Cristina related these issues to her desilusion – the breaking of her dreams about the United States, the humiliations she faced and that others have continued to face due to their legal status, and the racialized conflagrations of immigrants with Latinos in current political debates.

(Coll, 2010, p. 58)

She gave voice to the sentiments of many women about what it feels like to be ‘under attack’ as immigrants, wives, mothers, responding to the daily polemical assaults of the media and the state. Her testimonio wove politics, emotion, state discipline of immigrant families through immigration laws, and analysis of anti-female and anti-immigrant discourse (italics added).

(Coll, 2010, p. 59)

Introduction

The experiences and transformative nature of transmigration on individuals involved in the process are often ignored in analyses of citizenship rights and human rights of individuals. Coll (2010, p. 96) notes that:

Much of the contemporary academic literature on citizenship focuses on macro processes of legal and state-generated definitions.
of who is a citizen and what the legal entitlements and social obligations of citizenship should be (Barbalet, 1988; ...Turner, 1993).

This chapter focuses on the experiences and lives of those who migrate, the violence many have experienced before and during the process of migration, or even after, and the range of emotions they experience and the transformation of identity that occurs after migration. The focus of the chapter is on asylum seekers and refugees who are fleeing situations of abuse, violence and extreme persecution. The literature on the field of refugee and asylum seekers is limited compared to the literature on economic migrants. This chapter provides original research on Hispanic transmigrants who migrate from Mexico and Central America to the United States. It is a controversial area in the United States in 2011 with opinion divided as to how to resolve issues of illegal and undocumented migrants. In a country of migrants many of who have themselves come to the United States to flee persecution, the commentary is frequently lacking in understanding of the individuals who arrive into the United States. They are frequently fleeing violence, despair and constant threat to their own and their children’s lives as they seek a better life. This chapter details their feelings of ‘fear’, ‘belonging’, ‘isolation’, ‘despair’, ‘attachment’ and ‘estrangement’. It reflects their experiences of hope and despair and shows how the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and those who commit themselves to supporting migrants provide alternative agendas to those of governmental organizations and legislative structures. Thus understanding emotions in this context is about a different conception of ‘home’, ‘belonging’ and memory. The brutality of the lives of many of these asylum seekers finding a new home, a new sense of belonging and often erasing memories too painful to remember. It is also about transforming identity and defining themselves and their lives as being somebody rather than nobody.

The chapter presents a case study, providing original research undertaken in California, specifically the San Francisco Bay Area, which investigates the relationship between migration narratives, emotion and identity. The project considers the intersection of emotions and transmigration, specifically the transformation of