, the CTSO for agriculture, was the first chartered (1950) CTE student organization. The chartering of the FFA led the way for other vocational student groups also to organize. Some of the

many student organizations include Future Health Professionals (HOSA), Business Professionals of America (BPA), and the Technology Student Association (TSA).

Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has been useful in helping understand the role that the environment has on impacting the lives of young people (1979). Bronfenbrenner's model may also apply to at-risk youth. The model includes both the role of culture as well as the child's environment as important factors in contributing to human development. The ecological systems theory "conceptualizes youth development as an interaction among factors at various levels of the environment" (Gibbons & Poelker, 2017, p. 670).

Bronfenbrenner's earliest studies largely focused on the idea that the environment consisted of a group of interacting systems and that it was necessary to study human development in the context of these different systems. He defined human development as:

> the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content (1979, p. 27).

Bronfenbrenner recognized that a person's ecological environment went beyond their face-to-face experiences and included both the immediate surrounding of a developing person, including the connections between other people who were a part of that setting, as well as including larger systems that extended beyond the person's active

participation. Bronfenbrenner (1974) called for intervention at the ecological level for children who lived in poverty. He was a proponent for early childhood education to counteract the impact of poverty on children. Bronfenbrenner concluded that active family participation is an effective and essential element for any intervention program to be successful.

In 2000, Bronfenbrenner noted his concern for the "developmental disarray" (p. 120) that was taking place at that time. He concluded that "we are now in a period of growing chaos in the lives not only of families but in all the day-to-day environments of people of all ages (p. 123). Bronfenbrenner's (2005) later research moved from primarily studying the importance of the person-context relationship in human development to including additional integrated elements. He included four key concepts in the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model with the addition of Process and Time, which became the foundation of the bioecological theory of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The core component of the Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory is process. Proximal processes are engines of development that play a role in two key propositions of the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

According to Proposition I of the theory, human development occurs through proximal "processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment" (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000, pp. 117-118). These proximal processes may take different paths to either dysfunction or to competence.

Proposition II also involves proximal processes stating that "the form, power, content, and direction of proximal processes affecting development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing **person**, the environment **context-** both immediate and more remote- in which the processes are taking place, and the social continuities and changes occurring over *time* through the life course, the nature of the ***developmental outcomes*** under consideration" (p. 118-119).

Bronfenbrenner compared the ecological environment in human development to the layers of a set of Russian dolls (1979, p. 3) where the different layers correspond to the relationships of the developing person. Bronfenbrenner's model of human development included four different interconnected ecological levels of context or environment: the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems. The innermost level, the microsystem consists of the smallest environmental settings where a child at any given moment spends considerable time living and playing. The microsystem includes all the personal face-to-face physical experiences as well as any perceived experiences the child may have. The mesosystem consists of the child's multiple interconnected microsystems. The exosystem is a context where the developing person is not actively involved. Their exosystems include settings where events take place that influence their development and behavior. A person's highest level of ecology is the macrosystem which involves the culture, belief systems, institutions, policy and ideology of the society to which they belong (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) noted that time plays an important role in human development. They understood micro-time to be the time during which some

specific activity takes place in the development of a person. Meso-time includes activities that occurred in the person's environment. Macro-time involves developmental processes.

Conceptual Model for Youth at Risk

A development philosophy for working with youth at risk calls for giving them attention at an early age. It includes creating change in the institutions in which they are involved. Kronick (2013) considers it to be a good preventative investment to emphasize developing a quality preschool education for children. Figure 1 is an adaptation of the model developed by Cunningham, McGinnis, Verdú, Tesliuc, & Verner (2008), which outlines the consequences of youth who are at risk of dropping out of school in the LACs. The Figure 1 model is based on Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development (1976; 1979; 2005; 2006). Column 1 lists the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's theory. Column 2 outlines the various risk factors that contribute to youth dropping out of school. Column 3 lists the risky behaviors of youth that are expected to result from the exposure to the risk factors. Column 4 shows the anticipated outcomes for youth who face the given risk factors.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">→ Process over Time →</td></tr>
<tr><td>Context/Individual Factors</td><td>Risk Factors</td><td>Risky Behaviors</td><td>Outcomes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Individual Student</td><td>Gender, personal health, age, SES</td><td rowspan="5">Absenteeism, poor grades, sexual activity/pregnancy, use of drugs/alcohol, finding menial jobs that keep them from school.</td><td rowspan="5">Multiple: including school dropout and out of work.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Microsystem: Interrelations with the immediate setting (home, school, peer group)</td><td>Home life, parent’s migration, lack of extra-curricular participation, peer influence</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mesosystem: Events in which developing youth participate</td><td>School Problems</td></tr>
<tr><td>Exosystem: Events indirectly affecting the developing youth’s immediate environment</td><td>Poor schools, violence, gangs, few social services (no social safety net)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Macrosystem: Generalized contextual/cultural attitudes, nested interconnected systems,</td><td>Public Policy, Economy, existing school calendar</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Adapted from Cunningham, W. V., McGinnis, L. Verdú, R., Tesliuc, C. & Verner, D. (2008). Youth at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean: Understanding the causes, realizing the potential. World Bank Publications (p. 58).</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Youth at Risk

Summary of Review of Literature

In summary, a review of the literature identifies some of the possible reasons for youth dropping out of school. Dropping out is a complex process that takes place over several years' time, in fact, over the span of a young person's lifetime. Bronfenbrenner (1976, 2006) focused attention on the importance of context in the settings of places where students spend most of their time such as the environment of home, community and outside school activities as well as in school activities.

Various models have been developed in an attempt to explain the reasons why youth drop out of school. Among them, Finn's (1989) two developmental models consider school behavior of the youth, performance in school, and psychological issues in explaining high school dropout. Rumberger (2011) especially emphasizes the importance of two categories that impact the process of dropping out: educational performance and lack of engagement in school activities. Models are used to theorize whether students are push-out victims (Jordan, Lara, and McPartland, 1994) who leave school due to policies negatively affecting them. Becoming a pull-out youth, by contrast, occurs when students analyze the opportunity costs of staying in school and conclude that it is better for them to leave and begin working.

Children from families of low socio-economic status are reported to have higher dropout rates (Entwisle, and Horsey, 1997). The role of the family of capitals (Flora, Flora, & Gasteye, 2016) may play a larger role in impacting dropout rates in LAC countries in general and specifically in Honduras. Low levels of capital investment are

theorized to both impact dropout rates and to become affected by dropout rates (Ramos, Solis, Hernandez, Redondo, & Hernandez, 2017).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from a no work and no school attitude and why they decided to return to school at the Vocational School. The following central research question guided the study: Why are youth in Choluteca, Honduras not in school and not working and then decide to re-enter school at the Vocational School?

Research Design

Qualitative research may be appropriate when there is the need to comprehensively understand a problem or issue among marginalized groups . Qualitative research should contain an action agenda that leads to reform which potentially changes the lives of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological research is qualitative and descriptive research, focusing on the structure of experience (Laverty, 2003). It involves more than simply exploring a topic of interest. Rather, phenomenology is the study of a particular issue that exists and has previously been studied. According to Paley (2016), phenomenology research must be based on an antecedent theory to the phenomenon which is often based on earlier research. In phenomenological studies, the researcher elicits a deeper understanding of the nature of the lived experiences of those who have undergone the research problem (van Manen, 2016).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology was used to guide this study. IPA is a qualitative research method that examines how people understand their life experiences and engages them in the reflection of those experiences. IPA has its theoretical roots in the Heidegger's interpretive tradition of phenomenology. Heidegger was a student of Husserl who established descriptive or transcendental phenomenology. According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), Husserl is primarily interested in individual psychological processes while (p. 16) "Heidegger is more concerned with the ontological question itself, and with the practical activities and relationships which we are caught up in, and through which the world appears to us, and is made meaningful." Husserl emphasized the importance of finding the 'essence" of the lived experience while IPA's focus is on the particular experiences of a particular people (Smith, Flowers, P, & Larkin, 2009).

Phenomenological Assumptions

This participatory action research study was approached from a hermeneutical (interpretative) or pedagogical phenomenology lens to understand the research problem better. According to van Manen (2016), "phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (p. 10). This study sought to understand the lived experience that is of common importance to a group of young people in Choluteca, Honduras who are not studying and who are not working.

Phenomenological research is subjective and does not attempt to produce an empirical theory for generalization, but instead helps to understand the lived, contextual experiences that human beings have in common. Phenomenological reflection must be retrospective and can never be introspective. Phenomenology is unlike other types of research in that the results cannot be summarized. It may lead to freedom as research participants become less susceptible to others (van Manen, 2016).

Phenomenologists are interested in learning from the lived experience of humans. According to Vagle (2016), phenomenologists are not interested so much in the decisions that people make, but rather in how they make difficult decisions. Phenomenologists do not study the individual but instead study the manifestation of a phenomenon. Reality is a social construct where participants have different perceptions of reality (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

There are at least three possible failures in phenomenological research: first, research may fail by not describing lived experience. Secondly, the description may not elucidate the meaning of a lived experience. Thirdly, even though phenomenology research aims to make clear the lived experience of humans, the description may show something other than a lived experience (van Manen, 2016).

Positionality Statement

"This life's dim windows of the soul
Distorts the heavens from pole to pole
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see with, not through, the eye."
(William Blake)

Often, we see things with the eye, understanding things superficially, or allowing our eye's bias to distort the lived experience. Looking through the eye involves a more thoughtful and reflective stance. We may understand more completely when we make an effort to look through the eyes of others.

In phenomenological studies, the researcher must define their role or position in research that is taking place. Creswell (2013) emphasizes the necessity for the researcher to position themselves in any interpretive research. This study was not being done simply for the sake of research. Van Manen (2016) notes the human scientist does not do an investigation with microscopes or do research in a lab but instead carries out their studies in the world that they share with other human beings. As the lead researcher, who has spent my entire career working in education with the people of Honduras, and as a teacher, I am personally interested in the problem being researched.

As a high school student, I was interested in pursuing a career in international development. My involvement in faith-based organizations since my childhood has led me to develop a biblical worldview and establish my life-long values. My experience of 38 years as a missionary with World Gospel Mission, working with education in Honduras, has influenced my goals towards working with the local community in transforming education practices. My knowledge gained through academic studies has impacted my choice of research topic, as well as the methodology that I have chosen to use in this study. My choice to use participatory action research has resulted from reading Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's works, and on my developing beliefs on the need for learner participation and engagement in education, as well as participating in any

research involving them. Freire (1970) emphasized the necessity of creating a freedom producing dialogue of love when working with the oppressed. Just as development should be done with the person and with the community, research that potentially impacts the community should be in conjunction with its members.

Merriam and Bierema (2013) discuss the possibility of a "disorienting dilemma" (p. 228) becoming a trigger to critical thinking. The situation in Choluteca, Honduras, where over two-thirds of the 15-17-year-old youth population is not studying, is a situation that concerns me. I have been involved in vocational education and have seen first-hand the struggles of youth who have not been able to survive in the formal education system. For whatever reasons, they do not fit into the formal education system. Vocational education may be a good solution for those students. Almost daily, we learn of youth who have finished their primary education and are struggling to decide what step they will take next. Many youths consider work to be a struggle that is almost a necessary evil in life. They do not view a career as something satisfyingly challenging. Along with my wife, we have also sought options for those youth who are desiring an opportunity to obtain degrees in the formal education system that will make it possible for them to obtain a dignified job. My experience as an organizational insider, in non-formal and formal high school education in Choluteca, positions me as a practitioner-researcher where I am also a stakeholder in the research done.

Through the knowledge that is available in existing quantitative data, there is a degree of understanding of the phenomenon. However, quantitative data alone cannot provide a rich understanding of the lived experience of youth who are out of school and

out of work in Choluteca, Honduras. Phenomenologists tend to study those things that they think they already understand (Vagle, 2014). I think I understand, but instinctively realize, that there is much more to be discovered by following a qualitative approach to the research problem being studied.

As the primary researcher, I recognize that there is always the possibility of allowing my experience and bias to influence how I interpret the situation. Bracketing (Vagle, 2016) was used to minimize the possibility of my preconceptions influencing the description of the phenomenon being studied.

I depended heavily on the help of the director of the Vocational School to collaborate with me throughout the research process. The director of the school is bilingual and has a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and a master's degree in Business Administration.

Data Sources

Phenomenological data are obtained from first-person lived experiences of human beings. Qualitative data were collected for this phenomenological study using individual interviews, field notes, photovoice, and a focus group session. For this study, I followed an adaptation of Seidman's (2013) suggestion for using a series of interviews. Phenomenological, in-depth interviewing is a way of understanding people's stories. Broad, general and open-ended questions were asked of interview participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Seidman (2013) recommends including the following themes in the interview process: 1.) begin with a focused life history, with participants telling about themselves about the phenomenon being studied- from as far

back as they can remember up until the present time; 2.) ask for details of the present lived experience, and; 3.) encourage reflection on the meaning of their lived experience. In hermeneutic phenomenology, open-ended, unstructured interviews, or conversations, between the participant and the researcher provide data that help better understand the phenomenon of interest. Individual interviews help identify personal information that might not be easily discussed in a group setting (Vagle, 2016). Phenomenological interviews are informal and interactive (Moustakas, 1994).

To achieve triangulation is this research, the following methodology was followed: First, semi-structured individual interviews (up to 1 hour) were conducted with each student participant. The purpose of the questioning was to reconstruct the participant's lived experience and to place their experience in context. The initial interview included questions that would present a focused life history, with participants telling about themselves in relation to the phenomenon being studied. They relived their experience from as far back as they could remember up until the present time. Second, photovoice was used to encourage participants to take pictures that present details from their present lived experience. Third, a focus group follow-up session was held after the photovoice sessions. The group session included all twelve youth spending time together in a reflection of the meaning of their experience. Fourth, there was a public presentation of the findings. Community stakeholders were invited to participate.

Individual Introductory Interviews

When interviewing participants, Vagle (2013) suggests keeping in mind the value of practicing the "art of moving from the natural to the phenomenological attitude" (p.

79). The interviewer needs to remain responsive to the participant by following up on responses. The goal of the interview was to have the participant reconstruct the lived experience of being out of school and out of work (Seidman, 2013). A set of researcher-developed questions was used in this study to collect data . A single semi-structured interview was conducted separately with each of the twelve participants in the study. Each interview session lasted about 90 minutes and took place at a location chosen by the participant. The primary researcher led the sessions. The secondary researcher observed the session and took notes, taking care to record any non-verbal communication that took place before, during, and after the interview session.

Interview participants were asked several broad questions with follow-up questions based on the recommendations from the literature (Seidman, 2013). Follow-up open-ended questions were asked of the participants using a conversational style as needed (Creswell, 2013). A list of questions that were used may be found in Appendix A . All interviews were recorded with two digital audio recorders for transcription purposes. The recorders were placed at different strategic locations to maximize the probability of obtaining good quality recordings from both recorders.

Photovoice Interviews

Phenomenological studies often depend on participants to write a reflective journal or to keep a diary of their experiences. Sometimes, these techniques do not produce adequate data with children or with people who do not have a high level of education (van Manen, 2016). For this reason, photovoice was chosen as a qualitative

research method to study the phenomenon of youth dropping out of school and not working in Choluteca, Honduras.

Arts-based tools for gathering qualitative data may enable participants to express their lived experiences more effectively (Vagle, 2013). The use of photography, or photo-elicitation, done by research participants, may present several possible benefits (Sibeoni, Costa-Drolon, Poulmarćh, Colin, Valentin, Pradère, et al., 2017). The use of photovoice may include improved collected data quality. Using photovoice has the potential to empower participants by actively involving participants in the research process. Plunkett, Leipert, and Ray (2012) argue when researching lived experience, the use of the photovoice technique may be an effective way to elicit unspoken phenomenological data. Photovoice may encourage bonding between researchers and participants which promotes verbalization, by the participants, of their lived experience. Photovoice is often used in conjunction with other research methodologies. Its use has the potential for adding rich knowledge and may challenge existing narratives and fill in gaps in the literature and knowledge base (Latz, 2017).

Photovoice was originally developed as a participatory action research approach where community members become researchers by using cameras to record images of a theme of interest to the community. Photovoice is a term that was developed by Wang and Burris (1997). The technique provides an avenue for the marginalized members of society to make themselves heard. Photovoice combines the use of photos and "VOICE" which stands for "*v*oicing *o*ur *i*ndividual and *c*ollective *e*xperience" (p. 381).

"Photography provides the medium through which people's visions and voices surface" (p. 382).

Photovoice builds on three major theoretical sources: the critical consciousness approach of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's popular education, feminist theory, and community-based participatory research. As a teaching method for literacy classes, Freire (1970) suggested the use of visual images as an important learning tool that helped create critical consciousness in learners. According to Freire (2000), learning occurs best when using a dialogical problem-posing approach to deal with issues of common interest among teachers, students, and other community members. One of the goals of photovoice is to help create and promote critical dialogue (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). The visual image, using photovoice, provides the most vulnerable community members with a way to effectively tell their story. Literacy levels are not an issue with photovoice research. Photovoice is an effective and flexible tool that can be used in recording community settings (Wang & Burris, 1997). It is a tool that will enable the youth of Choluteca who are out of school to participate in a dialogue which may become an important part of learning and knowing. The youth participating in the research may then also become involved in any future transformative action that takes place because of the photovoice research (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Another goal of photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999) is to allow community members, or youth out of school, in this case, to record and report everyday issues that they face. Following parts of the feminist theory, photovoice may be a useful tool for those who have been held voiceless, have been manipulated, and are oppressed

by dominant forces in the culture. Photovoice allows these persons to gain a voice in expressing themselves in the decision-making process. Whether youth have been pushed out or pulled out of school, they have been left voiceless and without many options for their futures. Photovoice is a suitable method to encourage youth to regain their voice through artistic expression.

Thirdly, photovoice is a form of participatory action research. It uses participatory photography with community photographers and encourages community dialogue and documentary around issues of common concern (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). Another goal of photovoice is to provide information presented to community leaders and decision makers (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999).

Photovoice has been used internationally to encourage youth empowerment in working for community change (Wang, 2006). The youth who participated in this photovoice research went out into the community where they lived and reported, through photographs, on the phenomenon of being out of school.

In addition to the intended, expected consequences of using photovoice as a research methodology, there may also be unintended consequences to using Photovoice. Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) cautioned against using photovoice in any way that would be unethical. Before taking any photographs, training plans (Appendix E) were implemented with all participants to ensure that each person follows all the necessary precautions. There may be at least four different types of possible invasion into people's lives that need to be avoided. First, to avoid intrusion into another person's private space, consent forms were acquired that outlined the rights and responsibilities of photographer

participants. The photographers also obtained signed consent for the use of the photographs from any subjects being photographed. The consent form was also signed by the community photographers permitting the use of the photographs to accomplish the goals of the research. Secondly, research participants were informed not to take pictures that would be embarrassing or incriminating to others. Thirdly, photovoice was not to be used to present an untrue perception of the situation being photographed. Lastly, a person's image was not used for commercial gain.

Wang and Burris (1997) concluded that the main distinction with photovoice, as a research tool, is the nature of its participatory process which encourages community members to be involved in the process of collecting and defining issues resulting from the collected data. Photography becomes the medium that community members use to visualize and express their observations.

Focus Group Interviews

A focus group session was conducted as the final data collection method for encouraging group reflection on the meaning of lived experience. Focus groups normally are made up of a group whose members are similar to each other for the study. It is recommended that the participants not know each other well. The beginning questions of a focus group session are general questions and move towards being more focused and specific near the end (Kreuger, 1998).

Focus group interviews are often used in conjunction with the photovoice technique (Wang, 1999). Focus group interviews are an accepted procedure to use for collection of data in qualitative research and have the option of being conducted in a participatory manner where the participants dialogue with each other (Kreuger, 1988).

According to Kreuger (1998), there are several advantages to using focus groups for collecting data. There is a social advantage to using focus groups since focus groups are socially oriented and provide an environment that encourages the interaction between participants. The response of one participant may encourage others to contribute from their lived experience. The twelve students were seated around a table with the moderator sitting at the table. Two voice recorders were used to record audio. A video camera was not used because it was viewed as being intrusive to the session and may have discouraged participation. For data collection, it was not considered necessary to identify each speaker. Focus groups also encourage dialogue. The second advantage of focus groups, according to Kreuger, is the opportunity for the moderator to approve responses and to encourage additional dialogue when necessary. Focus groups are normally low cost.

Field Notes

Field notes were taken by the researchers throughout the data collection process, especially during interviews and while observing participants (Saldaña, 2016). According to Seidman, working notes are of value to help keep the researcher concentrating on the interview and makes them less likely to interrupt the person they are interviewing. Special attention was taken to record non-verbal responses, such as facial expressions and body language, as well as inflections in the voice. The notes are treated as data during data analysis (Seidman, 2013).

Context of the Vocational School

The lack of employment opportunities due to slow growth rates and low investment in business in Honduras provides challenges for educators of vocational

schools to seek new alternatives to prepare youth for finding quality jobs or of becoming entrepreneurs. The low value of a sixth or ninth grade education and the knowledge level gained from that education is insufficient to allow for those graduates to compete for jobs (L. Maradiaga, personal communication, August 2, 2017).

Southern Honduras, where the Vocational School is located, was especially hard-hit by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The school serves an area where many families were displaced. Approximately, 57% of the original inhabitants were working-class families who had lost their homes. The Vocational School surrounding community has remained vulnerable and has suffered multiple development problems during reconstruction. The community is characterized by having small building lots and small poorly constructed single room homes of 270-square feet in size. Installation of roads, sewer, and electric was delayed after the houses were constructed. The region was plagued by the violence of gang members in the early years (Barrios, 2014).

The Vocational School was founded following Hurricane Mitch to provide an opportunity for the regional workforce to learn the technical skills necessary to meet the needs of the southern region of Honduras. The majority of the students attending the school come from rural areas. Despite high poverty levels in Honduras and the low quality of educational opportunities available to many of the students, most of the students attending the Vocational School aspired to acquire the highest levels of education possible (Baughman, 2016).

The school presently offers vocational education in the areas of auto mechanics, bakery, sewing, welding, and sales assistant. During the 2018 school year, 165 students

were enrolled (O. Echeverria, personal communication, May 9, 2018). The Vocational School operates under two supervisory institutions, as a "collaborative center" under INFOP, the Honduras governmental vocational education program, and CADERH, a non-governmental certification agency. As a collaborative center with INFOP, the Vocational School receives a portion of its funding through INFOP and is supervised by INFOP. The philosophy of education that is required by INFOP is that all students progress at the same pace and study the same modules at the same time. The Vocational School is also a member of the CADERH network of twenty vocational schools located around the country. CADERH (The Consultant Center for the Development of Human Resources), is a non-governmental agency that was founded in 1984 to strengthen the capacity of vocational-technical education in Honduras. CADERH is also a certification agency which provides vocational education curriculum that is competency-based, allowing students to advance their education at an individual pace (L. Maradiaga, personal communication, May 28, 2018). Working with the two different systems creates a challenge in balancing two different philosophies of vocational education. According, to Maradiaga, it has been difficult to sustain vocational education centers due to insufficient support from the government. In addition to approximately 35% of the Vocational School's funding coming from the government through INFOP, the school depends on private donations in the form of scholarships for students. In recent years, the school has opened up short-courses in collaboration with World Vision.

Participants

In phenomenological research, the results of the study cannot be empirically generalizable to a larger population. The sample for this study was not selected as an empirical probability sampling of the general population. Creswell (2013) suggests using a heterogeneous sample of as few as three to four participants or as many as ten to fifteen. A similar number, a range of 7 to 12 participants, is suggested by Krueger (1988).

Following the methodology similar to previous phenomenological studies, a purposeful sample of twelve participants was selected to be involved in the study based on their experience with the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 2014). It was necessary to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the learned experiences of both males and females (Creswell & Poth, 2013). Among the participant pool of youth who entered the Vocational School in February 2018, six males and six females who best fit the required criteria were selected.

Criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used to select the participants in this study who were 15-17-year-old youths from Choluteca, Honduras and had completed the a minimum of the sixth grade. This age range was chosen based on existing data from the Honduras government which states that only 31.7% of the Honduran youth of this age group are in school (INE, 2017), and this is the typical age of youths who should be attending high school. Youth were selected who were not in school and were not working during the previous year (2017). Besides having a minimum of a sixth grade education, the participants in the study had held a job for at least six months at some point in their life.

Participants were also selected from a list of approximately 200 youth who were taking vocational courses. They were chosen with the goal of providing a diversity of experience for the phenomenon being studied. See Figure 2 for more characteristics of the participants in this study, including pseudonyms, age, gender, and academic level.

Participant Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Previous Academic Level
Maria	17	Female	9th grade
Raquel	17	Female	8th grade
Angela	17	Female	6th grade
Doris	15	Female	6th grade
Ana	15	Female	6th grade
Victoria	15	Female	6th grade
José	16	Male	9th grade
David	16	Male	6th grade
Ramon	17	Male	9th grade
Alfredo	16	Male	7th grade
Luis	17	Male	6th grade
Armando	17	Male	6th grade

Figure 2. Characteristics of Participants

Setting

The initial interview of each participant was done in their home, or at a location of their choice, to help the participants feel more at ease with the interview. I was accompanied in all interviews by the director of the Vocational School. Group meetings for photovoice activities were held at the school where technology and projection

equipment were available to present photos as digital images. The school is a central location for the participants and located on the public bus route.

Data Collection

All audio data from interviews and the focus group were recorded with two audio recorders, to assure no loss of data and to ensure the accuracy of the data. All verbal data were transcribed verbatim by native Spanish speakers and recorded in text documents. Non-verbal data were recorded in notes taken by the interviewer and observer and were added to the text documents. Permission for conducting the research study was obtained by The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the collection of any data. Data were collected during April-May 2018.

Initial Interviews

An initial meeting was arranged at the convenience and location of the student's choice, to meet with their parents or guardians to explain the involvement of the students in the study. The study was explained to the students and parents, and they were encouraged to ask any questions they had. Consent forms for the students to participate in the study were signed by a parent or guardian while the student was present. Each student also signed an assent form expressing their willingness to participate in the study.

Individual interviews with participants were the first method of data collection. Participants were contacted by the primary researcher, and the place and time of the interview were set up according to the convenience of the participants. The Vocational School, which is the site of the study, focuses on reaching underserved communities. Most students take public transportation to the school, and many of them do not have

adequate resources to pay for extra travel. Each participant was given the equivalent of $50 for their participation in the study. One half of the total amount was given at the beginning of the study, and the final amount was given to the participants at the end of the study. Individual interviews were followed up with using the photovoice procedure which was conducted at the Vocational School.

Photovoice

The photovoice methodology was used with the same youth as the initial interview. Photovoice typically involves an eight-step process or a similar adaptation (Latz, 2017; Wang, 2006). The director of the Vocational School was included in the research activities. His participation was important as a representative of the school and to help assure that the participants understood the active role that they would have in the research.

Identification. Meetings with the project participants were held at the Vocational School. The school's director participated in all meetings. The school is located along a principle bus route.

Selection of the Participants. A sample of 12 students was used in this study. In accordance with phenomenological research practice (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) participants were selected purposively based on their lived experience of the phenomenon being studied. Selection of the student participants occurred in two parts. First, the entire list of students attending the Vocational School in 2018 was reviewed to find those who fulfilled the requirements of the study. Only students who were between the ages of 15-17-years-old, were not studying or working the previous year, had completed a minimum of a sixth-grade education, and who were presently taking classes in the educational

institution were eligible for participating in the study. An original group of 14 students was reviewed. All 14 students were asked if they were willing to participate. After careful review, 12 students fulfilled the requirements for the study. Six of the participants were female, and six were male.

Education. The purpose, goals, and methods of the project were presented during the first session with each student who had been selected to participate as co-researchers in the study. They were informed that the title of the photovoice project was: How do 15-17-year-old youth who are out of school and out of work make decisions about returning to school? It was explained to the participants that the photos would be used as a tool to encourage further reflection about the topic of the study.

An education session was held with all of the participants together. During the session with the entire group of youth photographers, community stakeholders in the photovoice project topic were identified, including policymakers, political and community leaders, family members, and others.

Professional photographers are often used as part of the training for photovoice studies. They may help train participants in the use of cameras and techniques of photography (Latz, 2017). For this study, it was not considered necessary to include a professional photographer since photos were primarily used to stimulate reflective discussion by the participants.

General ethical guidelines associated with the Photovoice methodology were explained to the students. They were cautioned not to abuse the use of the camera:

1. Do not intrude on the private space of others in the community.

2. Be careful not to disclose embarrassing events in people's personal lives, especially if it is not of public concern.
3. Do not show people in a false light by using images that distort or create false impressions.
4. Assure people that a profit will not be made at their expense (Shannon, February 2013).

Each participant was given a brochure/information sheet (Appendix E) of the project to inform anyone who may inquire of them about the nature of their photography. Photography basics were explained to the participants. As suggested by Ewald and Lightfoot (2001), to build photographic literacy, examples of photographs were discussed to show what suitable photographs might look like and how they might be used in the final stages of the study. As a practice exercise, participants were encouraged to reflect on the story behind the images. Essentials of photography were discussed with the participants. Latz (2017) suggested the following topics be included: the framing of subjects to be photographed, the point of view, timing, symbolism, and details. Examples were used while discussing each of the themes.

Telephones with cameras were used for this research. Each participant was loaned a telephone for use throughout the study. Twelve identical telephones were purchased and included a camera capable of taking 5mpx photos. Each camera came preloaded with the equivalent of $8.50 to make phone calls and send text messages. Each of the youth was taught how to add contacts to the phone, and the phone numbers of all of the participants were shared with each other.

The youth were instructed to use only the cameras in the phones that they were assigned to assure consistency of the photos. Participants were asked to take photos at the highest resolution possible (5 mpx). The students were encouraged to take as many pictures as they wanted but not alter them or delete any of the pictures.

Prompts were used to guide the youth in their data gathering in the form of photos. The following is a list of questions and prompts that were given to stimulate reflection with the youth as researchers. They were instructed to focus on the details of their present lived experience:

- What motivates you to want to study?
- What are your favorite topics to study?
- My typical day includes these activities.
- What are some roadblocks that you are encountering in your desire to study?
- What are some roadblocks that you are encountering in seeking work?
- What is your vision for your life?

Vagle (2013) suggests doing what he calls a "phenomenology walk" where participants experience examples of the "where, what, how, and why" (p. 85) of a given phenomenon. A session was spent on a photo walk where the research participants practiced using their phones to take pictures. They were encouraged to ask questions. Practical suggestions were given on the use of the cameras.

Narration. Stage 2 of the photovoice activity consisted of contextualizing or story-telling the background and meaning of the photos which is a part of the participatory analysis (Wang & Burris, 1997). Participants chose their favorite three

photos and described each photo. Narration of the contents of photos took place in the form of individual interviews, reflection, and focus groups. An important part of participatory learning includes facilitating group discussion around the SHOWeD method of dialogue. Photovoice research has often used the SHOWeD method to encourage participants to enter into dialogue. The SHOWed method is used in the following manner:

S What do you SEE in the photo images?

H What is HAPPENING in the scene where the photograph was taken?

O How does this image relate to OUR lives?

W WHY does this asset or problem exist in our community?

e

D What can we DO about the situation?

Shannon (2013) warns that community participants may not always respond to the abstract questions in the SHOWeD method for creating dialogue. The author suggests the need to be prepared to modify the SHOWeD method by using open-ended questions relating to the individual photos taken by the participant.

The group discussion included placing captions on the photos.

- During individual photovoice interviews with each participant, photo elicitation was used to prompt the photographers to reflect on the meaning of their photos. Youth may be hesitant to discuss some issues in a larger group. The personal interviews allow for freedom of reflection and give the interviewer the opportunity to ask more in-depth questions.

- Two different two-hour focus group sessions were held with each of the two groups divided into females and males. The first session was held with the women from 8:00-10:00 A.M. From 10:00 A.M. to noon, the males met in a second group. The sessions were audio recorded to assure accuracy in transcribing the discussion. Also, field notes were kept by researchers. As part of the focus group session, the participants discussed and chose the titles for each photo and added captions.

The photovoice focus group sessions included two groups. One group was made up of the six females and another of the six males. Each group used the SHOWD method of creating dialogue. The participants in each group were asked to discuss in detail the 18 photos that had been selected by the six participants. After lunch was served to all of the participants and focus group observers, a final focus group was conducted from 1:00 P.M.- 3:00 P.M.

Ideation. While each group participated in the photo discussion, the other group's members met simultaneously in another room to discuss possible themes, titles, and paragraphs describing their photographs. During that time, they also designed the layout for their exhibition displays which were presented the following Monday.

Presentation. The final phase of the photovoice project included a poster presentation of the work that each of the photographers had done. Community leaders, policymakers, and families of the photographers were invited to attend the event. Each of the students remained available beside their presentation to answer questions. Each participant was given their display to keep.

Data Management Plan

Physical data is stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for five years after the project is finished. Interviews and discussions were transcribed and entered into a Microsoft Word software program and will be stored on the researcher's password-protected laptop for five years. Audio files from interviews will also be saved on the researcher's password-protected laptop for five years. Any backup files of transcripts or audio stored on flash drives or external hard drives will be securely kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for five years and will then be destroyed. Files will be transported on the researcher's password protected the laptop.

Time Frame

The photovoice sessions were conducted over a six-week period from April 2-May 14, 2018. At the conclusion, all participants jointly presented a two-hour photo exhibit for the Vocational School students and community members who were invited to attend. A timeline of all data collection activities is outlined in Figure 3. The initial two-week period that was planned for taking photographs was extended due to the participant photographers' confusion over the photography procedures. Some of the initial photographs were not suitable for the study. Some of the photos included recognizable images of people. Others were taken by cameras other than the assigned cameras. They explained that they were accustomed to using their own telephone cameras and liked those photos better. Some of the photographers had shared their photos resulting in images identical to other photographers. Still others turned in images taken from the internet. It is important to take into account that the students were 15-17-year old youths

who were not accustomed to this type of assignment. Repeated instructions were necessary until they were clear on the steps they needed to follow.

Topic/Session	Activities	Notes
Selection of Participants April 2, 2018	The Vocational School director selected a list of all possible candidates for the study.	
Session 1 April 3-12, 2018	Conducted individual interviews with participants.	
Session 2 Friday, April 13	Group orientation and training for photovoice and the use of cameras. Phones with cameras were distributed.	Took Practice Photos
April 14-May 3, 2018	Took Photos	The time was extended from the initial two-week plan to give time for participants to collect suitable photos.
Session 3 April 30-May 4, Selection of Photos	Met with individuals to choose photos and discuss with each participant the meaning of each of the three photos chosen.	Photos were printed as 10 x 12-inch images which the participants kept at the end of the study.
Invitations Sent May 8, 2018	Invitations were sent with the students to distribute to family and community leaders.	
Session 4 May 11, 2018 Photovoice sessions	A two-hour photovoice session was held with the male group and another with the female group of participants.	
Session 5 May 11, 2018 Group discussions	Focus Group-Reflection, selection of themes, titles and captions for the photos	
Session 6 May 14, 2018	Poster Presentation/Exhibition	Invited Stakeholders

Figure 3. A timeline of the data collection, interview session, discussion sessions, and final photo exhibition

Data Analysis

Personal interviews, field notes, photovoice sessions, and focus groups were analyzed. The youth photographers led the way in the investigation by photographing what they viewed as the most pressing needs and the most important community assets related to education. They spent two weeks photographing the situations that they found of interest related to the topics of community education, work, and their vision for the future. The youth were given an orientation class as a group that included basic photography lessons and photo ethics (Appendix E). Qualitative data analysis software was not used for data analysis.

Creswell (2013) describes the concept of the data spiral in qualitative studies where the researcher begins with data in the form of text or images. In the middle of the analysis process, the researcher circles around touching on various facets of analysis and finally ends with a narrative or story. Laverty (2003) also noted the process of data analysis in phenomenology is often cyclical.

Reading and Re-reading the Transcripts

Data analysis was initiated with what van Manen (2014) termed "the detailed reading approach" (p. 320) to understand portions of text that help reveal the meaning of the phenomenological experience. From a careful reading of all the paragraphs, sentences, and phrases, themes begin to appear and will be defined in a later step. Similarly, for IPA data analysis, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommend the first step of data analysis involves carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts. Bilingual researchers transcribed initial, individual interviews that were double-checked as I listened to the audio at the same time as reviewing the transcripts several times. When all

transcripts were revised for accuracy, each transcript was imported into a separate Word document with a double column table where the transcript filled the right column.

Initial Descriptive Note-Taking

Each question in the interview and each response by the participant was placed on separate lines of the document chart, and each line was numbered for easy identification later. Notes were made on the right as comments, and the left column was preserved for future thematic additions. Descriptive comments included keywords, concepts, events, and experiences that were mentioned by the participants. Text that was of particular interest was marked in bold font. Care was taken to keep an open mind and note any items of interest. Initial descriptive notes were taken of the first impressions of the transcript. Care was taken to bracket each participant's dialogue from the transcript of the preceding participant. To the extent possible, each participant was treated individually in the initial note-taking step.

Emergent Themes

Each stage of IPA analysis moves the analyst farther from the participant and more towards the researcher as interpretive phenomenology begins to take place. It is important that the interpretation be inspired by and originate from the participant's words and not imposed upon the participant's speech from outside. The themes that begin to develop reflect both the participant's original words as well as the analyst's interpretation of them (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Van Manen (2014) notes, in the analysis of phenomenology, there is no attempt to look for repetitive patterns, but the purpose is

rather to identify singular data. In phenomenological studies, a theme may only appear once.

Connections Between Emergent Themes

Once themes are identified, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest that the analyst begin arranging the themes and looking for ways they fit together, to develop a structure that will allow the researcher to write the story of the participants lived experience. At this point, some themes may no longer be useful because they do not apply to the research questions and may be discarded. To begin developing a structure of the emergent themes, they were all written on separate post-it notes and placed on a door. Super-ordinate themes were identified, and related themes were placed around them. Adjustments were made until a logical pattern developed about the main research problem. A graphic model (Appendix x) showing the relationships of the super-ordinate themes with the subordinate themes began to reveal itself.

Trustworthiness

Creswell and Miller (2000) define "validity as how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (p. 124-125). Validation strategies were implemented as described by Creswell (2013) to ensure trustworthiness of this qualitative research. Yardley (2000) suggests several criteria for assessing validity in qualitative research, including: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; impact and importance.

Sensitivity to context was guarded throughout the literature review and the data collection process. Relevant literature surrounding the research question was consulted.

During the data collection, the director of the Vocational School, where the students were studying, participated in the process. By including him in the interview sessions, the students were expected to be more comfortable with the interviews and trusting of the research project. Since the students were not adults, the research purpose and expectations were explained to their parents or guardians, and there was opportunity for both parents and students to ask questions. The students also chose the location where they were most comfortable for initiating the research with the first interview. In addition, care was taken to maintain anonymity. During the collection analysis process all interviews were recorded with audio recorders, and during the data analysis verbatum quotes were used extensively.

Rigor was taken to select the sample of students in relation to the research question. Only those students who fit the specific requirements of the purposive sample were included. In depth semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with each of the students. Triangulation was achieved by using a variety of data collection methods to identify themes in the data. Credibility increases when the participants, their setting, and the developing themes are described in detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Field notes detailing a thick, rich description of the context, along with extensive quotations, were taken during and immediately after all events being observed (Creswell, 2013). I actively participated in the entire research process and involved others making sure that I understood the context of all that was taking place. Data saturation was sought. Commitment in gathering data was demonstrated to the students by carefully working with each one in planning the entire process. Extensive time was spent with the 12

participants in a variety of settings using different data collection methodologies. Each student was shown respect and gratitude was expressed for their involvement. An emphasis was placed on the importance of their personal involvement in the data collection process. There was in-depth engagement with the students.

Transparency was obtained by carefully explaining the participant selection process. The data collection process was carefully detailed and completed. For the photovoice methodology, the participants chose the photos that they wanted to use in the exhibition at the end of the data collection process, and then added descriptions to their selections. The participants invited parents, community leaders, and fellow students to the final exhibition. The themes that resulted from the data collection added coherence and understanding to the lived experience of the participants.

Phenomenological studies make use of reduction, the removal of personal bias, or stepping away from oneself while involved in researching a phenomenon. To break through what is often taken for granted, and to get to actual meaning, phenomenological studies use "the practice of bracketing, brushing away, or reducing what prevents us from making primitive or originary contact with the primal concreteness of lived reality" (van Manen, 2016, p. 41). The use of bracketing in phenomenological research may serve two purposes. It may increase the rigor of the study, by helping to limit researcher bias resulting from past experience. Bracketing may also serve to facilitate researcher reflection (Vagle, 2016). Bracketing involves suspending researcher conclusions and keeping an open attitude related to a phenomenon by placing brackets or parenthesis

around certain assumptions while conducting research surrounding that phenomenon (van Manen, 2016, p. 215).

I engaged in member-checking throughout the research process and convened a focus group of the participants at the end of the research process (Creswell, 2013). Participants' views were solicited to ensure the credibility of the findings and the interpretation of the data. Peer reviewers, including Dr. Tracy Kitchel, Angie Overholt, and the director of the Vocational School were encouraged to engage in continual evaluation of the research process. Throughout the research study, reflexivity was practiced by continually examining my role in the gathering and analyzing of the data (Macbeth, 2001). I discussed and analyzed each step of the data collection process with the Vocational School director and wrote a daily self-reflexivity journal where I considered where bias might be entering the research. The data are likely to be more credible when collaboration takes place between the researcher and participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Collaboration and co-construction of the data were achieved by including the participants in the data collection and analysis process. Focus groups were used as part of the data collection process.

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CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Purpose and Central Question

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from a no work and no school attitude, and why they decided to return to school at the Vocational School. The following central research question guided the study: Why are youth in Choluteca, Honduras not in school and not working and then decide to re-enter school at the Vocational School?

Overview of the Findings

In the findings, there is a focus on the participant's attempts to come to a fuller understanding of their lived experiences. It is important to note in the findings that "one important element of this involves moving between the part and the whole of the hermeneutic circle" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, p. 81).

Throughout the group findings, I describe and interpret each of the three super-ordinate themes (contributions to being ninis, the motivations for ninis to return to school, and the pathway to fulfilling the ninis' dreams) in greater detail. Each super-ordinate theme brings together a series of additionally related themes that are major categories within each super-ordinate theme relating to the lived experiences of the six young men and six young women who participated in the study.

Context is provided by beginning with the themes developed from the initial interviews. From themes bracketed in each case, new themes began to emerge. I moved from the particulars of each of the individual case to the shared similarities and the

distinctions of their lived experience as a group. Each of the twelve youths expressed their understanding of their lived experience in a different way. Each one had their unique, individual experience of being out of school and out of work. Their individual stories and the succeeding group discussions added the richness of data needed for better understanding the shared group lived experience.

The most emergent theme of the study, the contributions to the students being ninis, was apparent from the very first individual interview and was developed more broadly from both the photovoice interviews and the final focus group interview. The theme had two major sub-themes that included: not studying and not working. These two themes along with the age determinant of the subjects are the three defining factors of being a nini. The sub-theme of not studying included the categories of economic needs, system failure, lack of student incentive, and student's suggestions for improving their options for education. In a second sub-theme, not working, I describe and interpret the lived experience of not working. Not working, as a sub-theme, did not have any additional categories.

Next, I describe and interpret the experiences of reasons why the ninis are returning to school. This second super-ordinate theme included a few existing options for work, a learning opportunity, and the nini's reasons for entering vocational school as an option for returning to school.

Understanding the Participants: Contributions to Individuals Becoming Ninis

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) involves what Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) term as the double hermeneutic where the researcher is making sense of the lived experience of the participant while the participant is also attempting to make

sense of their own lived experience. The following pseudonyms were used for the students to maintain confidentiality. The name "Vocational School" was a generic name used for the school where the students attended in Honduras. There were twelve students, six male, and six females, included in the study.

Raquel

An understanding of Raquel's lived experience as a nini started when we visited Raquel's home, accompanied by the school director, to obtain consent from her parents to include Raquel in the study. Raquel was not able to accompany us to her parents' home on a Sunday afternoon. Following Raquel's directions and after several phone calls to her parents, we wove our way through the sea village where she had grown up and ended up at Raquel's home. Her parents were very gracious and invited us to sit with them in front of their home. Raquel lived in the same home for several years before moving to a community close to attend the Vocational School.

Raquel did not finish high school. Her father makes a living as a fisherman, and her mother occasionally sells fish platters when Raquel's dad brings extra fish home. The house they live in is scraps of wood for the walls, a dirt floor inside, and a black plastic roof made from second-hand pieces of black plastic. The house is on a small lot a few blocks away from the beach. I could only imagine how hot it must have been inside their home at night. We were grateful for the sea breeze that helped cool us down.

Raquel related how the lack of family resources contributed to her struggles in school and led to the final decision to drop out. Her father's work does not produce a

reliable income. Even though he leaves at two or three in the morning and does not come home until five or six in the afternoon, he sometimes does not catch any fish. She stated,

> It makes me feel…I really don't know…Sometimes he catches something and sometimes he comes back home with empty hands. That is really hard for me to observe; sometimes my mom and we do not have anything to eat at home and he is not able to bring fish, not even enough to feed us.

Raquel carried the burden of knowing how difficult it was for the family to support her continued education. She lamented that,

> I dropped out because I saw how hard it was for my parents to send me to school. Where I was attending, we had many expenses; you know, my dad makes his living from fishing; I understand that it was too much effort for him, so I did not want to be one more concern for my dad. I wish he would quit fishing. My mom does laundry by hand for others, and I do not want her to have to do that.

Raquel dropped out in the middle of the year before finishing junior high school. When she was asked to be more specific about why she dropped out of school when she was so close to finishing her junior high program, she replied that the decision was hers alone and that she quit school to find a job but was never able to find an adequate job. When pressed about any problems that she might have had in school, Raquel admitted that she had been trying to go to school and work at the same time and that her grades were suffering as a result. She emphatically told us, "Look! While I was at school, I was working, but I was doing poorly at school, so my dad suggested for me to quit working and pay attention in school. The truth is that, for about two weeks, I did not want to go to school. I loved to study, but I do not know what happened to me."

Luis

Luis invited us to his house for the initial interview where his mother and family decided to sit in on the interview to contribute their perceptions of Luis's lived

experience. When asked about his childhood, Luis was a bit hesitant and, as he looked around at the family, he simply said, “Well…” followed by a long pause. I had my doubts about what direction the interview might take and if Luis was simply hesitant to talk in front of his family. I was already beginning to think about the follow-up interview, hoping it might be more productive. Luis’s sisters, mother, and grandmother lived in the house together. When I asked about Luis’s father, we learned that he is a traveling salesman and is gone from home for long periods of time, often for several months at a time, and only stays home for three days to a week.

Time goes by quickly. When asked how long he had been out of school, Luis told us that it had been two years. His mother quickly corrected him, and told him, “It has been five years since you have attended school.” Furthermore, she remembered the year because it was the same year that his sister had finished the ninth grade.

Luis began to explain saying, “Well, I really didn’t like going to school since when I was in the third grade.” His mother confirmed Luis’s statement saying, “Yes, he used to tell me to let him drop out of school.” Luis said, “up until third grade, I did well.” After the third grade, “I got discouraged and didn’t want to do anything.”

Luis told us that he never liked going to school without money in his pocket and that he wanted to work to help his siblings and his mother. He said, “I wanted to have money, so I always dedicated myself to...I went into the shop to paint, and afterward, I started to go with my dad to help him.” It was not due to any problems in school. Luis got good grades and got along well with the other students. In fact, Luis could not even remember any problem at all from his school experience. His mother reinforced the idea

that Luis's discouragement with the school was caused primarily by economic struggles saying that Luis's priority was to work so that he could make money. She said, "sometimes it is hard for poor people to raise their children, and maybe the father is poor and working." Grandmother offered her understanding of the situation by saying, "If he had had help, let's say that if his parents had been able to help him, he would not have gotten discouraged…". As in other cases, Luis's mom related that the problem was that if Luis's father worked, then there was something to eat. If he did not work, then there was nothing on the table. Luis only stayed in school until the sixth grade because his parents insisted that he finish sixth grade. He simply never showed up for seventh grade.

Doris

When asked about her reasons for dropping out of school five years ago, Doris said that she stopped going to school due to a lack of money. According to Doris, the school that she had attended only recently elevated beyond an elementary school level.

Many of the students claimed that the main issue interfering with their ability to attend school was economically related. However, upon further questioning, some admitted that the phenomenon was more complicated. Doris recounted how her father discouraged her from continuing her studies. Even though Doris wanted to continue in the seventh grade, she related that her parents discouraged her from finishing her junior school education. She explained that "what happened is that at the school here girls were not respected; some boys and girls were doing some inappropriate things, so my parents told me that this was not a school for a girl. He [her father] told me that when a girl goes

to school, it should be to study; a girl is not supposed to go to school to do something else. That is what happened."

The director of the Vocational School continued the interview by asking if there was any specific incident that was a bad experience. Doris replied, "Some would hit me." Not sure how to respond with the line of questioning, Doris was asked again to be sure we were understanding, "They hit you?" Doris replied forcefully, "I am telling you; they hit me." Later in the interview, Doris was asked about the potential for her to return to school. The director asked, "What do you think is the main reason why your dad does not support you to continue with your education?" The underlying reason appears to be, "That is the way he thinks...He says that it is his choice to make not to send me back to school to get 'a big belly.'" The Vocational School director asked, "He is afraid that you will get pregnant?" Doris replied, "or that I will leave, he says, so he says that he prefers not to spend the money." When asked how she plans to get back into a formal education system, Doris's response was one of silence.

José

José finished the ninth grade. His father recently returned from the States, and José hopes to get a visa for traveling to the United States to continue his studies and to work there as a mechanic. School was a great experience for José, and he had to stop his studies primarily for economic reasons. There are not many options close by his home for José to continue his formal education in seventh to ninth grades. José had to travel outside his community to finish his junior high education. He spent two years in a private boarding school, but for economic reasons, he was not able to continue. José's ninth-

grade year was spent attending a school in a neighboring community where he had to commute daily. Ultimately, his reason for not continuing in high school was due to not having the economic resources available for him to travel to a location where he could continue studying.

Victoria

Victoria finished primary school. Victoria's formal education experience was positive. She remembered it this way, "I shared happy moments with my teacher...My friends; in homework my teacher helped me...my parents also when I needed them, my siblings also supported me…"

Victoria's parents could not afford to keep her and her siblings in school at the same time. Going on to junior high would mean traveling to another community, and her parents are unable to pay for schooling for both her and her sister, who is already attending high school. Victoria's parents have asked her to suspend her formal middle school education momentarily. Victoria was asked if there was anything that she might have done differently to be able to stay in school. Beyond the economic struggles for the family, Victoria said, "Yes… Yes, if I could go back in time and do things over and the bad things I did, do them in the right way to continue more, so my parents would support me."

There was a possibility that Victoria's father might be able to help her enter the formal school system again during the 2018 school year, but instead, when the option came about, she chose to enter the Vocational School course saying, "this course opened

up; I preferred the course because these opportunities don't come back to you. [The Vocational School course] is what I always wanted..."

Ana

Ana finished primary school and said that she was not too excited about school, she only liked it a little bit. When asked why she did not continue school, Ana gave the simple answer, "I did not want to." Even though her parents encouraged Ana to go back to school, she insisted that she did not want to go to school. Her favorite memory of school was when they gave her candy in celebration of the "Day of the Child." Ana said that she enjoyed school and considered her teachers to be good teachers and did not have any complaints about the job they did teaching her, but when asked if they did anything to encourage her to stay in school, Ana said that they did not. When asked if she would consider going back to school to finish her formal education, Ana replied, "How can I say this? Because sometimes there is no money; because we are all poor."

Alfredo

Alfredo finished primary school and lived with his parents. His family has lived their entire lives in one of the communities built near the Vocational School immediately after Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The community has become less secure in recent years. Alfredo has been out of school from 2014 until entering the Vocational School in 2018. At first, when asked about any problems that he had in school previously, Alfredo replied that "Everything was fine." Only after additional questioning, José admitted that he had problems in the formal school system, "when I went into seventh grade, I switched to a different school, … I had problems with one teacher." In clarifying the problem, he said,

> Well, at that school, everything functions with a checkmark system; I had all of the assignments, but the teacher had not signed my assignments on the list. He told me that I did not have any checkmarks because my completed assignments did not show up in his records, but I had all the checkmarks. He accused me of cheating on the revisions and of counterfeiting the checkmarks. So, he told me that if I wanted to pass the school quarter, I had to go back and restudy everything we had already learned. I felt really bad because I was not going to learn everything in one day; I had to make folders and albums, so I decided to drop out.

Alfredo said, "I regretted it because my uncles and my friends were telling me to take my parents to school [to resolve the issue], but I did not." He said he did not ask his parents to intervene in the situation because he was too nervous about it.

Armando

Armando's family fled another part of the country due to safety issues. His father abandoned the family and moved in with another wife when Armando was a couple of years old. Armando recounts his childhood,

> …my mom was left alone with the two of us, you see. Well, there were other children, but we were the small children at home. Then, at the age of four years, my mom took us to live in another city. She registered me in kinder and my other brother in pre-kinder. Then, when she had free time, she came to visit us in the pre-kinder because others were taking care of us. And my dad helped us with a little bit. I felt bad because I was put in the children's home because I was abandoned. It is not pretty to be without your parents. We continued to grow up there. After that, we returned to 'our hometown.' We were older, and then we started first grade, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. We did our schooling in that town. For me, the years in school were hard, hard, hard, because sometimes I got up in the morning [to go to school], I went in the morning; I liked mornings. Sometimes there was no food, and I went to school hungry. Fasting [nervous chuckle]. Then when I came home at 11 AM, my mom would sometimes have food for us in the house.

Armando stated that in school,

> Others saw us as less than others because I was poor. Understand me? We were of no value to others. Moreover, like that, it was hard. And then, I thought that one day this would all be over, and things would be different. I knew that. After I

> passed sixth grade, from then on, 2013, 2014 around then, we liked to go to the river to swim every day. We went to the river every day; we went to the river to swim, to relax our minds with my brother, to hang out from 11 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon, in the river swimming. Sometimes there was no one at home. There were mango trees, cocoa trees, and (pause)...I really don't really know...I hardly tell this to anyone. At times I have the desire to cry. No one knows or cares.

Armando explained in detail some of his struggles and the difficulties of his lived experience. Armando admitted that some of his problems in school were related to him being a bit rebellious at times. He recounted an experience from his school years:

> Before, when I was young, I dreamed of painting pictures because I also like art, things painted. Then I came to Choluteca; everything changed with my sport. I forgot my dreams of painting because I was then 13 years old; I left behind my dreams from my childhood. In school, I won first place in drawing. I even went to the blackboard to draw drawings for science class, of human cells. My teacher called me up to the blackboard. I did not like to do that. I was rebellious. I accept that I was rebellious. But not too much. The teacher did not like me.
>
> I remember one time, when I was going into the sixth grade, I arrived the second day of school, not the first day. I did not know who my teacher was. So, I went to the office and asked who my teacher was. They said, Professor [X]. She had been there other years before. So, when I entered her class, I remember, she stood there looking, and she did like this [gesture covering his eyes], look, and said 'Oh no! Not this kid. Look at whom I got.' [Voice raised.] 'Get over there in the middle, man.'

Armando was asked if he was a bit "tremendous" in school, and Armando replied, "It is more like I was worthless. I had no value. The little girls were viewed as special. I did not stand up there to be a challenge; I sat down. It was like that; she expected a lot from me. I did not care much for her, but I finished sixth grade."

David

David finished junior high school. He lives near the vocational school. His father left home when he was just a baby. His mother moved with the children into the community soon after Hurricane Mitch. David says his mother often recalls the period

immediately following Mitch. He says, “At that time I was not born; my mom tells me it was horrible because almost the entire family lost everything. They had nothing left; no furniture, no homes, almost everyone was homeless.” A couple of times each week he sees his father, who has his own mechanic’s shop in a neighboring town.

David remembers his early school years saying, “I remember going to kindergarten with only a meal in my stomach. Then, during elementary school, I carried five lempiras [about 20 US cents].” David had a good school experience even though the family had very little. David noted, “Sometimes we faced a lack of money, a lack of resources, there was nothing to eat. There was no money to take (to school), but I still went because I wanted to learn.” David finished junior high school wanted to continue in high school. He said, “When I dropped out, since I am young, I thought I was going to stay at home, but after I had missed my first year of school, I felt sad because the others were advancing to tenth grade and I was stuck in ninth grade; I felt sad to miss my school year.”

Angela

Angela does not live with her dad because she says she does not know her dad. She stated,

> I would like to know him, but I have never had that privilege to know him because my mother, well she married again, and my stepfather is the father of my brother. For several reasons, he is always disciplining me a lot, but I always care about him because he has been a good father.

Angela remembers her experience in school,

> They struggled with my mother to keep me in kinder because they had to cross a river to take me to kinder. Then it was a sacrifice also to finish sixth grade because we did not have hardly any resources for studying. So, I struggled to be able to finish sixth grade. I ended up, well when I lived in a small town, I ended

> up coming on foot with my mom until I was bigger. Then we moved to "another city," and when we did not have money to pay for a ride to go to school, I would walk to school. My mother would come on foot and drop me off. It was a sacrifice; we would even bring my brother. Sometimes the teacher would help out, and she would bring me, and she would pass by also leaving and bringing me from school [both ways] so that I did not have to walk. She said that it was dangerous [traffic on the road and delinquency] when I walked to school with my mom and little brother. So, this is how I struggled to finish sixth grade. I finished sixth grade because my teacher helped me. They helped me.

Ramon

Ramon finished junior high school. The interview was conducted at his sister's house with his sister present. Ramon told us that his mother does not acknowledge him and that his father died several years ago when he was in primary school. His mother went to work after his father's death and left Ramon soon afterward. Then, Ramon lived with his grandmother until his sister invited him to live with her. His sister encouraged him to continue in school. He tried to work to buy his school supplies, but soon his grades were slipping.

Ramon's sister said that his grades dropped down to 60% after his father died. Ramon related his school experience to us by saying,

> Well, in my studies, it all started well, but the problem started when my dad passed away. I did not want to continue; I got discouraged and didn't want to study. I went to an institute where I started in seventh grade and went until ninth. I did not want to continue.

Ramon stated, "Since my mom left, I…She abandoned me…So, I thought to myself; this is why we are alone." He told his sister that he felt lonely. He said his problems in school stemmed from his family problems at that time. He said that after he dropped out, he regretted it. Ramon stated,

> [My teachers] did not try to help me. They only asked me, 'why are you like this? Why are you not passing your classes? Maybe you are hanging with the wrong crowd.' They never called me in to check what was truly going on, to check if I had any problems.

Maria

Maria was quiet and found it difficult to express herself. She did not offer much information about her life. Maria said that until the fifth grade, school went well for her. She said after fifth grade,

> It pretty much did not go well...I had the same teacher from first to fifth grade. I was one of her favorite students. The worst was in sixth grade when they did not want to give me to her because there were too many students. So, they took the teacher from me. They put me with another teacher; she was always angry, very strict. Even so, I learned because you do not always have to be the teacher's favorite.

She said she finished junior high school, even though her parents are divorced. However, after that, Maria did not continue her formal education for economic reasons, as well as family issues. Maria explained, while crying, that the separation of her parents impacted her decision to discontinue her studies. Moreover, the cost would be higher for her to continue because there is not a high school near where she lived, and she would have to travel to go to classes. She stated that she was sorry she had dropped out of school. When she was no longer attending classes, Maria tried to help her mom with her business to keep busy and learn a trade, but eventually moved to live with her father and help him.

Findings Specific to the Central Question

Contributions to Being Ninis

Not Studying. Several of the twelve students from the Vocational School, who were selected for the study, reported the lack of resources as the primary reason that they were forced to drop out of school. Public education is free in Honduras, so numerous attempts were made to ask the youth to explain what resources were needed to continue in school. During the focus group interview with the entire group of twelve students, they were asked, "With all of you, we want to know what resources are needed to continue studying." Following a long pause, one of the males replied by saying, "[We need] Help." In attempting to understand better the students' lived experience, I wondered what the lack of an immediate clear response from them suggested? Were they possibly intimidated by the session? Were the students tired of being asked questions? Was it possible that they could not relate to the question, that within their lived experience of being ninis, they were not able to provide the answer to the question?

There was not a consensus among the youth in answering what help was needed for continuing in public school. One of the young female students commented that "It depends on what your needs are." As 15-17-year-old students, whose formal education ranged between a sixth-grade and a ninth-grade level and who had been out of school and out of work, they found it difficult to analyze what it would take for them to continue a formal junior high or high school education.

Amount Needed Economically. Replying to the inquiry of how much money was needed monthly to attend school, one of the male students initiated the discussion by

suggesting that it would take 750 lempiras (one US dollar equals approximately 24 Honduras lempiras). The discussion continued in the background with several students saying that was not a high enough figure. They concluded that the "total cost is higher for travel costs." Depending on how far the student lived away from the school they would attend, there was general agreement that the actual travel cost would be around L.1,100 ($46.00) per month. Travel costs included bus fare to and from school, and food costs while at school. There were also one-time yearly costs for uniforms, a backpack, and other supplies, such as notebooks and pencils. Alfredo wrote about his photo (Figure 4), saying, "I consider money to be of importance to my family and me. With money, I can help them and buy the clothes that I like and shoes and food. Also, it is important to have money for an emergency. In the future, when I have children, I will be able to help them with their studies or buy a house, a car for me and other things."

Figure 4. The importance of money

The students were asked about the food cost and the type of food that included items typically offered in the school snack shop. They were asked if they could bring food from home. A couple of the students, especially the males, had a surprised look and didn't seem to know how to answer immediately. Finally, one wanted to be sure he understood and asked, "From home?" "Then you would not need so much money." Laughter followed among all the students, and I wondered, what had I missed? It seemed like a logical suggestion. I had grown up as a child in a family where we often "brown-bagged" it by carrying our lunch to school. One of the males answered, "There isn't food at my house." There were no additional comments. He spoke for the rest of the group. While those of us who were doing the interview could not relate to being without food in the house, the students seemed unfazed by the discussion of their lived experience of sometimes going to school without food.

System Failure

Geography Drives Educational System. Several students emphasized that after finished the sixth grade, they had run out of viable options for continuing their studies. Either there were no junior high or high schools in their communities or the schools did not offer programs in which students were interested. Travel costs are high and riding the public bus as transportation was viewed as a necessary evil for most of the students.

David wrote in his photovoice project (Figure 5),

> This picture shows a means of transportation. It is a problem for society. Many people travel by bus to work. Sometimes people take several buses to go to work because the salary they earn does not allow them to pay for other transportation. Many times, they cannot get around and are fired from their jobs.

Figure 5. The means of transportation

Teachers Perceived as Uncaring. Armando and others told of their problems with teachers in the formal education system. For Armando, the memory of being shouted at and ridiculed in front of other students was the lasting memory that he carried with him from the last year he had attended the formal classroom. Only when he became bored at home did he consider seeking a different option for education. Students were sometimes hesitant to talk about their past negative experiences in school. When asked if he had ever had problems in school, Ramon's response was, "No, I do not have any bad experiences." Ramon's sister was listening, and reminded him asking, "What about that day that you told me you wanted to die, why was that?" Ramon said,

> [I had]…problems with a teacher. There was a professor who did not get along with me. Only one female teacher. I do not know, because I, I do not know because I did not do anything; she always disliked me; if I were standing up, she would call me out. She took me to the principal's office. She accused me of not doing what I was supposed to do because I was always playing, according to her.

Ramon was not able to get help when he was discouraged and began failing in his classes after his father's prolonged illness and death from diabetes. He said,

> Well, they did not try to help me; they only asked me 'why are you like this? Why are you not passing your classes? Maybe you are hanging with the wrong crowd' they said; that is all they said, but they never called me in to check what was truly going on, to check if I had any problems; they never said anything like that.

I asked, "You do not know what initiated this?" Ramon said, "No, I do not know, and she told me that with her I was never going to pass my classes… This was before I dropped out of school."

Lack of Support. There is a lack of a support system. Students were asked to discuss in more detail concerning their barriers to continue in school. One thing that makes it difficult, reported one of the females, is that "you do not have the support from some family member or your parents." Furthermore, there is no one in the community to turn to when the students face difficulties finding the resources or need advice for attending school. Several students insisted they would have continued in school if there had been someone to encourage them. One said, "Yes, it would have made a big difference."

Lack of Student Incentive. It is possible that the students did not feel at liberty to express their experience. To create further dialogue, they were asked to respond to a scenario similar to their own, where another student might have the economic resources available for study, but for some other reason also chose to drop out of school. The students explained several possible reasons why other students in similar situations might

not be in school. The students discussed substance abuse, lack of interest, and a lack of motivation as the three main obstacles to providing an incentive for studying.

Substance Abuse. One of the young men answered, "Because some of them have vices. Some of the vices the students listed as common deterrents that interfere with 15-17-year old students staying in school in Choluteca are addictions to cocaine, marijuana, glue-sniffing, alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs. The students related that drugs are commonly available inside the schools. They unanimously confirmed that each of them had ready access to drugs if they were interested in experimenting with them. Several were aware of specific locations to obtain drugs. When asked how they might be exposed to drugs in the school, one of the girls said that they could be supplied by their "friend in school, sometimes your best friend." One of the students went on to say that some students, "use their money on the vices and then have nothing left for studying."

Lack of Interest. Not having the resources to attend school is not the only reason for youth being out of school. A lack of interest in being in school was noted as the primary reason for youth dropping out. One said, "In all reality, they do not want to study. Another followed up by commenting that some youth that he knows do not attend school, "because their parents give them everything. Or they already have enough money, so there is no reason for them to continue in school." Another suggested that some of the youth live with grandparents because "the parents have left the house to live outside the country. That is where the spoiling comes. They will not listen [to advice] to continue studying."

Lack of Motivation. When asked, how many would continue studying in formal education programs if they had sufficient resources to cover their needs for education, ten of the twelve responded positively. Two of the youth said they would not pursue a formal education even if they had sufficient resources to cover all the costs. One of the male students added, "Maybe you should only continue studying until you learn to read." The girls all laughed, emphasizing a difference between the girls and the guys in attitude towards formal study. None of the guys seemed to see anything unusual with the response. One of the two guys who were not interested in a formal education explained, it is "because I plan to get a job and not continue studying. I want to get a job to make money."

Student Suggested Solutions. One of the students felt it would help if the government would provide more outside school opportunities, such as providing more sports courts for them to have extracurricular activities. When pushed for an explanation of how sports' facilities would help keep youth in school, another student countered, "No, it would not help." He clarified his thought by saying,

> No, I do not think so. It might help get them off their bad habits. In one form, yes, in one manner it might help keep them away from their vices, but on the other hand, I do not think so. How do I say it? [The real issue is] there is no real advantage for them to start studying again. They can get skateboards, have basketball courts, but they do not need to study.

Another concurred saying, *"*I have a friend whose father works. He has money. He is a teacher. My friend says, 'Why do I need to study?' He is 15 years old. He does not need to work. He already has everything he needs." Even more explicitly, one of the male students commented that others do not study "because they are too lazy**.**"

Sports can be a motivator. Armando said, “I learned how to skateboard because I did not have any friends here with whom I wanted to hang out. So, I went to the park, and everyone was there, and I learned from them. I liked it; I liked it.”

Armando wrote a photovoice paragraph (Figure 6) explaining the importance of his sport in his life.

> This is the sport that I practice daily. This sport comes from surfing at sea, and they decided to do the same on the land and invented several styles of boards. The first trick they did in the skateboarding was in 1969 by Allan Galfen. However, what I want you to understand is that if you fall into one thing that you try, you do not have to stay lying down. You have to keep moving ahead in one way or another. That is why it motivates me to move forward.

Figure 6. My Favorite Sport

Not Working. Most of the ninis had periodic work experiences to talk about, but they had never had long-term jobs. They had held mostly part-time jobs while studying. Some had tried to find work after dropping out of school. Some of them had common experiences of not being able to find jobs because they were underage.

Raquel often helped her parents by going out to sell fruits, such as mangos. She also worked for a nearby family helping in their home. Telling about her work experience, Raquel said,

> Well, my mom used to do laundry by hand for the lady of that house because my mom does laundry for other people. The lady at that house told my mom that she needed a maid, so my mom asked me if I could take the job. My mom went in the morning, and I went in the afternoon when I finished school and worked until 8:00 P.M. I was at the house and cooked, cleaned, and cooked for the fishermen that work for them. I also watched over their children and cleaned the house. When they arrived, I had supper ready, and when they were not around, I had to watch the house and keep it clean.

Often while not in school, Raquel could only stay at home and help her family. She moved to Choluteca seeking work but could not find anything. She said that you have to have the experience to be able to find a job.

Luis occasionally worked at a neighboring car-painting shop for a year. He made 200 lempiras weekly (a little over $8). He gave 150 lempiras weekly to his mother and kept 50 lempiras for his own spending money. He looked for other work but could not legally work full-time since he was a minor. Luis worked with his uncle for a while as a

mason's assistant. Doris and LP both said that the only work available as a female in their community was to do housework. During the period when she had dropped out of school, Maria liked to work occasionally with her mother to help her make birthday and wedding decorations.

José told about the experience of being a construction mason's assistant hand-mixing concrete. He occasionally works on the weekends now. That is the only job available in his community. He said, "I was given the opportunity to study. It is better to study than to work." Referring to his photovoice picture (Figure 7), José said, "This picture is about the difficulty of working and studying at the same time. I work on the weekends as a mason's assistant. It is difficult to study and work at the same time."

Figure 7. Dignified work

Alfredo was only occasionally able to find work painting or welding. Armando found a part-time job that gave him 100 lempiras a day. He gave at least half of his earnings to his mother. David worked part-time as a mechanic's helper. He said that, in the beginning, it was hard because he did not know anything and came to the realization that he had to go back to school. Angela worked washing clothes for a neighbor. She also helped do household chores. Her family has a brick-making business, and she helped get the finished bricks out of the oven. As a young person, Ramon had worked in the fields of agriculture. He also worked for a while at a hardware store. According to Ramon, "The most important thing is to find a job."

Reasons Why Ninis Returned to School

Few Existing Options for Work

The students related how difficult it is to find a job as a nini. There are not many jobs available in the region. They had no experience, and they were too young to legally get full-time jobs, especially jobs that paid well and included benefits. In some areas, construction jobs are the only work available for unskilled laborers. Several of the males had worked as construction assistants. They noted that it is very difficult to work under harsh conditions and long hours. The only way to move on from being an assistant was to become an apprentice to the "maestro" [the teacher]. A construction assistant makes around $8 a day. When asked if this was enough to make a living for a family, the students replied in unison that "no," it was not.

Females were also limited in the work they could do. Several of the girls had worked at home doing house chores or working for neighbors. One of the girls said, "In

my neighborhood, there is a man who owns a little store [pulperia], and he gives you an opportunity to learn by selling in his store. There is only this and working on the okra farm." There are also other menial jobs available in agriculture during the planting season and at harvest time. There is seasonal work available in the melon fields. Those that are available have poor working conditions. Ninis are not allowed to work full-time.

A Learning Opportunity

When José was asked why he chose to come to school rather than keep on working, he said, "Because I was given the opportunity to study; it is better to study than to work." By enrolling in the vocational school during the 2018 school year, the former ninis became students again. Each of the ninis initially sought to enter classes at the Vocational School because they wanted to learn. The motivation for them to learn career-building skills depends on the pathway that the students intend to take towards fulfilling their final career dreams. Students were passionate about reaching those dreams and expressed that they had not given up. To fulfill their dreams, the ninis all realized the necessity of first obtaining an education. The students had several different course options from which to choose. Each student was motivated according to their end dreams for a career.

Figure 8. The mechanic's shop

Ramon wrote in his photovoice project (Figure 8),

> This is a workshop, and I admire the people who work in it. I dream of working in one like this, and I consider it an honest job and a good way to earn a living easily. Being a mechanic is a trade of many tools that one may not have used previously. So, he uses them and learns from them. I would like to have a mechanic workshop and be able to give jobs to others. My dad dreamed of having a mechanic shop, and he was not able to achieve that goal, possibly because his economic situation did not ever allow him to do it.

Ninis' Reasons for Entering Vocational School

Initial Reasons. The students were motivated to return to school in a non-formal educational setting for the reasons outlined above. Ninis approached the possibility of entering the Vocational School because they wanted an education that would help them

get better jobs, and they had been either pushed out or pulled out of the formal educational system. Their purpose for being in a vocational program evolved as they spent more time studying in the program that they chose.

Non-formal Education Option. The twelve students expressed their different reasons for returning to school at this point in their lives. The reasons they chose to follow a non-formal education route versus returning to a formal education classroom are specifically the same reasons that they chose for entering the Vocational School. José stated, "I am doing what I had in mind, which was to study a trade. I did not want to continue studying a regular formal high school career. I wanted to learn something else." Ramon added, "To continue studying is like moving forward, because staying like this, without studying, is nothing in this country." When asked why he chose auto mechanics, he said that it is a working career. "I think that if the letters could not get in my head, maybe this would because it is more work-like."

The Vocational School was more appealing than a formal technical high school for several reasons. One of the males said that he chose the vocational school because "I wanted to get done. At the technical professional high school, other things (courses) are included, and you do not get it done faster. [Here] they only have the basic classes. It is practical. Here it is just the experience." Another male student agreed, pointing out, also, that he chose the Auto Mechanics program at the Vocational School because of the type of teaching. "In other schools, you have more theory than hands-on learning. Here we have more hands-on practical learning…" Additionally, another male student pointed out that, "In other schools, they ask you to provide tools and here they do not."

Motivated by the Vocational School reputation. In many cases, the initial motivation to enter the vocational school was not well-planned out. It was an opportunity that presented itself. The vocational school was the second option for them and not their first choice for study. Several reasons were found for why the ninis were initially attracted to the Vocational School for renewing their educational efforts. At different times, they mentioned reasons such as: they liked the teaching style of vocational education; the school was close to their homes and travel costs were minimal; friends, family members, teachers or relatives recommended the school to them; they learned about the school on social media; someone at the school responded warmly to their inquiry; the cost is lower, or they had become bored at home where they were not doing anything. David said he learned about the reputation of the school through one of the school's teacher. He said, "he lives close to my house; he knows my family. He got me interested in taking classes here."

Like teaching style. Ramon was asked why he chose to study at the Vocational School over other options for schools. He replied, **"**Because I was told that the one in [this community] is better; I was advised to come here. They have better teachers to teach here. Our cousin told us; also, my brother-in-law told me that it was better to come here." Ramon's sister was sitting nearby and added, "It is probably because many of the graduates from here, maybe some who have behaved well, have been hired to work (at the places where they have done their internship); maybe that is the reason; they have learned well and have stayed to work." Another student added that he came to the

Vocational School because of "the type of teaching. Here they teach more than in other schools."

Close by home. One of the often-expressed reasons for students finding it difficult to continue their formal education was because in many of the communities, especially outside the city of Choluteca, there were few options for education nearby. The Vocational School filled a gap in some cases because the school was located in an area where there were few other options for studying.

Pathways to the Future. After students had attended the Vocational School for a couple of months, they began to develop long-term dreams for what they might be able to accomplish eventually. The students were divided into three categories regarding their broad purpose for choosing to learn a vocational trade. They chose to study at the Vocational School because it is considered to be the best available option for providing a pathway to the fulfillment of their long-term dreams. All students viewed vocational education in general, and their education at Vocational School, in particular, as a pathway to their future. The students identified with one of the three following pathways to reach their dreams. First, they hoped to learn a trade and a skill that would help them find a job, which would, in turn, allow them to earn the necessary income to return to some formal educational career path. Or next, they hoped to learn the skills to become entrepreneurs and eventually own their own businesses. Or finally, they were entirely focused on getting a job so that they could make money to earn a living.

Professional Career Pathway. All six of the female students, since their first interview, had each expressed an interest in becoming a professional in the medical field,

either as a nurse or a doctor. Since their plans for the formal education degree programs had been derailed for various reasons, they were beginning to look at vocational education as a possible option for learning a skill. That skill could then be used as a step towards finding a job that would provide an income, which in turn, would allow them to pay their way in formal education where they could pursue a professional career.

Angela wanted to "study for a career like become an engineer, a doctor, or nurse because I have always played with this idea that I want to be a doctor." Angela continued, "I am going to get myself together, everything is possible to study." Angela further explained that there "was always something within me. I think I saw something that told me to 'keep studying; you are about to finish.' I want to study and to make something of my life so that I could help my mom. Because that is what I want to do is help."

Figure 9. My dream (#1)

Several students labeled their photo photovoice picture (Figure 9) as "My Dream." Maria's dream is to become a nurse someday. She wrote, "One of my dreams is to study nursing. Through this career, I am going to help other people." Victoria believes that "with my high school education, I could achieve my goal to become a full professional. For her, the vocational degree is an important step that will allow her to go back and finish her formal degree and obtain the career that she has always dreamed of having. Armando views having a business as an opportunity to serve the community. Becoming a professional is also viewed as the route to being able to achieve the dreams of having the things that the ninis did not have growing up. One of the female students said, "Becoming a professional means that we will be able to pay for everything."

Entrepreneurial Career Pathway. Some of the students expressed interest in learning about business for the sake of taking the entrepreneurial route to have a future, which will fulfill their lifelong dreams of owning their own business. They want to learn, to have their own business, to have a future. Armando noted that "All I can think about is having a business, well, a cake business. I can live because I am older and I want to do something." Later, he added,

> The motivation is when I walk in the street and see persons lying on the ground, without anything, dirty, suffering hunger, I do not want to be there like them. Moreover, I see other people, with businesses, and I want to be like them. This motivates me. When I walk in the streets and see people lying around, it motivates me, because I do not want to be like that. I want to be someone in life. This motivates me.

Armando was asked, "What do you dream of?" He laughed as he said, "the same thing as everyone else in the class, I want to have a bakery to make a living." Also, Armando wrote about his photovoice picture (Figure 10),

> I am motivated to be the best pastry cook in the southern region and, in the future, to support my family and live well materially. For this reason, now that I am young, I do not want to waste time, and I want to learn all the superabundance of knowledge of everything that is involved in a course in cake-baking. Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if I were picking up cans and bottles to survive. That is why it is better to study.

Figure 10. My dream (#2)

When asked why so many of the students were interested in having their own business, they considered the business as a sure wa to provide financial income, a house, and to provide for the family. One of the students emphasized the value of having his mechanic's shop. He said, "If the person is a mechanic, and they have training, then they have a job, and then the family, wife, and children, would not go hungry because he would have the necessary knowledge."

Work Career Pathway. Other students see learning a trade and quickly getting a job so that they can make money and begin to fulfill their dreams as the primary purpose for continuing their vocational education. Luis wants to get a job in a modern shop.

Deviation by Gender. Depending on gender, there were pronounced differences in why ninis chose a vocational option as a pathway for fulfilling their dreams. The girls and

the boys had differing attitudes towards their expectations of how a vocational education would serve them in the future. Students were asked if they are primarily interested in returning to the classroom was for economic purposes. Implying that earning money was only part of the motivation for going back to school, one of the girls immediately replied, "and to become someone more in life." To "be someone" means more than attending school to get a job which would result in making money. The motivation to get a job means different things to different students. Learning serves a much more amplified purpose for the girls than just a means to the ultimate end of making money. Learning is a part of life and is necessary if you want to be someone. For clarification, Raquel commented that, "To learn what you need to continue in this life, you need to study." The girls were concerned about the inequality in pay between the sexes. Males are paid a higher amount than females for similar jobs.

Unlike the girls, the guys did not express any interest in using their vocational education as a pathway to pursue additional levels of formal education. The boys were not planning for a formal title or professional career. José commented on the high school degrees that are available. He said, "There are already too many people with those degrees." The male students continued commenting, "There are too many high schools. It would be better to have more technical careers." The guys were also interested in getting done quicker.

Obtaining better working conditions was important to all the students as an incentive for getting more education. Luis wrote about one of his photos (Figure 11), "The work that this man is doing draws my attention. He is earning a living doing what

he likes. I want to be an excellent mechanic. For that reason, I am learning to repair cars, to change the broken parts for good ones and to learn as a mechanic."

Figure 11. What I want to do when I grow up

For the guys, education is about getting a job so that they could make as much money as possible, so they could spend it on things they wanted and needed. For example, one of the boys said, "I have worked as a mason's assistant. They paid me L. 200 a day. It was hard work. If they paid me L.500 a day, I would do it." José emphasized that there is dignified work, but it is often very difficult. The students said that they were motivated to find jobs where they did not have to work in the sun.

In the End, Fulfilled Dreams. When the students were given cameras and asked to take pictures related to the themes given, they returned with the number of pictures overwhelmingly favoring topics related to the environment. They were especially mindful of the challenge for their generation to preserve the existing quantities of natural capital, which is one of the six capital forms in the family of capitals, and to do their part in adding new resources.

The most photographed items were photos of money or the houses of their dreams. The boys took several photos of cars and motors. In some cases, the photo was taken with one theme in mind and the discussion led in an entirely different direction. Having become ninis has not lessened the students' passion for dreaming about the future. They are still young and have not run out of opportunities. The students mentioned numerous dreams that they hoped would be possible to accomplish after finishing their education. Some were talked about more than others, but all the dreams discussed fell into one of two categories. Vocational education was still the answer to accomplishing their overarching dreams, as well as secondary dreams.

Overarching Dreams.

To Be Someone. The motivation to be someone was strong and expressed in many ways. Doris said, "I can become someone in life. I can achieve things." "An education would take me higher than where I am." Ana wrote under her photovoice photo (Figure 12), "I dream of having a house like that. I am sure that, first of all, my dream will be fulfilled. If possible, I can do it better, and I will build a park in front of the house so that children can have fun enjoying the park next to their parents. Victoria commented

that, “Once we have graduated, we have more worth.” Raquel wants to be able to work to help her family get ahead as well. “My dream is to be able to help my family build a house. I want to be someone in life.” “I have not given up my dream; I plan to continue studying and fulfill my dream of becoming a doctor; that is the dream of my family as well.”

Figure 12. The house of my dreams (#1)

Figure 13. Let's not destroy the forest

Environmental Issues. Though the ninis have not yet achieved a high level of formal education, they are still concerned about the issues that others are concerned about in their world. Given the option to discuss the lived experience that was of interest to them, several individuals chose to take pictures covering environmental issues.

The environmental concerns were emphasized even more in both photovoice group sessions. Some photos that had not been taken intentionally as an environmental issue were discussed and evaluated with the environment in mind. Doris wrote, “The reason for taking this picture (Figure 13) is so that we do not destroy the forest as many people do. Take care of it because if we keep destroying it, it affects all of human society so much.”

Photos showing trash, threats of pollution, and contamination to the drinking water were of concern. In one photo of a community well, the girls were concerned that

it “is near a house that is destroyed and all dirty.” With another photo, there was an attempt to encourage more discussion. The students were asked what they saw in the picture. One of the girls replied simply, “A house.” I suggested that that was not enough of an answer and to imagine that I could not see the house and to explain the photo more fully. It was getting late in the session, and we were all tired. Another one of the girls said, “This house is well-plastered and looks good, but it is dirty. It needs to be cleaned up. So, now can you imagine it?”

Secondary Dreams. Increasing the ability to earn money was mentioned by most students as one of the important reasons for getting a vocational education. Several students took photos of stacks of money. When asking about the importance of money in their lives, one of the males responded that it brings “happiness.” When asked what their priority would be if they had that stack of money available for the purchase of anything they wanted, they suggested they would use it to buy shoes, school uniforms, or work shoes. One of the males said that it would be enough money to help him come to school for two weeks. Most of the students looked at the value of the money in relation to their school activities.

Figure 14. The house of my dreams (#2)

Everyone hoped to have someday what one student described as a dignified house in which to live. Several took pictures of their dream house. Ramon wrote about his picture (Figure 14), “I liked the house. It is nice, big and has a garage. I hope in the future to have one as big and beautiful so that my family can live in it and be able to enjoy it each day with them. I hope that the dreams I have for the future will be fulfilled.”

In the photovoice sessions, students indicated the positive things the houses included, such as secured grates over the windows, being nicely painted, and roofs were made from metal instead of tile. An expensive house was not necessarily the dream. Even though one of the houses photographed was an expensive-looking house, when asked what the group observed about it one student commented simply, “It is a dirty house.”

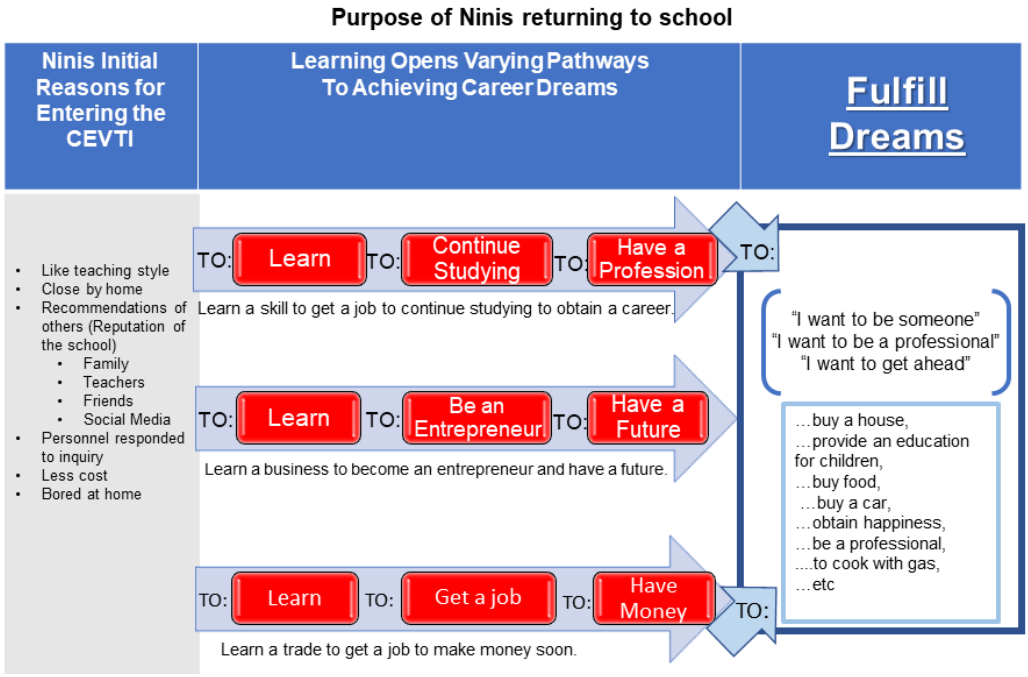

Figure 15. Purpose the Ninis gave for returning to school at the Vocational School

During the several weeks of the interview process, the students had sometimes been hesitant to share the depths of their experiences as ninis. The pain from the past was often obvious, though not explicitly stated. The depth of their academic understanding was not always clear. Sometimes, they did not have the words to say all that they had experienced.

On Friday, May 11, 2018, they put aside all their inhibitions, forgot for a moment all the previous bad experiences from school, and began to lay out their posters. They had the materials at hand (glue, construction paper, the photos, and sequins) and were given support as needed. The room was full of excitement as the students laughed at each other and asked for advice on all the design details that they were considering. The artistic

talent of each one was obvious as they portrayed their dream in pictures in a way they had struggled to put into words earlier.

The photovoice exercise brought out the aspirations and dreams of the students. With few pre-conditions, they were given basic guidelines and had an orientation on the types of photos that were needed. In the end, they were the researchers, the only ones who could tell their story, their lived experience.

It was their opportunity to express themselves. As the day of the exhibition got closer, the students nervously asked what they needed to do. We assured each student that everything would be calm, there was no need to worry. We secretly wondered if they would show up for the exhibition. As I thought about all the presentations I had done in school, I began to understand that the students might never have experienced anything like what they were being asked to do. On the other hand, they may have been nervous because of the negative feelings of those previous experiences. Standing up in front of everyone must have been a challenge no matter how much we attempted to prepare them.

The fantastic food that was in the doorway was of secondary interest to the event taking place inside the Vocational School salon. All the students not only showed up, but they also came with enthusiasm. The girls in high heels and their best dresses. The guys were well-groomed, and the mechanic's students had their shirts ironed and tucked inside their belts.

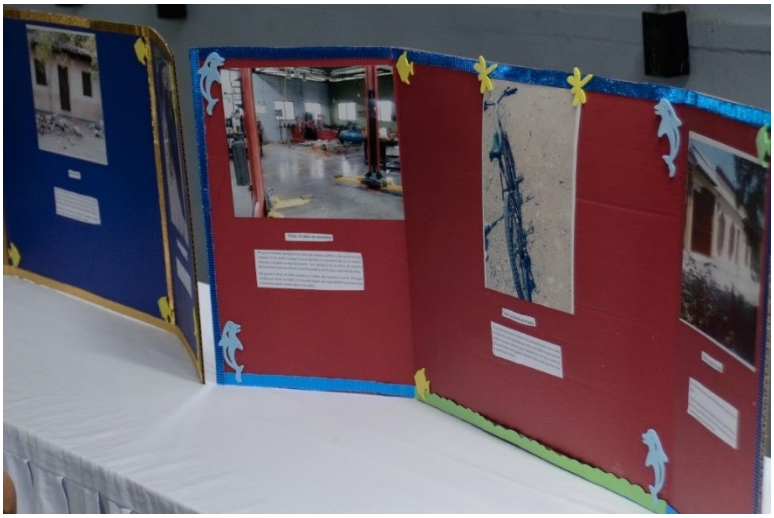

Figure 16. Photovoice exhibition

The participants gathered with their classmates around the display, and it was obvious that the other students were proud of the end result of much hard work. The highlight of all the data collection and findings came at the very end. Even though we had told all the students that they were going to keep their presentations, the excitement at the last minute of seeing them walk out cannot be put into words. One of the highest compliments to the entire photovoice project came from the sewing instructor. Immediately afterward, Melba, the instructor of several students, wrote a text saying,

> Good afternoon, Mr. Larry, the exposition was very interesting with the young people. They expressed the needs found in their communities, their dreams. They are interested in caring for the environment and many other things. What they expressed through photography, I was thinking might be possible through a similar exhibition at the graduations of the different courses.

My response was “Adelante!” Onward!

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

An entire story, a single sentence, a couple of phrases, a few keywords, the tone of voice, or an unspoken expression may contribute to forming a better understanding of the lived experiences of others (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; van Manen, 2014). The participants in this study greatly helped to advance the understanding of what it means to be a student again in southern Honduras after having experienced being out of work and out of school. Their reasons for attending the Vocational School in southern Honduras are better understood after spending time in dialogue with them about their lived experience.

For example, when Raquel spoke of her father, she said, "I wish he would quit fishing." These words alone, especially without understanding the context of Raquel's lived experience, cannot adequately express her meaning behind them. Without being there, and without seeing her expression of frustration in the situation, and without knowing that every day, everything they do as a family and all that they depend on requires her father to catch enough fish each day for her family to live. Without knowing Raquel's lived experience, that admonishment for her father to quit fishing could mean so many things to different people. Few people, however, can fully understand the experience of living in a slab wood house with a black plastic roof where the father has to catch enough fish every day to buy the things the family needs, including sending all his children to school. Raquel was one of nearly 640,000 ninis in Honduras (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székly, 2016). Before entering the Vocational School, Raquel was out of work and out of school.

In discussing the lived experience with former ninis who have returned to school for non-formal vocational education, there is a better understanding of the three main parts of the problem stated in this study. It has been beneficial to better understand what it means for 15-17-

year-olds in Choluteca to be out of school, what their experience of being out of work has been like, and finally to better understand their experience of entering a non-formal vocational education center. It is crucial to interpreting how these former ninis anticipate using vocational education as a step towards the achievement of reaching those life-long dreams.

School behavior and performance often define academic-risk of dropout for youth (Catterall, 1988). All of the students expressed confidence they could complete the academic requirements, that they were capable of doing the academic work required of them. However, several expressed the feeling of being pushed out of school for various reasons beyond their control. In agreement with Croninger and Lee's (2001) list of risk categories, the students who participated in this study acknowledged having previous experience with some of the common risk factors that may influence them to drop out of school. Some concluded that they had been at risk socially, and some of the youths mentioned academic risks they had experienced while in school. Most of the students experienced a combination of both academic risks and social risks. They recognized that the different risks that they had been exposed to ultimately contributed to their decisions to drop out of school.

According to the Cunningham's model for youth-at-risk in Latin America (2008), youth who are at-risk tend to move towards risky behavior. While none of the students in this study discussed any experience of personal involvement in what was considered risky behavior, they did acknowledge that other youth whom they know, including some of their friends, have been involved in risky behavior. The risky behavior they most lamented was the addiction to various forms of drugs that caused other youth to drop out of school. Unlike the youths in this study, the young people who were addicted to drugs did not exhibit any interest in returning to school.

The participants in this study discussed many of the dropout risk issues they had experienced as children and youth at home, in their communities, and at school. They identified the events, issues, and conditions that they perceived were instrumental in impacting their decisions to drop out of school. While there were certain similarities between the different students, they also discussed issues that were distinctive among them in their individual lived experiences. In the end, they expressed a better understanding of their shared lived experience.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of youth development (1979) considers that the young person's entire surroundings over time, the different levels of their environment, including their relationships with peers, and their culture to all, play a significant role in impacting their future lives. In Bronfenbrenner's model, the microsystem deals with the interrelations that youth experience in the closest settings where they live, in familiar areas such as the home, church, school, and local community. In an effort to better understand the student's lived experience from the microsystem level, in the first interview, students were encouraged to talk about their earliest childhood memories. The youths expressed a variety of challenges that placed them at risk of failure at an early age.

As a motivation for keeping students in school, Bryk and Tum (1989) emphasize the importance of school faculty showing interest in the students. Some of the students shared the experience of feeling that the school personnel were not interested in them. Armando reported that on his first day in the classroom, the teacher said in a loud voice, "Oh no! Not this kid. Look at whom I got." He said that afterward, he felt worthless. Doris could not continue in school because her father was concerned about the possibility of her developing a relationship with the boys. Alfredo lamented that he had problems with one teacher. At the end of the year, he was accused of cheating and told he had to redo all his school work. Alfredo was not willing to

resolve the issue, so he quit school. Ramon noted that his teachers did not try to help him when his father died.

In agreement with Bronfenbrenner's model, Croninger and Lee (2001) conclude that a common social risk factor for youth dropping out of school is when they live in single-parent homes. Several of the students in this study come from single-parent homes. At first, the students were reluctant to talk about the difficulties arising from their home situation, but they gradually began to candidly discuss the emotions and difficulties of having only one parent at home. Families were separated by divorce, by parents' migration to find work, or by death, and one of the girls never knew her father. In addition to the economic stress the families were going through, the family support system had often broken down. On the other hand, some of the students shared they had adapted to the situation of living in a single-parent home, where both parents remained involved in providing for the family whenever possible. For some of the students, coming from a single-parent home had no impact on them dropping out of school.

The mesosystem, the second layer of Bronfenbrenner's model (1979), involves the interactions between the various microsystems that are a part of the young person's life. In the best situations, the interactions between the student's different microsystems had a positive impact on their lived experience and helped them stay in school longer. Angela for example, praises the efforts of the school to work with her mother to keep her in school through the 6th grade. Often, the teacher would give her a ride to school so that she did not have to walk along the busy highway to get to school.

Angela, along with a couple other students noted a lack of positive interaction between the various microsystems that they were a part of which contributed to them dropping out of school. In Angela's case, a misunderstanding between her family and the local church created a

situation where the family had to move to a marginal section outside the city. The move created a difficult situation for Angela's family where their living conditions were worse and Angela had to walk a longer distance to school.

In other cases, the problem between microsystems was a lack of interaction between the the home microsystem and the school microsystem. According to Doris, her father did not want her in school because he was concerned that she would be spending too much unsupervised time with the boys. So, there was not a clear understanding of the relationships of the people in the two microsystems. Similarly, in Alfredo's case, a stronger link between his school microsystem and that of his parents might have helped keep him in school. He noted he regretted that he had not been able to resolve the situation at school because he was too nervous to ask his parents to intervene on his behalf. His parents never knew what the problem was, and in addition, the school administration and teachers never approached Alfredo's parents about the problem at school.

Problems at the exosystem, or third level of the bioecological model, included situations where the students were not directly involved or had very little knowledge. Raquel wished that her father would stop fishing. She knew very little about what his job entailed or the reasons why they never had much money. She only knew that her parents were not able to send her to school.

The macrosystem, or fourth and outermost layer of Bronfenbrenner's model, consists of all the larger cultural and societal issues affecting all of the youth in the region. The twelve youths in the study were negatively affected by the historical culture, educational policies, and the governmental economic policies that affect youth, in particular, and all of society in general. There is significant inequality of educational opportunity in Honduras, which, according to the PNUD (2012), contributes to the lower income among the poor population of the country, while

youth from wealthy families can attend the schools of their choice (Solis & Godoy, 2010). The students at the Vocational School were concerned about the lack of options for continuing their education in their home communities. Many of the rural communities where they live do not have high schools, so they encountered hardship when they faced the need to travel to another location for a high school education. The students noted that in addition to not having a sufficient distribution of local high schools, the schools that do exist in other communities do not offer sufficient coverage of career track options of study in which they are interested. The areas they are interested in are not available. Students said that in Choluteca they are limited to the formal education areas of Information Technology, Accounting and Finances, Business Administration, Health and Nutrition, Hotel and Tourism, as well as the Basic Science and Humanities track that is mostly a pre-university prep track. (none were aware of the new Nursing High School option available in Choluteca). Students reported attempting to enter one of the high school tracks even though it was not their area of interest, but combined with all the other difficulties, they were not able to continue. The students also complained that the market is saturated in areas of teaching that the schools offered. There are no jobs available even if a student becomes interested in an area offered and if they find a way to pay for continuing school.

Intersections of the Family of Capitals with the Findings

Flora, Flora, and Gasteye (2016) call for a balance of seven types of capital for the healthy development of any given community. The student participants in this study recognized the need for improvement in the region of several of the forms of capital for them to achieve an education that will help them reach their dreams. The priority need is to increase economic capital. They noted that education is a form of capital that depends on economic capital and vice versa. Just as Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1976, 2006) accounts for many ways

youth are impacted by their entire environment, the family of capitals is one way of understanding the impact that multiple forms of capital may have on the participants.

Lower levels of education, resulting in a reduction of the amount of human capital, impact the country's ability to develop other forms of capital. For Honduras and other LAC countries over the next twenty years, there is expected to be an increased proportion of the population reaching the working age. (Hoyos, Rogers, & Székely, 2016). There is considerable concern that the educational needs will be insufficient to provide the levels of human capital necessary to meet growth needs (Fonseca, 2017; Programa Estado de la Nación, 2016). The students were concerned that many of the programs being offered in the high schools did not meet the needs of the job market. Jobs are not available in those areas.

The most prominent social risk factors among the students included those associated with poor living conditions, and living in unstable family situations. The main reasons discussed by the Vocational School students for dropping out of school agreed with a survey of similar findings in 2017 (FEREMA). It was found that 42.2% of 18-24-year-old Honduran youth reported the main reason for them dropping out of school was because they lacked sufficient economic resources to continue. In the group and separately, the Vocational School students unanimously reported that the primary difficulty contributing to their dropout from school was due to economic difficulties. They did not have the material resources to stay in school or to continue to the next academic level in their school system.

According to Rumberger and Lim (2008), students often report the most recent incident as the reason for dropping out of school, and often do not recognize the underlying causes. Possibly, that is why they cited a lack of resources as the motivating factor for quitting school. Since poverty is a chronic situation for the students, being out of money was likely the most

recent experience they had faced before they dropped out of school. On a deeper level, there were reasons other than economic issues that may have contributed to the students dropping out of school. Poverty affects them in more ways than just not having bus money for transportation, lunch money, money for books, uniforms, and fees. The students were often not even able to explain why they could not go to school. The issues were complicated for 15-17-year-olds.

The students in the study listed a scarcity of several types of community capital resources that were lacking in their homes and in the community where they lived (Flora, Emery, Fey & Bregendahl, 2005; Flora, Flora, Gasteyer, 2016). Some of the students lived in homes where their families struggled with the economic means, or a sufficient amount of financial capital that was required to continue studying. All of the students stated that the primary reason for being out of school was due to economic difficulty. Raquel dropped out because she could not work and study at the same time. Luis liked to have money in his pocket but often went to school hungry. Jose stopped going to school because there was not a high school in his community and he did not have the money to travel to another community.

In the different discussion sessions, the students were asked in different ways to explain why they and other youth were not in school. In every case, the first reason given was that they dropped out of school due to "a lack of resources." It was never possible to adequately understand the full implications of what it meant to be lacking resources. For example, when repeatedly asked what it cost (financial capital) to attend a public high school, typically there was a long pause and a nervous laugh. When they finally responded, the answers were vague and unclear.

The students only knew they had been made aware that there was no longer enough money for them to continue their education. Since they had no school close by, they had costs of

travel. “It depends on what your needs are,” replied one of the girls. Many of the students came from families that did not have regular meals at home. Money was necessary for buying something to eat while at school. The students were unable to provide a sum of the costs. They possibly did not even know what each needed item costs for them to go to school. They did need pencils, a calculator, and notebooks that were required. Finally, a backpack was needed to carry everything. The combination of having economic problems as well as having problems at school was too large of a barrier to overcome. It is anticipated that the problem of having enough money for paying for education is a problem that is going to increase in Honduras as the number of students needing an education will increase over the next few years (Cunningham, 2008).

According to Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer (2016), built capital is an important asset in support of all other forms of capital. The students repeatedly brought up the lack of available resources in the form of parks and sports facilities, inadequate facilities in educational institutions, and problems with transportation and infrastructure. They noted the difference between the quality of the Vocational School shops and the shops they would work in part-time. The students who wanted to eventually have their shops and their business dream of having improved buildings and equipment with which to work.

Natural capital is considered by Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer (2016) to be the foundation of all other forms of capital. It may be readily transformed into financial capital through production. The conservation of natural capital was a topic of major concern for the students. Interestingly, even though the students only had between a sixth-grade education and a ninth-grade education, they were very concerned about the need to preserve the country’s natural capital. While the natural environment was not a topic they were instructed to emphasize in the photographs they took for the photovoice project, the theme of environmental issues came up as they discussed the

photos in group sessions. The students were concerned that there would be little natural capital left in a few years if the care of the existing natural resources is not promoted. They were cognizant that their generation needs to step forward and care for the environment.

Like other forms of capital, cultural capital may be converted into economic capital. The undervaluing of education may be considered a lack of cultural capital (Riele, 2006). There may be many reasons why students do not have an incentive to continue in school, but they are especially vulnerable to dropping out when their families do not recognize the importance of education (Ashida, 2015). Several of the students concluded that their parents did not see any advantage to them continuing their formal education. For the most part, their parents did not take a personal interest in encouraging them to stay in school. One of the students also commented that all he was interested in is getting a job and making money. They all were interested in obtaining the necessary job skills they needed for getting a good job.

Even though several of the students regretted not having the support of the teachers in school, the most difficult lived experience for them was not being able to find support outside the school. In Alfredo's situation, he was asked, "Why didn't you get help when you were accused of cheating?" He replied that he was too nervous about the situation to seek help from family. Not only did they feel a lack of support in the school, believing the school system had failed them, they often felt completely alone outside the school as well with no one to turn to when they were facing the decision whether to stay in school or to drop out. In other cases, the students experienced support from their teachers. Victoria shared many happy moments at school. Angela's teacher went out of her way to help her get to school.

There are few options for work for youth in Honduras, especially those who do not have an education. Opportunities are even more limited for those younger than 18 years old. All were

too young to hold full-time jobs. Some of the students had worked at odd jobs or part-time jobs. Some of the girls had done domestic work for other families. Some of the boys picked up hours in local mechanics and paint shops. Several of the young people talked about trying to go to school and work at the same time. As one of the students commented, people take low paying agricultural labor jobs in the fields in the hottest weather because they have no other options.

> It is because they lack resources, like money and work. They have not studied because the parents did not have money; they did not give their kids an education, so the young people have to work [like this]. They work so they can get out of the situation…There are few options…Because they come from different villages and many people need jobs.

The cycle continues. Just because Honduras youth have been out of school and out of work does not mean that they have lost the dream of being someone. They have not given up, even though the road has gotten rough for many of them. They want to break the cycle.

Conclusions and Implications: Returning to School via the Vocational School

Some of the reasons commonly given for young people in Honduras dropping out of school is from a lack of resources, they no longer care to study, there were health problems in their family, or there were no schools available (FEREMA, 2017). Vocational education is one option available to students who have dropped out of the formal education system. There has been a call for more vocational education centers to be established in order to help meet employment demands in Honduras (United Nations, 2010; Secretaría de Educación, 2017). Some of the youth who participated in the study considered studying under an apprenticeship, by learning from experience on the job. The only choice they knew was to take up a position with a master mason, someone who had the years of experience and a good reputation, from whom they could learn a trade. Those jobs involved long hours, hard work, and low pay. According the students, an assistant to a master mason makes the equivalent of approximately $8.30 per day. The students agreed that it was an insufficient wage rate to be able to support a family. Even if a

young person was interested in becoming a master mason's assistant, there are few openings for work.

Among the students, their future dreams differed radically from each other. The real reasons the students wanted to be at the Vocational School seemed to be divided into three general categories. Some students wanted to learn vocational education skills as a step that would take them back to formal education; others wanted to learn business to become entrepreneurs; and finally, others wanted to learn a trade to be able to get a better job.

Previous research has shown that former students at a vocational school in Honduras were interested in obtaining the highest academic level possible (Baughman, 2016). This study found that the six girls were interested in using the non-formal vocational education as a means of returning to a formal education system and pursuing professional careers that require a high school degree. They all dreamed of someday having careers in the medical field. They viewed an education at the Vocational School to be the step up or the pathway for them to attend high school. If they could get a vocational education degree, they could then work to support themselves while returning to high school.

Vocational education curriculum in the United States was originally designed to help graduates find better jobs (Moore, 2017). The six boys were divided in their deeper purpose for obtaining a vocational education degree, but they all were interested in using their newly learned skills to begin earning a better living after graduation immediately.

The boys were not interested, as the girls were, in vocational education to serve as a step up to return to pursue a formal education. Their focus was on studying to learn a trade so that they could eventually get jobs, and then make money to buy the things they wanted in life. One was so focused on getting a job that he told the others that once he got a job, he would never

have to continue studying. They viewed a vocational education in one of two ways: they were getting an education to either start a business, or to get a job working for someone else. Those who wanted to get a job immediately as soon as they learned a skill were averse to the uncertainty of starting their own business. They were interested in obtaining a steady job with benefits, and that paid well. They expect treatment with dignity in their work.

At times, it seemed difficult for some of the students to express themselves in the individual interview sessions or even in the focus group session. It may have been that they were hesitant to talk because that was a part of their personality, or they have been intimidated in some way by the process, or they may have had difficulty from a lack of educational experience. It was necessary to keep in mind, throughout the data collection, that some of the students are only 15-years-old and they had only gone through the sixth grade. Some of them had been out of school for several years. One of the concerns with focus group sessions (Krueger, 1988) is that participants will sometimes avoid participation. The focus group number of participants was on the high side of the acceptable range of members. A maximum number of between 10-12 members is recommended by Krueger (1988), and from 10-15 by Creswell (2013).

Recommendations for the Field of Education

Alternative means of financial support are needed for the students. The region of Choluteca, Honduras has a 53% poverty rate (Tot, 2015). The students participating in the study recognized that their home economic situation was the primary risk factor for dropping out of school. Due to economic needs in the home several of the students acknowledged that they had worked while attemption to go to school in a formal educational system. Also, the girls felt they could return to pursue a formal education degree by working part-time once they finished their vocational education courses. Working while attending school is likely to contribute to poor

academic achievement. According to Ecksteing and Wolpin (1999), students who had jobs while in school have lower academic performance.

Additional early childhood education in the form of pre-kinder and after-school mentoring programs is an option for establishing a stronger foundation in a child's life that will potentially carry through their entire academic life. Bronfenbrenner (1974) recommended educational intervention for children starting at the lowest ecological level, especially for children who are living in poverty. Kronick (2013) agrees with Bronfenbrenner that preschool intervention for children is a good preventative investment.

The need for career counseling is in line with Bronfenbrenner's call for early intervention (1974) . Many of the students were confused about the educational opportunities available to them. None of them were aware of the new high school nursing program that was recently approved by the government and is available in Choluteca.

Additional formal high school opportunities are needed throughout the country. There are only 35 professional technical high school career paths available in Honduras (G. Arita, personal communication, May 26, 2018), and only a few of those options are available in each region of the country. The youth in this study revealed that there are few educational options available, especially for those who come from low-income families, especially those who live outside the city. There need to be additional options for formal education for the youth of Honduras.

Additional vocational education opportunities are also needed. Some of the students in the study expressed a firm desire to pursue a practical non-formal education that would help them get good jobs. Some are no longer interested in taking the courses offered for formal high school education. Additionally, they are in a hurry to get jobs and earn a living to support their families.

There continues to be a challenge for vocational education to define itself in Honduras and to improve and become a viable option for more students. Partnerships with business and apprenticeships are needed. There needs to be a larger diversity of courses in the vocational school. Small business loans and teaching business skills need to be added to the vocational education. Job skills training and entrepreneurial skills should be offered in addition to the trade skills that are presently being taught.

Built capital improvements are needed to keep students occupied in their time away from school. It is recommended that non-governmental organizations work in conjunction with governmental agencies to close the gap on some of the built capital needs. Honduras is a country that thrives on soccer. Several students called for the government to add improvements to the soccer fields that exist. The students also brought up the possibility of adding facilities for other types of sports, such as basketball, and for rollerblading and bicycle ramps.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for further research are based on the findings of this study. This study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to understand better the lived experience of 12 students. These students were enrolled in the Vocational School, hoping to achieve an education that would help them achieve their life-long dreams. It would be of benefit to know how these twelve students respond to the opportunity that they have been given to return to the classroom.

Previous research has not addressed the impact that Honduras' non-formal vocational education has on the future of students who drop out of the formal school system. It would be beneficial to follow up on these twelve students, to understand better how a non-formal vocational education helps them reach their dreams. It is not known if they will finish their non-

formal education or if it will help them reach their stated dreams. Does the non-formal education help them accomplish their dreams?

This research was not generalizable. It was limited to 12 students in one school. The study reached a data saturation point with the study participants. However, additional data may be obtained by replicating the study with a different group of students in the same school or with a group of students in another similar school. The same research question may be applied to students at other non-formal education centers. Why are youth in Choluteca, Honduras not in school and not working and then decide to re-enter school at other non-formal education centers?

The perspective of this study was from the lived experience of 15-17-year-old youth who were out of school and out of work and were entering the Vocational School. Students in this study discussed the situation of friends who are not in school. Studies with youth who continue to be out of work and out of school would add rich data and a better understanding of the nini situation in Honduras and would provide insight to the understanding of how their lived experience is different from those who participated in this study.

The nini's dreams produce hope for a better future. The struggles, challenges, and difficulties of these youth did not end when the last minute of audio was recorded. Raquel dropped out again. Students continue to struggle to have bus fare to make it to class. Teachers still deal with discipline issues and continually look for better teaching methods that will hold the interest of the students and encourage them to learn. The director of the Vocational School continues to look for ways to keep the school operational. Funds are still scarce, and the demands are still high to find a viable educational solution for a few of the nearly 70% of Honduras 15-17-year-old youth who are not in school.

All the students captured my heart, but most importantly they helped me better understand the phenomenon of the ninis, young people who want another shot at an education. Only with education will they be able to fulfill their dreams. Armando summed up the situation of the ninis by writing on his photovoice project, “But what I want you to understand is that if you fall in one thing that you try, you do not have to stay lying down. You have to keep moving ahead one way or another. That is why it motivates me to move forward.”

Appendix A: Initial Interview Protocol

Personal Individual Interview Questions

(Each initial interview included Nine main questions plus follow-up questions as needed.)

Questions about the youth's background

Q1-Tell me about your background and home life.

- Tell me about your family.
- Talk to me about your friends. What role do they play in your life?
- Who are your biggest influencers in your life right now?

Questions related to the experience of dropping out of school

Q2-Tell me about your school experience beginning with your first memories of school and continue up until the present.

- Tell me more about your last year in school.
- What were the circumstance that led you to stop attending school?

Q3-How did you feel about school?

- What were your most difficult subjects?
- What were your teachers like?
- What was a day at school like for you?
- What was your favorite experience at school?
- Tell me about a situation that you disliked about school.

Q4-Describe what it was like to stop going to school.

- How did you feel when you made the decision?
- What were your thoughts about quitting school?
- How did your parents feel about your decision to stop going to school?
- Describe what your day is like when you are not in school and not working at a job.

Q5-What would you study if you had a choice?

- What would you do differently if you could start over in school?
- What type of learning format do you like best?
- What could have been done in order for you to have made the decision to stay in school instead of dropping out?

Questions related to Job Experience

Q6-What job experiences have you had?

Q7-Describe your most recent job experience like you are watching it on television.

Q8-Why did you stop working?

- What were the influences that caused you to stop working?

Q9-What job would you like to do?

- What are important experiences that you would like to have in a job?
- What could have been done in order for you to have made the decision to stay in school instead of dropping out?
- What would it take for you to get a job that you could stay at?
- What job do you envision doing?

Appendix B: Photovoice Guidelines for Participant Photographers-English

Introduction:

Name-
Something about yourself-
Ice breaker: What is most important in your life?
I am content with (complete the phrase) …

5 minutes	3 minutes	2 minutes
what I have accomplished.	**this in my family/home.**	**these characteristics in my community.**
1.		
2.		
3.		

I think I should change these things (complete the phrase) …

2 minutes	2 minutes	2 minutes
… personally.	**…in my family/home.**	**… in my community.**
1.		
2.		
3.		

What comes to mind when you think about these topics? What photo would you take to describe them? **What is photovoice?**

SHOWeD- What do you SEE in the photo images?
H What is HAPPENING in the scene where the photograph was taken?
O How does this image relate to OUR lives?
W WHY does this asset or problem exist in our community?
e

D What can we DO about the situation?

Our Goals:

- To help us reflection on the development potential in our community,
- To identify important issues through personal interviews and group discussion about the photos that you take, and
- To call attention to community leaders surrounding issues concerning work and education for youth.

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from a no work and no school attitude and why they decided to return to school at the Vocational School.

Ethics- Instructions for participants on the ethics of taking photographs for the photovoice study- There are a few general ethical concerns related to the Photovoice methodology. Photovoice:

1. Take photos that are a representative reflection of the community.
2. Do not invade the private space of others in the community.
3. Take care to not reveal embarrassing personal issues, especially if it is not of public concern.
4. Maintain confidentiality (especially within the group discussions).
5. Avoid dangerous situations. Photo participants should think critically in all situations that might be damaging and consider the consequences prior to taking photos.
6. Take photos only in public areas.

Learning to use the camera

Photo themes: Take photos for two weeks (04/12/2018-04/30/2018)

- What motivates you to study?
- What are your favorite subjects to study?
- What is your typical day like?
- What are some of the obstacles to you accomplishing your desire to study?
- What are some of your obstacles to finding work?
- What is your vision for your life?

Appendix C: Photovoice Guidelines for Participant Photographers-Spanish

Introducción:

Nombre-
Algo de su historia-
Arrancador: ¿Qué me importa más en la vida?
Nombre:
Estoy contento de (cumplir esta frase) …

5 minutos	3 minutos	2 minutos
…lo que he alcanzado	**…lo de mi familia/hogar.**	**…estas características de mi**
1.		
2.		
3.		

Pienso que debo cambiar algunas cosas (cumplir esta frase) …

2 minutos	2 minutos	2 minutos
… personalmente.	**…lo de mi familia/hogar.**	**… de me comunidad.**
1.		
2.		
3.		

¿Qué imagen viene a su mente? ¿Qué foto tomaría? **¿Qué es foto voz?**

O-P-A-P-A

O-¿Que **Observa?**
P- ¿Qué problema está **Pasando?**
A-¿Sucede esto **Agui?**
P-¿Porque sucede?
A-¿Qué **Acción** podemos tomar?

Nuestras metas:

- Ayudarnos a reflexionar sobre el desarrollo de la comunidad
- Identificar asuntos importantes a través de entrevistas personales y grupos de discusión sobre las fotos.
- Llamar atención a los líderes de la comunidad sobre asuntos de trabajo y educación para los jóvenes.

Propósito: El propósito de este estudio es comprender por qué los jóvenes de Choluteca, Honduras, decidieron alejarse de una actitud de no trabajo y no de escuela.

Ética- Instrucciones a los participantes sobre la ética de la toma de fotografías para fotovoz

Hay algunas pautas éticas generales asociadas con la metodología Photovoice:

1. Tome fotos que sean representativas y que reflejen a la comunidad.
2. No haga invasiones de privacidad.
3. Tenga cuidado de no revelar eventos embarazosos en la vida personal de las personas, especialmente si no es de interés público.
4. Guarda Confidencialidad (especialmente en las discusiones del grupo).
5. Evita situaciones peligrosas. Los participantes deben pensar críticamente sobre cualquier situación potencialmente dañina y considerar las consecuencias imprevistas de tomar fotos.
6. Las fotos se tomarán solo en lugares de acceso público.

Aprendiendo a usar la camera

Temas para fotos: Tomaran fotos por dos semanas (12/04/2018-30/04/2018)

- ¿Qué te motiva a querer estudiar?
- ¿Cuáles son tus temas favoritos para estudiar?
- Mi día típico incluye estas actividades.
- ¿Cuáles son algunos obstáculos que encuentras en tu deseo de estudiar?
- ¿Cuáles son algunos obstáculos que encuentras al buscar trabajo?
- ¿Cuál es tu visión para tu vida?

Appendix D Focus Group Protocol-English

Focus Grups April 11, 2018

What data do we hope to gather?- to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to change their situation of not working and not going to school to enter the Vocational Center this year.

A. Morning sessions (photo voice) using the participatory learning methodology (SHOWeD):

Session with the 6 males of the study (three photos each)

What do you see in the photo?
What's going on?
Does that happen here instead?
Why?
What action can we take to improve the situation?

Session with the 6 females of the study (three photos each)

What do you see in the photo?
What's going on?
Does that happen here instead?
Why it happens?
What action can we take to improve the situation?

B. Focus group with all 12 students

1. Education related issues (with examples if possible)
    a. What caused you to make the decision to drop out of school?
    b. When he decided not to continue studying, who could have helped you to continue in classes?
    c. What would you have needed to continue in your studies?
        i. What kind of support and what amount?
        ii. Was there someone who motivated him to continue studying?
        iii. What careers are important to study?
    d. How do you been affected by not studying? (What did you lose as a result of not studying?)
    e.How can education be improved?
2. Work related issues
    a. What kind of work exists in Choluteca for young people aged 15-17 who have not studied?
    b. What are the requirements to get a decent job in Choluteca?
    c. What motivates you to study?

Appendix E: Focus Group Protocol-Spanish

Grupos Focales 11 de abril, 2018

¿Que data esperamos conseguir?: determinar por qué la juventud de Choluteca, Honduras decidió cambiar su situación de no trabajar y de no ir a la escuela para entrar en el Centro Vocacional este año.

A. Sesiones de la mañana (foto voz) usando la metodología de aprendizaje participativa (OPAPA):

Sesión con los 6 varones del estudio
- ¿Que Observa en la foto?
- ¿Qué está pasando?
- ¿Sucede eso Aquí en su lugar?
- ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué Acción podemos tomar para mejor la situación?

Sesión con las 6 hembras del estudio
- ¿Que Observa en la foto?
- ¿Qué está pasando?
- ¿Sucede eso Aquí en su lugar?
- ¿Por qué sucede?
- ¿Qué Acción podemos tomar para mejor la situación?

B. Grupo focal con los 12
   1. Asunto de Educación (con ejemplos si es posible)
      a. ¿Qué le ocasiono tomar la decisión para abandonar el estudio?
      b. Cuando decidió no seguir estudiando, ¿quién le hubiese ayudado para seguir en clases?
      c. ¿Qué hubiese necesitado para darle seguimiento en sus estudios?
         i. ¿Qué tipo de apoyo y que cantidad?
         ii. ¿Hubo alguien que le motivo a seguir estudiando?
         iii. ¿Qué carreras son importante para estudiar?
      d. ¿Como le afecto no seguir estudiando? (¿Que perdió en el tiempo que no estudio?)
      e. ¿De qué forma puede mejorar la educación?
   2. Asunto de Trabajo
      a. Qué tipo de trabajo existe en Choluteca para los/las jóvenes de 15-17 años que no han estudiado?
      b. ¿Cuáles son los requisitos para conseguir un trabajo digno en Choluteca?
      c. ¿Qué le motiva para estudiar?

Appendix F: Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research-English

The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title:
Out of school and out of work in Choluteca, Honduras: A phenomenological study

Researcher: Larry Overholt

We are asking you to participate in a research study. Studies are conducted to find better ways to treat people or understand things better.
• This form will inform you about the study to help you decide if you want to participate or not.
• You should ask all the questions you have before deciding. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before deciding.
• It is okay to say "No" if you do not want to participate in the study. If you say "Yes", you can change your mind and stop participating in the study at any time without having problems.
• If you decide you want to participate in the study, an adult (usually a parent) must also authorize you to participate in the study.

1. What is this study about? I am conducting research to understand why did the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decide to shift away from a no work and a no school attitude.

2. What will I need to do if I am in this study? You are being asked to participate by contributing your thoughts on reasons why the youth would return to work and school. The information you will share will be of great value in this research project that will enhance our understanding. This research will occur through oral personal interviews and the opportunity to share pictures that you take to express your responses about the reasons mentioned above.

3. How long will I be in the study? The research will be done over a one-month period. It will include an interview of a maximum 2 hours, training sessions of two days (4 hours each day), a reflection session/focus group of 2 hours and a final presentation of 2 hours for a total session time of approximately 12 hours. In addition, the youth will spend a week taking photos during the normal course of their daily activities.

4. Can I stop being in the study?

You may stop being in the study at any time.

5. What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study? This research will involve youth as participant researchers. They will likely be rethinking their past which may bring up emotions that they have had difficulty expressing.

6. What good things might happen to me if I am in the study? Any discomforts from participating in the study will be offset by developing an attitude of hope for the future through non-formal education geared towards your interests. The research will coincide with an attempt for you to enter into a new area of education in preparation to eventually be prepared to enter the workforce as skilled workers. The research will be done in a positive manner that will encourage and develop vision for the youth and the community.

7. Will I be given anything for being in this study? There are no direct benefits to being in the study. Each participant will be given $50 to help cover travel costs.

8. Who can I talk to about the study?

For questions about the study you may contact may contact Larry Overholt (504-9942-2267) or Dr. Kitchel (614-292-6909).

To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251 or 1-614-688-4792.

Signing the assent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

	AM/PM
Signature or printed name of subject	**Date and time**

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining assent	**Signature of person obtaining assent**
	AM/PM
	Date and time

Appendix G: Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research-Spanish

The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title:

Fuera de la escuela y sin trabajo en Choluteca, Honduras: Un estudio fenomenológico

Investigador: Larry Overholt

Le piden que participe en un estudio de investigación. Se realizan estudios para encontrar mejores formas de tratar a las personas o comprender mejor las cosas.
• Este formulario le informará sobre el estudio para ayudarlo a decidir si desea participar o no.
• Debe hacer todas las preguntas que tenga antes de decidirse. Puede pensarlo y discutirlo con su familia o amigos antes de decidir.
• Está bien decir "No" si no desea participar en el estudio. Si dices "Sí", puedes cambiar de opinión y dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento sin tener problemas.
• Si decide que quiere participar en el estudio, un adulto (por lo general, un padre) también deberá autorizarlo para que participe en el estudio.

1. ¿De qué trata el estudio? Estoy llevando a cabo una investigación para determinar por qué la juventud de Choluteca, Honduras, decidió alejarse de una actitud de no trabajo y no escolar.

2. ¿Que necesito hacer si decido participar en este estudio? Se le pide que participe aportando sus ideas sobre las razones por las cuales los jóvenes regresarían al trabajo y a la escuela. La información que compartirá será de gran valor en este proyecto de investigación que mejorará nuestra comprensión. Esta investigación se realizará mediante entrevistas orales personales y la oportunidad de compartir las imágenes que toma para expresar sus respuestas sobre los motivos mencionados anteriormente

3. ¿Cuánto tiempo estaré en el estudio? La investigación se realizará durante un período de un mes. Incluirá una entrevista de un máximo de 2 horas, sesiones de capacitación de dos días (4 horas cada día), una sesión de reflexión / grupo de enfoque de 2 horas y una presentación final de 2 horas para un tiempo de sesión total de aproximadamente 12 horas. Además, los jóvenes pasarán una semana tomando fotos durante el curso normal de sus actividades diarias.

4. ¿Puedo dejar de participar en el estudio?
Puede dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento.

5. ¿Qué cosas malas me pueden pasar si estoy en el estudio?

Esta investigación involucrará a los jóvenes como investigadores participantes. Es probable que reconsideren su pasado, lo que puede provocar emociones que han tenido dificultades para expresar.

6. ¿Qué cosas buenas me pueden pasar si estoy en el estudio?

Las incomodidades de participar en el estudio se compensarán desarrollando una actitud de esperanza para el futuro a través de la educación no formal orientada a sus intereses. La investigación coincidirá con un intento para que entren en una nueva área de educación en preparación para eventualmente estar preparado para ingresar al campo de trabajo como trabajador calificado. La investigación se realizará de una manera positiva que fomentará y desarrollará una visión para los jóvenes y la comunidad.

7. ¿Me darán algo por estar en este estudio?

No hay beneficios directos de estar en el estudio. Cada participante recibirá $ 50 para ayudar a cubrir los costos de viaje.

8. **¿Con quién puedo hablar sobre el estudio?**

Si tiene preguntas sobre el estudio que puede contactar, puede contactar a Larry Overholt (504-9942-2267) o al Dr. Kitchel (614-292-6909). Para discutir otras preguntas relacionadas con el estudio con alguien que no sea parte del equipo de investigación, puede comunicarse con la Sra. Sandra Meadows en la Oficina de Prácticas de Investigación Responsables al 1-800-678-6251 o 1-614-688-4792.

Firmando el formulario de consentimiento

He leído (o alguien me ha leído) este formulario. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas antes de tomar una decisión. Quiero participar en este estudio de investigación.

Firma o nombre impreso de la asignatura	**Fecha y hora**	**AM/PM**

Investigador/Personal

Le expliqué la investigación al participante antes de solicitar la firma anterior. No hay espacios en blanco en este documento. Se ha entregado una copia de este formulario al participante o a su representante.

Nombre de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento	Firma de la persona que obtiene el asentimiento	
	Fecha y hora	**AM/PM**

This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian.

Appendix H: Letter of Institutional Support

Letter of Support
Vocational School

In signing this document, I grant permission for the data collection at the Vocational School for The Ohio State University research study, Out of School and Out of Work in Choluteca, Honduras: A Phenomenological Study. I understand that Larry Overholt will be interviewing volunteer students from our Vocational School. He will be giving training sessions for using photovoice methodology with the participating youth, and at the end of the study, there will be an exposition where the youth will participate in a poster presentation to stakeholders from the community.

By signing below, I understand that the purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand why the youth of Choluteca, Honduras decided to shift away from a no work and no school attitude.

_____ _____

Printed Name Director/ Vocational School

_____

Date

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