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Cruzando para el Otro Lado: Motivation, Communication, and the Migrant Experience

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CRUZANDO PARA EL OTRO LADO:
MOTIVATION, COMMUNICATION, AND THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The Department of Sociology

by
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ABSTRACT

Latino/a migration scholarship has largely focused on the motivations to migrate and the assimilation of men migrants. When gender is considered in migration research, it is often treated as a demographic characteristic used to track differences in trends between men and women migrants rather than as a structuring entity informing the migration experience. Recent feminist scholars have shifted focus, employing gender as a theoretical tool to understand how gender shapes the migrant experience before, during and after migration. My research draws upon this theoretical approach and uses data collected via in-depth interviews in an attempt to understand how gender shapes an individual's opportunities and motivations to migrate, the pre-migration communication they receive about crossing the Mexico-US border, and how crossing experiences are communicated post-migration. Findings indicate that both motivations to migrate and communication about crossing experiences are tied to gendered familial roles.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

An ever-growing field of inquiry, the migration of persons to the United States finds its modern American origin in the social scientific research movements of the Chicago School of the 1920s and remains a topic of great interest to sociologists and anthropologists alike (Fitzgerald 2006). Concurrent with their focus on the demographics of people's movement across politically defined borders are social scientists' interest(s) in the integration and assimilation of those migrants into US society (Park 1928). By 2011, the US foreign-born population had reached an estimated 40 million individuals with approximately 11.7 million migrants hailing from Mexico and another 3 million from Central America (Motel and Patten 2013). As immigration has ebbed and flowed in response to a variety of factors including governmental policy and economic demand, the interest and importance of research on migrant activities and communities has only increased.

During the first half of the 20th century, due in part to the large majority of Latino/a migrants being men, women's migration remained greatly ignored. However, during the late 1960s, the migration of women increased markedly (Donato 1993). Scholars predominantly cite the rise in women's migration during this period as a consequence of changing US immigration policy. With the waning of legal temporary work programs such as the Braceros Program (1942 – 1964), the passing of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act which criminalized the hiring of undocumented migrant workers, and increased border militarization throughout the 1990s and post-9/11, border transparency hardened and movement between the United States and Mexico became heavily restricted causing men migrant workers to stay longer and send for their wives/families to settle in the US (Cornelius 2001; Durand and Massey 2004). The influx of women migrants coupled with a shift in critical, post-modern, and feminist theory has caused

social scientists to reconsider women in the migration process and address the gender gap in migration research.

Recent research on clandestine Latino/a Mexico-US border crossing has included factors such as differences in the allure of migration for men and women (Cerrutti and Massey 2001), how migration modes differ between men and women (Donato, Wagner, and Patterson 2008), labor activity of “wives left behind” in Mexican migrant communities (Aysa and Massey 2004), recent shifts in the education and skill level of new migrants (Lozano and Lopez 2013), measuring women’s labor force participation on either side of the Mexico-US border (King 2011), and migrant mental health (Vega et al. 1986). These studies use gender as one of many demographic characteristics—similar to age, education, or family size—to help researchers identify trends in migration patterns. However, these studies do not adequately recognize the role gender plays in producing such trends. Feminist scholars have therefore called for a shift in the lens used to study migration to one that considers gender as a theoretical component of the inquiry (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Kanajaupuni 2000; Pessar and Mathler 2003). Adopting this lens allows investigators to understand how the social construction of gender facilitates and/or shapes migration opportunities and experiences. For example, researchers have begun to explore the independent social conditions shaping women’s decisions to migrate rather than continuing to view women migrants as associate to men migrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999). Other scholars have asserted that conventional explanations of men’s migration fall short when looking at women’s experiences because migration decisions are guided by socially constructed gender norms and expectations (Kanajaupuni 2000).

My research builds upon this scholarship by considering how gender and gender norms influence migratory experiences. Gender and gender norms impact opportunities and decisions to

migrate, the act of clandestine border crossing, and how migrants communicate with kin about their border crossing experiences. My work considers these processes and uses a feminist theoretical approach to better understand the role gender roles/norms play in them. I rely on feminist theory to illustrate how social structures inform the opportunities one has to participate in migration and shape what that participation looks like. I consider how the gendered social order, both in country of origin and settlement, affects an individual's opportunities and choices to migrate. Gendered familial roles and a gendered division of labor, for example, lead to various opportunities to migrate: a woman has constraints placed upon her, such as childcare, maintaining her virtue, and obeying men authority figures, that men do not and these constraints shape her opportunities and choices to migrate. I seek, therefore, to contribute to and expand the literature on immigration by reconsidering the initial motives of migration. In doing so, I decidedly shift the focus from purely economic motivation to consider the influence of gender in encouraging or limiting opportunities to migrate. To do this, I consider the border crossing experiences of migrants via their personal accounts and how they are passed through migrant networks.

In Chapter 2, I begin with a brief review of the literature on Latino/a migration, discuss the theories of migration, and identify some of the gender disparities in the migration literature. In Chapter 3, I outline my grounded theory methodological/theoretical framework as well as my data collection and analysis techniques. In Chapter 4, I identify the motivating factors participants reported for their migration and illustrate how these factors fall along a gender divide that reinforces traditional gendered familial roles. In Chapter 5, I describe how men and women participants experienced pre-migration communications regarding border crossing in very different ways and the impact this (lack of) information had on the participant's migrant

experience. In Chapter 6, I highlight how participants described sharing border crossing stories post-migration and how the re-telling of border crossing stories are in some ways similar and in some ways varied for men and women participants. In the conclusion, I outline how these findings are tied to gender/familial norms emphasizing the impact that motherhood and the investment in emotional labor that motherhood brings has on women participants' choice to migrate and their approach to communications regarding their migration experience.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Migration Research and Gender

Early migration scholars hailing from the Chicago School sought to understand general trends in human movement and resettlement across borders, intended to distinguish the most advantageous conditions for migrant assimilation into US culture and society, and attempted to identify what was assumed to be a universal migratory experience (Kivisto 1990). These scholars largely ignored the migrant's country of origin or ethnic heritage as contributing factors shaping the migrant's experience, asserting that all migrants will have similar experiences because they are outsiders settling into the same (US) environment (Kivisto 1990). Moreover, despite early findings that women and men both participate in international migration¹ at similar rates (Ravenstien 1885), social scientists have traditionally oriented their research on the migratory patterns and experiences of men; it was not until the 1980s that women's participation in migration became a topic of research (Pessar and Mahlet 2003).

Recent scholars have identified four potential explanations for this methodological choice: (1) the dominant gender order at the turn of the 20th century was such that centering the experiences of men was considered "natural"; (2) gender biases were perpetuated by the lack of women researchers—women were not available/qualified to collect/analyze data that would emphasize the woman's perspective therefore it remained invisible; (3) studying women's migration patterns was not considered necessary because it was assumed that women migrants were following men's patterns; (4) migratory research was highly linked to labor research and women's work was not identified as public or productive labor in the way that men's labor was,

¹ Ravenstien (1885) was referring to international trends not specifically Latino/a trends. Latino/a migration trends are difficult to track at this time in the United States as state and country borders were shifting as a result of political and military actions. As mentioned in the introduction, work visa implementation and other political actions shaped Latino/a migration during the 20th and 21st centuries in ways that were not previously in effect.

therefore women's work was ignored (Lutz 2010: 1648-9). Additionally, feminist scholars will argue that gender differences were not entertained in much of social science research throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries because the concept of gender as a mechanism/precipitator for differential experiences and inequality was not widely accepted.

Conventional Theories of Migration

Conventional theories of international migration have reflected the immigration patterns and experiences of men and have undertheorized women's participation in migration processes (Kanajaupni 2000). There are five main theoretical trends in the immigration literature, all of which are based upon the economic interests of men migrants: the neoclassical model, the new economics model, segmented labor market, world systems/globalization theory, and social/human capital theory. The neoclassical model and the new economics model are rational choice based/cost-benefit analysis theoretical models. The neoclassical model claims migration occurs in accordance with labor/wage supply and demand. Countries where labor is scarce and wages are high will draw migrant workers from countries where labor is abundant and wages are low. The neoclassical model assumes individual decision makers and/or earners are both aware of their productivity potential and skill set and capable of making an informed decision to migrate in order to be more economically solvent.

Similar to the neoclassical model, the new economics model of international migration recognizes the importance of labor supply/wage earning potential in the migration decision-making process. However, it differs in several key ways. First, it identifies the family unit, not the individual, as the decision-making entity. The new economics model states that families will choose to send migrant workers internationally in order to diversify their income, especially in locales where borrowing money is difficult (Massey, Arango, and Hugo et al. 1993). It is not just

the overall accumulation of capital that is important to families, but the fiscal security that is achieved when a family has diverse sources of income. The new economics model says families recognize the risk of international migration but, just as in the neoclassical model, they participate in a rational choice-based cost-benefit analysis and then decide what is best for the family overall (Massey 1999).

Segmented labor market theory claims that international migration is the result of pull factors drawing migrants from their countries of origin in order to benefit from their cheap labor. Pull factors include: structural inflation, social constraints on motivation, duality of labor and capital. Structural inflation means that wages are not only reflective of labor supply and demand but that wages also carry with them some sort of social status: as pay increases, it is assumed that prestige will also increase (Massey 1999). Therefore, employers are not free to alter wages without repercussions in the market. Segmented labor market theory claims social constraints on motivation benefit immigrant workers because individuals do not only work for economic gain but also to receive a benefit in social status. First generation migrants tend to find value in their social status in their home country (and sending wages home earns them prestige) so they are willing to take bottom rung jobs that are low paying and provide no status benefits (Massey 2002). The duality of the labor market identifies that there is a capital-intensive primary labor sector, where laborers are highly skilled, well paid, and work is more secure, and a labor-intensive secondary labor sector, where laborers are low skilled, wages are low, and work is unstable (Massey 1999). Immigrant labor is scarce in the capital-intensive primary sector because they generally require special training or education that often requires time to build. Few first-generation immigrants advance into this sector. The majority of immigrant labor is located

in the secondary sector because migrant workers are willing to take low wage, low skilled, insecure jobs (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Global systems theory is a theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) who surveyed global historical, political, social, and economic trends and ranked countries based upon their economic profitability. Those countries that are wealthier, and correspondingly more dependent upon monopolistic capitalism, are called core countries and those that are poorer and maintain a freer market type economy are labeled peripheral; the countries located between the two extremes are called semi-peripheral (Wallerstien 2004). Global systems theory therefore asserts that international migration is due to the expansion of capitalistic global markets from core countries into semi-peripheral and peripheral countries (Wallerstien 2004). This theory further credits employers and entrepreneurs for physically recruiting low-wage workers (along with material resources, land, and other tangible assets) from peripheral countries encouraging them to seek employment in the core country (Wallerstein 2004). As migrant workers move into core countries for employment, they begin to adopt cultural aspects of the core country, which is in some way translated to their families in the countries of origin. This cultural adaptation along with experiences of individuals from core countries bringing modern conveniences and core culture with them when they recruit creates economic dependence and a cultural tie between the core and peripheral countries, thus encouraging immigration overall (Wallerstein 2004).

Human and social capital theories identify the characteristics of individual migrants as well as their social networks as determinants for migration. In terms of human capital, scholars look at an individual's characteristics such as work and educational history, personal financial resources, and previous border crossing experiences to determine likelihood of migration and potential for a successful crossing (Singer and Massey 1998; Kanaiaupuni 2000). Scholars

identify human capital as an important component to migration because individuals who do not have some amount of financial resources, for example, will not be able to sustain the financial risk of crossing and settlement. Social capital scholars claim that individuals migrate based upon actual or potential resources afforded to them as a result of developed social networks—presumably networks that involve current or former migrants (Massey 2002). Drawing upon one's social capital is beneficial to (especially new) migrants because it reduces the cost of migration in the form of initial startup costs like finding shelter and employment (Massey 2002).

Women's migration is largely situated within these core theoretical frameworks—all of which were established by observing and studying men's migration patterns. For example, research has found that women will migrate in response to the outreach of the capitalistic economy seeking woman oriented low-wage domestic labor; this corroborates theoretical reasons for migration as asserted by world systems theory (Parrenas 2001). Other studies have revealed that women will sometimes migrate to find temporary employment opportunities to supplement family income before her first child is born; this suggests support for neoclassical and new economic theories of immigration (Massey, Arango, and Hugo 1993; Massey 1999; Massey 2002). However, scholars have revealed that the most common reason for the migration of women is family reunification (Portes 2006). Yet despite the findings that there is a unique cause for migration only found among women migrants, it has been relegated to a secondary status, as an associate response to the migration of men: family reunification is considered a secondary response to the primarily economically motivated theories of (men) migrants as outlined by immigration scholars (Parrenas 2001). Understanding women's migration patterns in this way marginalizes the motivations and opportunities of women migrants by framing the opportunities and experiences of woman migrants within the context of men-oriented theories. This minimizes

the importance of the role that women have in the migration process because when women migrate for family reunification purposes, they are ensuring the survival of the family (Parrenas 2001).

Bringing Gender In

Studies of Women's Reasons for Migration and Assimilation Processes

Without wholly rejecting the economic components to migration theory, recent feminist migration scholars have advocated for an approach that uses gender as theory working in concert with other structural impetuses that factor into one's decisions to migrate. This is the theoretical framework that I utilize, placing gender as a central theoretical factor. Identifying gender as a structuring factor, scholars can better understand how and why migration happens as well as how assimilation and settlement are also shaped by gender. The categorization of gender roles as they manifest in families and pertain to a patriarchal family structure, is driven by literature in the field. Recognizing the variance in cultural history and family structure of the (majority) Latino/a participants in this study, my analysis depends upon how scholars in the field present Latino/a migrant family structures and traditional gender roles as well as how participants chronicle their family lives, relationships, and responsibilities. In this way, I attempt to capture some of the nuance of Latino/a family structure not otherwise identified by a Eurocentric assessment of the family (Mirande 1997; Hidalgo 1998).

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), in her work, *Gendered Transitions*, breaks from the traditional approach to migration studies and instead assesses Mexican women's migration to the United States by outlining how gender organizes migration. She identifies that women's migration, similar to men's migration, can be largely shaped by labor supply and demand. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) identifies periods in US economic history where the market soliciting

woman-oriented labor, for jobs like child care, domestic labor and some factory work, expanded as labor markets in Mexico were limited for women seeking employment, causing work-oriented women to migrate to the US. Moving away from analyzing individual workers' motivations for migration, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) then considers family migration. She recognizes the strictly patriarchal formation of Mexican families and says that because Mexican social networks are characterized by male-domination, what she calls family stage migration is promoted. Due to the ability of men in such a patriarchal culture to act freely, he may act/move independently, he is responsible for the family's finances, and because the work that is available to migrant workers is generally accessible to men, preliminary migration of men is often a viable option for the family (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Women who follow their husbands usually have to cross with children making the border crossing experience difficult, but generally benefit from having an established location to arrive to and an established social network developed by their husbands in addition to their husbands' cultural orientation to their new community (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). While border crossing is often considered a rite of passage for men who can cross often without any familial resistance, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that the only time single women did not encounter patriarchal opposition to her decision to migrate was when familial ties were already weak the family experienced heightened economic hardship.

Moreover, considering the patriarchal construction of Western culture and the gendered nature of work, Durand (2004:113) asserts that, "migrant decision making is constrained by patriarchal norms and gender-linked power differences." Therefore, feminist scholars claim that it is problematic to frame women's and men's migration trends in similar ways and advocate for a re-contextualization and new theoretical approach of migration to understand how gender shapes the opportunities and experiences of migration. In one study of Mexican origin

immigrants, for example, Kanaiaupuni (2000), illustrated how a combination of social norms, institutionalized economic/labor market structures, and US immigration policies shape power dynamics between men and women and lead to varying opportunities for migration based upon gender. Social norms relegate women to domestic roles emphasizing child, family, and household care while men are expected to support the family financially outside of the home. Kanaiaupuni (2000) identifies how one's gender predetermines one's accepted role in society and how that role shapes opportunities for migration. For example, women who have small children in the home are less likely to migrate than other women; however, men in similar circumstances are more likely than other married men to migrate (Kanaiaupuni 2000). This is because women are expected to remain in the home and care for the house and children while men are expected to seek out economic gain (Kanaiaupuni 2000). Social norms extend beyond domestic duties as well. Using education as a factor to gauge likelihood of migration, Kanaiaupuni (2000) finds that men migrants with higher levels of education are less likely to migrate as they can often utilize their education to find desirable jobs in Mexico; however as education increases for women, the more likely they are to migrate, presumably to find jobs in the US where jobs for women with education are more abundant than in Mexico.

Opportunities to migrate are additionally segregated by gender due to the availability of economic opportunities provided by migration as shaped by the demand for labor and US policies (Kanaiaupuni 2000). Historically, US labor market demands have favored men migrants and the largely political nature of legal work visa/documentation programs center on physical labor demands normally associated with men's work leaving women migrant's labor invisible (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). Not only has the low wage/low skill work that is available to migrants been distinctly male-oriented, but any government-supported labor programs

promoting and legitimizing migrant labor have favored men over women migrants. The Bracero program, for example, provided over 4.5 million temporary work visas to Mexican migrants between 1942 and 1964 (Durand 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Chomsky 2014). Despite the high demand for domestic/woman-oriented labor, the majority of these visas were allotted to men migrants who were positioned to participate in fieldwork and seasonal labor—a more publicly-valued labor niche, thus excluding women who, it was assumed, would not participate in such labor (Durand 2004). The visibility of men migrants due to their increased opportunities for employment coupled with the establishment of government programs that supported such labor encouraged the legal migration of men over the legal migration of women and in part contributed to the establishment of these male-oriented theories of immigration (Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

Theories of migration are not the only component of Latino/a migration that has not previously considered gender seriously. Assimilation has been a feature of the migrant experience that has intrigued sociologists and anthropologists since the late 19th century and continues to pervade much migration research today (Park 1928; Fitzgerald 2006). Assimilation is a process in which immigrants shed some (or perhaps all) aspects of their heritage values/culture in favor of the values/culture of the society to which they have migrated (Zhou 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Traditionally, sociologists have categorized assimilation according to two basic paths: upward and downward assimilation (Zhou 1997; Warner 2007). Upward assimilation is a path where immigrants may maintain some of their heritage culture, but overall, tend to take on mainstream American middle-class values that promote economic and educational success and a respect for authority (Portes 1998). Downward assimilation, on the other hand, features the attrition of heritage values that are then replaced with values of the

lower-class, causing immigrant groups to devalue education and increase participation in deviant behavior (Portes and Rumbaut 2005). Aside from these two paths of assimilation, however, scholars have identified a process in which immigrant groups may assimilate in segmented patterns, choosing to add or subtract those aspects of either their heritage or newly assumed culture values that will be advantageous to their success in their new settlement location (Zhou 1997; Portes 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Haller, Portes and Lynch 2011).

Segmented assimilation has been used for the past two decades or so to explain income variation among second- and third-generation migrants, but has not been used to understand how differences in assimilation may be shaped by gender. Researchers have largely focused on immigrant ethnicity, country of origin, citizenship status (Borjas 1987), educational levels (Alba, Kasinitz and Waters 2011), human capital, geographic location (Woo 1994; Portes and Fernandez-Kelley 2005) and English language proficiency (Borjas 1994), however few have considered gender a contributing factor. Parrado and Flippen (2005) provide the literature with one of the few studies that identifies the importance of gender in the assimilation process.

Rooting their work in Connell (1987)'s work on gender and power, Parrado and Flippen (2005) advocate a shift from assessing how gender shapes migration based upon a single structure—that of the superiority of men and the subsequent oppression of women—to an approach that identifies the differing effects of three separate structure which collectively illustrate the order of gender in society and inform the way that institutions operate. These three structures are labor, power, and cathexis. Labor refers to the “sexual division of labor” or the allocation of work by sex categories which provides economic gain to men in the market labor force and loss to women, who are mostly relegated to domestic work and whose work in the market is less valued (Parrado and Flippen 2005: 610). Power is guided by an imbalance in

control and decision-making in the home; because men's work is more highly valued and rewarded, men tend to bring more financial resources into the home upon which women become dependent (Parrado and Flippen 2005). This differential in resources affords men authority in the home and limits the decision-making ability of women (Parrado and Flippen 2005). Cathexis is the emotional and symbolic construction of what it means to be a man or a woman and the husband and wife roles that subsequently correspond (Parrado and Flippen 2005: 610). Implicit in these gender roles are the power differentials providing superiority to men and subordination to women.

Parrado and Flippen (2005) operationalize these three structural components to assess how gender relations affect the assimilation process. They found that settlement in the US provides women with more/better employment opportunities and therefore does contribute to more egalitarian gender relations in the home; however, in terms of relationship control and household duties, they had less power than their Mexican counterparts. Parrado and Flippen (2005) discovered that the impact of women's work outside of the home has a weaker affect among Mexican migrants in the US than among working women who remained in Mexico: working migrant women in the US were responsible for all household duties in addition to market labor participation while women working out side of the home in Mexico were aided in their household chores by their husbands. This finding allowed Parrado and Flippen (2005) to reveal the importance of differing social forces upon the assimilation process and in the reconstruction of gender relations. Essentially, they concluded that Mexican migrant women aren't intentionally preserving the less egalitarian gender roles they experienced in Mexico while selecting other aspects of US culture to which they'd prefer to assimilate. Instead, the social structure affects which aspects of culture atrophy and which are adopted. So, while migrant

women are afforded more liberal positions outside of the home in the US, more strict gender relations are tolerated in the home because the external social-structural context: marginalization due to undocumented status, unfair working conditions for men and women, and social isolation or a lack of familiar relationships for newly migrated immigrations. These conditions are so insufferable that reinforcing traditional gender relations and additional subordination of women in the home is less acutely felt than it would be in a different social context (Parrado and Flippen 2005).

Despite a movement toward integrating gender into a full understanding of immigration assimilation, as Parrado and Flippen (2005) have done, most scholars who rely on this theory of assimilation apply it to migrant groups assuming, as scholars of migration determinants do, that men and women migrants have the same migratory behaviors and therefore assimilation will be similarly experienced by both genders.

Intersectionality and Migration

Understanding the role gender plays in shaping the migrant experience is highly important, but so, too, is understanding how gender is compounded by other characteristics to form opportunities for migration, to shape border crossing experiences, and to influence assimilation processes. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994, 1999) and Parrado and Flippen (2005) have demonstrated, gender is a main source of inequality in the migration experience. However, other characteristics work to enhance and complicate migrant experiences as well. Patricia Hill Collins (2000), in her work *Black Feminist Thought*, frames gender as a system of oppression. For Collins (2000) the gender system works in concert with other systems, such as race, class and sexual preference, to assign privileges to oppressors or group non-minorities and penalties to the oppressed or group minorities. These systems, for Collins (2000:222) are part of a “single

historically created system” wherein they interlock to create a distinct experience of oppression depending upon the social location of the individual. The matrix of domination is, for Collins (2000), the overall structure within which these systems/axes of oppression function to constitute the experience of an individual’s everyday life. Therefore, the experience of gender for each individual is not one that is measurable or categorizable in that for each individual gender works as only one dimension of an individual’s experience. Moreover, the effect gender may have varies depending upon one’s location in reference to other systems of oppression: these systems of oppression work intersectionally, causing an individual to experience distinctive forms of discrimination depending upon her social location within those systems (Crenshaw 1991).

Most Latino/a migrants who relocate to the US maintain an undocumented status, are upper-lower- or middle-class individuals and are of Mexican or Central American origin (Massey 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Therefore, although intersectional components do shape the border crossing experience, it is perhaps gender that is the clearest characteristic that will shape opportunities to migrate and crossing experiences, as discussed above. The effect of intersectionality, then is perhaps most obviously observable in settlement and assimilation processes. For example, migrant ethnicity within opportunistic social settings for migrants can affect assimilation. Portes and Zhou (1993) found that Punjabi migrants who moved to a rural area in California where there was no previously established ethnic enclave were able to advance their own personal success and their children’s because they maintained their own traditional cultural values and did not have an established community that may have taken on negative aspects of American culture to which the second generation could assimilate. Yet, while the lack of an established community was beneficial Punjabi migrants in California, Cuban migrants in Florida have an intricate and deeply rooted community in which they have successfully

combined their traditional Cuban values with those of American society and created a thriving ethnic enclave in which second generation immigrants have found much success (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I build on the small number of feminist and critical studies of migration that take gender seriously as a practical and theoretical element of border crossing, assimilation experiences, and migration patterns. Specifically, I use data collected via in-depth interviews with migrants who clandestinely crossed the Mexico-US border to examine how gender influences three specific points in the migration experience: motivations to migrate, communications regarding border crossing, and post-migration information sharing. I analyze participant narratives to understand how these processes and experiences are tied to gender and ultimately are structure by and exemplify traditional familial divisions of labor, contributing to the reproduction of gendered inequalities in social life.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Data for this dissertation come from 37 in-depth semi-structured intensive interviews with women and men clandestine border crossers and their families. In order to examine these individuals as members of a marginalized group I draw upon standpoint theory. Standpoint theory is an epistemological methodology where the distinctive, authentic accounts of marginalized groups are sought in order to give voice to and/or understand the realities and experiences of groups peripheral to the center (Collins 2000). Clandestine border crossers provide a unique standpoint not only as (mostly) low-wage working minorities, but also as undocumented persons on the fringe of the United States' legal system. In this vein, I am not seeking to, "universalize a particular experience" (Smith 1978:107). Instead, I aim to create a space for "an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence of spoken experience[s]" provided by marginalized individuals communicating the "actualities of their everyday worlds" (Smith 1978:107). Understanding the genuine experiences of clandestine border crossers better informs what we know about the inequality/experiences they face (Gleeson 2010; Berger 2013). Interviews conducted for this dissertation were focused in a way that gave voice to participants to discuss their/their family's motivations to migrate and how they, themselves and family members communicated with each other about their actual crossing experiences.

To best collect data that captures the actualities of clandestine border crossers' experiences, I use a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory methodology consists of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves" (Charmaz 2014:1). Using inductive data, grounded theory requires employing a comparative method of referral from data to analysis and theory and back to data, ever shaping

and informing findings, analysis, methods, and theory (Charmaz 2014). Moreover, Charmaz (2014) states that the content of data is molded by the way it was collected. Therefore, in line with standpoint theory, conducting interviews allowed me to see “research participants’ lives from the inside, often [giving me] an otherwise unobtainable view” (Charmaz 2014:24).

Interviews provided me with unique insight into the experiences of participants, as well as data for analysis that I used to then refine my interview guide in order to continue collecting relevant data and enhance analytical and theoretical conclusions based upon previous data.

Complimenting my interest in preserving the unique, situated knowledge of participants via standpoint and grounded theory, I relied on the methodological guidance of Holstein and Gubrium (1995). In their work, *The Active Interview*, they claim that the “active interview is a kind of limited “improvisational” performance. The production is spontaneous, yet structured—focused within loose parameters provided by the interviewer” (Holstein and Gubrium 1995:17). This approach encourages the researcher to understand that the narratives communicated during interviews are contextual and dependent upon the emotional state of both the researcher and the participant as well as the setting, time, location and other factors in which the interview takes place. In fact, Holstein and Gubrium (1995:9) claim that the meaning of narratives can even change during an interview because of the way meaning the participant and the researcher co-create meaning: “One cannot expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstance of production.” Therefore, I understand that my role in the interview—my research interests, my interview guide, my biography, my self-presentation and performance, among other things—coupled with the interview setting and the characteristics of the participant has shaped the meaning that is made during each interview. This collective meaning-making complicates my ability to strictly “give voice” to participants because

interviews took the form of a conversation in which I provided directive guidance. With this understanding, I employed a reflexive lens throughout my research so that I was (and continued to be) aware of my role in affecting both data collection and analysis. I elaborate upon this further in the final section of this chapter.

Data Collection

Data was collected via semi-structured intensive (Charmaz 2014) interviews. Scholars have widely recognized the use of interviews as a valuable form of data collection for marginalized populations because they allow for the understanding of phenomena from the participant's perspective (Esterberg 2002). Therefore, I used an intensive interviewing technique, which is a flexible, "gently guided, one-sided conversation", whose "in-depth nature...fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (Charmaz 2014:59-60). As I employed a grounded theory approach, interviews were largely exploratory, featuring a set of basic questions used only to prompt participants and guide narratives (Charmaz 2014). Specific questions tracking demographic information like participant's country of origin, age, marital status, age of border crossing, and gender were posed directly to all participants. I also used less definitive questions that allowed participants to construct their narrative in a more conversational, open-ended manner. Examples of these open-ended questions included asking participants to explain their migration and/or border crossing experiences and to explain how migration and border crossing experiences have been shared among their kin. After posing these questions, I provided space for the participant to provide as many details as s/he preferred before following up with probing questions. Since I draw upon a diverse group of participants, women and men who are English and Spanish speakers and who are first-, 1.5-, and second-generation border and non-border crossers, my interview guide varied accordingly [see Appendix A].

Tracking informal communication processes like migration stories as passed through kinship ties and personal narratives such as clandestine border crossing experiences via semi-structured interviews allowed me to record a rich and detailed account of participants' experiences. It also provided me space to ask probing questions within the structured context of an interview and allowed participants to frame experiences in ways that are meaningful to them (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Esterberg 2002). While a quantitative approach has been widely used to study Mexico-US border crossing and migration patterns (for example, see: Durand and Massey 2004), intensive interviewing creates an "open and interactional space in which the participant [could] relate his or her experience" (Charmaz 2014:57). Interviewing participants using a semi-structured interview guide allows them to construct their narratives, including representations of themselves, their values, their communities and their experiences in a detail-rich way that many other data collection techniques do not allow for (De Fina 2003). Moreover, due to the intensely personal, legally sensitive, and emotionally stirring nature of border crossing experiences, it may have been difficult to elicit detailed or candid narratives directly and fully through questionnaires, surveys, experiments or other forms of quantitative data collection. I conducted a total of 39 interviews, however only 37 were usable. Two interviews were discarded because they did not fulfill the required criteria for participants—something that only became clear after the interview had commenced.

Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 2.5 hours and were conducted in the language (English/Spanish) most preferred by the participant. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted in person and took place in a location that was private but convenient to the participant. When in-person interviews were not possible and participants were amenable, interviews were done by telephone. A total of 16 interviews were done in person and 21 were

conducted via telephone. All consent and informational materials were available to participants in both English and Spanish. Participants were not provided compensation for participation. All participants were assigned pseudonyms for consent paperwork, voice recordings, field notes, and any subsequent scholarly papers/publications.² The assurance of anonymity was explicitly described to each participant in order to reduce any potential aversion to sharing personal information with an outsider. Interviews were digitally recorded,³ transcribed verbatim, and translated to English when necessary. I used fieldnotes as supplemental data collection during informal conversations, participant recruitment efforts and any other relevant data collection opportunities (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995). My goal of acquiring thick description (Charmaz 2014) forced me to be thorough in my interview notes and fieldnotes describing surroundings, events and participants' words and expressions because all details may be relevant (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995). I collected fieldnotes in a variety of formats: sometimes typing directly into a word document on my computer, jotting handwritten notes in my notebook or on printed interview guides. Occasionally I took notes mentally that I typed up once I was in a location that allowed me to thoroughly reflect on my interactions and observations from the field. Interviews and fieldnotes were uploaded into the qualitative data processing software ATLAS.ti for analysis.

Initial participants were recruited through my own personal connections with clandestine border crossers or their immediate relatives (eg. mother, sister, daughter) who have crossed the Mexico-US border clandestinely. In cases of personal connections, I explained my project and asked them if they would like to participate; since I already have well developed relationships

² The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this project and has accepted that these provisions are adequate for the protection of each participant's identity, especially in light of legal entry/citizenship concerns.

³ Once transcribed, digital recordings were destroyed, as per IRB requirements for this project.

with these individuals, no attempt to gain entre was necessary. Of the eight individuals approached, seven participated. All potential participants agreed to be interviewed, but one was unable to keep any of our scheduled (and rescheduled) interview times.

I also recruited participants using an informal targeting approach in which more entre-gaining efforts were required (Esterberg 2002; Charmaz 2014). I posted a call on Facebook and Instagram [see Appendix B] briefly describing my project and request for participants. I asked that anyone who was a potential participant privately message or email me so that their interest was not publicly viewable on the social media platform. This method yielded interest from my Facebook friends and Instagram followers who knew of someone, or some group, to which they connected me, as potential participants through the social media platform itself or via email. I then followed up with the potential participant to answer questions about my project, their participation, and arranged a day/time for the interview. Once an interview was arranged, I deleted my association with the participant's account to ensure anonymity. Participants recruited using this method required considerably more rapport-building effort than those who were friends or recruited through friends. I generally spent more time describing my project and answering questions about my research at the start of the interview or via email/messaging in the time leading up to the participant's interview. This recruitment effort yielded a total of six participants. Several Facebook and Instagram friends sent potential leads, approximately eleven in total, however five or so did not respond after initial contact or were reluctant to schedule an interview.

An additional 25 participants were recruited via snowball sampling. In these instances, I asked current participants to recommend other individuals who fit the participant profile and may be been willing to interview with me. Snowball sampling has some limitations, including the

challenge of identifying initial respondents who can provide access to additional (willing) participants, confirming potential participant's eligibility, and gaining access to the appropriate number of participants (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981:144). However, this sampling technique was beneficial to my research because I did not aim to represent an entire population, but to gain a large amount of detail from a smaller population; a population that may be more likely to speak with an outsider if they know and trust the person connecting us. Therefore, because I was interested in depth not breadth (Esterberg 2002) I could focus on recruiting participants whose unique experiences most closely aligned with providing data that informed my research agenda.

Direct participant solicitation occurred in Michoacán, Mexico; California; Louisiana; Connecticut; and Massachusetts. These locations were identified because they are the locations in which I spent the majority of my time during my data collection phase and where I have the most personal connections. Recruitment efforts were indiscriminate regarding country of origin, however, the majority of participants hailed from Mexico (26 participants), Nicaragua (4 participants), and El Salvador (3 participants) as those are the Latino/a populations with which I have the most personal contact. Participants from other countries of origin included Brazil (1 participant), Guatemala (1 participant), and Eritrea (1 participant).⁴ This population allowed me to contextualize the experiences of non-Mexican Latino/a migrants as they compared their experiences crossing into Mexico before they crossed into the US. I chose to include the participant from Eritrea in my data sample to illustrate the diversity of the population crossing the Mexico-US border clandestinely. As a point of interest, while the majority of Black African Immigrants, including Eritreans⁵ enter the US with authorized status, 21 percent of all Black

⁴ One participant's familial country of origin is undisclosed.

⁵ In 2016, 1,700 of the 85,000 total refugees admitted to the US were from Eritrea (Kishi 2017).

African Immigrants⁶ between 2006 and 2008 entered the US without documentation (Capps, McCabe, and Fix 2012).

It is worth noting that I attempted to collect participants via casual interactions with individuals with whom I came into contact during daily activities. This included approaching servers in restaurants, nail salon employees, and food truck workers that I met and had built acquaintance relationships with in public. I attempted to identify potential participants in the field by observing language skills in spaces where Latino/as are predominately employed and where I am already a frequent patron. For example, interacting with individuals who openly speak Spanish only, prefer Spanish, or speak English with a heavy Spanish-sounding accent and are positioned in the low-skilled/minimum-wage job sector were indicators that they may have been a first-generation migrant or may have had a friend/family member who has clandestinely crossed the border.⁷⁸ Profiling in this way could have caused individuals to be targeted unfairly/unjustly. However, the alternatives (using phenotype, for example) are imperfect as well. In light of my discomfort participating in profiling, identifying participants was challenging, and I attempted to discuss respondents' characteristics and social position with as much sensitivity as possible.

In these recruitment situations, I targeted locations wherein I had already developed some familiarity with the potential participant. At the time of the interview request, I ensured that all services had been compensated for (and a tip provided when necessary), that the request was as inaudible to others as possible, that the participant was aware that his/her (non) participation in

⁶ Two percent, or 22,000, of all Black African Immigrants between 2008 and 2009 were from Eritrea (Capps, McCabe, Fix 2012).

⁷ Please see the *Reflexivity and Positionality* section of this proposal for further elaboration on this point.

⁸ I would like to note here that I am not assuming that these individuals will be undocumented (or have ever been) at the time of our interview as some individuals may currently be documented but may have crossed the Mexico-US border without papers at some point in the past, or may have only crossed legally but who may know someone who has crossed clandestinely.

my research in no way affected my patronage of the location and that his/her anonymity was guaranteed. As often as possible, I also provided the potential participant with an outline of the project and my contact information so the individual felt empowered to contact me if s/he was interested in interviewing. I used these tactics to help to minimize any pressure that the potential participant may have felt to agree to interview with me since I approached her/him in a workplace setting. I attempted to recruit seven participants using this method and it yielded no participants.

Although I center the woman migrant experience in my analysis, I collected data from both women and men. This tactic allowed me to compare crossing experiences for similarities and differences from both intra- and inter-gender perspectives. For example, I identify trends in men's and women's narratives as separately gendered groups and as a whole. Moreover, I asked men how their crossing experiences are different, if at all, when a woman is a part of their group to understand how men migrants view and interact with women migrants. This allowed me to more deeply understand how gender norms may be reproduced before, during, and after crossing. Therefore, my research is informed by the woman migrant herself, as well as through the voices of her friends, family, and companions, who are both women and men. This approach is unique in that it allowed me to understand the complexities of how gender influences the migration process/migrants' narratives in layered and nuanced ways.

Data Analysis

All interviews were coded via guidelines for grounded theory coding suggested by Charmaz (2014). I began using a line-by-line open coding strategy and compared data to establish differences and similarities. Examples of line by line codes include: "participant's first crossing," "communication about crossing," "mode of migration," "danger," and "women crossing." I also

sought potential in vivo codes—codes that originate in the participants’ narratives and hold particular meaning to the participant and/or target population—to incorporate into a systematic coding schema, paying particular attention to how members organize and define their world (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Examples of in vivo codes employed are: “worth the risk” and “easier then than now.” Next, I audited all codes, determined main themes and employed a more focused coding strategy. Examples of focused codes are: “US experience – status,” “family life in CoO – gender roles,” “unique crossing memory – food,” and “politics.” I also engaged in memoing and theoretical free writes to further my analysis and enhance thematic composition (Clarke 2005). I then culled the data and identified pertinent examples of each code/theme to include in my final analysis.

The main codes utilized in the analysis for this dissertation related to motivations to migrate and communications among family members. For example, codes such as, “reason to migrate,” “reason to stay,” “first crossing,” “economics,” and “life in CoO,” were compiled and analyzed to understand how participants reasoned/justified their decision to migrate. “Communication about crossing,” “migration impact on family,” “info from media,” “politics,” and “danger for women,” were codes used to investigate/uncover how/what communications participants received before their border crossing experiences and how/when they communicated with fellow migrants/kin after their crossing.

Reflexivity/Positionality

According to Charmaz (2014:23), “What we can do and ask in a setting depends on how our research participants identify and know us.” Therefore, in the interest of understanding the unique and situated knowledge of research participants, I worked first to identify my own positionality—as potentially both an insider, someone who shares similar characteristics and is

seen as a potential group member, and an outsider, someone who does not share similar characteristics and is not seen as a potential group member—in the field. Doing so helped me gain entre/establish rapport with participants and aided me in navigating interviewer-participant power dynamics while conducting interviews and collecting data in the field (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Gallagher 2000; Winddance-Twine and Warren 2000). Second, I worked to recognize my role, as a researcher and thus my role as an interpretive instrument responsible for activating the production of narratives (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Charmaz (2014:29) explains that “how your research participants identify you influences what they will tell you” therefore, the self-presentation, attitude, characteristics, physical setting and the restraints/parameters for responses that researcher brings to the study influences the type information elicited during the encounter (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Esterberg 2002). Recognizing the influence that I, as the researcher, had in affecting participants’ narratives, I consciously employed reflexivity to identify how my social position and interview techniques affected the meaning produced in the interview setting.

As a white, educated, middle-class, English-speaking American woman, I am mainly an outsider among my participants. However, my identification as a woman provided me some insider status among women participants. Moreover, the Spanish I speak is informal and while this does not erase my outsider status, it afforded me the opportunity to speak more familiarly with individuals whom I may not otherwise have been able to. I found that using colloquial/informal Spanish was advantageous to me in several ways: (1) participants spoke with me because they were curious about my ability to speak Spanish; (2) participants seemed to identify me as an ally; (3) it prompted participants to inquire how I learned to speak Spanish, thus allowing me to reveal my ties to Latino/a culture via personal relationships with Latino/a

friends/family. This opportunity for personal dialogue was helpful in building trust between participants and myself because it encouraged participants to speak intimately about themselves and their (potentially traumatic) border crossing experiences after my having also shared personal information about my connections with members of the Latino/a community.

I am an outsider in this community in many ways. The outsider traits that I possess are that of race, nationality, language skills, and professional status. For example, as a white American I am recognized as an outsider but also provided a certain status of respect. Whiteness and/or being light skinned is highly valued in Mexican and Central American culture and as an American, it is assumed that I have access to material and political benefits that they, as (perceived) non-white non-American citizens do not (Sue 2013).⁹ In this way, my outsider status aided me in that I was often invited into participants' homes and treated hospitably/less skeptically than a darker skinned non-American might be (Sue 2013). I am also an outsider as an English speaker, although I conducted interviews in Spanish, it was clear that Spanish is my second language. I am an outsider as an academic. Often participants did not understand my interest in their lives/experiences, making my outsider status all that more apparent.

Other than my presumed heterosexuality and Christianity, I have no particular insider status afforded to me except my gender, which can also place me as an outsider. As a woman interviewing women, I was expected to have unique insight into the struggles of being a wife, a mother, and a woman (among other things) and was therefore expected to relate, commiserate, and require little embellishment on certain topics (Esterberg 2002). Although I am an unmarried woman with no children, I encountered women who said things like, "You know how it is," implying that I understand the domestic duties that accompany a woman's familial

⁹ This has been a personal experience of mine in both Mexico and the United States during fieldwork/interviewing as well as in personal daily life.

responsibilities. If and when I asked for detail after this phrase is spoken, I risked damaging the rapport I had built with the participant who, through using the phrase, had accepted me as a woman insider. Though usually polite and conversational, men often spoke more formally and cautiously with me than women. Men identified me as an outsider who has no familiarity with their experiences and often did not understand my interest in them. This afforded me the opportunity to probe during conversation without risking damage to the rapport previously built—often, in fact, it put the participant at ease as my interest in his explanation situated him as the authority on the subject and relegated me to the more comfortable, less informed woman’s role (Gailey and Prohaska 2011). Moreover, my gender shaped participants’ responses in a way that was unintended. When discussing border crossing experiences where men observed a woman confronted with a threat/hardship, some men participants emphasized their willingness to aid the woman despite the potential harm it might have brought to himself; whereas women who had actually experienced threats/hardships while crossing reported that men were not willing to assist in the way that men participants expressed they would. Of course, I cannot firmly conclude that this difference in response is solely due to my gender, however, as a reflexive researcher, I must be aware of the factors that may contribute to the production of this difference in response—a main consideration being the performance/illusion of masculinity in Mexican/Central American culture, especially in the presence of women (Mirande 1997; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Tarrant 2014).

My position inside/outside the group not only affected my ability to build rapport with participants (Winddance-Twine and Warren 2000) but also influenced the power dynamic during the interview process (Clarke 2005). Power struggles present themselves in interview scenarios in complex and multidimensional ways. In their work, *Power and Gender Negotiations During*

Interviews with Men about Sex and Sexually Degrading Practices, Jeannine A. Gailey and Ariane Prohaska (2011:378) explain that, “both parties in the interview situation occupy several different social locations, including gender, race, age, and social class. When interviewing or being interviewed, we do not leave these positions behind; rather, they influence our actions during the interview process.” Although it may be assumed that the interviewer is automatically placed in a position of authority and the power therefore tipped in her favor, this is not always the case and the researcher must precariously navigate interview settings ensuring a productive and safe environment for both herself and the participant.

One way that I, as a researcher, attempted to neutralize an interview setting is by presenting myself as an ally. Social scientists often disagree about how much of oneself a researcher should disclose to participants, arguing that “[p]ersonal revelations on the part of the interviewer are said to produce bias, because interviewees will tend to give the responses that they think the interviewer wants to hear” (Esterberg 2002:86). However, due to the highly sensitive nature of the information I asked participants to share coupled with my interview strategy as intensive and largely conversational, I occasionally shared information about myself with participants with the intention of deactivating potential power differentials (Esterberg 2002). For example, I often shared that I have been to Mexico several times, that I have some intimate knowledge of Mexican culture, that I sympathize with their plight as immigrants, and sometimes employ the use of argot, or common vernacular, when appropriate (Belvins and Holt 2009). Other ways that I attempted to balance power in the field is by conducting interviews in the language of the participants’ choosing and conducting interviews in private settings so that the participant felt at ease. Ethical considerations must also be made especially in that I asked participants to not only share very intimate details about a physically and emotionally trying time in their lives (Lahman,

Mendoza, Rodriguez, and Schwartz 2011), but I also asked them to essentially describe how they committed an illegal act¹⁰ (clandestine border crossing). Therefore, I took seriously the importance of anonymity and was sure to explain that pseudonyms would be assigned and their identity would not be revealed (Blee and Currier 2011).

Negotiating power differentials and recognizing my outsider/insider status were integral to my ability to understand and accurately record the standpoint presented by participants. Holstein and Gubrium (1995:3-4) assert that during interviews there is a “mutual construction of meaning between interviewer and participant” and that all interviews are “reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions” in which “[i]nterviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents.” Therefore, my ability to navigate meaning making in a way that allowed the situated knowledge of the participant to emerge was paramount. Similar to Orner (2008) who found that the migrant participants he and his colleagues approached for interviews, “were not only willing to talk, they welcomed the invitation be heard. For many of them, it was the first time anybody had ever asked them to really talk about themselves and their families,” I too found that participants were eager to discuss their migration experiences and expressed deep interest in how their experiences compared to fellow migrants.

Participant Demographics

Of the 37 total participants, 6 were men (16%) and 31 were women (84%). The majority of participants hailed from Mexico, 26 (70.3%) in total [see Appendix C]. Four participants were from Nicaragua (10.8%), 3 from El Salvador (8.1%), and 1 from each Brazil, Guatemala, and Eritria (2.7% each). One participant failed to specify her country of origin (2.7%). Participants

¹⁰ According to 8 U.S.C. § 1325(a) the improper entry by an alien is punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or both.

did not self-identify what generation of migrant they were. Instead, I assigned generation based upon the age at which participants told me they had crossed. First-generation migrants are those who crossed at age 15 or older, 1.5-generation migrants are those who crossed at age 14 or younger, and second-generation migrants are those who did not cross themselves, but are the children of first or 1.5-generation migrants (Rumbaut 1997). There was a total of 13 first-generation migrants (35.1%), 17 1.5-generation migrants (45.9%), 5 second-generation migrants (13.6%) and 2 non-migrants (5.4%). I included the two non-migrants to capture the diversity in migrant familial communication and experience. Both non-migrants fit the participant criteria in that they knew someone intimately who had crossed the Mexico-US border clandestinely and could speak to what they knew of their loved one's experiences.

CHAPTER 4. MIGRATION MOTIVATION

[S]he almost felt like it was her duty like as a wife and just as a mom to make sure we had a better life.”

– Laura, 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant

Laura, a 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant, speaks powerfully about her mother’s “duty” as a wife and mom to make sure her children had a “better life.” This theme—of a better life, a good life, or the American dream—permeated participants’ narratives about their motives for migration. Put simply, for many participants the base motivation to migrate was economic. They often identified additional complexities and motives, some of which are discussed below, but these motivations were almost always related to fiscal gain. Participants overwhelmingly used phrases like working toward/looking for a “better life,” a “better future,” and the fulfillment of the “American dream” to express the goal of economic success post migration.

For example, Claudia, a first-generation migrant from Mexico plainly asserted: “I think people keep trying to cross the border or are crossing the border because of the economic situation that we have in our state or our country, and because they don't have other options.” Angelica, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, explains that her family migrated to find work. As a child, she too assisted in earning money for the family: “My dad went to find work...I would help my dad cut grapes, we lived over there [in California].” Maribel, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, revealed an additional motivation for migration—violence in her hometown—but seemed to consider violence a secondary motivation to financial advancement. She said where her family lived was, “really dangerous and there’s no jobs... It’s a really small town... there’s no way to make a decent income.” Ariam, a first-generation migrant from Eritrea, elucidates that the motivation to migrate for most Eritreans is political, yet their choice to move to the US, specifically, is economic:

I think getting out of Eritrea is political for sure, uh, but coming to US, I think for most people is...I think it has political freedom as well economical. I think I would say more economical than political to decide to come to US, because you could choose any other country in the world, pretty much, except Eritrea [laughs]. I think why people choose America is...economical, uh, because people see America and it's a good opportunity, so, they might as well go over there, is the thinking.

Moving beyond plain economics, nearly all participants mentioned other factors influencing their decisions, too—many of which are highlighted in the existing literature on Mexico-US border crossing, such as politically-related strains or a desire for temporary settlement in the US. When they did so, however, they did it in ways that were related to gender. Participants' narratives about their motives for migration were tied to gender in complex and nuanced ways.

“You just do it”

Men's Migration Motivations

Stories about men's motivation for their first crossing often revolved around purely economic gain or crossing as a rite of passage. Cristo, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, for example, explained that as a single man in his late teens having brothers who had already crossed to the US, he was encouraged, taunted even, to cross and earn money. Similarly, Daniel, a 1.5-generation Brazilian migrant, was “teased” by his friends to cross to the US. Peers told him the crossing was “easy” and he could earn money to build a house back home. Raul, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, wanted to follow his brothers to the US to help boost remittances home to his mother, and at the age of 13, did so.

Nicole, a second-generation Mexican migrant, spoke of her father's migration as though his migration was the obvious choice to fulfill the family's financial needs. She said he just, “decided that he was going to cross.” Nicole implied that the decision was a common solution and was made lightly, “because that's what a lot of immigrants do.” She explained that he told, “his mother and his siblings and stuff, that he was going to cross over um, to uh, make money

and then send it back home....It's it's, because the US dollar is higher in value than the Mexican [peso] ... it really helps the family out like, it's way...they're able to live way better lives that way." Isa, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, describes her father's first crossing experience as an act that boys participated in regularly:

[I]t was just like a thing that like children- now we think about it this way like children when they're fourteen, that's what you do. You go work. And it wasn't even like, uh, a need it was just like a- like, *you just do it*. Like, it's just a next step ... [that] just men [would participate in]... I mean, some women would come when they were maybe like eighteen, but not really... It was mostly like, in his town, or like actually, the people that he knew it was mostly [boys] when you're fourteen, *you just do it*. Like you just come. [emphasis added]

While no other participant expressed this sentiment as clearly as Isa does here, the idea that men, "just do it," was implicit throughout many participant narratives. For example, Estela, a 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant, described how civil unrest initiated her family's relocation to the US, but that the process began with her father. She disclosed that he, "decided to come to the United States because the war, the civil war in El Salvador, was starting [and it was] getting more dangerous." Estela explained that her family lived very near the presidential house where much of the fighting occurred. She continued, "My dad is a carpenter and, at that time, he didn't have work, enough work. [He thought] 'I cannot be waiting here while, you know, the war was getting more hard,' ... So, he goes, no I have to move on and that's the, that's the way he came." Estela completes this portion of her narrative by emphasizing that her father's motivation for migrating was to earn money in the US in order to send for her, her mother, and her siblings to save them from the local violence.

Similarly, Isa, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, speaks of her father who used to cross to the US from Mexico for holidays and for extended work sojourns. He used his brother's green card, "because they looked alike." Isa recounts how her aunt encouraged her father to

permanently relocate himself and the family to the US: “like right after Christmas - I think it was like New Years, um, my aunt, told my dad like, ‘Hey what the hell are you doing why don’t you just stay? Like, like you’re here just bring your family’ and it was literally like ‘Alright, let’s bring them’.” Echoing the sentiments expressed by other participants, crossing and/or staying is reinforced as something simple that men “just do” in Isa’s narrative.

Family Reunification and the Agentic Self

Women’s Migration Motivations

Coupling this framing of migration for men as something that is almost expected for financial enhancement, many participants simultaneously spoke about women’s motivation for migration as an effort in family reunification. As the feminization of migration has increased, scholars have repeatedly revealed that family reunification is, in fact, the most common motivation for women migrants (Perrenas 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2004; Portes 2006). Abril, a second-generation Mexican migrant, for example, described her father’s motivation to migrate as economic and intentionally temporary. She then explains, how her father’s migration became permanent thus leading to her mother’s, and her own, migration to the US. Moreover, Abril expresses how her mother’s migration seemed to be out of her own control, and perhaps forced, to ensure that the family remained intact:

Because um well it was basically just like, obviously, it was because of the money so, you know, we needed money and [pause] it was supposed to be just for a few months and then he was supposed to come back but, you know, he saw that the money was like good and he could support me so he stayed for like longer. And then, he asked my mom to come with him and my mom didn’t want to but she spoke to her mom and her mom was like ‘that’s your husband, you know? You have to go with him and, you know, for your kids.’ and in the end my grandma convinced my mom to come [be] with my dad... and my mom like loved him and she missed him so she wanted to come to the states... So [for my mom] it was more like to be together then rather than like look for a better life even though the better life was a given well supposedly a given, you know?... And that incoming here in like making dollars and having the American dream, which we thought

was the American dream, but yeah, so I think it was something that my dad just decided and my mom went along with it of course we didn't have a say in it, you know?

Abril continued to explain that her mother did have some power over the migration process, which was the decision to bring her children. She states that her mother said, “‘I’m not gonna leave [my children] behind,’ ... my mom wouldn’t leave, like my siblings behind to come in at different times, so [we came together].”

Andrea, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, shared similar motivations for migration divided gender roles. Andrea’s father had already been in the US for “a few years” when he decided to bring her, and her mother and siblings to the US to, “pursue a better life.” Andrea explains that, “‘basically one day [my dad] just told my mom like, ‘hey like I have everything ready sell everything you can, and you're coming.’” Andrea’s statement implies that her mother had little to no control over her or her children’s migration. As a woman and a mother, caring for her children, reliant upon her husband’s financial support, and facing permanent separation from her husband, migration to the US, Andrea implies, was her mother’s only option, as it is for many women migrants (Durand 2004). Abril’s and Andrea’s family’s stories are illustrative of stories articulated by many participants and corroborate the gendered nature of migration as discovered by scholars in the field (Kanaiaupuni 2000, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003, Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Namely, their stories speak to how gender shapes an individual’s opportunity to migrate. Men are encouraged to cross to the US for their financial earning power, and women cross to ensure the that the family remains whole.

Participant stories, however, also illuminate how nuanced this gender divide can be. While Abril and Andrea’s narratives, depict women—their mothers—as passive in the migration decision making process, Teresa’s firsthand narrative of her own border crossing experience adds complexity and agency to a woman’s opportunity to migrate. Her recollection of the

difficulty of the decision-making process sheds light on factors that could have been present for Abril and Andrea's mothers, but that they did not have access to and could not speak about if their mothers did not talk to them about how they made the decision to cross. Teresa, a first-generation Mexican migrant, whose husband crossed to the US to earn income and remit it home to her and their family says that, "It's like being alone knowing your husband is leaving and...I didn't like it." She continues, that being separated from her husband, "didn't feel [like] that was life. Being married with a family and him here [in the US] and I'm there [in Mexico]." In addition to feeling the loss of the physical closeness of her husband and her children being without their father, Teresa was skeptical of her husband's fidelity: "And then when one knows the lifestyle over here as well, [I'm] not very trusting of him either...Sometimes he'll go to the club and meet up with some men and they're [crazy]."

Gigi, a second-generation Mexican migrant, expressed a similar sentiment when discussing her aunts' motivations for migration. She explained that her aunts married their husbands in Mexico, "but then, the husbands came [to the US] because ... the economy just wasn't great and they were from a super small rancho so it's like even worse." Gigi, continues to explain that both of her aunts wanted to cross to the US to join their husbands, but that their husbands were resistant because they were involved in illegal activities. "Both of my aunts actually wanted to come here, but my uncles, um they all dealt drugs, so they didn't want their wives to be here. They didn't want their families here. But my aunts, of course-they're very persistent," Gigi explains. She said that her aunts knew about their husbands' business dealings but didn't care. Gigi expressed that her aunts still wanted to come to the US, "Because they wanted to be with their husbands. They wanted to be with their family, you know?" Teresa and Gigi's accounts portray the role that women have in not only their opportunities to migrate but

also their choice to do so. Their having husbands already located in the US provided them some opportunity for migration, perhaps pre-determined to them by virtue of family reunification, if they otherwise would not have wanted to migrate or had married a someone who did not migrate.

On the whole then, it is important to note that even within the family reunification motivation, women speak of border crossing in ways that reveal an agentic self—one acting based on their roles as wives as paramount and wanting to be physically with their husbands as a family unit. In Teresa’s case, this desire was made that much more salient by her skepticism of her husband’s potentially unfaithful behavior. For Gigi’s aunts, they viewed their husband’s relocation as their path to migration, a goal of their own outside of reunification. Clearly, women’s own conceptions of themselves and their lives operated to influence their decisions to migrate, above and beyond seeking to simply reunify family.

In rarer cases, participants spoke more straightforwardly about the role women played in influencing migration decisions—even if the decisions were not their own. For example, Eduardo, a first-generation Mexican migrant, explains that it was not he who chose to cross to the US to remit money back to his family. Instead, he did so at the urging of his, then wife. When discussing his motivation to migrate, Eduardo said, “So, I made the decision to—well, they kind of made me come, I didn’t want to come but [my wife at the time] is the one who wanted to come here the most.” He explained that his ex-wife wanted to migrate, but, he says, she needed to stay in Mexico with their children. As a woman and a mother, she wasn’t provided the opportunity to cross. Instead, she urged her then husband, Eduardo, to do so. When he did, he had a difficult time finding a job, but his ex-wife insisted he stay in the US. “Just wait,” she told him, “you’ll find another job.” Eduardo says his ex-wife wanted him to stay in the US so that he could establish himself and so that she and her children could follow. “I’ll be going over there

[soon],” Eduardo recalls she told him. Eduardo, his ex-wife and children were reunited soon after having crossed the border for themselves. Likewise, Nicole, a second-generation Mexican migrant, explains that it was her mother who chose to move to the US for economic stability: “So [my mother] decided they couldn’t struggle in Mexico anymore and that they had to move back, uh permanently to the United States.”

Other participants, in their description of their own or their mother’s motivation to cross, identified how weak patriarchal ties precipitated their opportunity to migrate (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 2003). Women who were unwed and/or did not have prominent father figures in their lives, expressed more unfettered opportunities and/or economic incentives to migrate. They did not have to wait for husbands or male kin to cross first while they stayed behind to care for children. Ximena, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, for example, describes how her mother, as a single woman, had the opportunity to migrate to create a “better future” for herself, but also to fulfill her “dream”: “But [my mother] wanted like, for me to have a better future. She had her dreams about over here [the US] so she wanted to come and do it on her own.” Esperanza, a first-generation Guatemalan migrant, recounted her decision to migrate as a single mother with no living parents, estranged from her siblings. She had a bakery she was running out of her mother’s house but when her mother died, her brothers kicked her out of the house and she had no means of income, so she decided to cross to the US to support her children:

I left everything and I came because there was nothing there ... Yes, there was the bakery but it wasn’t enough. It wasn't enough for anything. That’s why I left after. Saddened, and disappointed in my family that did all that evil. They didn't have to do it and they did. That is the motive why I came being sad, I didn't have support. My mom had just died, two months later they were fighting for the house.

The sole wage earner for herself and her two children, Esperanza had to make the choice to migrate to increase income for her family. This decision was reinforced by her lack of

connections and to immediate family in her hometown who, instead of collaborating in her decision to migrate, stimulated her migration through a lack of support.

Parental Motivation for Migration

In addition to migration opportunities being shaped by gender roles, participants also alluded to the role parenthood played in their decisions to migrate. Overwhelmingly, mothers identified migration as their duty to ensure the protection of their children and to give them a “better life,” while men viewed migration as an opportunity for economic success. These motivations support widely studied familial structures and gender roles identifying women as the caregivers and men as the providers (Franco, Sabattini, and Crosby 2004; Erickson 2005; Pinto 2009; Hochschild 2012). Elizabeth, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, framed her family’s motivation to migrate through this lens, she explains that they were living in a very dangerous neighborhood in Mexico and the decision to migrate was made by her parents for the well-being of herself and her siblings. Elizabeth reflects:

I think it’s just that they um at the time it was not a very nice place to live in where we were living. I think it was just a lot of drugs and killing and my parents just didn’t want that for us. They wanted us to have a better future, a safer place to live and grow up and I think that’s- that’s basically all they said for us...That they wanted us to get an education and to be in safe place.”

While Elizabeth mentioned that the decision to migrate for safety was made by her parents collectively, all other participants who spoke about safety or protection as a motivation to migrate, attributed this decision to their mothers.

Alexi, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, identified her mother’s motivation for migration as the need to safeguard her children: “in that area that we lived in, [there were] a lot of drugs ... a lot of my family that still lives in there is um, drug addicts...that’s why my mom wanted us to leave, to have a better future [and for] safety, for sure.” Laura, a 1.5-generation

Salvadorian migrant described her mother's motivation for migration directly, "that's why she left and then she also says like, she almost felt like it was her duty like as a wife and just as a mom to make sure we had a better life." Numerous participants indicated that they as mothers, or that their mothers felt like migration to the US was their "duty" in order to care for their children. Gloria, a first-generation Nicaraguan migrant, reiterated this concept. Gloria explained that she and her family were "doing well" in Nicaragua, but due to the infiltration of the Sandinistas (political militants), she fled to the US solely to protect her children. Otherwise, she said, she would not have migrated:

For me my motivation to cross was my kids. So my motivation was that, I came here to work so I could find a way to then bring my kids here. People were taking kids. They would take them to join militias, the war, even if the kids were young they gave them rifles...So that's why I came over here, otherwise I never would have come, because I was doing well in my country.

Also politically motivated, Fredda's mother chose to migrate to the US in order to safeguard her children. Fredda, a 1.5-generation Nicaraguan migrant explains,

One of the new laws was that if you were in 10th grade you could not move forward to 11th or 12th grade or graduate, unless you served 2 years in the field. And that meant like carrying an AK47 or some kind of big gun up in the field and a lot of the girls and even guys came back, um hurt or raped or pregnant or didn't come back or they came back dead. [So my mom told me] "I'm sorry you're gonna go," you know because she saw what was happening to my friends. And the neighbor's kids and stuff so she got me to umm, I had to leave the country.

In an example of return migration still motivated by the protection of her children, Vanessa, a second-generation Mexican migrant discussed her aunt's decision to go back to Mexico to give birth to her sons. She did this, Vanessa explained, so that they wouldn't be recorded for the US military draft: "Back then, because of the draft here [in the US] my aunt, when she had her younger kids, she would go back to Mexico and have the kids and then come back and cross because she didn't want her sons to be on record to be sent to the military." Vanessa explains

that as a mother, her aunt wanted to shield her children from military service in the US, so she crossed back to the US with her children once they were born in Mexico.

Other participants discussed their mother's motivations for migration as related to an interest in their child's well-being. Benito, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, claims: "My mom, still has that, that same passion that she had when she crossed the border: I want something for me and my kids. You can see the hunger." Just as Benito described his mother's desire to provide her children with a better life by crossing to the US, Violeta, a first-generation Nicaraguan migrant, lamented that she migrated to the US, leaving her child behind in Nicaragua, but explained that, "it's the sacrifice we make" to be able to provide for our children.

Narratives regarding fatherly motivations for migration revealed that fathers were comparatively more invested in providing economic stability for their children and ensuring their children can be economically successful for themselves. Ana, a 1.5-generation migrant, is an example. Ana discussed how her father explained his reasons for migrating: "Well my dad just always said that he wanted us to have ... access to a better education... you know, he wanted to be able to provide a home for us." Ana positioned her father's decision to migrate as relative to his status as a parent: he wanted to provide a home for his children and the opportunity for educational advancement, thus leading to their own financial independence. Further supporting this narrative, Ana described a time when her father used the return to their country of origin for her sister as punishment, a parenting tactic as well as an illustration of her parent's motivation to migrate. Ana said her sister was, "the rebel child" and that her father was "so upset at her behavior and her decision-making that they decided, you know what, ... you're not here doing what, what we are asking of you and you're not here doing what was the purpose of us coming

here so you're just gonna have to go back." Ana's sister was then sent back to Mexico for a short time with the intention of encouraging a change in her behavior.

Conclusion

Participants expressed motivations for migration that align with traditional theories of migration: economic advancement and the pursuit of a "better life." Gender, however acts as a structuring agent shaping one's opportunity and motivation to migrate. Men predominantly reported crossing to the US as a tactic that allowed them to send remittances back to their families and make other financial gains, while also fulfilling an expected rite of passage. Women, on the other hand, used migration mainly as a mechanism for family reunification. Though family reunification is often considered a secondary motivation to economic migration (Parrenas 2001), participants' narratives reveal that they are not passive actors in the decision-making process. Instead, they asserted agency and invoked their self-perception as wives and mothers to influence their choice to migrate. This parental stimulus for migration extended to use migration as a means to ensure their children's safety when confronted with violence in their countries of origin and to provide for their children's well-being by providing them with a "better life." For men, this motivation for migration spilled over to their role as fathers in as much as they saw it as their duty to provide, financially, for their children.

CHAPTER 5. PRE-MIGRATION COMMUNICATION

They told me I would have to walk, but they never said it would be as much as it was.

- Eduardo, first-generation Mexican migrant

Eduardo, a first-generation Mexican migrant, crossed the border as an adult at the urging of his wife, who remained in Mexico with their two small children, and kin who had already migrated to the United States. Driven by the advice and relayed experiences of his brother-in-law and other relatives, Eduardo employed the services of a *coyote*, or smuggler, and anticipated a smooth crossing to the US. As his quote above indicates, Eduardo was dismayed once he embarked upon his journey and discovered how physically demanding the crossing was and had to face the many challenges he encountered along the way. During his crossing, Eduardo was separated from members of his group, missed opportunities to cross successfully because he chose to help a fellow migrant, had several mishaps when trying to cross a river in a rowboat, walked for hours across a hot desert, and laid on the floor of a van with layers of fellow migrants piled on top of him. Eduardo complained that his pre-migration communication with people in his network in no way prepared him for his crossing.

Many men participants shared Eduardo's sentiment, but women spoke of their experiences differently; a divide existed between men and women in how they talked about information they received pre-migration. Men were more likely to claim they received what they deemed false information directly from friends and family, while women spoke of receiving the majority of their pre-migration information from generic media sources. Social networks and transnational communication play an important role in encouraging migration (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Singer and Massey 1998; Palloni, Massey, Espinosa, Spittel 2001). Women's lack of personal communication about migration experiences prior to crossing impacted both them and their children. Almost all 1.5-generation migrant participants crossed

with either both parents or solely their mothers. Among those participants old enough to remember pre-crossing and crossing experiences, all express having been told little to nothing about what to expect during their crossings. Similar to men who received information from friends and family prior to crossing, participants who crossed with their mothers or both parents as children spoke of feeling underinformed or unprepared for the realities of the experience.

Encouragement and Disillusionment

Men and Pre-Migration Information

Social networks and communication between those who have migrated and potential migrants shape the likelihood of migration and/or the experiences of those who choose to migrate (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003; Dreby 2009; Carlson, Jakli, and Linos 2018). Among those first-generation migrant participants, how these communications and/or encouragements to migrate affected participants differed based upon gender. Men disproportionately indicated that before they left for their first crossing, they had consulted with or been encouraged by friends and family who had already crossed themselves. Participants claimed these conversations generally focused upon recommendations for *coyotes*, the basic dangers of desert/mountain walking like protection from various insects and animals, scarce drinking water, harsh environmental elements, the presence of border patrol agents, and the financial rewards of working in the US. However, they often expressed that these pre-migration conversations placed less emphasis on the dangers of border crossing and, instead, worked to place the specter of a better life, financial success—the American dream—before them.

Due at least in part to this encouragement, many first-generation men migrant participants chose to make the journey northward. Yet, what they encountered during their crossings and upon their eventual arrival to their US destination, was quite different from what

they had anticipated. They reflected that pre-migration conversations with friends and family who had themselves crossed did not accurately depict the risks/dangers of border crossing, nor the reality of financial success in the US. In fact, several expressed a sense of disillusionment and anger regarding the pre-crossing information they received. In addition to Eduardo as presented above, Cristo and Daniel, articulated feeling encouraged by friends and family at the outset of their crossing experience but soon felt frustrated and betrayed when faced with the realities of the harshness of border crossing and the difficulty of arrival in the US.

Cristo, a first-generation Mexican migrant who crossed with the aid of a *coyote* for the first time at age 19, explains that when he spoke to his brothers and cousins who had previously crossed, they warned him that he may encounter snakes in the desert, that there would be a lack of drinking water during his walk, and to be careful not to drown in the river. At the same time, they told Cristo, “there was lots of money to be made...so much money.” When comparing these pre-crossing conversations to his actual experiences, Cristo spoke of feeling frustrated and angry, claiming that his brothers and cousins had lied to him. The reality of crossing the border and settlement in the US is, according to Cristo, all “suffering.” His crossing experience through the desert was brutal. He was caught by border patrol who dragged him through the dirt, humiliated him, and provided very little food or water. Upon arrival in the US, Cristo said finding a job was a challenge and that his family gave him minimal time to begin paying rent and helping to cover other bills. Overall, he says, he felt betrayed:

People tell you lies, that you’ll arrive and be making lots of money. And no, you get here and you suffer, it’s all work, sometimes there’s no food, you have to pay rent, bills, and with a job like [washing dishes that doesn’t pay well] ... sometimes people just get frustrated and want to go back to Mexico because of it all.

When Cristo asked his brothers why they lied, “They said well, there was nothing to say. They said they lied so that I would come...they wanted me to come over here so I could work, so I could help my parents [back in Mexico].”

Daniel, a first-generation migrant from Brazil who crossed with the help of a *coyote* at age 22, spoke of similar experiences. He explained that he crossed because his friends had “teased” him about not joining them in the US. When his friends described what he might encounter while crossing, Daniel reflects, they deemphasized the overall danger: “They told me I was gonna cross the river. It would be like swimming or in a small boat... They told me that I might walk a little bit...” Daniel suggests that his friends intentionally withheld the truth about what he might confront at the border. His friends would say, “it’s easy to come over, you know, you just got to make good money, you can stay for two years or four years and then you can go back...you can just go home and buy your own house.” Yet, Daniel conveyed feeling aggravated by his lack of preparedness for the atrocities he endured throughout his actual border crossing:

They never told me about big trucks with trailers, staying stuck in there, they never-I never knew we were gonna walk to these pick-up trucks [and ride] in the back for the whole night and then walk for another day. They never told me we would have to be stuck in hotels and – in a house where it could be dangerous, we could be kidnapped at or [worse].

At one point in his crossing, Daniel said he was stuck in the back of a trailer with many other migrants with no fresh air and no food or water for hours; exhausted and without facilities such that fellow migrants were urinating and defecating around, and once, on him. Moreover, he asserted that finding a well-paying job was incredibly difficult and that making and saving money during his first three to four years in the US was a challenge. Daniel asserted that he felt deceived by his friends. He says that he knows his friends lied to him because otherwise he wouldn’t have made the journey:

I believe [if] they [told] me, I would not come. I would stay in Brazil... if they [told] me, 'oh you're gonna face this and that,' I would not come. I mean I would try a different way – try the visa, or if I have to leave Brazil, I could go to another [country]. I have friends in England [and] in Spain, I could do other different things instead of come through Mexico.

Sentiments of frustration were disproportionately present in men's narratives, but some women first-generation migrants spoke of them, too. Esperanza, for example, a first-generation Guatemalan migrant who crossed independently at age 29, explained that she had a friend who travelled back and forth from Guatemala to the US frequently and who emphasized the ease with which one could cross the border. Esperanza remembers her friend saying, "look, I go, I come, there's no problems." The friend continued to explain to Esperanza that she knew a *coyote* that would cross them for free and that whenever she wanted to return home, she could turn herself in to immigration and be deported back to Guatemala. When Esperanza asked her friend why she should migrate, the friend "painted a picture" of success in the US, encouraging Esperanza to, "claim something [she didn't] have [in Guatemala]."

It wasn't until Esperanza had embarked for the US that she realized the difficulty of both crossing and settlement in the US. Esperanza's crossing experience was tumultuous, having been abandoned, robbed, and left helpless. Unlike Cristo and Daniel, however, she said that on her journey, she encountered individuals who told her the truth, which was that as a woman migrant traveling alone, she would, "endure betrayals, abuse, a lot of things, even death." Despite these warnings, she remained disillusioned by the encouragement she had previously received from her personal networks regarding crossing and life in the US:

Sometimes they go and lie to us and it's not okay because you come being fooled. If they spoke the truth maybe we would think twice about coming. I had suffered there [in Guatemala] but nothing like I have suffered now here [in the US], and on the way here. But they never talk about that, they never say anything about that.

Cristo, Daniel, and Esperanza are among the majority of first-generation migrants who indicated conversations with fellow migrants successfully encouraged them, at least in part, to migrate. Studies have found that migrants look to rumors about migration and stories from other migrants to anticipate and contextualize their own (potential) migrant experiences (Hondagneu-Sotelo's 1994; Dreby 2009; Soehl and Waldinger 2010; Carlson, Jakli, and Linos 2018). The majority of work done in this area has regarded migrants gathering information who had already made the decision to migrate, however, Cristo, Daniel, and Esperanza, claim to have felt indecisive or ambivalent about migrating before discussing the possibility with their friends and family. Additionally, without knowing what those encouraging friends and family members actually encountered during their own crossing, it is impossible to gauge the extent of their reality distorting. What can be assessed is the degree to which participants interpreted the stories of those friends and family members as false or intentionally misleading after having migrated themselves.

All participants who credited these pre-migration conversations for their decision to migrate were encouraged to do so by conversations with individuals of the same gender (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003). Moreover, all participants who claimed to have received direct—albeit presumed inaccurate—pre-migration communications from migrant kin¹¹, were men with the exception of one woman. Men migrants tend to cross for the first time in pursuit of economic gain (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Chomsky 2014) and often do so in their late teens/early twenties as single adults and as a rite of passage (Hondagneu-Sotelo's 1994; Chomsky 2014). In this way, they do not have their own personal experiences to rely upon, but must therefore seek guiding

¹¹ Excluding married couples. Pre-migration communication between couples was not addressed during enough interviews to be included here.

knowledge from friends and family who have already crossed themselves. The fact that men migrants seem to receive pre-crossing communications that are overly optimistic and encouraging may shape their choice and opportunities to migrate. Certainty among the participants in this study, the promise of an easy crossing, a place to settle upon arrival, and financial rewards by their kin, swayed their decision to migrate. Esperanza, the only woman participant who endured this same experience was a migrant who followed an atypical path for women migrants. Women migrants tend to cross more frequently as part of family reunification, but even if they do so independently, they tend to use more protected methods such as false documents of friends and family when passing through a point of entry or using a higher-cost, more secure *coyote* rather than crossing through the desert by foot (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Chomsky 2014). However, Esperanza crossed independently and at the urging of a friend. A single mother, Esperanza had few, if any, familial ties in Guatemala or in the US and was crossing with the intent of raising money to support her two children. Esperanza's experiences, therefore, left her to depend on the advice of a friend as she had no prior experiences or family resources upon which to rely.

“You hear about...”

Generic Speculation and Pre-Migration Information Among Women

Other first-generation migrants spoke in generalities about any pre-migration information they received. While some men did mention acquiring information through speculation, hear-say, or media, the majority of participants who discussed obtaining information through generic sources were women. Moreover, women disproportionately claimed to have received most of their information through unidentified or media sources. Unlike those migrants who received information from people they knew personally and trusted and by whom they felt betrayed when

confronted with the reality of crossing and life in the US, migrants who received information from generic sources expressed feeling more apprehensive about their migration experience before crossing.

Claudia, a first-generation Mexican migrant who crossed independently at age 24, explains that before she left for the US, she “had heard” that women were “exposed to being violated” during their crossing experiences. Claudia did not explain from where she had heard this information, but implied that it was common knowledge or gossip. Additionally, she said that while crossing she had encountered fellow migrants who knew people who were “robbed and who were abused [and who were] victims of human trafficking,” but that she herself had not met anyone who had experienced such violence first hand. When asked if she had any advice or guidance from friends or family who had previously crossed, she says that they, “never talked about that.” She continues,

[My family] never offered help. So, I thought if they weren't offering help, I didn't need to bother them or that they couldn't help. So, I did it alone ... So, it was frightening. There was a lot of fear, it was something unfamiliar maybe it didn't take me long, but it was always like ‘What’s going to happen?’

Claudia suggested that if she had “help” or even verbal guidance or reassurance from kin who had previously crossed, she might have felt better prepared or have crossed with less trepidation.

Carmen, a first-generation Mexican migrant who crossed with her two children at age 25, expressed that she was concerned for herself and her children because she had heard stories, from undisclosed sources, again, implying that the stories are common knowledge or gossip, and seen movies and TV programs about women and children being abducted:

Well the danger for me was that someone was going to grab us, because there are always bad people who are around there. *You hear about* people being assaulted that are going to cross by the *coyotes* and sometimes, in movies or on television too, and I thought about that. "What if they assault us? or what if they hurt us? or what if they kill us? or if they take my girls?" I thought about that. That's why I always kept them really close to me. I

was conscious of the danger, but I always thought “My God, I hope nothing happens.”
[emphasis added]

Other women migrants mentioned things they had “heard” before their crossing that caused them great anxiety. Teresa, a first-generation Mexican migrant, says that she had “heard” on the news about migrant women encountering sexual abuse and getting hurt or killed on what she calls “the train of death” (“el tren de la muerte” – popularly known as the beast). Gloria, a first-generation Nicaraguan migrant, said that no one told them to bring water but now she hears that people leave water out for migrants so they don’t die of thirst. Women participants who expressed these seemingly small examples of what appear to be asides in conversation, alluded to the apprehension this knowledge caused them to feel pre-migration. Claudia and Carmen, in particular, but women participants more broadly, expressed a sense of uncertainty and unchecked fear.

Very few male participants acknowledged acquiring information regarding the dangers of border crossing from a generic or media source. This finding corroborates much of the literature on communication and migration reinforcing the deeply gendered nature of communication (Aries 1987; Marston 2004). Scholars have found that cross-border communication works to restrict women’s behavior. Derby (2009) asserts that while both men and women can be subject to transnational gossip, messages are more intensely focused on women’s roles as caretakers and frame women who do not fulfill their wifely and motherly duties as reckless. Moreover, by the time women cross, they are likely already wives and/or mothers, whereas men may have likely already crossed several times before becoming a husband and/or father. This means that when women cross for the first time, they have the well-being of their family at stake and no prior crossing knowledge. When men cross for the first time, they are more likely single and therefore carry less responsibility and are less likely to have children in tow (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

The experience of participants in this study show that pre-migration communication differs by gender, which may in turn influence a structure that pre-determines one's opportunities and choice to migrate. Women, receiving more generic information, gendered information about danger from popular culture, and feeling less prepared for their crossing, may be more hesitant to cross and less able to effectively prepare their children for their migrant journeys, for example while men, encouraged and buffered by people's assurances that the journey is simple, might be more willing to cross and better prepared to support children crossing. Women, however, largely bore the burden of crossing with children or helping children get to the US safely, often in the name of family reunification.

Crossed as Children

The majority of 1.5-generation migration participants who crossed as children did so either with both parents or with their mothers only. Even for those who crossed with both parents, they expressed having spent their time during their crossing at their mother's side and looked to their mother's for information before and during their crossings. Most participants who crossed at an age at which they would remember pre-migration and crossing experiences claimed to have been told little to nothing in preparation for their crossing. Others remember some coaching as they were to cross at a border entry point. Overall, however, there was a sentiment that they felt underinformed and surprised by their crossing experiences.

Lucy, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant who crossed with her mother and siblings at age 11, expressed that her crossing experience was, "confusing" because her mother told her that, "it was just gonna be a little walk, and then a little walk turned into a half day." She explains that she doesn't remember having been told about the dangers of the desert—encountering snakes or border patrol, but they did have a long, difficulty journey. Fredda, a 1.5-generation Nicaraguan

migrant who crossed at age 16 with mother and sister, said that she had no idea what she would encounter when crossing the border. When asked if she was aware of the dangers of border crossing, she responded with, “Nope... Absolutely not, completely clueless.”

Estela, 1.5-generation migrant from El Salvador who crossed with her mother, sister, and brother at age 12, expresses frustration that she wasn't told anything until her crossing journey had begun:

Nobody told me anything. Nobody told me anything about any dangers. I just learned it when I got to, when, when I crossed the border... They instructed me, my mother, my sister, and my brother that there's been a, uh, snake, could be any ants, red ants. You know, they were instructing us, there was animals danger animals and crazy people but because we were smaller, the smaller group because we're, we don't face those big dangers because [the *coyote* said he would be walking with us].

Estela's crossing experience was particularly difficult. She and her sister were separated from their mother and the *coyotes* cared for them until they reunited with their mother later. It was traumatic in that they were chased by border patrol, there were helicopters, they were hungry, thirsty, tired and without their mother and concerned for her safety. Estela repeated several times throughout her narrative that she would like to have better informed. In fact, she believes that her mother would not have crossed with her children had she known what they would encounter. Moreover, this lack of pre-migration knowledge affected her and her mother so much that, coupled with their crossing experience, they discourage anyone they talk to in their country of origin seeking to migrate. Estela asserts that she is sure to convey the dangers one may encounter during their migration.

Other participants claimed to have received at least some pre-migration communication to prepare them for their crossing. Andrea, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant who crossed with her mother, sister and brother at age 12, said she was coached about what she would encounter at the border before she crossed in a car with false documents: “I was taken to a different house and

from there um they basically, I, umm they gave me someone's paperwork, I mean, passport or something like that to pass through a car. So, I had to learn like basically my age and where I was from in English.” Similarly, Alexi, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant who crossed first at age 4 with her mother and sister, then again at age 12 with her aunt, remembers pre-crossing coaching during her second crossing. Alexi was taken through the Tijuana border checkpoint in a vehicle with her aunt, an American citizen, using her cousin’s passport. Alexi’s aunt told her that she had to memorize her cousin’s name and age as if they were her own and to, “speak perfect English. No Spanish.”

Participants overall expressed that the pre-migration communication between mothers and children did not adequately prepare them for their crossing. Although some participants did receive guidance, this was only in cases where the child was almost certain to come into contact with a border patrol agent as the child was crossing at a check point. Keeping pre-migration conversations to a minimum may be intentional on the mother’s behalf. Mothers may think that children either cannot understand what they are to encounter or that providing information may frighten the children. My analysis suggests, however, that this lack of communication could also stem from the lack of information a mother has acquired for herself, pre-crossing. As she is not likely to have crossed yet herself, she relies on the stories of those around her and, as participants here expressed, collects news from generic sources which may not allow her to confidently speak to her children about their impending crossing.

Conclusion

Participants expressed general disappointment in the pre-migration communications regarding what to expect during their crossing. Men crossing for the first time were encouraged by their male peers who had already successfully migrated. Yet, the information they received

left them feeling betrayed and disillusioned because what they encountered on their journey and upon settlement in the US was quite different than what they had been led to believe. Women migrants disproportionately received information about their migration experience from generic sources: via media or hear-say. The majority of the information they received was threatening, unsubstantiated, and vague leaving them nervous and unsure about what to expect during crossing. Participants who migrated as children, crossing with their mothers, reported only receiving that information necessary to aid them if they were to encounter a border patrol agent when crossing with false documents. Other participants who crossed as children claimed to have received no information about their crossing at all, leaving one participant so frustrated that she now is sure to tell any potential migrant with whom she speaks to stay in their country of origin if crossing clandestinely is their only option.

Gender shapes the opportunity to migrate. If pre-migration communication is conducted differently by gender, as is found here, this may additionally shape migration choices and experiences by gender. While men disproportionately shared bitterness around feeling duped by friends/family who shared information with them about crossing the border, women's experiences with pre-migration information left them comparatively underprepared. Women, were generally forced to piece together advice independently, via hear-say or from media sources, therefore, they expressed feeling less prepared and experienced more anxiety and fear, pre-migration, than men did. This sense of uncertainty spilled over to impact their children. As mothers felt poorly equipped and lacked confidence in what to expect when crossing, they were unable to prepare their children for their journeys. Overall, then women's lack of access to networks of information left them in a more disadvantaged position than men when it came to the act of border crossing.

CHAPTER 6. POST-MIGRATION COMMUNICATION

[I] feel that it could be traumatic and it's just such a crazy experience that I don't know if they want to relive it through stories.

- Viviane, a second-generation Mexican migrant

Oh yeah, I absolutely do [plan to talk to them about my crossing experience]. I talk to them about it [now] and I tell them. I say shoot when I become a grandma, I said, I got stories for my grandkids.

- Fredda, a 1.5-generation Nicaraguan migrant

Viviane and Fredda express two different perspectives on the sharing of crossing stories in their post-migration lives. Viviane speaks of a silence around border crossing stories in her family and suggests it might be due to the trauma of people's experiences. Fredda, on the other hand, speaks of a commitment to telling her children and even grandchildren about what she went through. The co-existence of these two narratives is found in (mostly) women participants' perspectives. Relatedly, a commitment to (or avoidance of) storytelling, post-migration, is conveyed by (mostly) women participants and is tied to gender and has gendered implications for migrant's post-crossing lives.

As Chapter 5 made clear, prior to immigration, there was a gap between men and women's experiences with information gathering about the crossing process. Men disproportionately spoke of getting advice and even encouragement to cross the border from people in their social networks, of it being expected of them almost as a rite of passage. Women, on the other hand, spoke of getting crossing information from generic sources such as news media and/or pop culture. This exposed women to higher levels of fear and anxiety about crossing because their sources are laden with gendered messages about women's vulnerability, particularly to sexual assault (Riger and Gordon 1981). Alternatively, it protected men from fear and anxiety, but left many of them feeling jaded by what they interpreted as false or misleading information offered by peers about crossing and about life in the US.

Post-migration, a near-reverse pattern emerged, where men typically did not talk at all about sharing their crossing stories—whether in reality or in ideas about their future obligations to kin and future generations—and women consistently brought the topic up in conversation. In this segment of their interviews, women (and one or two men) respondents typically emphasized two contradictory themes, often in the same interview. First, they emphasized the lack of frequency with which crossing stories were shared, which they often attributed to one of three things: a) the pain caused by remembering such traumatic events, b) an affinity for migrants to be forward-looking rather than dwelling in the past, or c) crossing stories are so similar or were less intense than other's that they don't merit discussion. Second, they spoke of sharing crossing experiences with family if/when: a) the topic casually arose at a family gathering, b) they were pressed by external factors like politics or government institutions requiring such information, or c) for the purpose of family bonding.

In addition, women participants were also the only ones to speak of feeling a need or responsibility to communicate their experiences to future generations. Fredda, for example, expressed great enthusiasm for discussing her crossing experiences with her grandchildren. Having crossed as a child with her mother, fleeing civil unrest in Nicaragua, Fredda not only intends to communicate to her grandchildren about the hardship of growing up in a war-torn community—featuring corpses on open display and widespread famine, but also the difficulty she endured crossing the border. Fredda was separated from her mother during their journey and endured physical pains to complete the crossing. She wants her grandchildren to understand how fortunate they will be to grow up in a safe environment that offers opportunities for their future.

With the exception of two men participants—Benito who crossed with his parents as a child and was curious enough about his crossing story to ask his parents about it and Raul who

claims that he doesn't discuss crossing with friends/family—men participants didn't discuss sharing stories with kin; nor did they express having detailed knowledge of friends/family members who had crossed. Women were much more likely to have direct, comprehensive knowledge of stories of fellow (usually fellow woman) migrants. Moreover, the desire or intention to discuss crossing experiences with future generations did not arise in conversation with any men migrants but it was discussed extensively with most women migrants. Perhaps due to the gendered nature of emotional labor and the central role of women as keepers of culture (Daniels 1987; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Erickson 2005; Parrado and Flippen 2005; Hochschild 2012; Glenn, Chang, Forcey 2016), women migrants were more invested in, expected to, and sought out conversations regarding crossing experiences for their own and the wellbeing of friends and family.

Avoiding Crossing Story Sharing

Gloria, a first-generation Nicaraguan migrant, stopped in the middle of recounting a portion of her story and pronounced: "It's difficult, it's very hard to even talk about it." Likewise, Claudia, a first-generation Mexican migrant became disinclined to expand upon the basic overview of her crossing story because, she says, the experience was a, "nightmare." Later, in her account, it became clear that Claudia was not only reluctant to share her story, but that she was actually unable to do so. She explains, "I don't remember a lot because my brain has blocked it out because of the trauma I received." Claudia continued:

...when I came here, many sad things happened. A lot of things have happened to me. However, I feel that I'm still not well prepared or ready to talk about this. I'm only giving you the main things of what my trip was like, what the journey was, how I arrived. But a lot of things happened, but I would prefer not to remember them because it causes me a lot of sadness and pain.

While Claudia was unique in her inability to divulge crossing details during the interview, her reaction is illustrative of the intense emotion that discussing such traumatic experiences can prompt (Van der Kolk 2015) and provides context for why crossing stories may not be openly shared amongst kin members. Many of the respondents who spoke about a lack of discussion of crossing stories drew on this logic to explain why people did not talk about them.

Benito, a first-generation Mexican migrant, for example, described his impressions when asking his parents about their crossing: "[They] would rather not talk about it, like they, every time I ask questions, they, I can see the sadness in their faces and I'd just rather not keep asking, you know." Similarly, Vanessa, a second-generation Mexican migrant, considered whether family members prefer to avoid a re-telling of their crossing because it would be too emotional for them and/or it would evoke unsolicited pity. She wondered, "if it's bad experiences that they don't [want to] relive or go through or really tell us about so that we don't feel sorry or sad for them." "I don't know," Vanessa continued, "if it's like an emotional thing? I do know as my dad gets older, he starts to talk about more and more, and for him, it's emotional."

Just as Benito and Vanessa both draw on rare migration-based exchanges with family members to understand how these discussions affect them, so too, did Isa, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, rely on conversations with her parents to understand how her family frames their crossing experiences. Isa explained that when family members do talk about their crossing, they represent it as an "adventure." She was curious, though, if the adventure narrative is drawn upon because the crossing stories are "too traumatic" to discuss otherwise and, since the majority of her family has already crossed and do not plan to do so again, the adventure narrative frames their crossings as a journey endured in order to advance in life.

Implicit in Isa's family's adventure narrative runs an undercurrent of forward-looking sentiment that is shared by other participants. This was a second theme in how people (mostly women) explained the lack of discussion of crossing stories in their families. Several expressed that the aversion to sharing migration experiences, in addition to the painful emotional component, is a desire to not—as Nicole a second-generation Mexican migrant put it, “dwell” on the past or on, “experiences that they may have considered negative.” Andrea, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant who crossed at age 12, for example, said she considered her own crossing memories to be, “emotionally heavy.” Upon explaining the scarcity of details she thought she could provide about her crossing experience, Andrea stated that she might have “blocked it out” because she doesn't want to remember it. She explained that she would rather look to the positive things that happened after the act of migration. She sees her crossing as the beginning of a new life for herself and her family because her migration, “was basically like the starting point of [her] life now.” She continued to describe how her life in Mexico, her life before she crossed, is so far in her past that she doesn't experience it as part of her current reality:

...like the life before is more like a dream you know? Like all of the people that we left behind that we haven't been able to see, like it's more like a dream then like from then on like it's more, like, OK this is where we are this is who I am this is the point where I'm going to do for the rest of my life like, you know? Like how much I'm going to struggle and like how much I'm going to, I don't know... Maybe that's why I don't recall a lot of, you know, whatever the experience was.

Similar to Isa's narrative above, Andrea's statement here is a focused on the future. She doesn't think about her crossing experience and life before she migrated because what has since been most salient to her and her family, is successfully settling and living their lives in the US.

A final reason respondents provided for the lack of storytelling within families about crossing experiences is that they didn't merit retelling. Some, like, Ximena, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, argued that the stories did not bear retelling because they are all so similar.

She referred to her knowledge about her family's crossing experience by explaining, "I don't really know much about their experience because they're all the same." Correspondingly, Raul, a first-generation Mexican migrant, identified that among his family, they don't discuss their crossing because, "it's normal for us to know that the whole family is leaving, it becomes normal after so many people [cross]...everybody just knows." For Ximena and Raul, along with other participants, so many members in their kinship networks endured such similar experiences, that their families saw little need to revisit those experiences. (Though, as will be discussed later, when asked when stories of migration do come up, other participants state that it is because of the commonality in the stories that their experiences are discussed; a compare-and-contrast sharing scenario).

In other instances, however, participants felt that their own stories were so uneventful, so fortunate, and/or significantly less tragic than those of friends and family members, that they withhold from sharing them. Christine, a 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant, for example, said she refrains from discussing crossing with others because she didn't have to "sacrifice" the way many do:

... for me, speaking about my experience and comparing it as opposed to the experiences that I- I know a lot of other people have had ...I guess I almost feel like my experience, not only because I was a child when it happened, but also because how my experience was and the process in which I came, I don't know it almost feels like ... my experience doesn't really, add to the pain that many people talk about when they come to this country, you know? Like it's- I don't feel like I had to sacrifice ... so I don't know I just kinda feel like, maybe I don't feel like I have anything to add to it.

Few, but notable, participants framed the scarcity of crossing conversations among family and friends as an issue of pride. The implication here is that more recent immigrants are inferior to those who had crossed longer ago, or not at all (second- or third-generation migrants), due to the timing of the hardship experienced. Maribel, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, depicted this

phenomenon as she has witnessed it among her friends and family. Maribel began with the assertion that individuals may be reluctant to share stories due to the pain of remembering:

“They would not talk about it ‘cause if they got raped, they got robbed, or something happened...nobody wants to talk about it.” Then, she outlined the common crossing dialogue:

It’s mostly just like, ‘oh, how did you cross? how was it- how was it when you crossed? Oh, that’s good! Anything else? Nope! Everything’s done.’ ... Everybody is ashamed, like, oh, you crossed?! ... They- everybody- well, it’s- it’s a Latino thing, like, everybody wants to feel superior than the other person and nobody likes to say their things. Like, those are personal things that nobody has to know because that makes you lower than them.

However, Maribel then stressed that if/when crossing stories are shared, the types of details that elicit reactions are those that are funny, light, or optimistically unique. She used herself as an example. When she crossed with her mother at eight years old, Maribel was crying because she was tired and hungry. To calm her, her mother kept promising her that they were going to get cheese pizza, Maribel’s favorite meal. During their journey, however, they were caught by border patrol who, Maribel described as “rude” and “mean.” While detained, Maribel said she continued to cry and cry. Upon being asked by border agents why she wouldn’t stop crying, she told them that she was hungry and wanted cheese pizza. Maribel, laughing, continued her story, “He did. He did [bring] me a pizza. He brought me a cheese pizza and he didn’t allow anybody to eat but my mom and me.” Maribel explained that when speaking with family about her crossing, they only focus on the pizza portion of the story, they don’t want to hear about the hostility of the border patrol or other challenges faced:

Everybody knows. And they love the stor- they love, like, to hear that I was able to get my pizza...if I tell them the whole story, that’s the only thing that they’ll keep is that- that I was able to [eat my pizza]...That they were nice enough to do that for me. And everything else, nobody cares.

Participants' (again, mostly women) narratives in this section demonstrate how reluctant migrants can be to share their crossing stories with kin. This finding may shed light on why both women and men migrants expressed frustration and dismay at the pre-migration communication they received or did not receive from those who have already crossed. If migrants are unwilling to speak with those closest to them—friends and family—then they would likely be equally if not more unwilling to speak about the traumas of border crossing with people in their extended friend and family networks who are located in a different country. As can be seen in the next section, respondents argued that crossing stories were only shared when they served a function in a familial setting.

Experiences Sharing Crossing Stories

Most women (and a few men) spoke of a lack of storytelling within families and offered multiple reasons for why stories are withheld. At the same time, however, women respondents disproportionately reported experiences with sharing stories, propelled by two different contextual factors: When crossing stories are intentionally shared with kinship members, it most often occurs during a family gathering when relatives are reminiscing or discussing politics. What participants know about other's migrant's experiences are very gendered: Men tended to know little about others' journeys, including immediate family members, while women tended to know a lot about many fellow migrants' experiences, including both friends and family.

Family Gatherings

Cynthia, a second-generation Nicaraguan migrant, said her extended family rarely gather but when they do, conversations regarding migration and crossing-experiences arise. She asserted that her family is generally “forward-looking” but that discussing their past is “like a catharsis for them.” She explained that through these interactions, “They’re just bleeding out

whatever they don't talk about on a regular basis." Abril, a second-generation Mexican migrant, said crossing stories come up at family gatherings as well. Just recently, her brother-in-law crossed the border, clandestinely, and during a gathering he (tried) to share his story with the family:

Uh it's just kind of common. It was like on a Sunday that everybody gets together he was just like 'oh yeah..'. Well, they asked him, they were like 'how was it?' and they were like, because he's kind of an athletic guy and I'm like, 'I bet it was easy' but he was like no it was, he was like, 'it was really hard it's nothing compared to the first time when we came'. He's like, and then he was just like, couldn't explain it. He was just like 'yeah'.

Though Abril states that it is common for these conversations to happen, no other participant shared this sentiment. What is common, however, is the inability or discomfort in actually speaking about the experience (as outlined above). Relatedly, some participants claim that conversations around their own crossing or that of family members have only recently surfaced due to political rhetoric in the media. Of note here is that Abril's brother-in-law, as a man migrant, tried to convey his crossing story yet couldn't, reinforcing the contradiction that men migrants seem capable of open border crossing discussions with individuals, pre-migration, but are less capable of doing so post-migration.

Crossing Stories Discussed due to External Factors

Relatedly, some participants claim that conversations around their own crossing or that of family members have only recently surfaced due to political rhetoric in the media. Laura and Estela, both 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrants, expressed increased conversations about their own crossing experiences with friends and family due to explicit stories in the news about recent immigration issues or increased border deaths. Other migrants expressed that recent political controversies have caused increased conversations regarding border crossing. Lucy, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, explains that President Trump's threat to abolish the Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) brought about renewed discussions around crossing experiences as her siblings are only just applying for DACA protections. Lucy stated, “Well, we kind of bring it up, and more now with all this immigration stuff sometimes we do talk about it.” Similarly, Malena, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, revealed that her family didn’t used to talk about their crossing experiences very “much because [all of her family members] are already here.” “But,” she continued, “they do talk about it now since, Trump is President. They just talk about how like all their sacrifices they’re gonna be like gone if he decides to like take all the Mexicans out.”

For these migrants, external prompting via political issues caused families to discuss crossing stories more openly. Likewise, several 1.5- and second-generation participants expressed learning about their family’s migrant histories due to personal curiosity and/or for school related assignments. Vanessa, a second-generation Mexican migrant, learned details of her father’s crossing when her own children asked him for help with a school project. Similarly, Malena had an elementary school family tree project that caused her to ask her parents about their crossings. Elizabeth had a cultural history assignment in college that prompted her to ask her parents about their migration histories.

Ana, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, had to wait much longer than elementary school to learn about her own and her parent’s crossings. In fact, she was unaware of her personal status in the country and her/her parent’s migration history until she was an adult applying for college. Ana explained that while, “my parents made it clear that our number one responsibility in this country, for coming to this country, was so that we could go to college,” that was the extent of their discussion regarding migration. When Ana applied to college, however, she learned that she needed a social security number. She didn’t understand why she didn’t have one and asked her

parents. This conversation was what prompted her parents to explain her citizenship status and share their crossing stories with her. Ana recalled,

I just remember my dad saying like, “you know, remember when we talked about like you weren’t born here? So, only people who are born here have [a social security number] and since you were not born here, you don’t have that ... And so, he reminded me like, “remember that time, like, when your mom said I was in Mexico?” Um, this is the time he got deported from the raid that happened at his job. He was like, “that’s why I got deported because we don’t have this number that’s like, you know, sort of a representation of you being here legally.

Ana’s father then went on to recount his post-deportation return crossing story to her—one she was hearing for the first time as an adult. In fact, each time Ana learned additional details of her parent’s crossing, she recollects, “it was because the government was asking.” Another time she learned details of her parent’s crossing was when her sister was robbed and needed police assistance. Ana described the interaction with the lawyers as one that was elucidating:

When my sister was robbed, uh, at gunpoint and my parents went to see the attorney. They asked every question on the book that I can remember. Um, ‘when did you cross?’, ‘how many times did you cross?’, ‘what year was it?’, you know, um, all these questions. And so, that’s sort of where I learned a lot about my parents that I had never asked before.

The third time her parents discussed their crossing with her, Ana was in an immigration course in college and was asked to outline how her family came to live in the US for an assignment. This conversation helped her understand more thoroughly her parent’s, and her own, crossing experiences. Outside of these three isolated conversations, prompted by outside sources requesting the information, Ana and her family rarely, if ever, discuss their crossing. Ana remarked, “[w]e just never talked about specific details about coming and sort of how that journey was coming here... We never sit down and say, hey we’re gonna talk about this now.”

Estela, a 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant, didn’t openly share her crossing story with anyone, including family, until her daughter prompted her by asking questions.

[My daughter] saw this movie from El Salvador named “Voces Inocentes...and after she saw the film she goes, “Mommy, how did you come to the United States?” ... it’s based on a true story [and] was about a twelve year old boy who... lives in those poor communities outside of San Salvador [and was involved in a shooting] and ... the friends of this little boy were, um, taken to the, to the military bases to be soldiers and uh, I didn’t have that same experience, but my daughter saw the film and she goes, “Mommy, how did you get to the United States?” And that is when I had to tell her my story.

Estela migrated to the US when she was 12 with her family, she was separated from her mother during her crossing, an experience that has made a lasting impression on her and she was reluctant to share her story openly, however, when her daughter approached her with her curiosity peaked from having watched the film *Voces Inocentes*, she was inspired to share her story.

As outlined above, several participants only learned stories about their family’s crossing or chose to share their own crossing stories in response to prompting in some form: politics, school assignments, legal requirements, media, traumatic events, or pop culture. Carmen, a first-generation Mexican migrant, on the other hand, has spoken with her children about their crossing in the past. She has shared with them her own crossing story as well as described their stories to them throughout their lives. Yet, she stresses, the topic has come up more frequently now that her daughter, who crossed as a 6-year-old child along with her 4-year-old sister, has children of her own.

Crossing Stories as a Bonding Mechanism

Carmen and her two daughters attempted to cross walking with help of a *coyote* through the desert. However, the eldest of her daughters was unruly, attracting the attention of border patrol who forced them to return to Mexico. Therefore, Carmen explained, she was encouraged by the *coyote* to have a different *coyote* cross her daughters separately in a vehicle through the Tijuana entry point with false documents. Their attempt using this method was successful, yet,

Carmen said that since becoming a mother, her eldest daughter questions how she could have trusted a stranger with her children under such circumstances. Her daughter tells her that she would never leave her children alone, that she “wouldn’t dare separate from them.” “So,”

Carmen clarified,

I tell her maybe I thought about it and I was scared but the [*coyote*] kept telling me it was going to be okay, and I was also very young.... Maybe when you're young you don't think a lot about the danger. You think about it, but you think it's not going to happen. Now you have more fear, and yes I do speak about [crossing] with them. I tell them and sometimes we laugh because I tell my daughter, the first time we crossed the hill. The oldest didn't want me to grab her hand. Sometimes she would go down running on her own. Sometimes the *coyote* would stop her ... So, she would wait, and then she would go ahead on her own - the oldest. So, sometimes we talk, and I tell her that and she laughs.

Once prompted, Carmen used her daughter’s questions as an opportunity to discuss their crossing, to share her rationale with her daughter for their mode of crossing, and then transformed the conversation into one in which she can bond with her daughters. Their shared experience, daunting for both Carmen and her daughters (as illustrated by her daughter’s questioning) was used later by her daughter as a way to understand her mother’s outlook and the challenges she faced at the time.

Using the opportunity of sharing crossing stories and one’s migrant history to bond with their children was not unique to Carmen. Other (mostly women) participants expressed a similar tactic. Cynthia, a second-generation Nicaraguan migrant, for example, emphasized the difference in how and when her parents shared their crossing stories with her. Both parents shared their experiences as a means of parent-child bonding. Her father would often use his migration experience as a way to justify Cynthia’s childhood and teen behavior saying that coming to the US allowed her, and the family overall, to embrace the less restrictive US culture (as compared to Nicaraguan culture) and be themselves. Her mother, conversely, perpetually emphasized Nicaraguan cultural values that Cynthia and her father both found restricting. In this vein, her

father would share his migrant experience openly and frequently. Alternatively, Cynthia's mother conveyed her story to Cynthia more decidedly. Her mother refrained from sharing her crossing experience until Cynthia was older. She did so with the intention of fostering a more profound bond with her daughter due to both a physical distance between them and the desire to build a more complex relationship with each other. Cynthia describes the conversation, prompted by her mother, as follows:

Well whenever she told me, she just wanted us to connect on a deeper level, right? But the way that she looks at it is, you know, having her oldest kid having moved away and ... like that- that physical distance is something that we're both coping with and so... she sees it more beneficial in order to have me as like a friend. Like a friend that she can talk to about stuff that she has gone through and stuff that she goes through now, better than just a vague relationship with both histories.

Sharing Crossing Stories with Future Generations

Drawing on their knowledge of having lived in the US for years and having either withheld their crossing stories or having had crossing stories withheld from them, women participants largely agreed that speaking to their children, grandchildren, and future generations overall was imperative. They saw this information sharing as important to: 1) ensure the longevity of their language, culture, and history, 2) to help future generations contextualize the privileges provided them by virtue of growing up in the US, and 3) to reinforce what previous generations have endured to ensure that their own lives and that of future generations are prosperous. No men participants spoke of a desire or need to share their crossing experiences with their children or grandchildren. In fact, the only time even women participants shared having heard the stories of a man migrant was if prompted – a daughter asking her father, as in Ana's or Vanessa's case above.

Sharing Crossing Stories to Reinforce Familial and Cultural History

Elizabeth, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, said that sharing her crossing story with her children is important so that they understand their heritage. Elizabeth provided an example:

Yeah. I do plan on saying it. I do um, sometimes when they don't want to speak to me in Spanish or like they're like 'why do we have to?' and I'm just like 'because you are Mexican-American' and they're like 'but Mexico's not here' and I'm like 'yes but your mother is Mexican, you were born in America, so you're Mexican-American'. I do try to explain [it] to them.

Elizabeth concluded with, "I do plan on telling them how- about my story. How I came to the United States."

Gigi, a second-generation Mexican migrant, intends to tell her daughter about her family's migration history with the purpose of helping her daughter to contextualize her own identity, steeping her within her cultural history and ensuring that she has perspective on the complexity of citizenship status and the privileges that accompany it. Although Gigi, herself, never crossed the border without documents, her husband has, and she recognizes how important it is for their daughter to understand who she is in relation to her father and other family members experiences:

I think what happens [is] that a lot of like, after you go into the second and third and fourth generation, that like, that gets lost...the whole, not only traditions and culture of like what you come from, but the whole fact that you're already born here so you don't have to worry about like, being undocumented...And um, I don't know how I'm gonna talk to her about it, you know? But, her dad is an immigrant. He came here without documents...So, I think that definitely needs to be you know, talked about. I don't know how I'm gonna do that. But, I think it's definitely gonna happen. It has to. You know? She needs to know, like the struggle of what her dad went through, and not only her dad, but like my family...So it's still gonna be very like present in our lives, you know?

Gigi expressed insecurity regarding her ability to effectively communicate the importance of her daughter's family history to her. She desires that her daughter will develop a sense of compassion toward the struggles of migrants especially considering her husband and other

family member's migrant status. Gigi articulated concern that an appreciation for the struggles of migrants and the realities they face are lost on future generations. Further, Gigi explained that she recognizes the privilege that her daughter experiences having been born in the US and it is important to Gigi, that her daughter understand and respect her elders and their origins:

I want her to understand what's going on and not think she's more- even though she's gonna be privileged, right? She already is. But, not kind of like get that- let that get to her, you know? And grow up- how I see other people that I'm like just because you're documented- now you, you have documents, you were born here, you kind of like forget about everything else that your whole family or that you have through to be here, you know? I don't want that to happen. I want her to understand her privileges that she's gonna have and that she already has, without forgetting what it costs some of us for her to have it. So, but I don't know how I'm gonna do that.

Corresponding to Gigi's goal, Viviane, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, also plans to share her family's migrant history with her children because she wants them to identify and empathize with the migrant struggle as part of their cultural history. Expounding on this sentiment, Vivian identified that her actual crossing experience may not have impacted her the way it would have if she crossed at an older age, but that her crossing history and their collective culture remains significant. Viviane identified the importance of transferring this history to her children so that they understand their origins. Viviane began by explaining that crossing as a two-year-old, "wasn't as life changing as if I would have come here if I was twelve or ten." She explained that she, "was still young enough where I was able to kind of, I think, gather some privilege and pass and like I feel like I was able to move through society much better than if I was older." Vivian recognizes her own privilege having been brought young enough that the impact—possible discrimination—of her being a migrant was minimal. But she wants to ensure that her children understand how she and her family, "got [to the US] to begin with." Vivian roots her family's origin in her own parents and her husbands' parent's migration, "so," she says her children need to know their grandparent's story:

...there, there's so much history in terms of like generations and generations of like crossing, I think it's, if they don't know that story that they may not empathize with the story, I mean I think that people are gonna continue to migrate ...[out of] necessity and if they don't understand my story or their grandparent's story, they're not gonna understand the struggle, um, and be able to support the struggle, understand why people are coming here still.

Crossing Stories Shared to Provide Perspective

Christine, a 1.5-generation Salvadorian migrant who was brought to the US by her parents at age seven, highlighted the need for future generations to understand the sacrifices that were made for them. She made it clear that she doesn't, "feel like [she] had to sacrifice," but that it is important to share the stories of those who have. Christine stated,

I think it is important for [my little sister] to know that if it wasn't for my parents sacrificing, my parents coming here to this country and everything, um, then she wouldn't have the opportunities that she has now in this country. And I mean, um, like going back to El Salvador...I saw just how people live in El Salvador, um, and just the conditions in which kids my own age found themselves in, and the lack of opportunities and the violence and, you know, all those things and I'm just so thankful... I wasn't raised in that sort of environment...I think it's important, like I said, for my sister and for my future children to know that because if I had never come to this country then I would be living in the same unfortunate conditions that a lot of people find themselves in in El Salvador.

In her narrative, Christine underscores the importance of an additional layer of perspective and awareness needed when encouraging second and third-generation migrants to understand their culture; that of life in their country of origin. Having visited El Salvador herself, she witnessed living conditions to which she compared her life in the US and more deeply understood and appreciated the "sacrifices" her parents made and the life they have forged upon settlement in the US. Christine is not singular in her assessment. Teresa, a first-generation Mexican migrant, and Ximena, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, along with several other participants in this study, stressed the importance of understanding conditions in their country of origin for children to

grasp the meaning of those decisions, sacrifices made by their parents and family members and to appreciate the comforts and opportunities of the lives they lead in the US.

Teresa said she has tried to explain to her son that his life in the US is good compared to the lives of friends and family in Mexico. She expressed frustration that he has a difficult looking for work and being productive. But, she said, “It’s not the same living it as telling people [about] it. I tell you, it’s hard.” Teresa struggles with conveying the realities of the life in Mexico she endured before migrating to the US, she considers that it is just too difficult for her son to understand since he hasn’t had to live that life himself.

Ximena, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, wants to share her crossing story with her son not only so that he understands his cultural history, but so that he can understand who she is as a person and how her migration experience has impacted/shaped her. She stated:

Definitely when he’s older I would like to tell him the story of what I remember, and even just like the last things, and the growth part, how I’ve grown into being who I am, and always like, remembering your roots and the values from over there.

Moreover, Ximena was very seriously considering sending her son to Mexico to live with her grandmother because she wanted him to be raised, “more in touch with their values and culture and tradition.” After he learns, “respect,” she said, he could come back to the US.

Using crossing stories as a way to express cultural values to children and for them to appreciate and understand how their experiences have shaped who they are was a common theme among participants. Maribel, a 1.5-generation Mexican migrant, shared a similar sentiment; she wants her children and grandchildren to know, “where [she’s] coming from.” Maribel says it’s important “because it’s part of [her].” She continued, “It’s part of me, I can’t take it away. They have to know my struggles.” Building upon her assertion that her migration history is fundamental to who she is as a person, Maribel accentuated that she could use her status as a

barrier for success. Instead, however, she insisted that her children internalize her perseverance under such circumstances and apply it to their own lives:

For my kids I always tell, like, ‘You have a choice in life. Who do you want to be?’ So, it’s like, I can- I have a million and one excuses to say ‘hey, I can’t support you guys I’ll be, um, receiving welfare ... and food stamps and everything because I’m not a legal person ... But no. I don’t like to do that. So, I study and I have a good job. I make a decent amount of money to support them and that’s why I tell them. You see, I have excuses, but no. It’s not gonna take us anywhere. So, you gotta choose, what are you gonna be?’

The responsibility these women participants feel to share their own border crossing stories, or those of their family members, with their children reinforces two things: First, their role as responsible caretakers and emotional laborers. Concerned with helping their children with school projects, being present and involved in communications at family gatherings, insisting on sharing family histories with children to provide context and perspective on their cultural worlds, and using migration stories to teach them lessons all fall within the realm of the domestic, emotional labor practiced extensively by women (Dill 1988; DeVault 1999; Parrado and Flippen 2005; Glenn, Chang, Forcey 2016). Second, that communicating post-migration stories may help them work through the anxiety and trauma they felt embarking upon their crossing with little to no information about what to expect (Pennebaker 2000; Kearney 2007). Talking through stories with kin connections, may prove cathartic for women migrants and allow them to build deeper connections within their family units.

Conclusion

Participants (mostly women) contradictorily shared narratives that demonstrated how crossing stories are simultaneously not discussed due to a migrant’s interest in avoiding the pain caused by a retelling of the story, a preference to focus on the future, and the perception that their story doesn’t merit telling; and yet are discussed at family gatherings and when prompted by

conversations about politics or the need for information from schools/government entities. Moreover, (women) participants articulate an express desire to share family crossing stories to inform their children of their cultural history, sense of identity, and to provide perspective of their privileged lives in the US. These finding may be illuminated when the amount of emotional labor and caretaking in which a woman conventionally engages is considered. As outlined in Chapter 5, women participants indicated a lack of information networks to provide them with direct knowledge of what to expect upon crossing the border. After crossing, women (and some men) participants express a reluctance to discuss their experiences or those of friends and family who have migrated. This in itself is emotional labor—dealing with their own pain or noticing and respecting the pain/emotional boundaries of others and investing in moving on with their lives. Yet, when stories were shared, they were in service of some other need. As a way to bond with family members, as a way to contextualize real life experiences in political discussions, to complete school projects, and/or to fill out government documents and to pass their stories on to future generations. The gendered nature of emotional labor in the home, dealing with both their own trauma and that of children may shape the migrant’s crossing experience by forcing pre-migration information gathering and post-migration communication (Dill 1998; DeVault 1999).

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this dissertation are centered around participant's motivations to migrate and communication regarding migration as it is tied to gender. First, motivations to migrate varied between men and women. Men were more likely to identify economic advancement as their main incentive while women identified family reunification and the protection of their children from violence and poverty as their anticipated outcome. Pre-migration conversations may have some influence on a migrant's decision to migrate, inasmuch as men were more likely to receive information that encouraged them to cross. Most communication to which they were exposed promised a relatively easy crossing experience and financial success in the US. Women, on the other hand, were largely left to seek information from generic sources such as hearsay and the media—communication sources that convey aggressive messages of potentially violent encounters and women's suffering during crossing. Men, therefore, entered their crossing experience with confidence but became embittered when confronted with unanticipated challenges during their first crossing. Women, on the other hand, may have been deterred by the lack of access to information regarding crossing or by the threatening content of information provided them via undisclosed/generic sources. Yet, women's commitment to family reunification and the safety of their children may have over ridden this deterrent (Horton 2008). This is not to say that women participants are not motivated by economic gain (Horton 2008). Some are and, in fact, some participants do openly articulate their interest in fiscal advancement, however, within the narratives of women participants, this motivation is construed as secondary, if existent. When crossing, though, regardless of what incentivized them, women's comparable lack of access to information and exposure to gendered messages of danger made crossing more fearful, anxiety-inducing, and potentially dangerous.

Participants who crossed as children, largely, reported 1) having crossed with their mothers and 2) not having been provided information to prepare them for their crossings. Mothers, feeling nervous about crossing themselves may not have felt prepared to discuss potential dangers of crossing with their children and/or felt it better not to share these dangers in a protective move. Post-migration communication was reported as both discouraged and encouraged by men and women participants. Participants claimed that discussions about border crossing were too difficult or unnecessary. However, women participants added complexity to post-migration communications by identifying that border crossing story sharing did occur among family members when prompted. During family gatherings, inspired by politics/current events, or necessary to complete school projects or complete government documents, women explained that migration histories and crossing narratives were shared, largely with women in their families. Moreover, women participants, contradictorily, were enthusiastic about sharing their family's migration stories with children and grandchildren who, themselves, would not have had such experiences. Women participants explained that conveying these stories to younger generations was important so that they could better understand their own culture and identity, have perspective to respect and contextualize the migrant struggle, and to appreciate the sacrifices made by their elders who had crossed.

Migration Motivation and Communication

Shaped by Motherhood

When assessing motivations to migrate, women participants predominantly reported feeling a "duty" to protect their children from danger, violence, and a life of poverty in their countries of origin. Some married women did report an interest in reuniting with their husbands who had already migrated to the US, but often accompanying that sentiment was the desire to

reunify the family as a whole, including children with their fathers. Other women, single mothers, expressed a reluctance to migrate, but justified their choice to cross with an understanding that it was the only option to keep their children safe from political violence in their hometowns. Women participants clearly articulated their identity as mothers as a driving force behind their motivations for migration.

Women participants also expressed a scarcity in access to pre-migration communication that would prepare them for their journey. In this way, women sought information from generic sources that reiterated messages laden with threats of violence and danger for women border crossers. Women as mothers, and, as self-identified protectors, were likely unable or unwilling to share such information with the children pre-crossing. Participants who crossed as children report having been told nothing to prepare them for their crossing or having been told to memorize a new name and birthdate if stopped by border patrol when crossing in a car with false documents.

As mothers, thus invested in childrearing and perpetrators of culture, women participants identified an interest in and dedication to communicating crossing stories and migrant family histories to children. Despite previous articulations that discussing crossing stories was too painful, uncommon, or otherwise avoided, women participants saw merit in extending the details of these experiences to their children. Women participants expressed that the importance of this was several-fold. Participants saw story sharing as a bonding mechanism, allowing children to know them, as their mothers, better but also to help children know themselves and their family histories on a more complex level. Participants claimed that having children understand their crossing stories will allow them to understand their culture and will teach children lessons about their own privilege having been born in the US. Additionally, participants claimed that sharing

stories with children will help children to gain perspective and empathy for migrants and the migrant struggle. These conversations arose only with women participants and were provided in interviews framed by a responsibility woman felt to their children or future children.

Migrant Women's Emotional Labor and Agency

In addition to, or perhaps complimenting, their roles as mothers, participant women also implied an incredible amount of invisible or emotional labor in relation to both their motivations to migrate and their pre/post-migration communications (Kanaiaupuni 2000; Parrado and Flippen 2005; Horton 2008). Men participants reported as sense of ease in their decisions to migrate. With the exception of one man, who reported being encouraged by his wife to migrate, all men participants were uninvested or ambivalent about crossing. Pre-migration communication came to men participants easily and was provided, though falsely, by a variety of sources. Post-migration communication, men participants claim, was not frequently occurring. In fact, almost no men migrants knew details about or the crossing stories of even their closes kin.

Women participants, however, expressed investment in a large amount of emotional labor. Motivations to migrate took consideration and, occasionally, negotiation as they advocated for their own migration and that of their children or considered options while struggling with violence in their countries of origin. In this way women demonstrated that they are not passive actors in migration, but, instead, are proactive individuals exercising agency within a patriarchal structure. Provided with few avenues of pre-migration communication about border crossing, women were forced to independently seek out information often turned to indirect sources of information that provoked fear. Moreover, women then performed emotional labor (Hochschild 1979) to prepare (or not) their children for crossing experiences. Post-crossing communications forced women to perform emotional labor by an investment in their child's identity. Working to

share their own and their family's crossing stories, women participants articulate, are important for reinforcing their child's sense of self and encourages good citizenship as it will provide them with an understanding of their own, their family's, and fellow migrants' positionality in society.

Implications

Familial gender roles and traditionally held divisions of labor in Latino/a families is nuanced and should be considered in more detail in future studies, especially with consideration given to structural influencing factors and how gender roles are upheld or altered during/after migration. The association of (particularly) Latinas/Latina mothers as caretakers of children, guardians of culture, and responsible for emotional labor in the home has been widely assessed. While some scholars have found that Latino/as identify work in the home as associated directly with their cultural heritage (Segura 1992) and is similarly embedded in the machismo culture of Latin America (Mirande 1997), recent scholarship has challenged this idea by observing behavior among Latino/a migrants. For example, Pinto and Coltrane (2009) found that while Mexican migrants expressed a dedication to more traditional gender roles as touted by cultural standards, when assessed, they revealed that the division of labor in the home was not necessarily divided differently than those of Anglo households. Previous work in this area had parallel findings. Franco, Sabattini and Crosby (2004) discovered that Latino and White families living in the US shared similar views on the traditional divide of gender roles and division of labor in families and placed similar emphasis on how they valued parenting, marriage, and work outside of the home. And Parrado and Flippen (2005) found that gender roles in migrant homes altered relative to external forces such as the influencing values established in their community of settlement. Occasionally, this resulted in more liberal gender roles expressed outside of the

home, while more traditional gender roles were upheld within the home as a response (Parrado and Flippen 2005).

Regardless of how gender roles are established and carried over, the findings presented here reveal that when considered in concert, women's motivations to migrate and participation in pre- and post border-crossing communication, illustrate how women practice agency and advocacy and challenge traditional gender roles/stereotypes; and are not, therefore, passive migrants whose reasoning for migration should be considered secondary to that of economic gain (Parrenas 2001). Understanding women's migration patterns in this way relieves the marginalization of women's motivations and opportunities to migrate by no longer framing the opportunities and experiences of woman migrants within the context of man-oriented theories. An emphasis on women's role within the family and motivation as mothers could help center such experiences. For example, Parental choices to migrate clandestinely have been questioned as recently as 2018 when a large group of 5,000 Central American migrants, dubbed a migrant caravan by politicians and the media, journeyed through Mexico and arrived at the Mexico-US border. Citing the dangerous health conditions and physical brutality of the trip, critics condemned migrant parents for forcing their children to cross the border under such conditions labeling them bad parents (Burkhardt 2018; DePaolo 2018). In fact, echoes of this sentiment can be found in one participant narrative discussed in this dissertation. Carmen's daughter critiques her mother's choice to send her children in a vehicle with strangers to cross the border rather than keeping her daughters with her and having them cross the border, on foot, by her side. Carmen's daughter, after having two daughters of her own, is exacerbated by her mother's choice and implies that this was an act of bad parenting on her mother's part. Carmen, on the other hand, views this choice as the safest and most assured way for her children, and herself, to

cross the border successfully. Carmen, as do other participants in this study, view their choice to leave their country of origin and clandestinely cross to the US as a way to provide their children with “better lives” and frame their decision to migrate as good parenting. Therefore, this research complicates the concept of parental decisions to migrate as good or bad parenting and impacts the framework that the decision to have children accompany parents—most especially women as mothers—through the migrant process as a simple or irresponsible decision.

Additional, overall, findings reveal that improved communication regarding the dangers of clandestine border crossing for both men and women may reduce the trauma of crossing for clandestine migrants. More open communication within family networks, as women participants indicate they would like to have with their children, could be useful in this way. Considering how memory is related to expressions and communications of trauma may help illuminate how migrants process and share crossing stories with kin (Lacriox 2013; Creet 2014).

Plans for Future Research Using this Data

Utilizing the data collected from a broad range of participants for this dissertation, I have identified two specific areas of further research that I plan to pursue. First, directly relating to when, how, and with whom migrant women (crossing the Mexico-US border clandestinely) communicate pre- and post- migration; I plan to draw upon fear of crime literature to analyze the messages/indicators of potential violence during migration that women may receive pre-migration and the experiences of violence they report post-migration. Most participants indicated that Mexico-US border crossing was more dangerous for women than men and agreed that because women were physically weaker than men, they were more susceptible to sexual violence and elemental threats. Despite the anticipation of violence experienced during their crossing, participants reported that, (1) potential migrant women are unlikely to be deterred by this threat

and (2) few migrant women reported having experienced sexual violence during their crossing. Still, all migrants report experiencing physical and/or emotional hardship during their journey. I speculate that much of the messaging provided to women regarding crossing is related to social control in an attempt to deter single women and children from crossing alone.

Second, I plan to draw upon literature developed by scholars in the area of traumatic memories to better understand how physical, psychological, and/or emotional trauma may affect how participants recall their crossing experiences and how the trauma they experienced during crossing (if any) may affect their ability and/or willingness to discuss those experiences with others. Recent scholars have added to this body of work analyzing the narratives of refugees/asylum seekers to understand motivations for migration, how communications shape migration decision-making and the migration process, and post-migration settlement (Lacroix and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013; Creet and Kitzmann 2014; Carlson, Jakli and Linos 2017). Using this approach to analyze the narratives of clandestine migrants may additionally allow insight into the ways in which structural and situational forces shape how individuals remember, recount, and comprehend their experiences and themselves (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). Despite describing the hardship they experienced during their crossing, for example, most participants (1) highlighted any positive memories they had during their crossing—usually food related, such as eating their first burrito or drinking a juice box that reminded them of childhood, (2) stressed that crossing at certain times was much easier than other times in a then vs. now framework and (3) emphasized that their crossing was “worth the risk.” In addition to the contradictory expressions of willingness to share crossing stories presented in this dissertation—namely that participants simultaneously claimed an unwillingness to share crossing stories with kin but also intended to, and indeed saw value in sharing their migration histories with future

generations—these two themes reveal how migrants process and frame their crossing experiences in particular ways that may expose various cultural influences and expectations placed on the participant regarding migration story retelling as well as personal, internal processing that affects the same retelling of that story.

Aside from the two themes outlined above, I plan to cultivate additional research threads using participant narratives. There is significant evidence, for example, to support the application of critical race theory (Crenshaw 1991) to participant's reported experiences of discrimination before, during, and after their crossing. Moreover, criminal race theory and the concept of intersectionality would enhance the analysis of participant's discussions regarding legal status and documentation when attempting to settle, even if temporarily, in the United States. There is also evidence in participant narratives to explore further the differences in gender roles/family roles in the participant's country of origin and the United States. Participants express differing situations pre- and post-migration relative to both expectations placed on them by their families as well as the expectations they have of others relative to what they consider "traditional" gender roles in the family. Relatedly, participants also identify preferences and sometimes lament the loss of a particular freedom or experience they had/did not have in their country of origin pre-migration that supported or defied particular views of gender roles and familial divisions of labor. I am eager to analyze participants' interviews to reveal the many, complex layers of narrative while investigating these propositions further.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE

NOTE: Three interview guides were used, one for each population group (female migrant, family member of female migrant, male migrant who crossed with a female – if a respondent fit both of the last two roles, he was asked a combination of related questions, if a respondent had multiple female migrant family members, we discussed the one that is closest in lineage to the participant, unless it is the participant herself, in which case we discussed her experience directly). For the sake of space, all guides have been condensed into one guide below.

Migration Experience

For migrant: Tell me about your migration experience.

Hábleme de su experiencia cruzando la frontera de principio a fin.

For migrant's relative: What has she (family member) told you about her crossing experience?

Qué le ha dicho su familiar sobre su experiencia cruzando la frontera?

For male migrant who crossed with a female: Tell me about your experience crossing the border with a female. Was it different than crossing with only men? How have you observed the female's experience to be different than yours?

Cuénteme de su experiencia cruzando la frontera con una mujer. Es diferente cruzando con mujeres que cruzando con sólo hombres? Piensa que la experiencia es diferente para las mujeres comparado con la suya/los hombres?

Include:

How many times have you/has she crossed the border? When/how long ago? (each time)

Cuántas veces ha cruzado la frontera? Cuándo fue?

Why did you/she cross? (Each time if more than once) What was your/her motivation to cross?

Por qué cruzó?/Cuál fue su motivación en cruzar?

What was your destination? Did you/she have family there? And/or a place to live?

Qué era su destino? Tenía familia ahí? Tenía adónde hospedarse o un lugar para vivir?

With whom did you/she cross?

Con quién cruzó?

What dangers did you/she think you/she might encounter on your/her journey across the border? Who told you about those dangers?

Que tipos de peligros pensó que enfrentaría al cruzar la frontera? Quién le dijo sobre los peligros?

What dangers did you/she actually encounter?

Cuales peligros realmente enfrentó?

Why didn't those dangers deter you/her from crossing?

Por qué no le detuvo de cruzar la frontera al saber de los peligros inminentes?

Are you happy you/she crossed? (Was the danger worth it in the long run?)

Valió la pena enfrentar los peligros de cruzar para poder llegar a Estados Unidos? Esta feliz aquí?

Do you think it harder for men or women to cross the border? How? Why?

Cree que es más difícil para los hombres o las mujeres cruzar la frontera? Cómo? Por qué?

For migrant: What did you learn from your crossing experience?

Qué aprendió de su experiencia cruzando la frontera?

For male migrants who crossed with a female: Tell me how protective you felt over other migrants. Tell me how you may have felt differently among male migrants and female migrants.

Si cruzó con una mujer, cuénteme como era la dinámica entre el grupo, sobre todo hacia las mujeres. Sentía usted protector del grupo, en particular de la/s mujer/es?

For those who returned to Mexico: Why did you go back to (country of origin)?

En alguna ocasión ha regresado a su país de origen? Por qué regresó?

American Experience

For migrant: Compare your life in the United States to your life in (country of origin), how is it different?

Cómo se compara su vida/su vida diaria/rutina, etc. ahora en ee.uu. con la vida que tenías en su país?

For migrant's relative: How do you think her life in the United States is different than her life was in (country of origin)?

Cómo cree que su vida en ee.uu es diferente a su vida en su país?

For male migrant who crossed with a female (if applicable): How do you think a female migrants' life is different in the United States compared to her life in (country of origin)?

Cómo cree que la vida de ___ es diferente en ee.uu comparado con su vida en su país de origen?

Include:

What was your/her life like in Mexico before you crossed?

Como era su vida en Mexico antes de cruzar?

What did you/she think your/her life would be like in the US after you/she crossed?

Como pensó/imaginó su vida en los Estados Unidos antes de cruzar?
Qué esperanzas/expectativas tuvo?

What is your/her life like now that you are living in the US?

Cómo es su vida ahora ya que vive en ee.uu?

How has your/her role in your/her family changed since you moved to the US? (Family in US and country of origin) Tell me about your spouse, children (if any) parents, friends, extended family.

Ha cambiado su papel en la familia o sus responsabilidades desde que este viviendo en ee.uu? Cuénteme de su mujer/marido/hijos/padres/amigos/parientes.

Did you/she work in (country of origin)? What was your/her role in the home?

Trabajaba o tenía trabajo fijo en su país de origen? Qué era su papel en el hogar?

Do you/she work in the US? What is your/her role in the home (housework etc)? Who else in the home assists with housework, childcare etc?

Trabaja en ee.uu? Que hace? Qué es su papel en la casa? Cuáles son sus responsabilidades en el hogar?

What would you say a woman's role is in your home/in public in (country of origin?)
Tell me how that described your/her role.

Según usted, qué dirías era el papel de la mujer en el hogar y fuera de la casa en su país? (ie. Cuáles eran sus responsabilidades como mujer? Qué tipo de expectativas habían de las mujeres?)

What would you say a woman's role is in the home/in public in the US? Tell me how that describes your/her role now.

Qué dirías sobre el papel de la mujer en el hogar y fuera de la casa en ee.uu?
Cómo ha cambiado su papel en el hogar or sus responsabilidades desde que se vino a ee.uu?

How does this similarity/difference in roles reflect similar experiences of your female family members and friends?

Piensa que los cambios en su vida/papel desde que se vino para ee.uu son similar a las experiencias de sus parientes que son mujeres o sus amigas?

If female migrant works in the US: What job do you/does she hold now? Tell me about your/her work history, how did you/she come to this job?

Si una mujer que emigró trabaja en ee.uu: Qué tipo de trabajo/empleo tiene ahora? Cuénteme de su experiencia laboral y cómo llegó a conseguir su trabajo.

How have your/her friends and family helped you here in the US? Finding/keeping a job, childcare, emotionally, housing, support etc.

Cómo le han ayudado/apoyado sus familiares/amigos desde que llegó a ee.uu?
Por ejemplo, le han ayudado encontrar trabajo? ...conseguir cuidado de niños...apoyo emocional...vivienda, etc.

How recently did your/her friends/family migrate to the US? To this particular city?

Cuándo emigraron sus amigos/familiares/familia a ee.uu? Fue recientemente? Emigraron a una ciudad o zona particular?

How do you think your/her life in the US is different than that of a male

migrant's? Cómo cree que su vida en ee.uu es diferente a la de un hombre que emigró?

How do you think your/her experience in the US is different than other races/ethnicities?

Qué diría de su experiencia en ee.uu comparado con personas de otras culturas/razas/identidades étnicas?

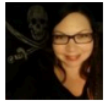
Tell me about any discrimination you may have felt since coming to the United States.

Cuénteme de cualquier tipo de discriminación que ha enfrentado en ee.uu.

Since coming to (or before coming to) the US, did you/she take English classes or did you try to learn English elsewhere?

Tomó clases de inglés antes de venir a ee.uu o desde que llegó? Intentó aprender el inglés de otra manera por ejemplo TV, amistades americanas, trabajo,

APPENDIX B. FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM RECRUITMENT LANGUAGE



Crystal Paul

February 17 at 1:03pm ·  ▼

Seeking research participants

FB friends, As many of you know I am currently completing my dissertation research on Mexico/US border migration and am seeking participants. If you have or you know someone who has crossed the Mex/US border w/out documentation and you/they are willing to discuss please private message, text or email me (this includes discussing what you know about the crossing of family/friends even if you yourself didn't cross). All interviews are anonymous and all contact/communication is deleted to protect the identity of all participants. As you can imagine in these turbulent political times, it is difficult to recruit participants, so any help is most appreciated. If you/those you know have questions about my research, I am happy to discuss before participation occurs. Please do not comment below, but PM or email me with questions or interest. Thank you!!!! (Seriously, thank you!)

 Like

 Comment

 Share

APPENDIX C. DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES

**Table 1. Participant Demographics
(N = 37, Percent = 100)**

	Number	Percent
Gender		
Men	6	16.2
Women	31	83.8
Generation		
1st Generation	13	35.1
1.5 Generation	17	45.9
2nd Generation	5	13.6
Non-Migrant	2	5.4
Country of Origin		
Mexico	26	70.3
Nicaragua	4	10.8
El Salvador	3	8.1
Brazil	1	2.7
Guatemala	1	2.7
Eretria	1	2.7
Unspecified	1	2.7

Table 2. Participant Demographics by Gender and Country of Origin (N = 37)

		Participant Gender									
		Women	Generation				Men	Generation			
			1st	1.5	2nd	Non-Migrant		1st	1.5	2nd	Non-Migrant
Participant Country of Origin	Mexico	20	4	12	4	0	5	4	1	0	0
	Nicaragua	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	El Salvador	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Brazil	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
	Guatemala	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Eretria	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Unspecified	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	31	8	16	5	2	6	5	1	0	0

APPENDIX D. INTERNATIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Crystal Paul
Sociology

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: November 27, 2018

RE: IRB# E11387

TITLE: Latina Migrants: Crossing the Border and the American Experience

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/research

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 11/20/2018

Approved X Disapproved _____

Approval Date: 11/27/2018 Approval Expiration Date: 11/26/2021

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2b

Signed Consent Waived?: No for face to face interviews; Yes for interviews conducted over the phone or Skype

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman _____

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:**

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.**

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>

VITA

Crystal Paul, received her bachelor's degree at Providence College in Providence, RI in 2004. Thereafter, she worked for the American Red Cross Silicon Valley Chapter in Santa Clara, CA and earned her master's degree in Sociology from San Jose State University in 2009. She will receive her doctorate in Sociology from Louisiana State University in 2019 with a research focus on gender, race/ethnicity, qualitative research, and immigration studies. Crystal currently works as an administrator in the Department of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.