MIGRATION INFORMATION GATHERING BY MEXICAN-ORIGIN IMMIGRANTS IN THE PRE-MIGRATION PHASE

Cassie Hudson, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2015

APPROVED:

Ami Moore, Committee Chair
George Yancey, Committee Member
Alicia Re Cruz, Committee Member
Cynthia Cready, Committee Member
Daniel Rodeheaver, Chair of the Department of Sociology
Mark Wardell, Dean of the Graduate School
Hudson, Cassie. *Migration Information Gathering by Mexican-Origin Immigrants in the Pre-Migration Phase*. Master of Arts (Sociology), December 2015, 131 pp., 2 tables, 4 figures, references, 121 titles.

U.S. immigration procedures are complex and may elude the average individual seeking admission to the United States. Understanding this, the current study investigates how information resources are used by potential migrants to learn about the migratory process. Using a mixed-methods approach, I interviewed 30 Mexican immigrants with unauthorized immigration experience about the process of gathering migration information in the pre-migration phase. Qualitative data were coded using seven themes generated from the primary research questions, including: Information Resources, Resources Used During Migration, Motivation for Migration, Method of Migration, Lack of Information/Misinformation, Types of Help and Types of Information. Findings suggest that the factors motivating migrants to come to the U.S. are combined in complex ways and lack of information about legal alternatives to unauthorized migration is an important factor influencing method of migration. Also, while access to new information resources is increasing, these resources are not being tapped for migration information.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all the participants who committed to being interviewed, especially those who actively recruited others to take part in this study. Also, I would like to thank the immigrant services organization that served as one of the data collection sites.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................................... iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................................... iv

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES ......................................................................................................... viii

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Theories: The “How” and “Why” of Migration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push-Pull Models.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Models.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Brief History of Mexico-U.S. Migration</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bracero Migrant Period (1946-1964)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Undocumented Immigration Period Pre-IRCA (1964-1986)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clandestine Migration Post-IRCA (1987-2014).</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Gathering Practices</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Resources</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Access: Mexico</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Selection: Mexico</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lack of agency................................................................. 84
Immaturity. ......................................................................... 85
Summary.............................................................................. 85

5. DISCUSSION........................................................................ 87

Motivation(s) for Migration: Underlying, Catalytic and Supplemental
Motivations............................................................................ 87
Electing a Method of Migration—Not Information Only ................. 91
Information Access is Growing—But Not Migration Information Sources 92
Implications.............................................................................. 93
Directions for Future Research.................................................... 94

APPENDICES........................................................................... 95
REFERENCES.......................................................................... 122
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 4.1 Participant Characteristics ................................................................. 28
Table 4.2 Motivations for Migration ............................................................... 30
Figure 4.1 Lack of Information About the U.S. ........................................ 55
Figure 4.2 Lack of Information/Misinformation about Migration .............. 67
Figure 4.3 Resources Used Pre-Migration .................................................. 72
Figure 4.4 Electing a Method of Migration .................................................. 79
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations’ Population Division (2013), there were 232 million international migrants in 2013. An international migrant is a person who has crossed an international border and taken up residence in another country for at least six months. Though the act of crossing a border may appear straightforward, there are many different methods of migration, each resulting in different outcomes, consequences and benefits (Castles, 2000). According to Castles (2000), there are eight major types of migrants: temporary labor migrants, highly skilled/business migrants, unauthorized migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, forced migrants, family reunification and return migrants. While this breakdown may be useful for understanding the general motivations fueling migration, it is oversimplified when compared to the possible methods of immigrating to the U.S.

In 2013, the U.S. had the largest absolute number of international migrants, gaining an additional 1 million migrants per year from 1990 to 2013 (United Nations’ Population Division, 2013). There are two broad visa types in the U.S.—immigrant visas (intended for extended stay) and non-immigrant visas (intended for temporary stay). The sub-categories of visas within these two overarching types generally follow the guidelines laid out by Castles (2000), but the U.S. Department of State continues to divide these subcategories. In fact, the U.S. Department of State website lists 42 unique non-immigrant visas and 30 immigrant visas and this changes regularly (2014). Each visa type has specific eligibility criteria, application requirements, etc. and the myriad of visa types naturally leads to the question: what information resources are available to
potential migrants to help discern between these options? Furthermore, what alternatives are available to would-be immigrants with lower economic capital?

The United States is considered by many to be a “nation of immigrants,” but the implementation of restrictive immigration policies suggests that tolerance for unauthorized immigration is waning. Throughout the past several decades, there have been a series of comprehensive immigration “overhauls” which bend to the economic, political and public climate dominating the era. The most recent example, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRRA) of 1996, takes a firmer stance against unauthorized (or otherwise unsuitable) immigrants by implementing such practices as retroactive deportation, increasing the number of border patrol officers and expanding the use of detention centers. In between the passing of comprehensive legislation, specific policies are developed to cope with unforeseen contemporary issues (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). For example, the backlash against immigrants after 9/11 led to the creation of Border Security Task Forces (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011) and the civil war and subsequent gang violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua compelled the U.S. to grant Temporary Status Protection (TPS) to emigrants from these nations (Coutin, 2011; Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Garcia-Bedolla, 2009; Johnson & Trujillo, 2011).¹ Even more recently, President Obama issued Executive Orders granting work authorization and deferred deportation to undocumented youths and, though currently contested, undocumented immigrants who are parents of U.S.-born children

¹ For a detailed history of changes in immigration legislation over the past century, especially as it relates to Latino immigrants, see Johnson & Trujillo, 2011.
In order to legally immigrate to the United States, potential immigrants must navigate an array of legislation, rules and multi-stage processes that is constantly developing. How does the information available to each individual relate to their eventual choice of migration method? Also, what happens when the “best” choice is not the “obvious” choice? These are crucial questions considering that potential immigrants experience differential treatment based on national origin and other individual characteristics (Coutin, 2011; Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). Understanding how individuals receive information about the migratory process prior in the pre-migration phase is of vital importance because the information available will influence their ability to make an informed decision. Investigating information resources used during the pre-migration phase may reveal avenues through which accurate information about the U.S. can be disseminated.

The goal of this study is to develop a more thorough understanding of the information gathering practices of immigrants in the pre-migration phase and to illuminate avenues through which legal immigration may be encouraged, specifically among those originating from Mexico— the top source of unauthorized immigration to the United States (Department of Homeland Security, 2012a).\(^2\)

However, method of entry should not be taken as a ‘authorized, unauthorized’ dichotomy, but instead should be specified into the various types of ‘authorized’ and

\(^2\)Approximately 55% of the 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants residing in the U.S. as of 2011 are from Mexico (Gonzalez-Barrera & Lopez, 2013).
‘unauthorized’ options. For instance, one may apply for various types of immigrant visas, asylum/refugee status, Temporary Protected Status, use a Border Crossing Card (BCC) or non-immigrant visa (NIV), enter without inspection (cross the border without documents) or cross with falsified documents and the outcomes vary depending on the method of entry employed (Chavez, 2011; Coutin, 2011; Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2008).³

With this in mind, I explored the nuances of method of entry in connection with the participants’ experiences gathering information (both accurate and inaccurate) about the immigration process and the United States. I created the interview tool based on four major research questions:

1. What resources were available during the pre-migration phase?
2. Of these, which resources were used to learn about migration?
3. What information was obtained from which resources and how accurate was this information?
4. How does the information received relate to the elected method of migration?

To investigate these questions, I developed an interview protocol to uncover the information gathering practices of unauthorized Mexican migrants in the pre-migration phase. I used interview data collected from 30 Mexican immigrants who had experience with unauthorized migration to explore any potential patterns between method of entry and the information resources available at the time of migration.

³ For example, those who enter without inspection are barred from readmission for varying lengths of time depending on the period of time they were unlawfully present in the U.S. while those who have overstayed a visa do not experience this penalty (Weissbrodt & Danielson, 1998).
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Major Theories: The “How” and “Why” of Migration

There are several important theoretical models that influence our understanding of the migratory process that I considered throughout data analysis; however, this study is not driven by a specific theory of migration. While this is not an exhaustive review, the following theories illuminate mechanisms through which individuals make the decision to migrate and factors that could influence their election of one migration method over another.

Push-Pull Models.

Everett Lee’s (1966) push-pull model of migration is one of the best known formulations designed to account for the “why” of migration and many theories are simply elaborations or modifications of Lee’s basic principles. Essentially, the migrant is influenced by factors “pushing” him/her from the place of origin (i.e. poverty, repression) and “pulling” them to the place of destination (i.e. job opportunities, freedom). Despite these factors people are naturally inclined to stay in one place rather than migrate, meaning migration is triggered only in extraordinary circumstances. Whether or not an accumulation of push-pull factors results in migration depends on the individual’s personal characteristics and “intervening obstacles.” Some examples of intervening obstacles are distance, legal and/or physical barriers (Kivisto & Faist, 2010) or, for the purpose of this study—incomplete information.

A variant of this model is the neoclassical equilibrium perspective. Derived from economics, this approach dominates the field and the full push-pull model is often
replaced by this more limited version (Kivisto & Faist, 2010). The foundation of the neoclassical equilibrium model is supply and demand of labor and it was initially developed by Todaro (1969) to explain rural-urban labor migration, but the concept has since been extended to other types of migration. However, the decision to migrate is often more complex and riddled with “intervening obstacles,” as Lee (1966) initially suggested. Stark (1991) further problematized the push-pull model by developing the “new economics of migration.” This theory places the decision to migrate within the family instead of the individual and alongside this, Massey, et al. (1993) extrapolated the network model.

Network Models.

Migrant networks connect current and potential migrants across international borders and these interpersonal ties both increase the likelihood of migration and decrease risks (Massey et al., 1993). As the migrant network expands, the cost and risks of migration decrease to a point where migrating is more accessible to a broader swath of the population (Massey, et al., 1993). Network ties are extremely important to unauthorized migrants who are forced to access information and resources outside of traditional channels (Flores-Yeffal, 2012).

In fact, Singer and Massey (1998) developed a network model specific to unauthorized Mexican immigrants, elaborating on how human and social capital derived from network ties and experience with the migratory process contributes to sustained unauthorized migration. This is a specification of Massey’s (1990) theory of cumulative causation wherein each act of migration affects the context in which subsequent migratory decisions are made by altering the distribution of land, income, human capital,
etc. The culture of migration is also an important aspect of cumulative causation because migration alters the cultural perception of migration in the community, increasing the prevalence of migration as practices like generational migration and migration as a rite of passage become normative (Massey, 1990).

More recently, Hein de Haas (2010) applied diffusion theory to migration, suggesting that migration has five stages like other types of diffusion which begins with pioneer migrants who have slightly more human and economic capital (innovators) and ends with migrants who have low skills and economic resources (laggards). If migration operates in this manner, there is reason to suspect that migration streams will not self-perpetuate indefinitely. Krissman (2005) also takes issue with contemporary network theories of migration, arguing that the network should be expanded internationally and incorporate non-migrants—especially employers. Research approached through the lens of transnationalism incorporates several types of cross-country interactions—specifically, economic, political and sociocultural, but information is not generally the focus of many transnational studies (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999).

This study contributes to the current literature by incorporating the concept of bounded rationality into the migration decision, especially with regard to information. Bounded rationality is an expanded model of decision-making that takes into account the limitations humans have that prevent making perfectly rational decisions. While there are many limiting factors, the role of information in decision-making is the primary focus of this study. Information is an important aspect of effective decision-making and the decision to migrate is not an exception. For example, in uncertain situations with limited information, migrants are more likely to choose the first “reasonable” option
which, for many would-be Mexican migrants, may lead to unauthorized methods of entering the U.S. (Friedman & Hechter, 1988; Simon, 1972; Witteck, Snijders & Nee, 2013). There are other factors that influence the “rational” decision making process, as well, such as time pressure, crisis and structural constraints (Friedman & Hechter, 1988).

A Brief History of Mexico-U.S. Migration

Mexicans have been part of the U.S. population since the founding of the nation, and there are several key factors that led to the development of the U.S. immigration system—including the current immigration policies, the size of the unauthorized immigrant population and economic condition of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. In this section, I will employ the framework developed Montes de Oca, Garcia, Saenz and Guillen (2011), dividing the history of Mexico-U.S. migration into three major periods: the Bracero Migrant period (1942-1964), Undocumented Immigration to IRCA (1965-1986) and Clandestine Migration Post-IRCA (1987-2014). The historical aspect of migration is crucial because it has laid the foundation for modern patterns of migration and reveals the relationship between broad historical trends and the process of immigrating to the U.S.

As noted, Mexicans have been a feature of the southern United States since the signing of the Treaty of Guadelupe-Hidalgo in 1848. After Texas seceded from Mexico and successfully established an independent state, the Mexican government encouraged settlers to migrate into modern-day New Mexico and California to avoid a repeat incident. Unfortunately, these efforts were in vain. Once Texas was annexed by the U.S., the Polk administration pressured Mexico to resolve the Mexico-Texas border
dispute and, during these negotiations, a skirmish broke out between Mexican and U.S. soldiers near the disputed southern border. President Polk declared “American blood has been spilt on American soil,” and immediately declared war on Mexico (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011).

At the close of the war, Mexico was required to cede nearly two-thirds of its territory to the U.S.—this included the Mexican settlers who were promised full rights as American citizens. Some of the Mexican settlers returned to what remained of Mexico but others stayed and laid the foundation for future Mexico-U.S. migration (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011).

The Bracero Migrant Period (1946-1964).

Though Mexicans migrated the U.S. prior to the Bracero period, the labor shortages during World War II required massive numbers of migrant workers—about 4 million by the termination of the Bracero program in 1964. Because Bracero migrants were legal temporary workers, many migrated between the U.S. and Mexico several times a year, following the demand in the agricultural labor market. For the most part, these migrants were young men with low levels of education who emigrated from the “historical” migration region of Mexico, including states like Chihuahua, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Zacatecas (Massey, Rugh, & Pren, 2010; Montes de Oca et al., 2011).

Bracero migrant workers were often relegated to low-paid positions with poor working conditions, but generally accepted their positions uncomplainingly, instead focusing on the higher wages to be had in the U.S (Martinez, 1948 as cited in Montes de Oca, 2011). The Bracero program was disbanded in 1964 amidst public outcries that
Mexican migrant workers were raising unemployment levels among Americans, driving down wages and straining resources. However, by then the U.S. agricultural industry had already become dependent on the cheap labor provided by Mexican migrant workers (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011).

The Undocumented Immigration Period Pre-IRCA (1964-1986).

In an attempt to appease U.S. farm owners, the H2-A visa category was developed to replace the Bracero program, allowing companies to solicit migrant labor if they could prove that there was an insufficient native labor pool. Despite these efforts, the demand for migrant labor could not be met with the number of H2-A visas allotted and unauthorized migration increased (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). Immigration policy became increasingly restrictive in the 70s and early 80s until the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 granted amnesty to about 1 million undocumented workers (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). This policy was followed by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 which increased immigration law enforcement, banned the use of most public services (from undocumented immigrants and recently arrived legal permanent residents) and allowed for expedited exclusion and deportation. Despite the increase in restrictions and enforcement, “clandestine” migration continued and the numbers of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. kept climbing. By this time, migration to the U.S. had become a “rite of passage” in some areas of Mexico, a tradition that continued in spite of increasingly treacherous crossing conditions (Massey, 1990). Also, undocumented workers were easily exploited by their employers as a result of their precarious status in the U.S. (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011; Montes de Oca et al., 2011).

By the late 80s, Mexican migrants began to diversify in terms of regional origin, gender, age and education. The increased difficulty and cost of crossing the border encouraged more migrants to make the U.S. their permanent home. This trend was exacerbated when security tightened even further post 9/11. The Department of Homeland Security boasts several security improvements, including doubling border patrol agents along the Southwest border, creating intelligence task forces to dismantle criminal organizations, employing surveillance systems and canine teams and building 650 miles of fencing. Apprehension of currency, drugs and weapons have risen, but apprehension of migrants has declined, indicating fewer people are attempting to cross the border (Department of Homeland Security, 2011). This is in line with current research conducted by the Pew Research Center which reports that, as of late, the net migration between the U.S. and Mexico is near zero as a result of decreasing migration and increases in deportation (Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2011; 2012).  

Information Gathering Practices

Investigating information gathering practices is best suited for the purposes of this study because information practice situates the process of gathering information in the social and cultural context (Savolainen, 2008). Within this context, migrants occupy an information field that consists of information resources, constraints and information carriers with which the individual regularly interacts (Johnson, Case, Andrews, Allard & Johnson, 2006). Immigrants often occupy a limited information field (Johnson, et al., 2006; Savolainen, 2007) that consists of only informal information resources (i.e. family

---

4 Deportations have stayed above 300,000 per year since 2007 (Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2014).
and friends), but some immigrants may also have access to formal resources, such as organizations, accessible as physical entities or through the Internet (Barsi n.d.; Benitez, 2006; Caidi, Allard, Quirke, 2004; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Panagakos & Horst, 2006).

Each individual migrant exists within a unique context, allowing for the development of a specific information field which in turn lends itself to the creation of paths utilized for obtaining migration related information (Johnson et al., 2006). Additionally, each context encourages the growth of different types of information grounds, created when people gather and share information informally (Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). According to Srinivasan and Pyati (2007) migration information grounds are diasporically mediated, containing both experienced and potential migrants. And the information exchanged in these informal settings influences how migratory methods become “normative,” encouraging the development of a culture of migration (Massey, 1990).

Given the history of Mexican labor migration, it is unsurprising that Mexican immigrants are often portrayed as “economic migrants” (Coutin, 1998, 2011; Johnson & Trujillo, 2011; Ortemeyer & Quinn, 2012), crafting an image of a rational being motivated by economic gain. However, though the choice to migrate appears to be a simple and rational decision, the election of a migration method is more suspect. Potential migrants often make decisions with limited information available and, if we assume that information disseminated to potential migrants about the migratory process is obtained through social networks, then examples of apparently less rational decisions would be common. This is because information obtained through informal social
networks may be unreliable—both information about the U.S. and information about migration. Furthermore, individuals with limited access to information are more likely to take the first reasonable option—though it may not be their best option (Witteck, Snijders & Nee, 2013).

Experienced migrants may emphasize only the positive aspects of their experience, leading potential migrants to have unrealistic beliefs about what to expect upon arrival (Howenstine, 1996; Mahler, 1995; Moore, 2013; Pessar, 1995; Sladkova, 2007). These expectations may become further ingrained by exaggerated portrayals of the U.S. in the media (Appadurai, 1990; Deaux, 2006).

Migrating with unrealistic expectations may leave new immigrants unpleasantly surprised upon arrival, but unable to return home due to debt incurred during the migratory journey (Gardner, 2010; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012; Ortemeyer & Quinn; Spener, 2004) or the shame of returning empty-handed and disappointing their family (Vigh, 2009; Winther, 2014). In some cases, the disillusionment migrants experience upon arriving to the destination country may even influence their ability to reintergrate in their country of origin upon return (Sabates-Wheeler, Taylor & Natali, 2009).

Information Resources

Traditionally, sociologists considered the migrant network to be the primary information source for potential immigrants and, more recently, the migrant network has been treated as a transnational phenomenon consisting of members in the country of origin and destination. Transnational social networks are often referenced as the driving force behind the maintenance of a steady stream of international migrants (Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Krissman, 2005; Singer & Massey, 1998; Spener, 2004). Often, important
information is exchanged through social networks, especially regarding reliable smugglers (Spener, 2004) and border crossing alternatives (Chavez, 2011). Singer and Massey (1998) take a more direct approach, developing a theoretical model of undocumented migration by combining social and human capital derived from the migratory process.

Building from Singer and Massey’s (1998) work, Flores-Yeffal (2012) developed the concept of a “migration-trust network.” One would expect ties based solely upon national origin to be relatively weak compared to familial ties, but Flores-Yeffal (2012) maintains that these ties are transformed by the migratory experience, gaining strength and resulting in altruistic behavior toward other migrants, regardless of prior association. While her focus is on the immigrant experience in the U.S., the transnational ties between sending communities and the migration-trust networks into which they are incorporated in the United States are obvious influences on the election of migration method (Flores-Yeffal, 2012).

The circulatory nature of immigration to the United States (largely by Mexican nationals) strengthens and extends this social network as relative deprivation is introduced into sending communities and the migratory process becomes self-perpetuating (Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Hein de Haas, 2010; Singer & Massey, 1998). Past migrants become sources of information and guidance for those seeking to raise their economic status in the community and, thus, the cycle continues. The phenomenon of circulatory migration has allowed for the existence of “transborder ties” throughout history, but more recently scholars have encouraged the adoption of a transnational
perspective on a broader scale that is particularly useful in understanding the perpetuation of migratory streams (Faist, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2006).

This has resulted in an increase in research approached under a transnational lens, but some would argue that it is also necessary to incorporate the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) into the study of migration (Hiller & Franz, 2004; Schrooten, 2012). Previous research indicates that this shift is occurring slowly among information and social science scholars (Barsi, n.d; Benítez, 2006; Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2004; Castles, 2002; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Komito, 2011; Panagakos & Horst, 2006; Schrooten, 2012; Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007; Williams, Anderson & Dourish, 2008).

As social scientists become increasingly becoming involved in information science research (Cronin, 2008), they have helped shift the focus of information gathering from the cognitive process of seeking information to the social context of the information seeker (Savolainen, 2007). Johnson et al. (2006) furthers this by developing an understanding of the complementary relationship between information fields and pathways. The information field of an individual necessarily restricts them from accessing particular resources and these restrictions may set them on a specific path to seek necessary information. For instance, migrants may occupy a limited information field that precludes access to information and communication technologies (ICT) (Johnson et al., 2006; Savolainen, 2007).

Only a handful of ethnographic studies have focused on the transnational use of ICT by immigrant populations, such as Salvadorans in the U.S. (Benítez, 2006), Brazilian, Moroccan and Ukrainian migrants in the Netherlands (Dekker & Engbersen,
2012), Polish and Filipino immigrants in Ireland (Komito, 2011) and Brazilian immigrants in Belgium (Schrooten, 2012). Some suggest that social networking sites have allowed for the development of new ties outside of the traditional network (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Schrooten, 2012), while others describe websites that serve as potential sources of information throughout the migratory process for Latin Americans (Barsi, n.d.).

Potential immigrants overcome access restrictions to make use of chat rooms, forums (Barsi, n.d.; Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007) and social networking sites (Komito, 2011; Schrooten, 2012), addressing migration-related questions to both known and unknown individuals. Using these new tools does not necessarily discount the traditional migrant network; instead, it adds a new dimension to be investigated and researchers must develop new techniques to incorporate these unique information environments.

Schrooten (2012) suggests important considerations for online ethnography, such as using offline sources to gain admission into online communities and advocating for informed consent regardless of the fact that the information is often ‘publicly’ available. Also, Postill and Pink (2012) stress that the digital ethnographer must follow participants across the range of their “copresent contexts.” In other words, the researcher should track individuals through their traditional physical environments and online digital networks. Unfortunately, the issue of inaccurate information is not resolved by expanding access to new information resources, as websites may not reflect current policies (Barsi, n.d.) and new contacts found through social networking sites may not be

---

5 Researchers admit that there are access limitations within the sending countries, but point to unique ways this is overcome, such as borrowing a friend's Internet connection (Benitez, 2006) or visiting a cybercafé (Benitez, 2006; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012).

6 One such social networking site is Orkut, owned and operated by Google, which is dedicated to group formation and widely used by Brazilians both at home and abroad (Schrooten, 2012).
altruistically motivated and, thus, more likely to take advantage of unsuspecting potential immigrants (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012).

Thus far, research concerning transnational social networks tends to focus on the initial decision to migrate (Singer & Massey, 1998), describing the migratory method (Chavez, 2011; Coutin, 1998, 2011; Singer & Massey, 1998; Spener, 2005) or the development of ethnic enclaves/networks in the U.S. (Chavez, 1994; Flores-Yeffal, 2012). Also, while research exploring the role of ICT in the migratory process tends to focus on immigrants post-migration, some suggest that the increase in ICT utilization by those in the sending countries to communicate with relatives abroad may contribute to the usage of technology in the pre-migration phase (Benitez, 2006; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Komito, 2011). Despite this, the implication of ICT usage in perpetuating migratory flows has not been investigated. Given that research concerning the usage of alternative information resources has generally focused on current usage by post-migration immigrants, I propose to investigate the role of information resources in deciding how one chooses among the available methods of entry, moving the focus from current use to past utilization of traditional social networks and alternative information resources. In this attempt, I also move beyond traditional face-to-face interaction into other potential avenues of information gathering (ICT, organizations, etc.) in order to explore information channels that could be developed to encourage legal migration to the United States.

Resource Access: Mexico

While access to ICT in immigration sending countries is often limited, there has been an explosion in public access cybercafés in Latin America and some countries
report that over half of all ICT use occurs in cybercafés (Gomez, Ambikar & Coward, 2009). The popularity of private and publicly funded public access centers partially explains why the number of internet users is often substantially higher than the number of personal computers in developing countries (White, Guanasekaran, Shea & Ariguzo, 2011). Recent data from Mexico reflect this trend as 38.4% of the population was using the Internet, but only 26% had Internet access in their homes. However, over 80% of Mexicans have access to mobile phones, most of which are designed for Internet access (Merritt, 2012; The World Bank, 2014)

Furthermore, according to Cybercafes.com (a database tracking cybercafés world-wide) there are 178 cybercafés registered in Mexico—second only to 478 in the U.S. on the North American continent (www.cybercafes.com). This supplements the e-Mexico program that established 3,200 Community Telecenters throughout the country as of 2001 (Merrit, 2012). Unfortunately, the program received mixed results because these centers faced massive societal divides in computer literacy (Huerta & Sandoval-Almazán, 2007). Additionally, the centers made use of older networks developed for rural payphones, reducing Internet efficiency.

Another issue to consider is the likelihood that a potential migrant will connect with an experienced migrant abroad who is willing to share information. According to the Pew Hispanic Research Center (Fox & Livingston, 2007), Latinos in the U.S. were the least likely racial-ethnic group in the U.S. to use the Internet, though this is mediated by their lower education, income and English proficiency levels. Regardless, the fact remains that only 43% of foreign-born Latinos reported using the Internet, resulting in a smaller pool of Spanish speaking migrants and reducing the potential of connecting with
an experienced migrant. Mexican Americans and immigrants from Mexico are among the least likely to go online of all Latinos with approximately half using the Internet at least occasionally (Fox & Livingston, 2007). Furthermore, access to the Internet is not an indication of technological literacy. Many potential migrants may be either unaware of the vast amount of migration-related information that can be found online or uncertain of how they can access this information.

Despite these restrictions, ICT could become a valuable resource for migration information. Collin et al. (2012) draw attention to the fact that official and informal information sources concerned with a variety of topics can be accessed online. Chat rooms are a type of informal information source; individuals currently abroad who share similar circumstances with potential immigrants may serve as connections in the host country (Hiller & Franz, 2004). Of course, utilizing online channels is more difficult for some migrants because they are more likely to fear surveillance, have fewer access options and are often required to sign up for multiple services from different vendors (Panagakos & Horst, 2006).

Irrespective of these barriers, ICT is becoming increasingly important in certain countries during the pre-migration phase; specifically, ICT has been used in the transition from one country to another (Schrooten, 2012), identifying job opportunities, linking to consultation services (Ackland & Gray, 2002), choosing a country/city in which to settle (Statistics Canada, 2008) and offering advice about unauthorized migration (Schapendonk & Moppes, 2007). Informal information resources may ease the transition, but they do not necessarily contribute to migration (Castells, 2000; Castles, 2000) and they may not always be reliable. According to Dekker and Engerbersen
(2012), established migrants sometimes advise potential migrants not to migrate. Alternatively, potential migrants may be exploited by pioneer migrants who settled in the U.S. earlier (Dekker & Engbersen, 2012). To determine the role of ICT and other information sources individuals used to learn about migration, I developed an interview protocol which examines resource access and allows participants to describe how they used different resources during the pre-migration phase and migratory process.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Case Selection: Mexico

Latinos form the largest minority ethnic group in the United States and most foreign-born individuals residing in the United States are Latino (Motel & Patten, 2013). Furthermore, about two-thirds of the unauthorized immigrants in the United States are Latino (Passel & Cohn, 2011). This information leads to the conclusion that there is great diversity among Latino immigrants in the methods they employ to enter the U.S. For instance, in a study of legal immigrants in the United States, Jasso et al. (2008) found that approximately 19% entered without inspection and 12% overstayed visas, indicating that nearly a third of the legal immigrant population had employed unlawful means to enter/reside in the U.S. Apparently, even currently authorized immigrants employed a range of authorized/unauthorized means to enter the United States. The question that remains is—what encourages some to employ one method over another? Among Latino immigrants, Mexico is the largest contributor of both authorized and unauthorized immigrants to the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012a; Passel & Cohn, 2011) and the methods employed by this group are exceedingly diverse (Chavez, 2011; Ortemeyer & Quinn, 2012; Singer & Massey, 1998; Spener, 2004), making it an ideal candidate for a study of the relationship between information resources and methods of migration.

Interview Protocol

I developed an interview protocol consisting of closed-ended questions about descriptive characteristics (age, gender, state of origin, etc.) and resource access and
open-ended questions regarding the process of obtaining information from specific resources. Participants were encouraged to discuss the specific resources used with probes derived from the literature, but the semi-structured format allowed them to add relevant details as needed. Examples of question sources include social networks (Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Krissman, 2005; Singer & Massey, 1998; Spener, 2004) and more recent information alternatives, including the new media and government/non-government organizations (Barsi, n.d; Benítez, 2006; Caidi, Allard & Quirke 2004; Castles, 2002; Dekker & Engbersen, 2012; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Komito, 2011; Panagakos & Horst, 2006; Schrooten, 2012; Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007; Williams, Anderson & Dourish, 2008). However, while these sources were used as a rubric in interview construction, other potential information seeking practices/sources became apparent throughout the course of the project. The study protocol was approved by the University of North Texas’ Institutional Review Board (Project #14141).

This method is most appropriate because it is expected that information gathering and choice of migration method is an involved, multi-faceted process that cannot be adequately captured by fixed-choice questions. Qualitative inquiry assumes that reality is a social construction uniquely formed by each individual and thus is best approached as a process of understanding “with” the subject rather than restricting understanding of the subject/phenomenon to the framework imposed by the researcher (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). Interviews followed the format of sequential interviewing suggested by Small (2009), in that each interview encouraged further focusing of

7 To see the full interview protocol, see Appendix B (English) and C (Spanish).
questions on the area of interest as it revealed itself through the course of the project.
A total of 30 Mexican immigrants were interviewed.

Interview length varied, but the average interview time was approximately 30 minutes. Participants were offered the choice to be interviewed in English or Spanish and two-thirds chose to be interviewed in Spanish. With permission of the participant, the interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the researcher verbatim (Roulston, 2010, pg. 105-06). Analysis was performed on the translated version of interviews conducted in Spanish.

Recruitment Criteria

Participants were drawn from the population of Mexican immigrants and temporary migrants currently residing in North and East Texas, both male and female. To be recruited, participants had to be at least 18 years old or older at the time of the interview and at least 16 years of age by their first migration to the U.S. As most questions were related to gathering information about how to migrate, it was important that the individual participated in this decision. All participants had some experience with unauthorized migration, though some had experience with authorized migration, also. Given that unauthorized immigrants form a hard-to-reach population, participants were selected through snowball sampling in two waves—the initial convenience sample and referrals from that sample (Goodman, 2011). Participants were drawn from four Texas cities, two in North Texas and two in East Texas for a total of 30 interviewees. One of the sites was a local immigrant services organization. Appendix D contains information about the participants drawn from each site, the referrals made by each participant and the nature of relationships between participants.
Analysis

The interviews were transcribed while subsequent interviews were being conducted and I engaged in memo-writing during the transcription process, but the bulk of the analysis occurred once all interviews were transcribed and translated. The closed-ended portion of the interview protocol was entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and imported into ATLAS.ti as a survey, enabling comparisons between participants with different characteristics.

Data were coded on several dimensions, including type of information/help received, source of information/help, accuracy of the information and whether the information concerned the immigration process or the U.S. To aid in the coding process, seven a priori themes were generated from the research questions: Information Resources, Resources Used During Migration, Motivation for Migration, Method of Migration, Lack of Information/Misinformation, Types of Help and Types of Information. During the coding process, several phrases and concepts were discovered that typify the seven major themes (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). After allowing these to emerge from the data, I reassessed the codes applied to the full set of interviews to resolve inconsistencies and redundancies using a comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After the final round of analysis, the data revealed six types of Information Sources, six types of Resources Used During Migration, 18 Motivations for Migration, 13 factors influencing Method of Migration, six Types of Help received during migration and 30 Types of Information. Appendix A contains the titles of all coding categories.

8 Types of information might be information learned in the pre-migration or post-migration phase, including misinformation and missing information prior to migration.
subsumed under each of the major themes and sub-themes as described in the findings section.

Ethics and Limitations

No recordings, written or audio, are connected to the participant’s names or other contact information and audio-recordings were erased after transcription. All names used herein are pseudonyms. Furthermore, participants were allowed to opt out of signing the informed consent document by checking a box that read: “Check this box if you consent to participate in the interview but would prefer not to sign the informed consent form.” For the full English and Spanish versions of the informed consent documents, see Appendix E and F. Regardless of the option the interviewee elected, the informed consent document was read to them in full and they were provided with a copy.

I provided this alternative because previous research suggests that some foreign-born participants may be hesitant to sign consent forms (Birman, 2005; Lahman, Mendoza, Rodriguez & Shwartz, 2011). While there is nothing directly incriminating about participation in a study which investigates methods of migration to the United States, the potential for revealing sensitive information does exist, so I provided participants with the opportunity to remove identifying information from all documents, including consent forms. I avoid the issue of revealing potentially incriminating information by not directly requesting current legal status in the U.S.\(^9\)

---

\(^9\) While the method of entry may have been considered illegal, that is no indication of the participant’s current legal status. It is not uncommon for legal immigrants to previously have committed illegal acts related to migration but since adjusted their status (Jasso et al., 2008).
As with any qualitative study, this project is not intended to be generalizable to all immigrants, but instead to elaborate upon the process of obtaining information about migration. Another limitation is the fact that the use of traditional snowball sampling may lead participants to focus on the role their social network ties played in their migration experience. Participants who shared social networks may also result in a more homogenous sample with similar experiences. Because of this, I supplemented my sample by connecting with participants at four different sites. I obtained written Permission to Recruit Participants from the immigrant services organization and assured both organization leaders and potential participants that there was no obligation to participate in the study and no relationship between services received and participation (Birman, 2005). With this in mind, a statement was added to the consent document specifically for individuals receiving services from the immigrant services organization.

As a white, native-born female, it is more difficult to gather information from Mexican immigrant participants, despite being proficient in speaking Spanish. Past qualitative inquiry in similar populations is considered difficult for outsiders, regardless of ethnic background (Birman, 2005; Coutin, 2013; Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Mountz et al., 2002), but this obstacle was overcome by entering the network of trust through a gatekeeper/organization, such as personal contacts and the immigrant services organization.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

First, I present participant characteristics and the subsequent sections are arranged into five major sections: Motivations for Migration, Information Obtained, Lack of Information/Misinformation, Migration Resources and Electing a Method of Migration.

Participant Characteristics

Table 4.1 contains descriptive data collected from participants as well as information about access to specific resources in Mexico prior to migrating. On average, participants were about 35 years old ($M = 35.77$) and had lived in the U.S. for over a decade ($M = 12.4$). About three-quarters were employed before migrating to the U.S. (73%) and their average annual household income was approximately $6,000 U.S. dollars ($M = 6,194.95$). On average, participants had completed at least some high school ($M = 10.23$), and about one-quarter of participants completed some form of education in the U.S. (27%), which could be high school, GED or English classes. Only a handful of participants came from a rural area in Mexico (7%) and about one-third came from each of the major sending regions of Mexico, excluding the Southeast (10%), but fewer people migrate from this region (Massey, Rugh & Pren, 2010).

Prior to migrating to the U.S., most participants had access to a television (80%) and a public library near their home (70%), but only one-third had access to the Internet (33%) and only one individual reported access to another migration information resource (the U.S. Consulate at Monterrey).
Table 4.1 Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at migration (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in years (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (Mexico) (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6194.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of migration (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years since last migration (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Employed at migration</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Primary decision-maker</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% &quot;Some&quot; education in U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Migration Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Semi-urban</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Migration Resource Access (% Yes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Library</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Other&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview length (M)</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 30

*a Annual income in Mexico the year prior to migration in U.S. dollars.

*b Education may be high school or GED, college or English classes.

*c Rural: < 2,500, Semi-Urban 2,500 ≥ and < 50,000; Urban: ≥ 50,000 (See Villareal & Hamilton, 2012).

*d See Massey, Rugh and Pren (2010).
Motivation(s) For Migration

The popularity of neoclassical economic theories of migration (Kivisto & Faist, 2010; Todaro, 1969) and references to economic issues in public debates about immigration (Bell, 2014; Camarota, 2015; Fryberg et al., 2011), tend to prioritize the “economic” motivation to migrate and, while this is a major factor, I found that participants named a combination of factors that contributed to their decision to come to the U.S. Table 4.2 illustrates the full list of factors and the number of participants who mentioned each motivation. Though participants identified 18 distinct motivations that contributed to their decision to migrate, they do not serve the same function in making the decision to migrate. I classified each motivation into three major categories: underlying, catalytic and supplemental. On average, participants mentioned about three motivating factors ($M = 3.26$) that spurred their decision to migrate and the prevalence of each type is shown in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2 Motivations for Migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underlying (Traditional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic (Individual)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalytic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidental</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Disaster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border State</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return Migrant</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Underlying (Traditional) Motivations. Underlying motivations were the most commonly cited of all motivations and included what are commonly thought of as “traditional” motivations to migrate—economic concerns (Todaro, 1969) and social network ties (Singer and Massey, 1998). Specifically, the three underlying motivations were: individual economic motivations, family and children. Given the foundational nature of these motivations, it is unsurprising that each of the three motivations were mentioned by at least 10 participants.

All but six participants cited the economy or work opportunities as at least one of their reasons for migrating to the U.S., but this came in two varieties: economic benefits
to the individual and benefits to the family. Participants were slightly more likely to state that their own personal economic benefit was their reason for migrating, but individual economic motivations were discussed in different ways, such as work opportunities, the ability to make more money or the fact that U.S. dollars were worth more than pesos in Mexico. It was not uncommon for both individual and family economic factors to influence their decision--only eight participants did not discuss economic benefits to their family while also discussing their own. However, even when participants migrated primarily to support their family, they considered it to be an individual decision, not a "family" decision, as the new economics of migration theory has suggested (Stark, 1991).

Yolanda, who was primarily motivated by individual economic aspirations explained that she decided to migrate: “When I realized that I earned very little and I was never going to get ahead in Mexico.” She migrated to the U.S. as a single woman eight years ago when she was 19 years old after working briefly as a waitress in Tijuana (she is originally from Tabasco). Others shared the desire to improve themselves economically, but were focused on helping the family they left behind in Mexico. Orlando expressed this motivation clearly by saying, “First it was my family, like say--my mom, my brothers, my sisters, and I can help them. After that, there was me.” He left his family behind in Mexico City 17 years ago when he was only 16 years old. Occasionally, the participants saw helping their family as the sole economic motivation. This was the case for Gustavo who claimed, “We were there with my parents and we used to eat just a little bit of beans and tortillas. That’s why I came over here--so I could work to send them money.” Gustavo left Nuevo León for the first time over 30 years ago at age 17.
Some were influenced by their family in other ways—such as family reunification or health crises. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), family reunification, willing or otherwise, is a major force driving migration among Mexican immigrant women and this was replicated among participants in this study. Reuniting with family members, especially spouses, was an important motivation (sometimes the sole motivation) for immigrating to the U.S. for half of the female participants. Men also discussed family reunification as a motivation to migrate, but generally only when discussing why they chose to come to the U.S. instead of any other country or other part of Mexico.

Paula was raised in Nuevo León by her grandparents while the rest of her siblings and her mother lived in the U.S. After Paula was abandoned by her husband last year (2013), she thought, “I have never been with them [her family] and, so, when my husband left us, I made the choice to come here and to be with them and make up for all the time I lost.” In contrast, Jaime revealed that his sister, Yolanda, was living in the U.S. only after he was asked why he chose to migrate to the U.S. instead of another country or part of Mexico. He agreed that he likely could have found work in another part of Mexico (he had recently graduated from a technical school with a degree in gastronomy), but he commented that those places were “kind of far away” and asked rhetorically, “Why would you go there if you don’t know anybody when you can go to a place where you can do good and you have somebody that you know?” Jaime was 21 years old when he migrated to the U.S. three years ago from a mid-sized town in Tabasco. He never had the opportunity to work in Mexico, but has applied his skills as a restaurant manager in the U.S.
I distinguished between those who specifically cited their children or “future” children and those who referenced “family” in general because the motivation is slightly different. The desire to provide children with an “ideal” childhood can lead to migration with children, like the participants in this study who all eventually brought their children to the U.S., or even family separation, such as in Paula’s case described above (Horton, 2008). Unlike migrating to support family members with remittances, those with children were seeking direct benefits for their children in the United States—educational and economic opportunities, as well as security. Again, those who cited their children as a motivation to migrate were predominantly women, but a few men were focused on their children, as well.

Victoria and Emmanuel migrated to the U.S. permanently 16 years ago after returning to Mexico to have their first child—an action Victoria now regrets, because her first son does not have U.S. citizenship like her other children. She says the second time she came to the U.S., it was for her children:

More than anything, for them because here [in the U.S.], even though you have to work a lot, the money lasts. Here...you can get things you might not need, but things that the children like...they wouldn’t have the schools that they have here or a bus to pick them up and take them. That’s why I came here. For them. Or for him (referring to her son who was born in Mexico), because at that time, there was only one.

Victoria’s husband, Emmanuel, was also interviewed and he described their decision to migrate differently. He confided:

To start with, my wife [Victoria] didn’t like the place—Acapulco. Next, after we left Acapulco, there was a hurricane that destroyed almost all of Acapulco and the work situation was very hard, challenging. And the economic opportunities narrowed, it got hard, difficult. Then, because we already had been here, we knew how it was and, in a sense, we lived better, well, we decided to come back.
Both participants believed they were primarily responsible for the decision to migrate, but had different perspectives of the same event, possibly due to their roles at that time as a new mother and migrant worker. Emmanuel is a native acapulqueño who was first introduced to the U.S. 20 years ago while working on a cruise ship. He met his wife Victoria in the U.S., but they returned to Mexico for the birth of their first child.

Alberto mentioned the desire to leave an inheritance for his future children, but Rafael was the only male participant who prioritized his children as the impetus that led to his decision to migrate. He was not planning to leave Mexico until his wife’s sister became ill, even if this had not been the case, he still believes that he would have eventually left Mexico for his children because of the safety issues where they lived in Mexico City. He migrated to the U.S. permanently 13 years ago (this was his second trip) when he was 32 years old.

Catalytic Motivations. Although three participants mentioned only a combination of underlying motivations, the majority had one or more catalytic motivations also fueling their decision to come to the U.S. There was only one type of catalytic motivation that stood alone—cases where participants were “pushed” to migrate by someone else.

Five participants did not feel like they were primarily responsible for making the decision to migrate, but only two of these had no other motivations for immigrating to the U.S. Jorge was brought to the U.S. by his parents 15 years ago as a 17-year-old though he never wanted to come to the U.S. After years of migrating to and from Mexico, his father was tired of being apart from his family and he decided that the entire family should migrate to the U.S. permanently. First, Jorge’s mother accompanied his father to the U.S. and later they sent for Jorge and his siblings. When asked why he
decided to come to the U.S., Jorge replied, “They [my parents] came here, but I never wanted to go. They brought us—everyone.” All of the remaining four participants who were pushed to immigrate to the U.S. were women, reiterating the fact that women are more often pressured to reunite with their spouses and parents against their will (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Five additional catalytic motivations operated in tandem with underlying and tertiary motivations, including: generational and cultural migration, security, crisis and transitions (Table 4.2). Generational and cultural migration are similar in that participants indicated that seeing others migrate to the U.S. influenced their decision to migrate, illustrating the culture of migration and relative deprivation introduced into their communities (Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Hein de Haas, 2010; Massey, 1990). However, the categories are distinct in that generational migration consists of specific family members—especially parents. Jesus, for example, acknowledged the role generational migration played in his decision to migrate as follows:

Before, my grandfathers, and my uncles and my father came here on [agricultural (cotton) labor] contracts—when more people started to come over here. They came to work for a certain amount of time and then came back to Mexico and they brought good money to buy things, fix their houses, to buy televisions and refrigerators…And it was my choice to come here and try to do this, too.

Jesus migrated to the U.S. from Michoacán for the first time in 1979, so his parents and grandparents were likely Bracero era agricultural workers (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). After several trips to the U.S., Jesus settled permanently 18 years ago, after which his wife and children soon followed.

The familial pattern of migration enabled Jesus to see clearly how immigrating to the U.S. could be economically beneficial. As generations of Bracero migrants returned
to his hometown in Michoacán, they purchased goods that non-migrants could not afford, introducing relative deprivation into the community and adding fuel to the migratory stream (Hein de Haas, 2010). Cultural migration, on the other hand, consists of examples that include references to “they,” “everyone” or, as Samuel put it: “It was a decision precipitated by all the comments that everyone in the world would make, like: “No, the US—over there you’ll find a job” and they told us all these things--about good things.” The culture of migration was slightly more prevalent than generational migration, but altogether about one-third of participants mentioned at least one of these motivations.

As a motivation to migrate, security was also catalytic (though it often was more focal when participants described why they wanted to stay in the U.S.). Ignacio, a 22-year-old mechanic, primarily wanted to migrate for economic reasons—to help his family, specifically. His parents, however, disapproved of his choice until crime became more prevalent in his hometown in Guerrero. At that time, security became a more pronounced issue for Ignacio, who was 18 years old when he first migrated to the U.S. four years ago. He confided:

It was really hard to be a young person there [in Mexico]. What I remember is that my parents weren’t thinking about letting me go, but…they decided it was best to let me come because it was bad at that time. They were afraid that something would happen to me. And, well, it’s better if something happens here [in the U.S.]. They [his parents] said it was better here. Let’s let him go. (He concluded, speaking for his parents).

Like the new economics of migration theory suggests, Ignacio’s family heavily influenced his decision to come to the U.S. (Stark, 1991). However, his safety was the deciding factor, not necessarily the economic motivations Ignacio held personally.
Lastly, crisis and life transitions were also common catalytic motivations. According to the life course perspective, there are several transitions throughout the lifetime that result in role changes (Hutchison, 2010). While migration is also a “transition,” there were life transitions that preceded migration and led participants to begin considering migrating to the U.S. The transitions mentioned by participants included: divorce, marriage, childbirth, children reaching school age and graduating college. These transitionary periods gave participants extra impetus to migrate and put them under pressure to come to a decision quickly. In a word, crisis and transitions created the “extraordinary” circumstances that pushed these participants to migrate (Lee, 1966). Mariana, for example, had two U.S. citizen children who were living with her in Mexico after she separated from her American husband. As they got older, she began to think about returning to the U.S., “So, when they started school—they turned the age when you start school, that’s when I started to think about bringing them over here so they could study.” Mariana lived in the border-state of Tamaulipas where marriage between American and Mexican citizens was more feasible.

Crisis situations were more severe, including cases of abandonment, illness, job loss and death threats. Marta, for example, was bombarded by several factors at once when her father developed health problems and she lost a job opportunity:

I was thinking--I’m going to get it [the job]. I’m going to make it! But when they decided to change the person [the Health Secretary], everything fell down and I was desperate. I said this is the only way I can go. What else can I do?

She left Nayarit when she was 26 years old, unmarried and without children, and has lived in the U.S. for 18 years. These catalytic motivations generally operated in tandem
with one another and one or more underlying motivations, but about half of the participants also mentioned one or more supplemental motivations.

Supplemental Motivations. Nine supplemental motivations emerged from the data: accidental, environmental disaster, personal education, helping a friend, curiosity, pleasure, freedom and being a return migrant (Table 4.2). Each of these motivations were cited by at least one participant, but they never operated in isolation. The supplemental motivations category contains the largest number of factors and the importance of this category is that diversity. Most participants mentioned underlying motivations commonly referenced in the literature, but about half also indicated a supplemental motivation. The fact that participants mentioned several uncommon motivations illustrates the complexity of the decision to migrate to the U.S.

For example, Ángel never planned to come to the U.S. He was working as a truck driver, transporting “mapacas” throughout northern Mexico when he was asked by a friend who smuggled people into the U.S. to help monitor a group that he was crossing over.\(^\text{10}\) They would pay him 1,500 pesos for one day (the equivalent of about 160 U.S. dollars in 2000)—more than he made in two weeks at his regular job. He disclosed the following, “When we got there an immigration patrol truck was looking for us. So, we all ran and I ran over here, inside the border.” He was separated from the group and, having no family in Mexico, he didn’t see any reason to return.

Some claimed that they just wanted to visit or were curious, like Rafael who clarified that he only, “wanted to see what the U.S. was like,” the first time he migrated. He stayed for a year, but he missed his family and was not enthusiastic about the

\(^{10}\) Mapacas are bundles of alfalfa used to feed herd animals.
agricultural work he was doing in California. He was finally able to buy the Nike tennis shoes he wanted, but they were stolen soon after he returned to Mexico City. Victoria overstayed her visitor’s visa the first time she visited the U.S. She planned only to visit but later stayed, though she couldn’t pinpoint exactly why. She admitted that it was, “Not for any particular reason. I just liked it.”

Liking to live in the U.S. or growing accustomed to the U.S. was a common sentiment expressed by return migrants, as well. Some adapted quickly to the work environment in the U.S. and were disappointed by their opportunities when they returned to Mexico (Gordon, 1964). For example, when Ernesto came to the U.S. for the first time 15 years ago, it was to save money and build a house for his new wife and baby. He earned the money, built a house, but soon returned with his family, leaving Mexico City permanently. He explained his decision in the following way: “You get used to it—this kind of life over here. So, I was over there for like a year and I decided to come back because…you get used to all this. Working—everything. You get used to it.” He has lived in the U.S. for about ten years now and is currently working as the general manager of a restaurant.

Another important aspect was freedom—something brought up more often by single female participants and also by one male participant who was openly gay. Gender is a central aspect of migration because female migrants may experience improvements in autonomy and independence in ways men do not. For example, remittances may increase a female migrant’s social standing in the sending community to an extent that would be otherwise impossible (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). As with most benefits resulting from migration, there are also negative aspects specific to women—
like more rigid division of household labor, but these may be filtered out of discussions focused on employment opportunities (Parrado & Flippen, 2005).

Few women specifically referenced their gender as a motivation to migrate; however, seven of the women interviewed were single at the time of migration (two were single mothers) and expressed economic and familial motivations to migrate similar to male interviewees. Marta, for example, was determined to overcome the barriers imposed on her as a woman living in Mexico. She enrolled in college, but was forced to drop out once her father became ill. She discovered innovative ways to make ends meet by working three part-time jobs as a teacher, secretary and in a pharmacy. In addition to this, she rented a room from a friend (she had to share the room with her friend’s children) and helped out by caring for the children, cooking and cleaning the house. She expressed her motivation as follows:

I don’t want to be like everybody else—just get married and have my husband give me food and everything. I want to do something for me, that’s why I decided to go to school. I’ve always been independent and I wanted to help my family.

She was promised that when she finished her training as a secretary she would be able to move into a full-time position, but the job offer fell through when her supervisor was replaced and she became desperate. She thought she may have been able to succeed if she waited longer in Mexico, but with the responsibility of caring for her family falling to her at age 26, she confided, “I was just tired of looking for a better life [in Mexico].” Even in the U.S., she continued to be independent. She supported herself, bought her own home and had her first child four years ago at age 40. Other women did not reference their gender, but, like male interviewees, they saw the U.S. as a land of opportunities for both men and women.
Summary.

Underlying motivations were shared by almost all participants and it is clear why economic progress and social network ties are of interest to immigration scholars, but, despite their frequency, these motivations rarely operated in isolation. Because of how often the participants gave the “typical” response, it is easy to overlook the additional, less common motivations that were at play in each of their experiences. More than anything, it seems that economic progress has become the default explanation—the one that is most easily digested by the public and expressed cleanly by politicians and the mass media, but this summarizing sentence: “I came here for a better life,” misses the combination of factors that either 1) led participants to conclude that the U.S. was a viable option or 2) pushed them toward that option. The fact that it’s possible to be more financially secure in the U.S. is common knowledge—a type of “tacit knowledge”—that people are exposed to early in life, but the impetus to migrate requires more than a simple calculation of finances. Because of this, motivations that reference seeking a better life generally can be viewed as underlying motivations. Without the understanding of the U.S. as a land of opportunity, the decision would not have been made, but for most a catalyzing event is required for the decision to take place.

For many participants, catalytic motivations were events or patterns of behavior that acted as catalysts, activating the migration decision. This is most evident among the 15 participants who were either in transition, experiencing a crisis or pushed into the U.S. against their will. In all of these cases, participants knew that the U.S. would be more secure and likely make them more financially stable, but a catalyzing event was require to activate the decision—or, as Lee (1966) indicated—extraordinary
circumstances developed. Throughout the life course, individuals are met with several events that indicate major milestones in life and require drastic changes. For this study, I refer to less life-altering events as transitions—marriage, graduation, childbirth, etc.—normal events that occur throughout the lifetime that nonetheless necessitate lifestyle changes. Events with more devastating consequences, such as job loss, illness or security threats, I refer to as “crises.” In either case, participants were pressured by a catalyzing event to come to a decision quickly in order to maintain or improve their standard of living.

Migration to the U.S. is more likely to be identified as a reasonable option when cultural and generational migration is at play. It is an important catalytic motivation because witnessing community members migrate and return successfully (or send remittances), encourages a pattern of behavior to develop. Essentially, migration is seen as an acceptable—or even preferred—response to transitions and crises that occur throughout the lifespan.

Supplemental motivations are unique because they never operated in isolation and were unique to each participant. For a handful of participants, a supplemental motivation served as the primary impetus for migration—specifically, those whose migrations were completely unplanned and intended to be temporary. These participants cited reasons like: curiosity, pleasure, accidental and accompanying a friend. Supplemental motivations were also important to those seeking freedom, but there were only two participants in this situation and they expressed other important catalytic motivations, as well. In other cases, supplemental motivations were spoken of as an afterthought, like how an environmental disaster made it difficult for Emmanuel to
find work in Acapulco, though he was already planning to leave for the U.S. prior to the hurricane.

While most participants reported underlying motivations that supported their decision to immigrate to the U.S., the migration decision was generally activated by a catalytic motivation—usually events such as transitions and crises. Furthermore, each participant made their decision with a host of other supplemental factors at play that were unique to each person. As with any decision, choosing to migrate is personal and complex. With that in mind, once a decision is made, the individual must access a range of resources to assist them on their journey to the U.S.

Resources Used During the Pre-Migration Phase

For the purposes of this study, I distinguish between two types of resources—those used solely to provide information about the U.S. or immigrating to the U.S. and those directly involved in the individual’s migration experience. Henceforth, I will refer to these two types of resources as: “Information Sources” and “Migration Resources,” respectively. For the sake of clarity, this section is divided into three parts: Information Obtained (from “information sources”), Lack of Information/Misinformation and Migration Resources. I distinguish between information obtained and lack of information/misinformation because the former contains examples the participants considered to be accurate while the latter consists of examples participants considered to be inaccurate or absent.

To learn about the U.S. or what it was like to immigrate to the U.S., participants generally accessed informal sources like family or friends and, occasionally, the media (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2004). More often than mentioning any specific information
source, participants would describe the information they had as a type of “tacit knowledge”—this information was taken to be something they everyone knew or that they had learned from an unspecified “they” or “them.” This illustrates the role of diasporic information grounds in generating information about the U.S. and the migratory process (Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). Information collected in informal settings or through observation is not easily linked to a specific information source.

For example, when asked what resources he used prior to migrating the U.S. Andrés replied, “Well, I always had the information because people come and go and they tell you everything. So, you already have a little map. You’re already imagining it…” Andrés was forced to leave his home-state of Michoacán less than a year ago. At age 39, he was an independent entrepreneur in Mexico and more financially stable than many of the other participants in the sample, but had to flee for security reasons. To protect his assets and community, he joined a local “autodefensas” group in Michoacán to fight organized crime. He soon realized that many of the practices the group engaged in were similar to the local gangs, but, when he tried to cut ties with the group, they began making threats on his life.

As indicated in Table 4.1, a third of participants had Internet access, but this was not typically used to learn about migration. This reaffirms the idea that information practices are embedded in the social and cultural environment (Savolainen, 2008). While participants may have had the opportunity to retrieve valuable information from

11 The “auto defensas” or “comunitarios” arose in Michoacán to fight organized crime and are often romanticized as vigilante groups (Andrews, 2014; Katz, 2014; Partlow, 2014).
the Internet or U.S. Consulate, the socially embedded process of obtaining migration information through network ties generally predominated (Singer & Massey, 1998).

Information Obtained

Though participants obtained both accurate and inaccurate information from the information sources they used in the pre-migration phase (i.e. friends, family, media), for the sake of clarity, only examples of information that participants considered to be true will be presented in this section. The information obtained concerned both the U.S. and immigrating to the U.S. and, overall, 30 distinct types of information emerged from the data (Appendix A). However, I collapsed these types into two major themes: Information About the U.S. and Information About the Immigration Process and arranged the information obtained according to the source of the information.

Information about the U.S.—From “Them, They.”

Participants had various types of tacit knowledge about the U.S. that they had picked up from unknown sources throughout their lifetime, ranging from topics like the treatment of women and the “American Dream” to discrimination and the work environment. Participants’ information about the U.S. was derived from unknown sources more often than even their family and friends and occasionally knowledge was based on assumptions the participants made about the U.S. after seeing return migrants, illustrating the importance of informal information grounds in generating knowledge about the U.S. (Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). For example, successful migrants who send remittances back to Mexico or return to build houses and purchase other material goods (i.e. refrigerators, televisions, automobiles) introduce relative deprivation into the community (Flores-Yeffal, 2012; Hein de Haas, 2010).
For example, Cassandra, a young woman who emigrated alone from the Guanajuato at age 18, believed her initial desire to come to the U.S. was fueled by, “…the people who came over here [to the U.S]…I saw that they lived better and they were better off than others.” José, a recent immigrant from a rural town in Michoacán summed up his experience in the U.S. by saying, “…you can have better opportunities here ‘cause you can make more money than over there.”

This type of information was gathered through informal channels and not deliberately. After witnessing others succeed and listening to return migrants boast of success in informal settings, the perception that the U.S. was a place of progress became embedded in the participant’s tacit knowledge. The informal exchange of information left participants unaware of how they came to possess certain assumptions about the U.S., but nonetheless surprised when many of their assumptions were not completely accurate—a finding I will discuss in a later section concerning misconceptions about the U.S.

Information About the U.S.—From the Media.

Though about 30% of participants had Internet access, either at home, school, work or in cybercafés, none of the respondents indicated that they used the Internet to learn about the U.S. In fact, only Marta confessed that the media may have influenced her decision to immigrate to the U.S. According to her, “…nobody told me or showed me…” how it would be like in the U.S., “I just wanted to come because of the TV, because I was thinking it would be a better life for me.” While others may have been unknowingly influenced by the media, it was not a prominent topic of discussion.
Information about the U.S.—From Friends and Family.

A handful of participants talked directly to their family members about what the U.S. was like before making the decision to migrate, but, more often than not, interviewees felt their family members told them relatively little about day-to-day life in the U.S., leaving about important details about the work environment/culture, interactions with Americans and transportation. Without information about potential disadvantages of migrating to the U.S., participants made their decision based on limited information available. (Friedman & Hechter, 1988; Simon, 1972; Witteck, Snijders & Nee, 2013). Essentially, that the U.S. is a place where you are guaranteed to make more money.

What information participants did receive about the U.S. from family members was limited to economic opportunities, but this was considered sufficient to make a decision. Adrian, who emigrated from Michoacán 12 years ago at age 22, expressed that he didn’t have a plan laid out for when he got to the U.S., but he had learned of economic opportunities in the U.S. from his uncles and declared, “…it was enough information for me that it was nice and good and you have a car and everything.”

Similarly, Mariana, a single mother who migrated to the U.S. from the border state of Tamaulipas 12 years ago with her two American-born children, disclosed that her family living in the U.S. didn’t tell her anything except that, “…I could find a job, I could put the kids in school and all that, but never about how life was here [in the U.S.].”

Participants reported learning slightly more about the U.S. from their friends than from family members, but, generally the topic of conversation was similar—the U.S. was discussed as a place where you could make progress, improving your own economic
standing and that of your family. Occasionally, friends were even more boastful, like José’s friends who told him, “…that it was amazing over here [in the U.S.]…you make a lot of money and you can buy a truck in maybe 2 or 3 months. Or that they would give you a great life here.” After spending six years in the U.S., José has realized that earning a living as an undocumented immigrant is more challenging than he expected.

Some friends gave practical advice, as well, like Orlando’s friend who told him, “…you need to learn English…you’re gonna have a lot of trouble if you can’t speak English.” Migrating alone at age 16, Orlando didn’t take his friend’s advice seriously until he had an argument with an English speaking co-worker who later told his supervisor that Orlando was “being racist.” A bilingual co-worker then spoke with the supervisor for 15 minutes, so he could translate back to Orlando why he was being punished. After the conversation ended, the bilingual co-worker said simply, “If you do this again, you’re going to get fired.” Confused how a 15 minute conversation could be translated into one sentence, Orlando continued to question his bilingual co-worker, but the co-worker replied only with, “If you don’t like it, you should go to school to learn English!” Soon afterward, he enrolled in English classes at night and struggled through until he mastered the language.

Summary. Between tales of progress and practical advice, discussion about the disadvantages of living in the U.S. was sorely lacking. Essentially, the decision to migrate was made based solely positive information about the U.S. weighed against the emotional consequences of leaving behind one’s family—without considering the challenges of succeeding in the U.S., such as linguistic, economic, educational and immigration status barriers. Friends, family, the media and general assumptions based
on impressions from return migrants left participants with the feeling that the U.S. was a place of progress.

By presenting a one-sided view of the U.S., the cost of migrating was significantly reduced because the potential for discrimination and failure was generally not entertained. Essentially, the only cost to be considered was family separation and almost all participants believed they would be separated from their families for only a short time. I will continue to discuss lacking information and misconceptions about the U.S. in a later section, but it is well-established in earlier literature that the rosy portrayal of the U.S. encourages migration and this trend appears to be replicated among these participants (Appadurai, 1990; Deaux, 2006; Howenstine, 1996; Mahler, 1995; Moore, 2013; Pessar, 1995; Sladkova, 2007).

Information About the Immigration Process—From “They, Them.”

As indicated earlier by Andrés, there is a level of tacit knowledge many migrants possess before beginning their trip to the U.S. In his words: “…you already have a little map.” This was reaffirmed by his uncle, Jesus, who claimed that,

People didn’t study this [how to immigrate to the U.S.] because they already know everything—then, you know what? Come on, go over there! It’s easy over here. There are those that tell you where to cross—you have no idea.

This tacit knowledge operated in a similar way for participants who entered the country legally. Victoria, a native of Tamaulipas, explained that she wasn’t exactly sure how she learned to apply for a Border Crossing Card because,

We already knew what to do because—I have never gotten one before but we already knew because we have—then are a lot of people, because it’s the border, the talk, they say you need this, you need that. So, for me it was really easy.
The gradual incorporation of U.S. Consulates into migrant information fields contributed to the addition of applying for permission to enter the U.S. as a standard step in the migratory process. However, this occurred only among a few participants residing along the U.S.-Mexico border (specifically, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas). A recent study of undocumented border crossings in Tijuana (another border state) confirms this development, describing how Border Crossing Cards became normalized in the region when undocumented crossing became more hazardous (Chavez, 2011).

Information about the Immigration Process—From the Media.

Only one participant (Andrés), tried to use the Internet to learn about how to immigrate into the U.S. Though he was relatively financially well-off in Mexico, Andrés was unexpectedly forced to migrate to the U.S. a little over half a year ago after receiving threats on his life. When he began to consider fleeing to the U.S., he searched the Internet for information, but he did not use the Internet to explore legal alternatives. Instead, he tried to locate a smuggler but was unsuccessful. He explained his experience as follows:

There are pages on the Internet that, well, everything’s on there—about how to get someone to bring you here, all that, and you can get phone numbers… but, there in the border is where you figure out how you’re going to cross. No, no. The internet isn’t useful because everything is secret. Really, you’re not going to learn anything there.

The fact that Andrés used the Internet only to search for a cóyote illustrates how the unauthorized method of migration has become normalized to the point where investigating legal alternatives is not even considered. Just as migration becomes a “rite of passage,” the method employed by migrants becomes culturally embedded and self-perpetuating (Massey, 1990; Singer & Massey, 1998).
Information about the Immigration Process—From Friends and Family.

Friends and family members were both more likely to be actual resources used during the migration process than information resources alone, but, occasionally participants reported only learning information about the migratory process. For example, Catalina, a young woman who emigrated from Nuevo León at age 16 with her aunt, Alejandra, stated that her father advised her about the potential dangers of crossing the border, telling her that, “...immigration could stop me or I could have an accident.” Her father had already immigrated to the U.S. and, after it became apparent that her mother was unable to afford to place Catalina in a decent high school in Mexico, she was pressured to join her father in the U.S.

Sometimes participants used family members as illustrative examples to explain why they chose to avoid applying for a visa. Ernesto, an immigrant from Mexico City who traveled between the U.S. and Mexico several times offered the explanation that his father, “…was working for the government for Mexico and he was making a lot of money. They wouldn’t even give a visa to my dad.” Other times, “friends” suggested migration alternatives, such as when a friend of Orlando told him that he would help him to cross the border, but that he would have to work for him without pay for the first year. Fortunately, he declined, but admitted that he seriously considered the offer. As indicated by Dekker and Engberson (2012), there is a risk that potential migrants will be exploited by experienced migrants who receive requests for information and help.
Information About the Immigration Process—From “Cóyotes.”\textsuperscript{12}

Nearly all participants who entered the U.S. without inspection (i.e. “illegally”), crossed the border with the help of a paid guide, but, for the most part these guides were not forthcoming about the migratory process. Some participants expressed that they felt “blind” or “in darkness” when crossing the border and, in a few instances, participants reported being misled or abandoned by their cóyote. In the words of Jesus, a 56-year-old migrant from Michoacán, all you know is that it’s “their job” and you “try your luck.” Despite this, some guides did explain what crossing the border would be like beforehand.

Rafael and his wife crossed the border through the hills, but, after travelling from Mexico City to the U.S.-Mexico border, his female guide informed them that she “worked differently” and their two children (who were 8 and 10 years old at the time) would cross separately through the traditional checkpoints in a car. Some, like Marta, knew her guide before crossing the border and he provided her with more details about the journey—like how long they would be walking, where they would be picked up, etc.

Summary.

As I will discuss in the following section, participants had more to say about information they lacked and misinformation, but there are still a few important conclusions to be drawn from the accurate information they obtained. First, tacit knowledge from “they/them” strongly influenced the options participants believed were available to them. Simply observing how “others” migrated to the U.S. dictated which

\textsuperscript{12} Cóyote is a popular term for individuals who are paid to bring immigrants into the country illegally. Occasionally, they are also referred to as “guides” or “smugglers.”
path each participant pursued—whether that was entering without inspection or applying for a visa. Second, the information imparted by friends and family members wasn’t always helpful and led to undesirable assumptions—like that applying for a visa was pointless. It was far more likely that participants used friends and family as migration resources as opposed to information resources alone, however, and the extent of help provided to participants during the migration process will be explored in a later section.

A third observation is that coyotes generally did not provide participants with much guidance prior to crossing the border. Many expressed that they felt they were embarking on the journey “blind” and uncertain of what was going to take place because directions were given moment by moment. This, combined with the standardization of methods of migration, combines to reveal how the limited information available could encourage participants to elect an unauthorized method of migration. This claim is further supported in the following section where participants discuss the information they lacked about the migration process.

Lack of Information and Misinformation

Overall, participants had more to say about information they lacked prior to migrating or misinformation they received about either the migratory process or the U.S. For the most part, participants didn’t point to any specific source of misinformation, but rather discussed how some of their assumptions about the U.S. or the migratory process were proven incorrect. Of course, this is not without exception—some indicated that they felt they were lied to directly by either friends or coyotes. As discussed previously, the majority of the information participants received was obtained indirectly
through observation of return migrants and obtaining information solely through informal information grounds will likely lead to an incomplete picture of the U.S. and the migratory process (Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). This incomplete picture could result in the inability to make an informed decision about migrating to the U.S.

I will explore incomplete and inaccurate information in two parts: about the U.S. and about the immigration process. Inaccuracies and/or missing information about either could contribute to either migrating under false pretenses or choosing an unauthorized migration method. Despite the fact that some participants supplemented the tacit knowledge they developed over time by directly discussing the U.S. and the migratory process with friends and family, they were not forthcoming about the disadvantages of living in the U.S., leading many to feel they lacked information about what life was like in the U.S. This is in line with previous research that suggests migrants are more likely to report only positive experiences to potential migrants (Howenstine, 1996; Mahler, 1995; Moore, 2013; Pessar, 1995; Sladkova, 2007).

Furthermore, experienced migrants can advise potential migrants about the migratory process based only on their experiences with unauthorized migration. This is compounded by the fact that in most regions unauthorized migration is considered to be the “norm,” and, thus, it is the method that would be most commonly discussed in informal information grounds (Srinivasan & Pyati, 2007). The combination of these two elements led to a lack of information and misinformation about authorized migration and the reproduction of unauthorized migration.
Participants discussed misinformation and lack information about the U.S. slightly more often than misinformation about the migratory process and there were as many as 13 specific types of information that were mentioned before being collapsed into four themes: Relationships, Lifestyle, Laws/Rights, and the “American Dream” (Figure 4.2).

About the United States—The American Dream.

Misinformation about the “true nature” of the American Dream was mentioned more often than any other theme and many participants indicated that achieving success in the U.S. wasn’t quite as easy as they had imagined. The American Dream was popularized by the works of Horatio Alger, a 19th century novelist who wrote rags-
to-riches stories based on the myth that anyone can succeed in the U.S. if they prioritize hard work and sacrifice (Mahler, 1996). Prior to migrating, however, many participants had not internalized the “hard work” aspect of these narratives—likely because experienced migrants are more likely to emphasize the positive experiences they have had in the host country (Howenstine, 1996; Mahler, 1995; Moore, 2013; Pessar, 1995; Sladkova, 2007). Instead, the amount of effort required to subsist in the U.S. surprised many participants and, in turn, they adapted their ideas of what constituted success in the U.S. and how that success could be achieved (Berry & Annis, 1974; Berry, 1997; Gordon, 1961). Work was often referenced in these discussions in different capacities, especially referring to limited job opportunities, time spent working and workplace discrimination.

Jaime, a recent immigrant from Tabasco, indicated the following: “…you have to work a lot because the environment makes you work a lot.” As a restaurant manager, Jaime works about 50 hours a week. This sentiment was echoed by Samuel who affirmed that, “…you have to work a full-time and part-time job just to cover all your payments. They [past migrants] always say the opposite.” Samuel left Veracruz 12 years ago at age 19 with his friend and her 8-month-old son. Besides being required to work a lot to make ends meet, participants complained that sometimes it can be difficult to find work. One woman, Angelica, who was pushed to migrate to the U.S. by her parents (Jesus is her father) when she was 20 years old explained, “It’s very hard—sometimes the people who have to provide food for the household can’t find work.” She wasn’t prepared for life in the U.S. and did not know what to expect. After both of her
parents migrated to the U.S., her mom told her that she and her siblings would be going also.

Oftentimes, the jobs that are available to undocumented immigrants are undesirable. Rafael, who refers to himself as “chilango,” described his first work experience in the U.S\textsuperscript{13}:

When I came in 1990...I started working in agriculture—harvesting apples, peaches, fruit, you know? And I worked doing all that and I had never done that type of work before...because I was born in the city. I've done all types of difficult jobs but that one was the hardest because I didn't know what I was doing. That's what caused my disappointment in the lifestyle the first time.

Clinging to their original notion that succeeding in the U.S. was “easy” in the face of linguistic, economic, educational and immigration status barriers would undoubtedly result in psychological stress (Berry, 1970; 1997; Berry & Annis, 1974). To avoid this, approximately a third of participants redefined their interpretation of the American Dream to a distinctively Americanized narrative--success is still possible, but only for those who work hard (Mahler, 1996). Yolanda, who has been living in the U.S. for the last eight years summed up this perspective, “…the people who want to get ahead, get ahead. There are possibilities to get ahead here and those who have the drive to get ahead, who have the drive to work—will do it. Those who don’t, won’t.” Linda, another woman who migrated to the U.S. as a single woman, expressed a similar sentiment by saying, “Everything depends...if you want to live better, you can do it, but you have to work hard or do it a different way, like going to school.”

\textsuperscript{13} Rafael carefully explained the meaning of “chilango” for those who are unfamiliar with the term, “if you’re born there [in Mexico City], they call you “chilango.” I don’t why, but that's how it is.”
Linda dropped out of school in Mexico in the 9th grade to work and help support her family. At age 17, she migrated to the U.S. from Guanajuato like her father before her and has since helped put her mom and two sisters through nursing school in Mexico. Even after 12 years of living in the U.S. and having five children, she would still like to go back to school. Andrés also adopted this perspective, though he has lived in the U.S. for less than a year. He says that he thought the U.S. would be “…better, because…I’ve done better than anyone in my family. I’ve worked—I’ve gotten better jobs than them without speaking English and being here illegally. All of them are legal—they all have papers, most speak English and they don’t have good jobs.”

Because of the pressure of daily life and acculturative stress (Berry, 1970; 1997), some experienced changes in their mannerisms and way of thinking. Though Samuel was in college in Mexico before coming to the U.S., he lamented:

I don’t even speak diplomatically anymore—I’ve picked up the slang, and other ways of speaking, other mannerisms that I didn’t have when I left the university…you become hostile, vulgar and it’s been disappointing because, in reality, you become a person who just thinks of themselves without caring anything about anyone else.

Once in the U.S., he adopted the linguistic patterns of his peers and co-workers who were generally less educated than himself and felt himself transforming into a more callous person.

About the United States—Lifestyle.

Approximately one-fifth of the discussion about the U.S. concerned misinformation about the “lifestyle” in the United States (Figure 4.2). For many participants, the “rhythm of life” was monotonous, limited to a repetitive cycle of going from work to home. This cycle often developed as a result of less family/friendship
connections and restrictions of the behavior of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Rafael encapsulated the sentiment of several other participants when he remarked: “Over here you lose the—I don’t know—some days you’re like what day is today? It’s Monday or Tuesday? I don’t know...Because every day we work, work, work.” Rafael is currently on his second stay in the U.S. which has been considerably longer than the first. After working a year in agricultural in 1990, he returned to Mexico disappointed with the thought, “…my cousin told me that here (in the U.S.) life was beautiful and happy, but it’s not like that. It wasn’t.”

Linda disagrees, but she feels “sad” that she isn’t able to participate as fully in the U.S. as she would like. According to her, “…this is not my place so…I can’t drive away from home because probably they’re asking me for my papers or, you know, but it’s a beautiful place.” It was not uncommon to refer to life in the U.S. as “prison.” Basically, participants felt they were able to make money, but they were stuck and unable to enjoy their lives in the U.S. Emmanuel voiced this issue in the following way:

If you don’t have papers it’s like...you make money but you’re in a sort of prison. And you don’t leave this place. You can’t leave because you can’t move, for example, to San Antonio or go to the places you want to go, leave the country to visit friends and family. You can’t.

Beyond the restrictive lifestyle and work culture, participants were unpleasantly surprised about the cost of living in the U.S. and automobile dependence. Two participants were accustomed to walking or using public transportation in Mexico—something nearly impossible in many regions of the U.S. Catalina states that she wasn’t prepared for this change, “If you don’t have a car, you can’t go to the doctor, you can’t go to the store. I was not ready for that. I mean, in Mexico we never had a car. All the time we walked to the doctor, to the store, to school.” Jaime had a similar experience
and when he arrived to the U.S. four years ago he didn’t know how to drive, though he was 21 years old.

Automobile dependence accounts for part of the unexpected increase in expenses and this increase indubitably leads to working longer hours. However, there are other types of expenses, as well. Samuel related that Mexicans who visit Mexico always “exaggerate,” telling others, “…I have houses, I have cars—and the latest model—but they don’t tell you that what they have are debts.” Alberto adds that regular payments for rent, cell phone bills and even the frequency of paying for utilities (services not required when he lived in Mexico) were surprising for him. About half of participants mentioned unanticipated lifestyle differences between the U.S. and Mexico, but this hasn’t been sufficient for any of the participants to seriously considered the U.S. permanently.

About the United States—Relationships.

About one-fifth (Figure 4.2) of references to lack of information about the U.S. concerned relationships and/or interactions with the native-born and other immigrants upon arriving to the U.S. Interaction between coethnics is sometimes notably degraded in the U.S. because of divisions along social class and citizenship lines that may not have been as prevalent in Mexico (Cranford, 2005; Holmes, 2007; Morales, 2008; 2011). Furthermore, the stress of the migratory experience and struggles in the U.S. may lead to fractures in both familial relationships and friendships (Mahler, 1996; Menjívar, 1997; 2000).

Several participants described an unexpected deterioration in their familial and friendship relationships after arriving to the U.S. Orlando immigrated to the U.S. and
lived with a brother soon after arrival, but he claimed that the U.S. taught him that “…you cannot expect anything from your family,” a fact illustrated by Jesus’s early experiences in the U.S. when a family member he was staying with kicked him, his wife and young daughters out of their house unexpectedly. Ernesto mentioned that he wasn’t successful in the U.S. in the beginning because he was working with people from his hometown (Mexico City) and “…that kind of people are always trying to rip you off…[and] trying to pay you less than what you’re supposed to be making.”

Oftentimes, participants would contrast their experience with Americans with the experiences they had with other Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans in the U.S. For example, Jesus compared his interaction with “white people” and other Mexicans in the workplace:

I thought white people treated others badly and that’s not true. Those who treat you badly are of your own race. Where I work the Americans say: “Thank you so much for your job!” They work hard and carry their weight. I started working with people of my own Mexican race and they treat you like dirt. It seems that what I thought about the Americans, it’s actually your own race that does that.

Yolanda extends this comparison, adding that:

…If today you don’t have anything to eat and you go and ask an American to help you or if they will give you a job so you can buy something to eat—they will give you a job. But if you go to a Hispanic person and ask the same, oftentimes they will not help you.

In the eight years that Yolanda has been living in the U.S., she married a fellow immigrant from Mexico and had two children who are now in elementary school. After her divorce, she could no longer afford her home and had to move numerous times, resulting in difficulties for her sons who were forced to change schools. This is especially problematic for her oldest son who has a developmental delay. Last year she
started a cleaning business—catering primarily to wealthier white families who pay well and often give her small gifts.

In light of these experiences, Alberto, who left Guanajuato at age 25 and has been living in the U.S. for nearly 20 years, tries to imitate the U.S.-born:

They’re respectful, polite, they don’t mess with you. They’re closed up in their houses and they stay there. They’ve taught me to live like that, too, not wandering the streets drinking, not going around outside playing music—no. They have taught me to live a disciplined life—in the house.

He came to value the “American” lifestyle after he was confronted by a police officer who told him, “You can drink and do what you want, but go to your house with your family. Eat, enjoy yourself, but don’t go out in the street.” It is unsurprising that this direct encounter with U.S. law enforcement led him to adopt a more Americanized perspective (Gordon, 1964; Berry, 1997).

Despite these comparisons, participants generally believed there was a “little bit of everything” when it came to the people living in the U.S., but some were pleasantly surprised by the treatment they received by the native-born. Mariana described an experience she had soon after she arrived to the U.S. as surprising to her, though she had visited U.S. border cities many times before:

It surprised me a little because the majority [of the native-born] are very nice and, in Mexico, you aren’t accustomed to this. Like, when I just got here [to the U.S.], I went out on the street with my sister and the whole world would say, “Hello, hello!” And I said—what the heck? Do you know them?

This early experience positively shaped Mariana’s perception of Americans, but others interpret the pleasant demeanor of Americans as “superficial” (Alarcón & Novak, 2010). Regardless, even those participants who had direct experiences with discrimination saw it as out of the norm or as something that has improved over time. Ignacio laughed as
he recalled an experience he recently arriving to the U.S.:

I went out with my nephew to a park and a little black boy was following us... I didn’t invite him, nor did my nephew. We got there, to the park, we started playing for a little bit. After that, his mom showed up, very angry, telling me many words--I didn’t understand English, but in the way I saw her reaction, she was going to hit me or something. She was telling me lots of words because she thought I was trying to kidnap her son and this surprised me because that was never my intention—I didn’t want to hurt her son.

Afterward, the police were called and the situation was straightened out, but the woman still took his picture. Even so, he ended the story as follows:

Everyone lives there own life sometimes. Everyone tries to do with their life what they see to be good and the good thing is that nothing happened—I didn’t kidnap the boy!

Ignacio’s light-hearted retelling of this experience is contrasted with others who are burdened by institutional discriminatory forces that prevent many from engaging in basic tasks like finding work or a place to live and securing securities like insurance and bank accounts (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999).

About the United States—Laws/Rights.

Nearly 10% of participants mentioned they learned important information about the legal system and their rights (including those denied to them as unauthorized immigrants) after arriving to the U.S. Sometimes lacking this information was devastating. For example, Lissana lived in the U.S. with an abusive husband for almost 20 years, not knowing that she could request legal protection and possibly adjust to legal permanent resident status even as an undocumented immigrant. Her spouse was a legal permanent resident and refused to petition for her unless she paid for his application to become a citizen. Currently, the cost of an N-400, Application for
Naturalization is $680, plus legal fees (USCIS, 2014). In Tamaulipas, she ran a small restaurant alongside her mother and was relatively well-off economically, but her fiancé pressured her to leave for the U.S. after she became pregnant.

For others, knowing about the discrimination they would face prior to migrating might have influenced their choice of migration method. Adrian divulged that, “if I could...come over here in a legal way, I would do it,” because of, “The rights that you have and the things that you can earn that can make your life better, improve your living and improve your rights, improve your health and improve your overall—like, social security and taxes and all that.” After all of his documents were destroyed in a fire a few years ago, Adrian has had difficulty obtaining replacements. Without anything to prove his identity, he is denied rights that even other undocumented immigrants possess—like opening bank accounts, filing taxes and boarding airplanes. Others mentioned the fact that you can’t receive loans (Alberto and Emmanuel) and that their friends never told them that, “people aren’t going to give you a job because you don’t have papers.” (José). Similarly, Mario, an emigrant from Guerrero who was lived in the U.S. for 13 years, claimed, “The lifestyle is a little more...restrictive. You don’t have any freedom just because you’re an immigrant.”

Forms of institutional discrimination, such as legal restrictions that prevented them from working, obtaining loans, having a driver’s license, pursuing higher education, receiving benefits and filing taxes were more significant to participants than individual discrimination (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999) and participants were often not aware of these restrictions until arriving to the U.S. This may be due in part to the recent
implementation of many restrictions and variation between states (Brettel & Nibbs, 2011; Johnson & Trujillo, 2011; Johnson, 2004).

About the United States—The Undirected Minority.

The smallest category stands alone and includes participants who didn’t know what their next step would be once they made it to the U.S. Seven participants expressed uncertainty about what would happen next, but this was more influential for some than others. Samuel, who crossed the border alone with his friend and her eight-month-old son, recanted their early experiences in the U.S., saying:

We didn’t have a house, we didn’t have a car, food, clothing—so, well, we didn’t have any support except for one another and…a few times we would sleep in parks, on the street. And, then, it’s even harder for a child to bear with the cold than for an adult—and the hunger, for an 8 month old. But we got here…it was very sad.

Others expressed that they “didn’t really have a clue” where to go or what to do, but this didn’t deter them from immigrating. Linda recognized that she didn’t have a plan, but explained her reasoning as follows: “I just thinking this is—this isn’t gonna be easy, but I have to do it. I just did it. I don’t know what’s gonna happen later, but I just need to try. I don’t know what’s over there, but I need to do it.” The remittances her father sent barely provided her mother with enough money to feed her and her seven siblings. Her father would send money every Monday and after three days her mother would exhaust the money and was forced to ask their extended family for help just to feed the children. Like Adrian remarked, even though you don’t “have information on how life is on the other side, how they’re going to treat you or what you’re going to do,” it’s sufficient knowing that life will be better.
Summary.

Most participants agree with Adrian—life is somewhat better here in the United States, even if it doesn’t quite live up to their expectations. None of the participants stated that they had learned or experienced something in the U.S. that would have changed their decision to come, but a few expressed regrets—either about family separation or the difficulty of learning English late in life. With more people migrating to the U.S. permanently and unable to visit home, the fact that moving to the U.S. may involve years or even decades of family separation is likely becoming common knowledge among potential migrants today.

While no one wishes they had never come to the U.S., most say they have had experiences that would have changed how they came to the U.S. Only three participants stated that they wouldn’t change how they came to the U.S., if possible, and even those who doubt they would have qualified for a visa say they would have at least tried. The experiences that influenced many people included the difficult lifestyle for an undocumented immigrant, the struggles with obtaining decent work and getting ahead in life without the support U.S. citizens receive from the government and other institutions. Plus, authorized immigrants are in the enviable position of being able to return to Mexico to visit their family and return to the U.S. with fewer complications. Unfortunately, most participants knew relatively little about migrating to the U.S.—both authorized and unauthorized methods—and this is a topic I will explore in greater depth in the following section.
About the Immigration Process—Unauthorized Migration.

Participants expressed misinformation and lacking information about both unauthorized and authorized migration.

Figure 4.2 Lack of Information/Misinformation about Migration

Both types of migration were discussed about equally, though unauthorized migration was mentioned slightly more often (See Figure 4.3). Generally, the information participants were lacking or misinformation they received concerned crossing the border, including the cost, difficulty, waiting time, etc. Cedro immigrated to the U.S. for the first time 13 years ago at age 20 from Mexico City to earn money and start a business in his hometown. His brother told him about a work opportunity in the U.S., but
he was left to find a guide on his own. The guide he chose led him and another couple into the desert and abandoned them. He described his experience as follows:

Right away, I can identify how a lie passed for truth because he [the coyote] said that he was going to bring us to this side and everything would be fine. [But] He abandoned us in the desert and we ended up having to walk and suffer. There was much suffering.

Though Cedro succeeded in crossing the border, that type of misinformation can be deadly.

Other participants described the difficulty of their experience crossing the border as “easier” or “harder” than they expected. Yolanda, for instance, disclosed that crossing the border was easier than she expected, “I thought that it would be harder. For me, it was easy. I didn’t have to go through what everyone else did, piled one on top of the other.” She rode into Tuscon, AZ in the front seat of a pick-up truck—12 people were “piled one on top of the other” in the truck bed. Angelica had the opposite experience and explained that it was harder than she expected, “It was harder. It’s very…It’s dangerous. You can run into bad people. You could drown--very many people have drowned and a lot of people you don’t know anything about them anymore.” Like Angelica, Catalina was sent for by her parents and she also expressed surprise:

I thought that we would walk on a road…We started walking through the mountains. We had to cross, in Mexico we call it “milpas,” and they were wet with mud and litter. And you don’t think that it’s going to be like that.”\(^\text{14}\)

Unlike Cedro, these women were not directly lied to, but had pieced together an image of what crossing the border would be like based on a compilation of informally gathered information.

\(^{14}\) Milpas are corn fields.
migration stories. Ignacio, who migrated from Guerrero four years ago, also claimed his experience crossing the border was much easier than he expected, adding,

Well, I think that sometimes the people who tell you these stories (about migrant’s being kidnapped and/or tortured) are people who haven’t-- in reality, they haven’t come here, but you just would hear what they were saying.

Another participant, Andrés, actually did experience issues getting to the U.S. until his family and friends provided the smuggler with an additional $3,000. According to him,

After getting here, to go and see my family, they wanted $3,000 more. So, altogether I paid $6,000 to be here. That’s what I’m referring to when I tell you that they tell you one thing and something else happens.

Many of his friends and family members pooled their money to send to him when he was told that he would have to pay double after being caught during the first attempt at crossing the border.

Several participants discussed that they didn’t realize traveling back and forth between the U.S. would be (or become) so difficult. Many grew up during a time when travelling back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico was more common, but the cost and increasing danger of unauthorized migration has made returning to Mexico for temporary visits more challenging compared to the Bracero migrant era and subsequent years of clandestine labor migration (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). Fernanda, a 41-year-old woman who migrated to the U.S. with her husband and three children 14 years ago, claimed she didn’t know that you couldn’t travel freely between the U.S. and Mexico until, “We got here and I saw on the TV that you couldn’t come and go back...I didn’t know that.” Fernanda was raised in a rural area of Guanajuato, Mexico—a state that has been a top source of unauthorized migration to the U.S. for decades (Massey, Rugh & Pren, 2011) and has only a 6th grade education.
In many cases, participants learned about different legal means of entering the U.S. only after they arrived—including student, tourist and visitor’s visas, family petitions and political asylum. Without accessing formal information sources (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2004), unauthorized migration remained the standard choice even for more educated participants. Jaime, who immigrated to the U.S. soon after graduating college, confirmed that he learned about many means of immigrating to the U.S. only after arrival, “I know now that you can get a visa--employee, worker’s visa, tourist visa, and a student visa, but, that was after I got here.” Cedro also expressed concerns about the lack of information available in Mexico about legal immigration, “With the information that we had at the time, it was not easy to get a visa to come to the United States. Today, it can be easier. There are more ways to do it. I feel like there was a lack of communication with respect to this.” Ignacio admitted that there are “plenty of people” who get visas, but added that visas are “for people who know a little bit more about that.” Both Cedro and Ignacio ended their educational careers before reaching middle school, but their knowledge of authorized methods of migration did not differ greatly from Jaime, a college graduate.

Two women were engaged to men with legal permanent resident status in the U.S. at the time of migration, but never considered the possibility of petitioning for a spouse. Alejandra began by describing their situation—her fiancé, Gustavo, was still married and unable to petition for her until he officially ended his first marriage, but she interrupted herself midsentence saying, “I don’t know…we never really thought about that--that he could petition for me in Mexico, so I could come here legally.” Her
husband, Gustavo, became a legal permanent resident under the 1986 amnesty, but both he and his wife, Alejandra, had only a 6th grade education and were uninformed about the intricacies of the immigration process. Instead, the pathway chosen by many within mixed-status families was to apply to adjust their status in the U.S. Given that the waiting periods for many family preference categories is over a decade (USCIS, 2014), this may be the most reasonable option for individuals in these situations.

One participant, Andrés, was detained trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border and then told that, because he was being targeted by an autodefensa group in Mexico, he might qualify for political asylum. However, the immigration official followed this statement telling him that, “I would have to be in detention for three months until they sent me to court. He said: you should go voluntarily, through voluntary departure. Just go and don’t cause problems.”

Summary.

Lack of knowledge about the dangers and complications of unauthorized migration led many to underestimate the difficulty of crossing the border. Several participants stated that, after their experience crossing the border, it was not something they would be willing to attempt again. Furthermore, the assumption that crossing the border was easy left many believing they would be able to return to visit their families—most of the participants I interviewed had not returned to Mexico since they migrated to the U.S.

This is compounded by the lack of information participants had about authorized methods of migration. As indicated earlier, most have learned more about authorized migration since migrating to the U.S. and would have preferred to migrate legally, if
possible. Unfortunately, the punishment is harsh for those who have come to the U.S. illegally even for only a short time—bans begin accruing as early as half a year of unlawful presence (Weissbrodt & Danielson, 2011). Regardless, this is evidence that access to more reliable information could enable migrants to test legal immigration alternatives.

Migration Resources

Once participants decided to immigrate to the U.S., they used several resources to accomplish their goals, namely: family, friends, resource chains, the Internet, U.S. Consulates and a combination of self-direction with tacit knowledge.

Figure 4.3 Resources Used Pre-Migration
Occasionally, a combination of resources was used, but most often participants relied on a single resource, indicating that many participants were situated in a stagnant context with few regular information carriers that was not conducive to comparing information from various sources and fact-checking (Johnson et al., 2006). I will discuss how these resources were used as well as differences across resource types.

There were three primary types of help participants received from migration resources: identifying unauthorized crossing opportunities, immigrating to the U.S., and financial support.

Unauthorized crossing opportunities. In line with previous research, half of the participants obtained knowledge of an opportunity to cross the border from either a friend or family member (Spener, 2004), but participants differed with respect to the extent friends and family members were involved in arranging their trip to the U.S. Sometimes they were only supported financially and left to find a guide alone, but, more often, participants were put in contact with a reliable “smuggler” and provided with financial help. Overall, family members were tapped slightly more often than friends to identify crossing opportunities and only occasionally did participants report using a resource chain or initiating their journey without the support of others (self-directed).

To illustrate the variation in involvement from outsiders, contrast Lissana’s experience with Adrian. Lissana immigrated to the U.S. 18 years ago when she was six months pregnant. Her husband, who was a legal permanent resident at the time, arranged and paid for her trip to the U.S. and she described her experience in the following way:

I just followed instructions. This is what the people told me in the phone calls they were making--where I had to go, when I had to wait for everything. I remember
because I had just opened the restaurant when the father of my children’s sister called me and told me--she said: you have to come now because someone is going to be waiting for you in Matamoros and I didn't even know his name.

Adrian, on the other hand, relied on his own tacit knowledge about how to cross the border compiled over generations from experienced migrants in his family when he decided to migrate. He explained his experience as follows, “I came over here to the border and talked to somebody that I didn’t know and say, hey, get me across and they did.” When asked how he was able to locate the person, he replied that they find you.

They know that you’re not local. And they see you and they know you have money and you’re scared and you don’t know what to do. So they ask you what do you want to do, where do you want to go, where are you going?

Initiating crossing the border in this manner was less common, but a handful of people did use this method. In recent years, large criminal organizations have joined small-scale smugglers in the human smuggling business, making coyotes easier to locate without the help of experienced migrants (Spener, 2004).

Perhaps the most extreme example of self-direction was Samuel. He came to the U.S. with a friend and her eight-month-old son 12 years ago and stayed unintentionally. After both were denied visas, they decided to cross the border without the help of a guide. “We got lost once, but we made it!,” he boasted, and then jokingly added, “That’s why I had my GPS!” Others did not refer to any specific friend or family member that helped them identify a crossing opportunity and instead discussed resource chains. Jesus aptly labeled these resource chains as “chains of men,” in his description: “Well, it’s a chain—from here you get a person, the person contacts someone else, they contact someone else over there and another other there—they get together. So, it’s a chain. There are chains of men.” Though he immigrated to the U.S. nearly two decades
after Jesus, Ignacio had a similar experience, “It was my first time. I didn’t know…you have to find a person…the person who knows how to get here.” He struggled to explain his relationship with the people who helped them—once referring to them as “friends,” and then correcting himself, stating they weren’t really friends, only people who he was connected to through others. As the smuggling business becomes more sophisticated and large-scale operations develop, more people are required to manage the smuggling process (Spener, 2004).

Financial support. A third of participants received financial help to immigrate to the U.S. from either friends or family—this includes eight people who were loaned money to pay smuggling fees and two who were given money to cover the cost of applying for a visa. Participants were much more likely to receive financial support from a family member than from friends, but friends did contribute occasionally. As mentioned above, participants reported that they either received help with money and locating a guide or only received financial support. Alejandra explained that, “He [her fiancé, Gustavo] paid a person called a “coyote” to take me across the Rio Bravo and, after we left, they put me in a car to get here.” Her husband, Gustavo, had been living in the U.S. as a legal permanent resident for over a decade (after he was granted amnesty with the immigration reform in 1986) before bringing his fiancé, Alejandra, to the U.S.

Others received financial support, but weren’t given much direction about how to immigrate to the U.S. Orlando, who migrated to the U.S. at age 16, said simply, “He [his brother] just helped me with the money and that’s it. After that I could do whatever I wanted.” Andrés was more financially stable when he was forced to flee his home-state of Michoacán by threats on his life from a local “auto-defensa” group and he paid for his
first trip to the U.S. on his own. However, after a few failed attempts, he was held hostage in the U.S. and was told he needed an additional $3,000 before they would release him to his family. He described his experience in this way:

They charged me more than what they said they would and I didn’t have any money after that. If you don’t pay, you don’t know what will happen to you, you get it? I talked with my uncles, all my friends—give me something because I don’t have anything. And then they sent me money. Everyone came together to send me that money—it’s to survive, that’s why.

Though applying for a visa is significantly less expensive than paying a smuggler, two women relied on the help of their family to pay application fees. As Sofia stated, “…you have to pay the money, even though you don’t know if they are going to give you the visa.” Sofia emigrated from Nuevo León 14 years ago at age 23. She was working on a degree in physical education at the time and found obtaining a visa to be easier for a college student. These potentially wasted application fees could be devastating for someone like Paula who immigrated to the U.S. with her two children shortly after she was abandoned by their father. With the help of her brother, who is currently a legal permanent resident, she was able to cover the application cost and successfully obtained a visitor’s visa.

**Immigrating to the U.S.** Though Singer and Massey (1998) suggest that experienced migrants often accompany novices on their first migratory journey, this was less common among the participants in this study. Only occasionally were friends and family members present during the migratory journey and more directly involved in the immigration process. Four participants reported having help crossing the border from friends or family and four visited a U.S. Consulate where they applied for and received a visa to enter the U.S. legally.
To immigrate to the U.S. the first time, Victoria obtained a visitor’s visa after her cousin, a legal permanent resident, came to Mexico for a funeral. Afterward, her cousin drove her to the U.S. However, the second time around she was unemployed and had recently given birth to her first child. Unable to meet the income requirements, she solicited the help of a friend who had a relative who was an immigration official responsible for distributing visas. She described her experience in the following way:

We contacted that person and, over the phone, we reached an agreement about where I was going to meet her…We went to the person’s house and the wife of the man who worked in immigration met us and we went with her to the international bridge. She took us there and asked for her cousin, me by her side the entire time. And he came up to us and spoke softly. They already knew what was going on. He took out the paper and asks—and your name? I told him my name. Where are you going? Go through. I paid $400 for that permit, but I came legally. I brought my son to the international bridge with…my sister’s son’s papers [Mariana’s son] and, coming up in the car with the guys [guides]…my son was going to cross like he was their son.

Victoria’s sister, Mariana, has two children from her first marriage who are U.S. citizens. In the two years that she was married to a U.S. citizen, she had a visitor’s visa that enabled her to travel back and forth easily between the U.S. and Mexico, but, after they separated, that pathway was closed to her. Most participants, however, by-passed immigration officials altogether and, occasionally they were accompanied by friends or family members who provided them with direction and support. Marta, for example, explained, “There were friends and all the time they were with me, taking care of me and then we walked.” After the walking, they were picked up by a small, two-door car where she and four others had to lay down on top of one another in the back seat to avoid being seen.
Summary.

Generally, participants relied on only a single resource to help them plan their journey to the U.S. Friends and family members guided them almost exclusively to unauthorized methods of migration while those who used U.S. Consulates described their behavior as commonplace and not the result of the guidance from others. It is not uncommon to choose the first reasonable option in situations where information access is limited and it appears that most, if not all, participants approached the migration decision under these conditions. Many were set on a predetermined path, designed either by their own tacit knowledge of immigrating to the U.S. or constructed by experienced migrants in their social network.

Electing a Method of Migration

Participants identified 11 unique factors that contributed to their decision to migrate using unauthorized channels which were collapsed into six categories as illustrated in Figure 4.5. The most prevalent category was Lack of Information (28%), followed by No Alternatives (24%), Pressures (20%), Normalization (12%), Lack of Agency (10%) and Immaturity (5%). Through a combination of factors, participants were led to choose unauthorized migration over legal alternatives. Participants mentioned up to four factors, but over half described only two factors that influenced their decision.

Lack of information.

As indicated previously, most participants did not have information fields that were conducive to exploring legal alternatives to unauthorized migration and this was a major influence on their decision to use unauthorized mean to enter the U.S. (Johnson
et al., 2006). Participants said they did not how to get a visa or if they were eligible and some didn’t even know that obtaining a visa was necessary to enter the U.S. legally.

This is distinct from the second category where participants believed, and continue to believe, that there were no alternatives available to them. When discussing how to apply for a visa, Rafael admitted his ignorance about how to apply for a visa,

I would have preferred to apply for a visa...No one knows--now I know that there are people who go to the consulate and they give them visas to come work for 6
months and go back. I would have asked for one of those, maybe. But at the
time, we didn’t know.

Jorge expressed a similar sentiment:

Ah, no one knows! Because of that, it’s hard! No one explains to you that you
can—study, get a career and, when you finish, you can come—visit on a visa, if
they give you a visa, you can come to work if you want, also. Now I think that the
United States is hiring nurses. You could study to be a nurse or a teacher. You
could have done that and come to work here.

He is confident in this assessment because his wife, Linda, paid for her sisters and
mother to go to nursing school with money she earned in the U.S. After becoming a
nurse, her mother was able to obtain a visitor’s visa and come to the U.S. to visit her
daughter whom she had not seen in ten years. There are other situations, as well. For
example, Lissana and Alejandra came to the U.S. to live with their fiancés—both of
whom were legal permanent residents at the time. When asked if they considered
alternatives, Lissana replied, “We didn’t know much about the situation. I didn’t know. If I
would have known that before I came here I could have gotten married in Mexico, then
we would have gotten married and we would have put in a petition.” Lissana completed
some high school in Mexico and considers herself to be an intelligent and resourceful
person, but, at the time, her abusive husband had full control of the decision.

Though most weren’t certain if they would qualify for a visa, they reported that
after their experiences in the U.S., they would have at least tried. Marta put it this way,
“Well, now I know that in those days I could apply to get a visa, but I don’t know if I
could get it. I don’t know—it’s hard.” Marta completed some college in Mexico, but
struggled to make ends meet with the meager income provided by her three part-time
jobs before eventually deciding that migrating to the U.S. was her best option.
No Alternatives.

Others were aware of authorized methods of entering the U.S., but did not believe these options were open to them, mostly because of poverty. These individuals had strict interpretations of who qualified for a visa, including only the very wealthy and politicians. When asked if there were other alternatives to unauthorized migration, Jesus, a seasoned migrant from Michoacán with less than a 6th grade education, replied with an anecdote:

Immigration asked me—why didn’t you get a visa? It’s not a ticket to the movies! Give me a ticket! No, it’s for people that have money. That’s why I didn’t get one. That’s why so many people are coming and dying—in the desert, in the river—they’re drowning. Why? Because they can’t get visas because they have no money. If they had money, well, why are they coming?

In other cases, participants began applying for a visa but either stopped during the process when they realized that they wouldn’t qualify or applied and were denied altogether. Adrian, a high school graduate who was employed before migrating, claimed:

I tried. I got my passport. But I ain’t got no visa cause the requirements are, like, too high. You have to have an (bank) account and you have to have properties and stuff like that and I was poor, so—it was useless.

Samuel was a college student when he and his friend applied for tourist visas, but both were denied. He never intended to stay in the U.S., but has been here for about 12 years now.

Others actually had visas during their first trip to the U.S., like Emmanuel, his wife, Victoria, and Victoria’s sister, Mariana, but, once their circumstances had changed, they felt that receiving a visa for their second trip would not be feasible. For example, Emmanuel worked legally on a cruise ship during his first trip to the U.S., but he did not
meet the income requirements to renew his visa for his second trip. Victoria’s situation was similar, but Mariana was initially married to U.S. citizen and, once they separated, she thought that she would not be able to get another visa despite the fact that both of her children were technically U.S. citizens.

Others, like Orlando and Yolanda, said they didn’t see the point of applying for a visa because it wasn’t possible to get a work visa. Many people want to come to the U.S. to work, but this would still be considered illegal with only student, visitor or tourist visas. Yolanda only earned about $2,500 a year as a waitress in Tijuana and doubted she would be eligible for a visa. She explained further that, even if she was, “…this would only be a visa to come to the U.S., but not to come and work legally.”

Pressures.

Many participants experienced pressures that made exploring legal alternatives unfeasible, especially pressures related to crises or time pressure from others to make a decision quickly. Crises of different types arose—economic, illness, abandonment and security. Rafael, a native of Mexico City, was pressured to make an immediate decision when his wife’s sister became deathly ill, and this time pressure was compounded by security threats that pushed him to remove his family as quickly as possible. He described the following incident that occurred not long before he and his family left for the U.S.:

One day before we came here, they killed a young guy behind my house and, because not many people had drainage systems, the water ran through the streets filled with blood…

Andrés experienced direct threats on his life that pressured him to move from his home quickly and cross the border illegally, despite the fact that his sister, a U.S.
citizen, had put in a petition for him that was finally “in process” after more than 10 years.\textsuperscript{15} He agreed that, “It wasn’t the right way (referring to entering the U.S. without inspection)--because I didn’t want this either…I don’t like this either, but it was either that or die. I prefer to be here.”

Others experienced time pressures that were less dire, like Jaime. After graduating college, his sister pushed him to decide whether or not he wanted to come to the U.S. and the decision was made impulsively, “I chose the illegal way because…I made the decision too fast. I didn’t have time to go looking for all the papers that you need to come here legally.”

Normalization.

For some, unauthorized migration was the “natural” way to come to the U.S. As discussed previously, the method of migration employed by migrants becomes culturally embedded and self-perpetuating (Massey, 1990; Singer & Massey, 1998), precluding access to alternative information sources that might provide information about legal methods of migration. Furthermore, because information practices are embedded in the social and cultural environment (Savolainen, 2008), though participants may have had the opportunity to retrieve valuable information from the Internet or U.S. Consulate, the socially embedded process of obtaining migration information through network ties generally predominated (Singer & Massey, 1998).

\textsuperscript{15} Applications in visa categories with annual limits (like Fourth Family Preference Immigrant Visas—U.S. citizens petitioning for their siblings) are held “in queue” for an indefinite amount of time until the application is able to be processed. At that point, the applicant receives a notice that their application is “in process.” (U.S. Department of State, 2015).
Like Gustavo stated, “That was the way that everyone from where I am from used to do it—that's why I did it like that.” Migrating nearly 30 years later, Ignacio corroborated this statement, adding that, “When you hear people that say “I’m going to the United States,” the only thing you think about is crossing over places—the mountains, the river, crossing through other places.”

Furthermore, “coming and going,” though it is less common today, is something that many people witnessed growing up and tried to replicate. However, with the growing difficulty of moving between the U.S. and Mexico, these participants opted to stay in the U.S. (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). Despite this, the mentality that this will be a temporary trip does not facilitate exploring the potential long-term consequences of living in the U.S. without documentation (Sladkova, 2007). As Ernesto explained, “The first time…I came here with a goal, you know, I’m going to make a house and I’m going to leave and never come back.”

Lack of agency.

Six participants felt they had little or no agency to make the decision to come to the U.S., either because, as discussed previously, they arrived accidentally or they were “brought” to the U.S. by spouses or parents. Though all participants were at least 16 years old at the time of migration, three felt like they were pushed to come to the U.S. by their parents: Jorge, Catalina and Angelica. In these three cases, participants either had never considered coming to the U.S. or they did not want to come but felt forced to do so.

Two other women, Fernanda and Lissana, were brought to the U.S. by their spouses. Both expressed a desire to come to the U.S., but their male partners currently
living in the U.S. planned the entire trip without their input. In line with previous research, most of the participants who expressed they had no choice to come to the U.S. were women and, of male interviewees, only Raphael was motivated to come primarily because of his spouse who had a sister in the U.S. who was very ill (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Immaturity.

A few participants indicated that they were simply too young to appropriately make the decision to migrate. The average age at migration was about 21, so this is unsurprising. Both Samuel and José referred to their choice to come to the U.S. as “crazy.” Both of the participants were young (19 and 18, respectively), but both had above-average education relative to the rest of the sample. Lissana also said of her fiancé who pushed her to come to the U.S., “He was a child who lived a crazy life.” Ignacio, who was 18 years old when he left Guerrero, divulged that he wasn’t able to make the best choice because, “I was a minor and immature.” Migrants tend to be young adults, so this is likely to be a recurring theme (Pew Hispanic Research Center, 2007).

Summary. All participants who employed unauthorized means to enter the U.S. at some point—which includes everyone except a single participant—did so under less than optimal conditions. Generally, participants either 1) were unaware of other options or 2) excluded from other options. This, combined with a system that is incapable of issuing visas rapidly in crisis situations, leaves many with no realistic expectations of alternatives. Of course, most envision their trip to U.S. as being short in duration and the long-term consequences of living as an undocumented immigrant in the U.S. often
do not play a role in their decision to migrate. Furthermore, age aside, 20% of participants did not believe the decision to migrate was their own and they certainly were not involved in choosing a method of migration.

Each of these factors, including the age and maturity of the participant, played an important role in their decision to use unauthorized means to enter the U.S., but the most prevalent factor was lack of information about legal alternatives. Additionally, it is not unlikely that some of the participants who believed there were “no alternatives” were simply uninformed about their options. Information is the most basic prerequisite for making a decision and it is unsurprising that many opt for unauthorized methods under these conditions. The normalization of unauthorized migration lead crossing the border illegally to be viewed as the “natural” choice or at least the first reasonable option. As described by Witteck, Snidjers and Nee (2013), when individuals are pressured to make a decision with insufficient information, it is common to elect the first most reasonable option—regardless of whether or not it was their best option.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The major finding of this study is that information, or lack thereof, plays an important role in sustaining unauthorized migration. Traditionally, research has focused on how migrants are lured into the U.S. and other wealthy countries by tales of unlimited progress (Howenstine, 1996; Mahler, 1995; Moore, 2013; Pessar, 1995; Sladkova, 2007). While this disillusionment is relevant to these participants, as well, their interviews revealed several other areas of misinformation and lacking information, both about the U.S. and the immigration process. To begin this elaboration of the relationship between lack of information and unauthorized migration, I first assessed the participants’ motivation for migration.

Motivation(s) for Migration: Underlying, Catalytic and Supplemental Motivations

Throughout the interviews, I was able to divide motivations to migrate into three types: underlying, catalytic and supplemental. Underlying or “traditional” motivations were expressed by almost all participants, but after giving the “typical” response, most divulged additional motivations. Of these additional motivations, I find catalytic motivations to be the most influential in making the decision to migrate using unauthorized means. Catalytic motivations like crisis and transitions activated the migration decision and often put pressure on participants to migrate quickly. These motivations represented “extraordinary events” that spurred the decision or represented the normalization of migration as a regular stage in the life process, either through cultural or generational migration.
Lastly, supplemental motivations were unique to each participant and never operated in isolation. Occasionally, these motivations acted as the primary impetus for migration—“accidental” migration, for instance, but generally supplemental motivations were expressed as afterthoughts following a discussion of more prominent motivations.

The Role of Information in Sustaining Unauthorized Migration

Participants were almost equally divided between those who felt like there were no alternatives to unauthorized migration and those who believed other paths would have been open to them had they been informed. Though access to information and communication technologies in Mexico is improving (The World Bank, 2014), even those participants with the capability of exploring alternative methods of migration generally did not do so. I attribute this, in part, to the socially and culturally embedded nature of information gathering practices (Savoleinen, 2008).

Potential migrants may have access to formal and informal migration information sources (Caidi, Allard & Quirke, 2004), but information imparted by friends and family members continues to be privileged over alternative sources. Because participants rarely accessed a combination of resources, it appears that, for most, the social context is not conducive to dynamic information fields that encourage accessing variable information sources (Johnson et al., 2006). For example, only one of the participants in this study used the Internet to learn about migration or the U.S., though approximately 30% of participants had Internet access at the time of migration.

Of those five participants who had experience with authorized migration, four lived in a border state and discussed visiting the U.S. Consulate in either Matamoros or Monterrey. The crucial aspect is less that they lived in a border state and more how they
discussed the normalization of obtaining Border Crossing Cards and visitor's/tourist's visas in the area where they lived. As Victoria stated—"We already knew what to do because—I had never gotten one [a visa] before, but we already knew because...there are a lot of people, because it's the border, they talk, they say you need this, you need that. So, for me it was really easy."

Compare that statement to Ignacio (from the central state of Guerrero), quoted earlier saying, “…the only thing you think about is crossing over—the mountains, the river, crossing through other places.” In situations where information is scarce, individuals fall back on their tacit knowledge and assumptions—in this case, what they have seen others do. From this, most gathered either: 1) it is impossible to qualify for a visa or 2) no one is available to show me how to apply for a visa, but I do have connections that can bring me across the border illegally. Especially if new policies are developed allowing for more temporary workers, disseminating accurate information will be key to breaking the patterns of cultural migration.

Similar to the adaptations presented by Chavez (2011), issuing Border Crossing Cards to those residing along the U.S.-Mexico border has led to the gradual incorporation of U.S. Consulates into migrant information fields. As the Border Crossing Card gains popularity, it contributes to the perception that applying for permission to enter the U.S. is a standard step in the migratory process.

Returning to the issue of disillusionment, these participants did not discuss problems with “shame” or “failure” if they returned to Mexico unsuccessful unlike other migrant groups (Vigh, 2009). For example, Jesus quickly returned to Mexico when his wages were extremely low during his second trip to the U.S. Most stayed for their family
and children, but security became a more prevalent reason for staying in the U.S. than it was as a motivator for migration. Participants admitted that it was difficult here and were modest when describing their own advancement—a trend embodied Cassandra’s remark, “Here we have it a little better” and instead focused on security concerns that prevented them from returning to Mexico—like gangs, theft, indiscriminate killing and maiming.

It may be that, as participants had children (as most have), their focus changed to their children’s potential for advancement in the U.S and safety. This, coupled with the difficulty of moving back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, has encouraged people to stay, though many have lost family members on the “other side” (Johnson & Trujillo, 2011). According to Lee (1966), people are naturally inclined to stay and these long-term migrants have settled, extending their roots and it will, once again, take extraordinary events to facilitate another permanent move.

Participants envisioned the U.S. as a place of progress before migration and most immigrated without considering the emotional toll of long-term family separation and the challenges of succeeding in the U.S. This one-sided view prevents potential migrants from making an informed decision because they are unable to account for the issues associated with discrimination, linguistic barriers, family separation/deterioration, etc. addressed in the Lack of Information About the U.S. section. Though none of the participants indicated that they would have chosen not to come to U.S. if they had known about the struggles they would face here, all but three participants would have at least entertained legal migration alternatives.
Electing a Method of Migration—Not Information Only

While information access was an important factor influencing migration, other factors need to be considered. First, some migrants, especially women, do not make the decision to migrate nor do they decide the method of migration, a phenomenon discussed in previous research (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). Regardless of the legal status of the “pusher,” spouses and older children were brought across the border illegally. Educational trajectories are interrupted and, unlike children under age 16, older children and spouses are offered no reprieve through programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

Lissana represents another illustrative case. She lived with an abusive spouse for nearly 20 years after he brought her to the U.S. and used her status to prevent her from leaving. Like many undocumented women, she was unaware of protections for immigrant women under the Violence Against Women Act (Department of Homeland Security, 2013). Currently in the process of applying for legal permanent residence, she regrets not having her husband detained:

Perhaps we don't have sufficient evidence because we didn't take risks. In my case, I never dared call the police to take away a spouse...because of the children. In the future, well, it works against you that you never had your spouse detained.

She didn’t learn about the legal protection the U.S. offered for women in her situation until after she left her husband. Also, many migrants are young—the average age in this sample was 21--and felt like they weren’t prepared to make the decision to come to the U.S., especially under crisis conditions and time constraints.

All of these factors played a role in electing a method of migration, but the most prevalent of these was lack of information about legal alternatives. Furthermore, it is
possible that those who expressed that there were “no alternatives” may be unaware of the options that could have been available to them. Information is a basic prerequisite for making a decision and it is unsurprising that many opt for unauthorized methods under these conditions. When information is scarce, unauthorized migration may serve as the first reasonable option to remove oneself from an undesirable situation in Mexico.

Information Access is Growing—But Not Migration Information Sources

For the majority of participants, only a single migration resource was used to help them on their journey to the U.S.—mostly friends or family and, less often, U.S. Consulates. Because of this, many participants were set on a predetermined path designed with their own tacit knowledge and/or co-constructed with experienced migrants. Though participants averaged over ten years in the U.S., nearly one-third reported Internet access. This is as almost as high as Internet access in Mexico for 2012 (The World Bank, 2014), but others likely have irregular access, as well, especially considering that the majority of Mexicans have Internet-ready phones that could be used in conjunction with Wi-Fi hotspots (Merrit, 2012). However, as reported, only one person used the Internet to learn about migration and then only to search for a smuggler. The question remains—as Internet access grows, will potential migrants use it to connect even more rapidly with family and friends to obtain information about unauthorized methods of migration? Will it be used, as in the case of Andrés, to search for smugglers’ contact information? Or will migration information websites become more popular, like www.mequieroir.com in Venezuela? (Barsi, n.d.) I interviewed only five individuals who had migrated to the U.S. in the last five years and, of these, only two
had Internet access in Mexico, but this is an important question to investigate further with more recent immigrants.

Implications

The major takeaway from this research is that information is not adequately disseminated to immigrants in the pre-migration phase. This is an important concern if the U.S. is moving toward immigration reform of any type. Even a well-developed policy that satisfies the needs of both the U.S. and potential immigrants will not stem the flow of unauthorized migration if those who desire to immigrate to the U.S. cannot access the appropriate information. This study indicates that, at least for this more established group of migrants, the Internet did not play much of a role in their migratory experience. This is problematic since the Internet is an important tool for disbursing information to large groups. Regardless, oftentimes only experts are able to navigate the complex immigration process, indicating that a workable policy should be either streamlined and simplified to the point where it is useful to the average migrant or a slew of experts need to be available to help people through the migratory process legally.

If we are unable to provide potential migrants with new legislation and the tools to navigate the system, then I do not anticipate any reform effort will be successful at ending unauthorized immigration—especially not “quickly.” It can take a long time for accurate information to filter through social networks and, by that time, there will likely already be another population of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. who do not qualify for adjustment of status.

Another important finding from this research is that choosing “16” as the cutoff age for DACA recipients may not reflect the reality of young immigrants accompanying
their parents to the U.S. as minors. One of the founding principles of DACA was that migrants who came to the U.S. at age 16 or younger did not have a “choice.” Three of my participants felt pushed to come to the U.S. against their will by their parents, but did not qualify for DACA. A similar statement could be made for women accompanying their spouses to the U.S.—many felt like they had no choice but to migrate and, even if they supported the decision, they were not involved in the planning process.

Directions for Future Research

Two directions would be useful to expand and elaborate on the results of this study. First, interviewing more recent migrants to the U.S. who would have a greater likelihood of being exposed to new ICTs which might transform the information gathering process and, second, focusing on those still in Mexico who are currently in the information gathering phase. There are two benefits to focusing on these populations: 1) it may more accurately capture current transformations in migration information gathering and 2) participants with recent experiences would have an easier time recalling the pre-migration phase.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CODING SCHEMA
# Appendix A Major Themes and Types

## Information Sources
- Family
- Friends
- Immigration Official
- Guide/Coyote
- Media
- "They, Them"

## Migration Resources
- Family
- Friends
- Media
- Resource Chain
- U.S. Consulate
- Self-Directed

## Method of Migration (Unauthorized)

**Lack of Information**
- About Legal Alternatives
- About the illegality of Entering Without Inspection
- About the severity of consequences of immigration fraud

**Lack of Agency**
- "Pushed" by a family member or spouse
- Accidental

**Pressures**
- Desperation/Crisis
- Fast Decision

**Normalization**
- Short Stay
- Normalization of unauthorized migration

**Immaturity**

**No Alternatives**

## Method of Migration (Authorized)

- Current Student
- Normalization of authorized migration
Types of Help

Crossing Opportunity

*Immigrating to the U.S.*

- Crossing the Border
- Married U.S. Citizen
- Petition
- Visa

Financial Help

Types of Information

*About the U.S.*

- The “American Dream”
- Work
- It's Not Easy
- “Bootstraps”
- Place of Progress
- Every Man for Himself

Relationships

- Good Americans
- Discrimination
- Weak Family/Ethnic Ties

Lifestyle

- Learn English
- Expenses
- Transportation
- Lifestyle "Other"

Laws/Rights

- Education
- Social Security
- Women's Rights
- "Other" Rights

Next Step

Environment

*About Immigration*

- Unauthorized Migration
- Crossing the Border
- Finding a Guide
- Immigration Fraud
- Indentured Servitude
- Price

Authorized Migration

97
Motivations for Migration

*Underlying*
- Economic (Individual)
- Family
- Children

*Catalytic*
- Generational
- Cultural
- Security
- Crisis
- Transition
- Pushed

*Supplemental*
- Accidental
- Environmental Disaster
- Border State
- Education
- Curiosity
- Pleasure
- Freedom
- Friend

Return Migrant
Demographic Questionnaire (Pre-Interview)

Instructions: Before we begin the interview, I’d like to ask you a few specific questions about how you identify yourself and your unique migration experience. Feel free to ask for clarification about any question.

1. Gender: Male or Female
2. Country of Birth: ______________________
3. State you consider your "home state": ______________________
4. Town you consider your "home town": ______________________
5. What is the last place (state) you lived in your home country for 6 months or more?: ______________________
6. What race do you consider yourself to be? Check all that apply:
   - [ ] White
   - [ ] Black or African American
   - [ ] Something else: ______________________
   - [ ] American Indian or Alaskan native
   - [ ] Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
   - [ ] Asian
7. What is your ethnicity? ______________________
8. How many years (or months) have you lived in the U.S. since the last time you came to the U.S.? ______________________
9. Taking into account all the times you have been to the U.S., how much time do you think you have spent here (years or months)?: ______________________
10. How old were you the first time you came to the U.S.?: ______________________
11. What is the highest level of education you worked toward in your home country (whether or not you completed the year or earned a degree)?: ______________________
12. What is the highest level of education you worked toward in the U.S. (if any, and whether or not you completed the year or earned a degree)?: ______________________
13. When you first came to the U.S., did you come alone or with someone else? Check all that apply.
   - [ ] I came alone.
   - [ ] I came with a friend (or some friends).
   - [ ] I came with someone (or people) that I did not know.
   - [ ] I came with a family member (or some family members).
15. Were you working during the 6 months before coming to the U.S.?
   a. Yes  b. No

15. If possible, could you estimate the total income earned by your household (in dollars) the year before you first migrated to the U.S.? Your total household income is all the money earned by all people living in the home.
   a. Earned by you alone: _________________
   b. Earned by everyone in your home together: _________________

16. If possible, please estimate your income last year (2013):
   a. Earned by you alone: _________________
   b. Earned by everyone in your home together: _________________

17. Would you say that you were primarily responsible for making the decision to come to U.S.?
   a. Yes  b. No
   If no, who made this decision for you (father, sister, friend, etc.)? _________________

Instructions: Now I’d like to ask you to answer a few specific questions about resources that may have been available to you before migrating, regardless of whether or not you used them to learn about migration to the U.S. Please indicate whether or not you were able to access the resource and where it was available. Some examples for where it was available might be: your home, school, a café, etc.

1. Did you have access to any of the following resources in your home country before coming to the U.S.?
   a. Television?
      a. Yes  b. No
      If yes, where?: _________________
   b. Internet?
      a. Yes  b. No
      If yes, where?: _________________
   c. Public library?
      a. Yes  b. No
      If yes, how far was the library from your home?
      a. Less than 1 km  c. Between 1 and 5 km
      b. Between 6 and 10 km  d. More than 10 km

2. Were any other organizations or resources available to provide information about migrating to the U.S. in your area?
Introduction: The following questions are about how you made your decision to come to the United States. Feel free to provide as much detail as you feel comfortable providing. It is also perfectly acceptable to deviate from the specific question to give additional information you think I may need to fully understand your response. Remember, you may ask that the recording be stopped at any time and you are allowed to refuse to answer any question.

Prompt: First, I want you to think about when you first considered coming to the United States.

1. When did you think you might want to come to the United States and how did you come to this decision? Could you tell me some of the reasons you wanted to come to the U.S.?

If needed, probe: Did anyone encourage you to leave your home country? Did you read or see anything that made you think you might want to come to the United States?

2. Did you ever consider going to another country or a different part of (home country)?

If so, what encouraged you to choose to come to the United States instead? If not, why did you feel the U.S. was the only option?

3. Once you decided to come to the United States, what resources did you use to help you learn about how to get to the United States?


If the participant mentions speaking with people, ask to describe the medium used to converse (i.e. face to face, phone, etc.) and how they decided that these people were reliable sources of information.

4. What did you learn using each of these resources?

5. Which did you find was the most/least helpful or informative and why? How did you decide?

6. How many strategies for coming to the U.S. did you consider? Just one or were there others? If there were several, how did you choose which method was best for you?

7. Did you feel like you had all of the necessary information to make your decision? If yes, what made you feel confident that you had enough information? If not, what else did you think you needed to know?

Prompt: Now I want you to think about the present.

8. In retrospect, do you feel that the information you received about the immigration process was true? What information did you receive that was true/false and how did you receive this information?
If needed, probe: What about with regard to the time it took to get to the United States? The cost of coming to the United States? How people treated you?

9. Thinking back, is there anything that you have learned since coming to the United States that would have changed your decision to come? Is there anything you have learned that would have changed how you came to the United States?

10. Would you consider returning to your home country? Why or why not?

11. If you could speak to your younger self before you came to the United States, what advice would you give yourself? Why do you feel this is important?

12. If you could change anything about the current immigration process/system, what would you change? Why?

Closing Statement: Before I move to the final set of questions, is there anything else you would like to add?

- Bring up questions respondent may be willing to elaborate upon more fully at this time
- Also, is there something I did not ask about that you feel like I should know to really understand your experience?

That is all the questions I have for you. Thank you so much for participating in this interview. The information you provided will be very useful for this project. Now that I am finished, is there anything you would like to ask me? (If yes, answer questions and continue; If no, continue.)

Do you have any suggestions about how to improve this experience for future participants? What about other questions you thought I should have asked?

(If yes, thank the participant and continue. If no, continue.) Anything else?

Thank you, again
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (SPANISH)
Información Demográfica

Introducción: Antes de empezar, le haré algunas preguntas en específico de cómo se identifica usted mismo y su propia experiencia migratoria. Siéntase libre de preguntar para cualquier aclaración acerca de cualquier pregunta.

1. Sexo: **Hombre** o **Mujer**
2. País de nacimiento: ________________________
3. Estado: ________________________
4. Municipio: ________________________
5. ¿Qué es el último estado en el que vivió (en México) por 6 meses o más?: ______________
6. ¿A qué raza se identifica? Marque una o más casillas:
   - □ Blanca
   - □ Negra o Africana
   - □ India Americana o Alaska nativo
   - □ Asiática
   - □ Alguna otra raza: ________________________
7. ¿Qué es el origen étnico a que se identifica?: ______________
8. ¿Cuántos años tiene?: ______________
9. ¿Cuántos años (o meses) tiene viviendo en los Estados Unidos desde la última vez que vino? ______________
10. ¿Teniendo en cuenta todo el tiempo que ha estado en los EEUU, cuántos años (o meses) totales ha vivido en Estados Unidos?: ______________
11. ¿Cuántos años tuvo el primero tiempo que vino a los Estados Unidos?: ______________
12. ¿Cuál es el máximo nivel escolar que ha intentado completar en México (sin importar si completó el año o grado)? : ______________
13. ¿Cuál es el máximo nivel escolar que ha intentado completar en EEUU (si alguno, y sin importar si completó el año o grado)?: ______________
14. ¿Cuándo vino usted a los EEUU por primera vez, vino solo o con alguien más? Marque una o más casillas:
   - Vine solo/a.
   - Vine con mi familia.
   - Vine con un(os) amigo(s).
   - Vine con gente desconocida.

15. ¿Estaba trabajando por pago durante los 6 meses antes de venir?: Si o No

16. Si es posible, ¿pueda usted estimar el ingreso total (en dólares) en el año antes de que llegara a los EEUU por primera vez?
   a. Usted solo(a): $_______________
   b. El hogar entero: $_______________

17. Si es posible, ¿puede usted estimar el ingreso en el año pasado (2013)?
   a. Usted solo(a): $_______________
   b. El hogar entero: $_______________

18. ¿Diría que usted tomó la última decisión de migrar?: Si o No
   --¿No? ¿Quién tomó por usted esa decisión (su padre, hermana, etc.)?

Instrucciones: Ahora le quisiera hacer unas preguntas específicas sobre los recursos que, a lo mejor, tenía usted disponible antes de venir a los Estados Unidos. Por favor, escoge sin importar si usted lo uso para aprender sobre como venir a los EEUU. Indica si usted podía acceder al recurso y en dónde estaba disponible. Unos ejemplos en donde pudiera estar disponible son: su casa, la escuela, un café de internet, etc.

1. ¿Puede usted usar algunos de los siguientes recursos en su país antes de venir a los EEUU?
   a. ¿La Televisión?
      a. Si  b. No
      ¿Si? ¿Donde?: ______________
   b. ¿El Internet?
      a. Si  b. No
      ¿Si? ¿Donde?: ______________
   c. ¿Una biblioteca pública?
      a. Si  b. No
Si, ¿qué tan lejos estaba la biblioteca de su casa?

a. Menos que 1 km  c. Entre 1 y 5 km
b. Entre 6 and 10 km  d. Más que 10 km

3. ¿Estaba disponible otros recursos (como organizaciones) que usted podía usar para aprender sobre como venir a los EEUU?
¿Sí? ¿Cómo qué? ______________________

4. ¿Si usted uso el Internet para aprender más sobre los EEUU, que tipo de sitios visitó? Describanlos, por favor.

**Entrevista**

**Introducción:** Las siguientes preguntas son acerca de cómo tomo la decisión de venir a los EEUU. Siéntase libre de decir todo lo que quiera mientras se sienta a gusto. También es perfectamente aceptable desviarse de una pregunta específica para dar información adicional que usted crea que yo necesite para comprender completamente su respuesta. Recuerde, usted puede detener la grabación en cualquier momento y está permitido negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta.

**Part I Prompt:** Primero, quiero que piense a cerca de cuando considero venir a los EEUU.

1). ¿Cuándo pensó en venir a los EEUU? ¿Cómo tomo esa decisión? ¿Puede decírmelo por qué razón quiso venir a los EEUU?

*If needed, probe: ¿Alguien le animó a dejar México? ¿Leyó u vio algo que lo hizo pensar en venir a los EEUU?*

2). ¿Pensó alguna vez ir a otro país o algún lugar diferente en México?

(Of yes): Entonces, ¿Por qué decidió venir a los EEUU?
(Of no): ¿Por qué sintió que los EEUU era la única opción?

3). Una vez que decidió venir a los EEUU, ¿Qué medios uso para ayudar a aprender acerca de cómo llegar a los EEUU?

*If needed, probe: ¿Su familia, amigos, organizaciones, media, o Internet?*
*If the participant mentions speaking with people, ask: ¿Qué medio uso para conversar con ________? (i.e. en persona, por teléfono) y ¿por qué sintió que esa persona era un buen fuente de información?*
4). ¿Qué aprendió usando cada una de estos medios?

5). ¿Cuál fue de mayor ayuda o informativo y porque? ¿Cuál fue de menor ayuda o informativo y porque? ¿Cómo decidió?

6). ¿Cuántos medios para venir a los EEUU consideró? ¿Uno? O habían otros? Si habían más que uno, ¿cómo decidió entre las opciones cual era el mejor para usted?

(If yes): Entonces, ¿Cómo decidió que método era mejor para usted?

7). ¿Sintió que tenía toda la información necesaria para tomar su decisión?

(if yes): ¿Qué lo hizo pensar en tener la suficiente información?  
(if no): ¿Qué le falta saber?

Part II Prompt: Ahora, quiero que piense en el presente.

8). ¿Siente que la información recibida acerca de los procesos de inmigración fueron ciertos? ¿Qué información correcta recibió? ¿Qué información incorrecta recibió? ¿Me pueda dar unos ejemplos?

If needed, probe: ¿Qué tal de cuánto tiempo tomó para inmigrar a los EEUU? ¿Cuánto costo? ¿Cómo fue tratado en llegar?

9). ¿Hay algo que haya aprendido o experimentado desde que vino a los EEUU que haya cambiado su decisión en venir? ¿Hay algo que haya aprendido que podría cambiar la forma que usó en venir a los EEUU?

10). ¿Consideraría regresar a México? ¿Por qué?

11). Si pudiera hablar consigo mismo antes de llegar a los EEUU, ¿Qué consejo te darías? ¿Por qué lo cree importante?

12). Si pudiera cambiar algo sobre los actuales procesos/sistemas de inmigración, ¿Qué cambiaría? ¿Por qué?

Closing Statement: Antes de terminar, ¿hay algo más que le gustaría agregar?

- Bring up questions the respondent may be willing to elaborate upon more fully at this time.

Esas son todas las preguntas que tengo para usted. Muchas gracias por participar en esta entrevista. Su participación será de gran ayuda para este proyecto. Ahora que termine, ¿hay algo que le gustaría preguntarme? (If yes, answer question and continue; if no, continue.)

¿Tiene algunas sugerencias para mejorar la experiencia de futuros participantes en la entrevista? ¿Alguna pregunta que quisiera que yo preguntara?
(If yes, thank the participant and continue. If no, continue.) ¿Algo más?

¡Muchas gracias!
APPENDIX D: NETWORK MAP
The connectors signify participants who are related but were not referred by that relative.
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

**Title of Study:** Information-Seeking Practices and Method of Migration of Immigrants in the United States

**Student Investigator:** Cassie Hudson Castillo, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology  **Supervising Investigator:** Dr. Ami Moore

**Purpose of the Study:** You are being asked to participate in a research study which aims to explore how permanent and temporary immigrants in the United States decided to come to the United States.

**Study Procedures:** You will be asked to answer a few questions about your migration experience and it will take about 1 to 2 hours of your time. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will take place in the location of your choice, suggestions include: a local public park or library.

**Foreseeable Risks:** It is possible that you will be asked to discuss unpleasant events. However, you may choose not to answer specific questions or terminate the interview at any time without consequence.

**Benefits to the Subjects or Others:** It is unlikely that you will directly benefit from participating in this study. However, it is expected that this study will benefit the larger foreign-born population in the United States because it is aimed at understanding the immigration process through the perspective of people directly influenced by current immigration laws. It is anticipated that this information may be used to help create immigration policies better suited to the needs of the diverse immigrant population in the U.S. and those seeking to come to the U.S. in the future.

**Compensation for Participants:** None

**Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:** Maintaining confidentiality means that the information you provide during this interview will not be shared with others in a way that could be traced back to you. Some of the procedures used to protect you include:
No names will be collected. We will use numbers to separate participants instead of names.

- The ability to opt-out of signing a consent form, instead giving verbal consent
- Storing signed consent forms and tapes/surveys in separate locations, so they cannot be linked together
- Storing all hard-copies and tapes in a locked safe in a locked office/Storing all digital information on a password protected computer
- The option to refuse to be recorded or to only record certain parts of the interview
- Tapes will be erased after the interviews have been written down to protect your identity

Any publications using information from this interview will not include any identifying information—names (self or those mentioned in the interview) and current residence (including place of employment or schools/universities currently attending) will be changed to disguise your identity.

**Questions about the Study:** If you have any questions about the study in the future, you may contact Cassie Hudson Castillo at cassie.hudson@unt.edu or Dr. Ami Moore at ami.moore@unt.edu.

**Review for the Protection of Participants:** This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Cassie Hudson Castillo has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- For ODIS Clients: Your decision to participate or withdraw from the study will have no effect on the services you received from ODIS. This project is conducted by the student alone and ODIS will not release any of your information to the student.
- For students: Your decision whether to participate or to withdraw from the study will have no effect on your grade or standing in this course.
• You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
• You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
• You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Questions: Do you have any questions you would like to ask before we continue?

________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

_______________________                                ____________
Signature of Participant                                Date

☐ Check this box if you consent to participate in the interview but would prefer not to sign the informed consent form.

For the Student Investigator:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the participant signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

__________________________________________                    ____________
Signature of Student Investigator                                Date
APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT (SPANISH)
Forma de consentimiento (Versión Español)

Antes de aceptar participar en éste estudio de investigación, es importante que lea y entienda la siguiente explicación del propósito, beneficios y riesgos del estudio y como será llevado a cabo.

Título del estudio: Búsqueda de información prácticas y métodos de migración de inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos.

Estudiante investigador: Cassie Hudson Castillo, University of North Texas (UNT) Departamento de sociología. Supervisor de investigación: Dr. Ami Moore.

Propósito del estudio: Le invitamos a participar en un estudio de investigación que busca saber cómo los inmigrantes (permanentes o no permanentes) toma la decisión de venir a los Estados Unidos.

Proceso del estudio: Le pediremos contestar algunas preguntas acerca de su experiencia migratoria y tomará de 1 a 2 horas de su tiempo. Con su permiso, la entrevista será grabada en audio. La entrevista será en un lugar de su elección, algunas sugerencias: un parque público o una biblioteca.

Riesgos previsibles: Es posible que se le pregunte hablar de eventos bochornosos. Como sea, usted puede elegir no contestar preguntas específicas o incluso terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento sin ninguna consecuencia.

Beneficios para el sujeto u otros: No es común que usted consiga algún beneficio directamente por participar en éste estudio. Sin embargo, se espera que éste estudio beneficiará a la gran población extranjera en los Estados Unidos porque busca un entendimiento en los procesos de migración mediante la perspectiva de personas directamente influenciadas por las actuales leyes de inmigración. Es anticipado que ésta información puede ser usada para ayudar a crear mejores políticas de inmigración situadas a las necesidades de las diversas poblaciones inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos y para aquellos que buscan venir en el futuro.

Compensación por participar: Ninguna

Los procedimientos para mantener la confidencialidad de los registros de la investigación: Mantener la confidencialidad significa que la información que usted proporcionó durante ésta
entrevista no será compartida con otros de forma que pueda ser usada para su localización. Algunos de los procesos utilizados para su protección son:

- Ningún nombre será guardado. Usaremos números para separar a cada participante envés de nombres.
- La habilidad de dar su consentimiento de forma verbal envés de firmar una hoja de consentimiento
- Guardar hojas de consentimiento y grabaciones en lugares separados, de manera que no se puedan ser relacionadas entre ellas.
- Guardar todas las copias y grabaciones en un lugar seguro dentro de una oficina de almacenamiento y toda la información digital en una computadora protegida por contraseña.
- La opción de rechazar ser grabado o solo grabar algunas partes de la entrevista.
- Grabaciones serán borradas después de que la entrevista haya sido transcrita para proteger su identidad.
- Cualquier publicación que use información de esta entrevista no incluirá ningún tipo de identificación personal (mencionados en la entrevista) y residencia actual (incluyendo lugar de trabajo o escuela/universidad a la que asiste) todo será cambiado para proteger su identidad.

**Preguntas acerca del estudio:** Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca del estudio en el futuro, puede usted contactar a Cassie Hudson Castillo en cassie.hudson@unt.edu o Dr. Ami Moore en ami.moore@unt.edu.

**Revisión para la protección de los participantes:** Éste estudio de investigación ha sido revisado y aprobado por The UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB puede ser contactado al teléfono (940) 565-3940 con cualquier pregunta relacionada con los derechos de los sujetos de la investigación.

**Derechos de los sujetos de la investigación:**

Su firma indica que ha leído o se le ha leído todo lo anterior y confirma lo siguiente.

- Cassie Hudson Castillo ha explicado el estudio a usted y ha contestado a todas sus dudas. Se le han dicho los posibles beneficios, riesgos potenciales y/o incomodidades del estudio.
- Usted entiende que no tiene que tomar parte de éste estudio, y su rechazo a participar o retirarse no será castigado o no perderá sus derechos o/y beneficios. El personal de estudios puede elegir detener su participación en cualquier momento.
- Los Clientes de ODIS: Su decisión a participar o retirarse del estudio no
afectará los servicios que usted recibe del ODIS. El proyecto es del estudiante y ODIS no compartirá nada de su información con el estudiante.

- Estudiantes: Su decisión a participar o retirarse del estudio no afectará en sus calificaciones o la estancia en éste curso.
- Usted entiende porque se hace éste estudio y como será realizado.
- Usted entiende sus derechos como participante de la investigación y a su consentimiento voluntario para participar en éste estudio.
- Se le dijo que recibirá una copia de esta forma.

**Preguntas:** ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de proseguir?

________________________  ______________________
Nombre del participante                              Fecha

________________________  ______________________
Firma del participante                              Fecha

☐ Marca aquí si acepta participar en la entrevista pero prefiere no firmar la hoja de consentimiento.

**Para el estudiante investigador:**

Certifico que he revisado el contenido de ésta forma con la firma del participante de arriba. Le he explicado los posibles beneficios y el riesgo potencial y/o incomodo del estudio. En mi opinión el participante entendió la explicación.

________________________  ______________________
Firma del estudiante investigador                              Fecha
REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT

A few things surprised me throughout the research process. First, nearly all participants appreciated having an informed consent document—it made the research seem more official and safe with their rights and information protected by the university. Of course, my experience may differ from that of other researchers who are required to obtain written consent. For this project, it was an “option,” but not required. When possible, I recommend pursuing this option for research with undocumented immigrants and other groups that might be hesitant to sign informed consent documents. Another difference in my experience could be that the method of selection fostered a degree of trust between the participants and I—even among those I had not met previously.

Second, this research confirmed a suspicion I held prior to beginning data collection. Despite the sensitive nature of data collected (and, for some, the traumatic events experienced during migration and afterward), many people want to discuss their experience—even if it’s with a young, white woman from the university. I believe this is due in part to the frustration of not being able to do anything to alter their situation (or that of their friends and family). Many people thanked me for including them in the study (or, as Cedro called it, my “libro secreto”) and for expressing interest in the issues associated with the U.S. immigration system. I believe some felt like they were passing on information to someone who might actually be able to “do something” about the situation and once they saw that my stance was open and favorable, everyone I interviewed spoke freely.
REFERENCES

Ackland, R., & Gray, E. (2005). Australia’s online presence: What potential migrants find out about Australia from the WWW. *People and place*. 13, 4: 12-23


129


