ORIENTATION TO HOMELAND:

Mexican Migrant Mothers Who Long for Home But Settle Abroad.

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the extent to which the intention to return to one's home country and the existing transnational participation of Mexican female migrants changes with the birth of their U.S.-born children. Through this study I explored how selected demographic characteristics, social support and perceptions of financial well-being, public assistance and schools in the United States influenced first-generation migrant mothers' orientation to homeland (OTH). I conceptualize OTH as these two sets of behaviors: immigrant parents decisions' to return to their home country or engage in transnational practices.

Mothers of newborn children were recruited at maternity wards in New York City hospitals as part of an ongoing longitudinal study aimed at determining how living conditions and family environment of low-income families affect children from birth to 36 months, A subsample of Mexican mothers (N=97) comprised the sample of the present study. Data for this study consisted of survey questionnaires, in-depth interviews and ethnographic field notes. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze survey

data. A narrative analysis using a categorical and content approach was used with the qualitative data of four case studies that represented two views of return migration.

Results of the study showed how migrant mothers who had stayed longer in the United States had weaker intentions to return to their home country. Statistical results of this study did not show that age, education, nor social support or perceptions of financial well-being had contributed to OTH. Meanwhile, participants in this study seemed more interested in public assistance intended to pay for the health and care of their children. In the qualitative analysis, a shared expectation of migrant mothers was to offer a safe and healthy environment for children.

This study was not designed as a study of undocumented women, however survey and interview data revealed legal status to be an important filter of participants' perceptions of life and opportunity in the United States.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the heart of my research is the study of how perceptions of home and family shift among immigrant women as they become mothers in the destination country. Orientation to homeland (OTH), as I conceived it, alludes to immigrant parents' return migration and transnational practices -sending remittances, travels to home country and raising children abroad. Therefore, as I explored questions of return migration and transnational practices among Mexican migrant mothers, my aim was to understand the reasons, other than their born abroad children, that might have led them to consider settling in the destination country despite much they longed for and hoped to one day return to their homeland.

This study provides an opportunity to explore how demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors inform migrants' orientation to homeland. Under the umbrella of these three sets of factors, I specifically explored how a) age, education and immigration history, b) social support and financial well-being, and c) perceptions of public health and child care programs and of public schools in the host country- might relate to OTH, in a sample of Mexican migrant mothers.

Undertaking this study of immigrant parents' orientation to homeland entailed looking at the implications that settlement decisions have on the well-being of families, specifically how migrant mothers ponder return migration and transnational parenting as they might benefit or be a detriment to their children's future. In other words, contrary to the "anchor baby" rhetoric, which states that immigrant mothers purposefully and deliberately crossed the border to delivered children in U.S. soil and use that as an excuse to remain in the United States, in this study I explore how the experiences of immigrant

mothers in the host country and the welfare of their children unveils a deeper understanding of immigrant families' settlement decisions.

Specific Aims

In the vast literature on migration, taking a closer look at the push and pull factors has meant studying the socioeconomic costs and gains affecting migrant's decisions. This has also been true for return migration decisions (Jenkins, 1977; Reyes, 1997). In the social front of post-migration decisions and return migration, researchers have studied assimilation as a crucial portion defining migrants' success in adapting to life in the host country vs. their intent to return to their home country. As for the economic factors shaping post-migration decisions, a review of the literature focused mostly on the effect that economic factors have had on an immigrant's decision to go back to their homeland (Borjas & Bratsberg, 1996; Coniglio, De Arcangelis & Serlenga, 2006; Dustman & Weiss, 2007).

In the second half of the twentieth century, this move from short-term migration to more permanent migration movements among Mexican migrants was mostly defined by the shutdown of the guest worker Bracero Program[1] (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). Whereas in the first decade of the twenty-first century, anti-immigrant attitudes and the events of 9/11 had contributed to heightened border enforcement, decreased mobility of migrants across the Mexico-U.S. border and has also had an impact on the number of undocumented migrants who return home (Massey & Sanchez, 2010).

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1 The guest worker Bracero Program that took place from 1942-1964.

Overall, settlement decisions have often been linked with a migrant's process of assimilation. And assimilation has been interpreted as an "unlearning process" by which immigrants in the destination country[2] willingly reject ethnic cultural traits and native languages (Alba & Nee, 2003). In some cases, as immigrant parents embrace life in the destination country their affiliation to their home country lessens. By this standard, part of the assimilation process suggests that immigrants' roots deepen in the destination country in hopes that their children will grow up having better opportunities than those available to immigrant parents growing up in their home country. In the process, communication with and participation in the life of those left behind will either vanish or prevail.

However, newer perspectives on assimilation started to consider the feasibility of both, of immigrants remaining in contact with their homeland while being a full participant in the host country (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Part of this process of integrating migrants' attachment to the home and host countries has been at the core of transnational studies. More recently, studies have looked at transnational parenting, or the study of child-rearing strategies that involve exposing children to ethnic culture and traditions in the parents' home country (Dreby, 2010; Levitt, 2001; Orellana, Torne & Liam, 2003; Smith, 2006). While the study of how geographical distance affect the emotional, physical and psychological lives of immigrant families has entered the spotlight; including for example the relationships between children and parents, children and grandparents, and those among partners that live across borders (Dreby, 2006; Djajić, 2008; Heymann, Flores-Macias, Hayes, Kennedy, Lahaie & Earle, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003). Particular

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[2] The terms destination country and host country are used interchangeably, as are the terms home and sending country.

attention has also been given to the way transnational parenting arrangements play out. This emerging interest around the consequences of temporary and permanent return of immigrant families has still to address the perceptions and motivations of immigrant parents who chose to settle permanently in the host country rather than permanently return to their home country.

Research Questions

The three research questions that frame this study examine the effect that demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors have on low-income urban mothers who are first-generation migrants of U.S.-born children. To study the orientation to homeland of mothers who had such characteristics I selected a sample of first-generation Mexican migrant mothers living in New York City. Specifically I investigated:

- How do demographic characteristics, social support and financial well-being in the United States influence orientation to homeland among Mexican immigrant mothers of very young children?
- How do perceptions of public assistance and schools in the United States shape migrant mothers' orientation to homeland?
- What does it mean to be oriented to homeland and what are the factors that contribute to the OTH of migrant mothers?

In the following section I review the literature relevant to these general questions and elaborate on the rationale of the present study as I present the hypotheses and proposed analysis for this study.

Background and Significance

The intent to seek better economic opportunities and family reunification are generally regarded as two main motivations for Mexicans to migrate to the United States. Sociologist Douglas Massey has stressed that before they consider the likelihood of a permanent settlement in a new country, migrants, as social and economic entities, weigh in the socio-economic benefits of life in the destination country (Massey, 1986, Massey & Sanchez, 2010). Seasonal migrant workers, recruited as part of the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) during the 1970s and 80s, were mostly young males from urban and rural areas in western Mexico who reported having made successive trips back to Mexico. Different perspectives on return migration were reported from the cohort of participants recruited in 2003 for the Immigration Identity Project[3]. These differences had to do not only with the cost and risks of traveling back and forth, which have changed significantly; gender seemed to also play a part on immigrants' settlement intentions. Results from this study showed that women were more certain about their settlement decisions than men were. Although a relatively similar percentage of men and women intended to return - 42.5% of men versus 47.2% of women-more drastic disparities were shown among those uncertain about their decisions to either stay or return -30.2% of men vs. 18.9 % of women who said they didn't know- (Massey and Sanchez, 2010).

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[3] The Immigration Identity Project (IIP) became in a way an ethnographic subproject of the ongoing MMP. 159 first and second-generation migrants from Mexico, Central and Latin America participated in the study. I report here on the return migration perspectives of first-generation migrants. For more information on the IIP refer to Massey & Sanchez, 2010 *Broken Boundaries*.

In all, as migrants built connections in the destination country, they got better-paid jobs, brought family with them and were then more likely to become long-term settlers. It was also the presence of family and social ties, connections to institutions, stable jobs that pay higher salaries and increased spending in the destination country that reinforced migrants' settlement (Durand & Massey, 2006; Massey & Sanchez, 2010). In the end, family ties to the home and host countries are an important motivation to return or settle abroad.

Data showed that by 1995, women made up for 57% of the legal Mexican immigrant population to the United States; while the undocumented population of Mexican women estimated to have entered the country between the years of 1990-1995 was 28% (Cerrutti & Massey, 2001). As the numbers of female migrants started to increase, so did a close examination of their reasons to migrate and to settle permanently in the United States. Young single Mexican women were more often transitioning from sojourner to settlers as they become parents and consolidate families in the United States. Their intent to return would lessen not because they brought family with them, as was the case with guest workers decades ago, but because they started new families after they arrived to the United States. Ultimately, as some scholars have suggested, "most ethnic and minority parents consider what they believe and do […] to be in the best interest of their children and/or their family system" (Garcia-Coll, Meyer & Brillon 1995, p.190). Post-migration decisions of these mothers are strategically linked to the well-being of their children, both those who were born abroad and those living in the home country.

As immigrant mothers search for the best environment to raise their children they might either find ways to reconsider return migration or rely on transnational strategies such as sending remittances or seeking family reunification to their children living in the

home country. The kind of motivations Massey (1986) described as triggering settlement decisions among Mexican migrants, are in line with those I intended to explore as motivating immigrant mothers' orientation to homeland. These demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors explored as supporting migrants' orientation to homeland could also be understood as the principles to how and where parents decide to raise children.

Historical Patterns of Mexican Migration

Patterns of Mexican migration to the United States have shifted over a century-long history. Today, Mexicans are the largest immigrant group in the United States. Nearly 12 million foreign-born Mexicans, 11 % of the total Mexican population, reside in the United States (Ramos, 2008). Immigration policy has played an important role in how Mexican immigrants steadily became permanent settlers (Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001). After the Bracero Program (1948-1964), the 1965 Immigration Act included numerous inclusion and exclusion clauses which intended to abolish regions quotas of eastern and southern European countries set in 1924 and restricting at the same time entry of Mexican and Latin American migrants (Ngai, 2004, Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002, Rumbaut, 1997). Inadvertently, by emphasizing the reunification of immigrant families, the Immigration Act of 1965 allowed for the arrival of many Mexican immigrants and their families. The Mexican migrant population consolidated even more when two decades later, the 1986 Immigration Reform Act (IRCA) had granted a majority of the undocumented immigrants living in the United States the opportunity to legalize their status (Cornelius, 1989; Donato, 1993). By the early 1990s, an approximate total of two million undocumented migrants

had outnumbered the legal Mexican migrant population, within a decade this figure more than doubled to 4.8 million, and by 2007 the number of undocumented Mexicans in the United States neared seven million (Passel, 2004; Passel & Cohn, 2008). Katherine Donato, a leading scholar in the study of Mexican migration, estimated that in 2006 somewhere between "35 percent to 45 percent […] of the more than 11 million people who were living in the United States without proper documents," were women. That was a considerable increase from the 20 percent likely to have crossed illegally into the United States in the mid-1980s (Alvarez & Broder, 2006).

In an attempt to demonstrate that Mexican migration to new destinations within the United States involved reasons other than labor migration, Leach and Bean (2008) used census data from the 1970s to 2000s to examine how human and social capital, and not only economic factors, played a role in the migration and settlement of Mexican-origin people. The authors proposed a combination of labor demands outside historical Mexican destinations, as well as social networks and immigrants' family formation and marital status to be equally important in defining new destinations for Mexican migration. They concluded that one of strongest predictors of internal migration was the type of industry available in the destination area (i.e., service, manufacturing, agriculture).

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the presence of Mexican migrants was primarily concentrated in the four southwest border states of California, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico (Massey & Zenteno, 2001). Things started to shift during the mid-1960s and 1970s, leading to rising numbers of unemployment by the mid and late 1980s. At the time, the social tension and economic circumstances in the state of California, created a particularly hostile environment against Mexican-origin people, both foreign and

native-born, legal and undocumented, long-time settlers and new comers. The Mexican population living in California dropped from 59% in the 1970s to 35.4 % by 2000 (Durand, Massey & Capoferro, 2005). Flows of Mexican migrants had moved from the so-called traditional states to non-traditional or non-gateway states (Zúñiga & Hernández, 2005). As families relocated to rural and urban places throughout the Midwest, Southeast and Northeastern states, a new geographic landscape for Mexican migrants was being redefined (Lee, Ottati & Hussain, 2001). Meanwhile, New York, which was by definition a historical immigrant enclave, had not been a destination for Mexican migrants until the late 1980s when it emerged as a "continuous gateway" for domestic and foreign-born Mexicans (Singer, 2004; Smith, 2006).

Mexican migrant destinations thus changed, as did the sending regions across Mexico. For most of the early 20th century, traditional outmigration regions were located across the central-western Mexican states of Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco and Zacatecas (Terrazas, 2010). By the late 1970s, the Mixteca region in southern and central Mexico, encompassing portions of the states of Puebla, Oaxaca and Guerrero had become one of the highest sending regions of Mexican migrants to the United States (Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Smith, 2006). In his comprehensive study of Mexicans in New York, Robert Smith highlights the role that social networks had in the growing presence of this migrant community. As children of immigrants sought family reunification, and undocumented migrants looked for jobs through family and friends, the number of foreign and native-born Mexicans in New York rose from 40,000 in 1980 to 100,000 in 1990. This growing trend continued into the twenty-first century. In 2000 an estimated 250,000 Mexican origin

people were living in the New York metropolitan area and close to 320,000 were recorded to be living here by 2009 (Smith, 2006; Bergad, 2010).

In sum, the notion that Mexican migrant workers were in the United States temporarily and would eventually go back to Mexico became questionable as increasing number of workers and their families failed to return at the end of the Bracero Program (1942-1964). By the late 1970s, after the end of the guest-worker program, Wayne Cornelius, a leading scholar on Mexican migration and U.S.-Mexico border studies, had stated that there did not seem to be evidence that the number of new permanent [settlers] had risen (Massey & Singer, 1998). Shortly after, scholars studying settlement patterns of Mexican migrants questioned this assumption and offered new explanations as to why Mexican migrants were choosing not to return to Mexico. Some addressed the role of social and economic ties (Massey 1986), migrants sense of community in the host country (Chavez, 1994), and even how immigration policies (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994) and later on migrant's gender (Pessar, 1999) had proven to have an effect on return migration decisions. Push factors, such as the economic crisis in Mexico of the mid-1980s, and pull factors, particularly the labor demands of the United States, were also proof of a reciprocal process of a continuing migration (Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001).

Orientation to Homeland

Immigrants' economic and social concerns determine return decisions as well as transnational participation. From the length of their stay abroad to the remittances they sent and the social networks they seek and rely on in the home and host country. Similarly, economic restrictions and family separation are considered determining factors in post-

migration decisions of immigrant families, such as where to settle down and raise children. In the study of return migration, the economic and sociological approaches take into account how monetary and socio-emotional motivations work together as the driving motivations of immigrants to save money and be able to reunite with their relatives back in the country of origin. Beyond the economic or social incentives alone, researchers have considered the way an immigrant' life cycle impacts his or hers return migration decisions. For instance, the return migration decisions of elderly people who are financially well-off and looking to retire, is likely to differ from the return migration plans of poor immigrant parents of young children. For the latter group return migration decisions are family-oriented decisions that take much more into account.

Cases in which return migration decisions are driven by the expectations of immigrant parents and the opportunities available to children back in the home country have been seldom explored. This study looks to contribute to understanding the perceptions and expectations of immigrant mothers in the destination country as they shape their orientation to homeland. As mentioned earlier, I conceptualize orientation to homeland as two sets of behaviors: how immigrant parents might decide to return to their home country or to engage in transnational practices that impact their extended and immediate families in the home and destination countries.

Return Migration

Return migration has been defined as "the movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle" (Gmelch, 1980, p.136). In a careful review of the literature, immigration policy expert Belinda Reyes identified four theories that explain return

migration which I here summarize. Three of them are based on economic factors. *Disappointment theory* suggests that migrants return to their home country because they are unable to meet their expectation of savings or remittances. *Target income theory* proposes that migrants go back once they saved or sent a set amount of money to fulfill a project (i.e., to buy a piece of land, purchase commodities, or make an investment). These first two theories explain timing of return migration based on immigrants' income earnings. *Circular migration theory*, the third economic theory is best exemplified by guest-worker programs under which workers, most of them men, participate in short, temporary cyclical agricultural jobs and anticipate returning to their families at the end of a season. *Social network theory*, the one sociological theory used to explain return migration, suggests that social supports available to immigrants make life in the destination country easier and result in delayed return migration plans and sometimes permanent settlement in the destination country (Reyes, 1997). As it is here suggested, immigrant parents bear in mind the length of their stay in the destination country, their legal status, and their overall experience before making a return migration decision (Djajić, 2008; Hirsch, 2000; Navarro, 2006; Papademetrious & Terrazas, 2009, Reyez, 1997).

International migration expert Slobodan Djajić, one of the few European scholars to study the role that children play in the return migration decision of immigrant parents, has studied changing interests and aspirations of migrants as they become parents in the destination country: "At the moment of departure from the source country, an immigrant may be a young, unmarried man or woman, making decisions on an individual basis or in conjunction with the objectives of his or her parents and perhaps other family members. As the immigrant subsequently marries and has children, decisions related to return

migration might come under the influence of the spouse or factors that the immigrant couple considers as important to the future of their children." (2008, p. 470).

Transnational Practices

The likelihood of Mexican immigrants, who had initially thought of themselves as being temporary migrants in the U.S., to become permanent settlers increases as they become parents of U.S.-born children (Chavez, 1988; Massey, 1986). In some cases, as the alternative of return migration, immigrant mothers who have settled with their families in the destination country consider sending their children to stay for a certain period of time with relatives back in Mexico (Smith, 2006). This dynamic which may be regarded as an inverted transnational parenting strategy sheds light on how immigrant parents reason a transnational family life dynamic, which has been part of a relatively new study area in the transnational literature (Herrera Lima, 2001, Levitt, 2001; Sørensen, 2005). As decisions to settle permanently in the host country weigh in, some immigrants then decide to participate and stay connected to their home country in new ways.

Mexico is by far the largest Latin American recipient of remittances from the United States; the millions of dollars sent every year constitute the second largest source of income to the Mexican economy (Suro, 2003; Watson, 2009). While there are those who argue that remittances work as an indicator of migrants connection to their home country, a handful of studies that have examined the remittance behavior of Mexican migrants concluded that migrants' income did not affect their intentions to remit, but it did affect the amount of money being sent (Lianos & Cavounidis, 2008, Maggard, 2004). Remittances to Mexico were estimated at $13 billion in 2003, a figure that nearly doubled to $23.9 billion

in 2007 (Orozco, 2004, Niza, 2008); and reached its highest reported mark of $28 billion despite reports of a decline in remittances in 2008.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, two main objectives of this study, which framed the first two research questions, focused on the orientation to homeland of migrant mothers as guided by the predicting value of: 1. demographic characteristics, social support and perceptions of financial well-being in the United States; and 2. their perceptions of public assistance and schools in the United States.

Demographic Characteristics of Mexican Migrant Mothers.

According to the 2008 U.S. census data, foreign-born Mexican woman accounted for the largest (27%) percentage of female migrants from one single country followed by China (5%). Mexican migrants come mostly from rural areas knowing very little English and with an average 6th grade education (Hernández-León, 2008; Portes, 1998). Attributes such as education, job skills and experience, along with gender and age at time of migration, are all part of a migrant's human capital defining a migrants' prospects of life in the host country (Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Maggard, 2004).

A general view that Mexican migration was male dominated and that female migrants were set to follow their male migrant partners and seek reunification (Cornelius, 1990; Massey, Alarcón, Durand, & González, 1987; Rouse, 1992) remained in place until migration scholars in the 1990s proposed new explanations to the changing trends of migration. Mexican women who were not married to male migrants already in the United States suddenly emerged as autonomous agents migrating at considerably higher rates than men in the last decades of the 1900s (Donato, 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997;

Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001). In 1985, census records showed that 41 percent of the legal Mexican migrants in the United States were women and by 1995 women made up 57 percent of the legal Mexican migrant population in the United States (Cerrutti &Massey, 2001). Census records show that in 2006, the presence of undocumented migrants might have shifted the incidence of a female Mexican migrant population, as women accounted for 44.1 percent of the total Mexican immigrants in the U.S. (Batalova, 2008). Contrary to public opinion, women made up a substantial share of the adult undocumented population, 41 percent (Passel, Capps & Fix, 2004). Despite how the proportion of Mexican migrants and Mexican female migrants in particular has changed across the United States, there are still metropolitan areas where Hispanic other than Mexicans –such as Cubans in Miami (50.9%) and Puerto Ricans in the New York/ New Jersey area (29.4%)- are the predominant groups (Lopez & Dockterman, 2011).

The study of female migration became a rising field among a handful of migration scholars who were interested in the way gender shaped the experience of migration (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kanaiaupuni, 2000; Jasso, & Rosenzweig, 1990; Pedraza, 1991). It became evident not only that the number of Mexican migrant women had increased but also that the majority of Mexican female migrants were living without proper documentation in the United States.

While some scholars focused on how Mexican women in the United States were becoming politically active figures and benefiting from a more favorable position within their community than did their counterparts in Mexico (Mahler & Pessar, 2001), other experts focused on the way migration had had an impact on the gender dynamics at the household level. Males were becoming more active participants in household obligations

and child care (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Pessar, 1999), hierarchical relations within the family were changing (Barajas & Ramirez, 2007), and income-earning potential for female migrants in the United States was more promising (Glick, 1999).

Understanding migrant mothers' reasons to migrate became more relevant as the female migrant population grew and diversified, including a record presence of married and single mothers who were the primary breadwinners who had left their children behind in the home country (Hongadneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997, Dreby, 2010, Parreñas, 2001, Viruell-Fuentes, 2006).

Social Support of Mexican Migrant Mothers

Social capital as a source of support shapes female migrants' experience of migration, from the impact that social relations have on immigrants' lives (Enriquez, 2001; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa & Spittel, 2001) to the set of "rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust" that social networks generate (Naraya, 1997, p.50). Some scholars consider interpersonal social support to be a means to action for immigrants (Aguilera et. al., 2003; Espinosa & Massey, 1997; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino & Taylor, 1993). Others view social networks primarily as the social ties that help generate resources (Palloni, et. al, 2001). In this section, I describe the significance that social support has had for immigrant mothers and the way they make decisions that include their orientation to homeland.

The sociological approach to social capital has emphasized the role of social relations in advancing people's welfare (Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Li, Holloway, Bempechat & Lo, 2008). Sharing information on jobs available, the use of public services and the ways

in which institutions work in the host country, allows immigrants to improve their living and working conditions. In other words, a series of strategies enhances immigrants' access to information and allows them to consolidate networks, advance opportunities and maximize their resources (Palloni, et.al, 2001). Social support from family and community in the United States facilitates immigrants' settlement in the destination country. Mexican immigrants, for example, reach out to family and friends in the destination country as they seek information on how to safely cross the border and reach out their final destination (Singer & Massey, 1998).

The creation of networks of social support is also a dynamic process. Gender and generational differences (Curran et.al., 2003; Glick, 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994), length of stay, selected destination (Winters, de Janvry & Sadoulet, 2001; Hernández-León, 2008), and legal status (Aguilera & Massey, 2003) determine the function and type of network of support sought by immigrants. Mexican immigrants who cohabitate with extended family members find this type of household arrangement to benefit them socially and financially. Saving money on rent and other bills comes hand in hand with the opportunity to share household chores and getting help taking care of children (Galvez, 2011). Living arrangements among immigrants might vary depending on an immigrant's length of stay in the United States (Goerman, 2006), his or her socioeconomic needs (Tienda & Angel, 1982) and their levels of acculturation (Van Hook & Glick, 2007). Differences are also determined by whether immigrant families are Mexican-born or second generation migrants. For example, Mexican immigrants are more likely to live with adults of a same generation (e.g., cousins, siblings, uncles and aunts), that is in a horizontally extended household, while Mexican-American families live in vertically extended households with

multiple generations (i.e., grandparents, parents, grandchildren) (Glick, 1999). And, when comparing to other ethnic groups, Mexican mothers reach out to family members for child care more often than Anglo-American mothers do (Hill Collins, 1998; Uttal, 1999).

In the household and workplace, networks of kinship and friends are known to be a major source of support for immigrants seeking better paying jobs and better working conditions. Aguilera and Massey (2003) analyzed the effects of social capital on migrant wages and concluded that networks had an effect on wages, and the differences were greater among undocumented Mexican migrants than among documented ones.

Overall, a range of categories have been used to explain the function and nature of social networks. Vertical networks are hierarchically driven and horizontal ones are those accessible to an individual with similar social and economic backgrounds. Informal types of networks fostered among relatives, friends and neighbors encourage reciprocal support, whereas formal networks among people outside a close circle of friends and family are hierarchical and impersonal relations from which reciprocity is not expected. Then, strong ties are those that include close relatives and family members, whereas weaker ties, which can be equally important, are formed by acquaintances who can help with seeking jobs or other services outside a migrants' close reach and community (Granovetter, 1983; Enriquez, 2001; Portes, 1998). Because migration increases income opportunities for immigrants (Maggard, 2004), in the strict economic sense it makes sense for migrants to resource to many different types of networks.

Financial Well-being of Mexican Migrant Mothers

When conditions are favorable in the destination country, returns to the home country are delayed and migrants are likely to become permanent settlers (Maggard, 2004). Understanding immigrants' economic well-being in the United States and the way gender, education and other social factors promote better jobs, wages and opportunities, has been of central interest to researchers and policymakers (Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1990; Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003). For example, guest workers during the Bracero Program (1946-1968) "created new standards of material well-being and instilled new ambitions for upward mobility that involved additional trips and longer stays" (Massey, Durand & Malone, 2002, p.42). In some cases, the strenuous and costly implications of traveling back and forth, particularly among the undocumented migrants, led many to extend their stays in the United States and resulted eventually in permanent settlements for many temporary migrants. Other factors such as foreseeing upward mobility in the United States delayed returns to the home country, particularly if prosperous opportunities back in Mexico were not guaranteed.

The economic and emotional investment of coming into the United States undocumented is not taken lightly. Around the early 1980s Mexican undocumented immigrants were more likely to go back to Mexico than they did two decades later. As explained by Massey, "[t]he average probability of return for illegal immigrants was 47 percent during 1979-84 but fell to 27 percent during 1997-2003" (as cited by Navarro, 2006, para.9). Aside from the macro level restrictions and conditions in the host and home countries that affect perceived financial well-being and economic possibilities for migrants, micro level factors such as beliefs and personal life histories and circumstances had been seldom addressed in the literature. One way to examine those subjective interpretations of

wealth and opportunities might be through comparative evaluations of struggle and opportunity growing up in Mexico and after having migrated to the United States.

Public Assistance to Mexican Migrant Mothers

One of the reasons immigrants tend to be perceived as threats has to do with native residents' perceptions that economic opportunities are being seized, social values change and public services may be overwhelmed (Berry, 2001). On regards to public services, it is hard to find a consensus when objectivity is clouded by policy makers, researchers and scholars interpreting immigrants' use of public assistance in the destination country depending on who is targeted population in the studies and how results are used and interpreted. Therefore, to contribute to a more extensive interpretation of who has access to and uses government-funded programs and services, it is important to include differences based on an immigrants' age, ethnicity, level of education, place of origin and legal status (Brandon, 1999; Capps, Kinney & Fix, 2003; Fix, Zimmermann & Passel 2001; Guendelman, Halpin Shauffler & Peral, 2001; Yoshikawa, Godfrey & Rivera, 2008). Eligibility and impact based on actual take-up of public assistance are two broad directions on how to approach the use of public assistance. In the following section, first I describe policies that have specifically targeted immigrants with the intent to keep them from having access to publicly funded programs and services assistance and federal benefits. Then, I briefly present how access and restrictions to public assistance by immigrant families have had an effect on children's health and well-being. Finally, I suggest that as important as it has been to understand the use and restrictions of institutional resources and government funded benefits by immigrant families, it is equally important to address

and study how immigrant parents' perceive and benefit from public assistance programs in the host country. Only a handful of studies have tried to contextualize the use of public assistance by immigrants and to understand immigrant parents' experiences and beliefs about public assistance (Brandon, 1999; Suarez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008; Yoshikawa & Way, 2008; Yoshikawa, 2011).

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) aimed to restructure public assistance for poor people in the United States. This welfare reform law included also a set of provisions intended to ban immigrants from having access to various sources of federal funding, which indirectly restricted an eligible population of U.S. born children of immigrants who were eligible to having access to some of these services (Capps 2001; Fix, Zimmermann, & Passel 2001; Mohanty, Woolhandler, Himmeistein, Pati, Carrasquillo & Bor, 2005). In the years following PRWORA, some critics held parents' immigration status as enough evidence to restrict their children from receiving institutional assistance. Although undocumented parents were afraid of taking full advantage of those resources, it did not seriously affect the number of U.S. citizen children living in mixed-status families whose enrollment in Medicaid increased by 11.6 % between 1999 and 2002 (Capps, Kinney & Fix, 2003).

Researchers have noted that economic instability affects the well-being of immigrants. A byproduct of having limited access to health care coverage and other benefits is how it can interfere with the cognitive, physiological and psychological well-being of immigrant children (Massey et. al., 2002; Reardon-Anderson, Capps, & Fix, 2002; Yoshikawa, 2011). Studies have shown that the economic disadvantages of living in low-income households affect an average 6.6 million young children under the age of 6 in the

United States (Capps, Fix, Ost, Reardon-Anderson & Passel, 2005). As noted earlier, while it is true that non-citizen children of immigrants are ineligible for federal funded programs like TANF, food stamps, housing assistance and Medicaid, undocumented parents afraid of being labeled "a public charge" or being deported, do not use public services and programs that their U.S.-born children are eligible for deportation (Fix et. al., 1999; Guendelman et. al., 2001; Capps, et. al., 2005; Yoshikawa, 2011). Understanding how eligibility and the impact of public assistance affect children of immigrants living in low-income households is of most importance, considering that three out of four U.S. born children live in immigrant households (Brandon, 2002). I posit that immigrant parents' perceptions of health care and assistance are important as they could help explain immigrants' use of public assistance as well and offer valuable comparisons to the perceived availability and eligibility of public services in their host countries.

Schools according to Mexican Migrant Mothers

The debate on eligibility to receive public assistance by foreign and native born children of immigrants has included many arguments on whether the children of undocumented immigrants should be banned from American public schools (Brown, Wyn & Yu, 1999). The notorious 1982 case of Plyler vs. Doe, in which the U.S. Supreme Court overruled an exclusionary Texas law aimed at banning children from public education based on their legal status, seems to resonate in today's anti-immigrant climate (Olivas & Bowman, 2011). Federal authorities have recently stated unconstitutional to have school personnel to inquire about the immigration status of children enrolled in schools across the United States (Semple, 2011a). Disparity from state to state as to how public assistance

and welfare benefits should be regulated has led to some controversial decisions by local authorities. As notorious as Proposition 187 was in California in the mid-1990s, which aimed to ban foreign-born children from having access to health care services and public education, recently enacted laws in states like Arizona, Georgia and Alabama are no different. Current and controversial trends to ban undocumented children from public schools have recently reemerged.

Cultural beliefs and practices of immigrants have at times led to misconstrued portrayals of immigrant parents, and their interest and participation in the education of their children (Arendell, 1997). Fortunately, the impact that parents have on the assimilation of immigrant children and children of immigrants has been carefully documented (Min, 1997; Suárez-Orozco et. al., 2001; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters & Holdaway, 2008). Some scholars have suggested that the parenting styles and school involvement of Mexican immigrants determine the level of acculturation and assimilation of their U.S-born and foreign-born children (Conchas, 2001; Dumka, Roosa & Jackson, 1997; Fuligni, 1998; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Some have found that the more acculturated the children of immigrants are, the better they perform in school (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997). Others have suggested the opposite, that the more assimilated to the mainstream culture immigrant children become, the poorer their school performance (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Meanwhile, parents' education and legal status have also been credited as determining factors on the school performance of immigrant children (Brandon, 1999; Garcia-Coll et. al., 1997), as well as neighborhood and school district (Zhou, 1997).

Most studies interested in the school performance of immigrant children take a child-centered perspective, in which children are the unit of analysis (Sohn & Wang, 2006). An alternative is to take a parent-centered perspective. In the latter, immigrant parents' beliefs, concerns and expectations of the school system in the host country are related to their perceptions of schools and their role in their children's education. In other words, I argue that although the analysis of eligibility, access and performance of immigrant children in public schools is important, it is equally important to ascertain immigrant parents' subjective view of American public schools.

Hypotheses

To answer the first two research questions I used a quantitative analysis of survey data. Answering the third question was done through qualitative data analysis. To learn about the subjective meaning of orientation to homeland, as presented in the third research question, I conducted a categorical and content analysis of semi-structured interview questions and fieldworker's ethnographic notes. To answer the first two research questions on key predictors of orientation to homeland, I present the following five hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1- Demographics and OTH. Mexican migrant mothers who are older, have been in the U.S. for longer and are less educated will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and less likely to engage in transnational practices.

Hypothesis 2- Social Support and OTH. Mexican migrant mothers with a larger network of support in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and less likely to engage in transnational practices.

Hypothesis 3- Financial Well-being and OTH. Mexican migrant mothers who perceive their lives to be financially better-off in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices.

Hypothesis 4- Public Assistance and OTH. Mexican migrant mothers who think positively about receiving public assistance and believe it will not interfere with future opportunities in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices**.**

Hypothesis 5- Schools and OTH. Mexican migrant mothers who believe that schooling opportunities in the United States are better than those in Mexico will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Orientation to homeland (OTH) indicates an immigrant's intention to return to their home country as well as to engage in transnational practices. The more permanent aspect of orientation to homeland would be the settlement decisions, while a more immediate and provisional aspect of OTH would be how immigrants engage in transnational practices (e.g., sending remittances). Research questions and hypotheses were tested using data from survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews collected as part of a longitudinal study conducted with low-income families in the New York metropolitan area. Professors Hiro Yoshikawa and Catherine Tamis-LeMonda were the principal investigators of this study conducted by the Center for Research on Culture, Development and Education (CDRCDE) at New York University (NYU). The intent of their study was to examine how living conditions and family environment of low-income families affected children's development during early childhood (i.e. birth to 36 months), and how such conditions could impact children's school readiness in the future.

Data for this study on Mexican mothers' orientation to homeland were selected from both the the longitudinal survey and in-depth interview portions of the CRCDE study. The study of demographic, socio-economic and institutional aspects I set to study was a way to approach immigrants' perceptions, experiences and expectations, which inform return and transnational migration decisions. Survey questions on topics related to these factors were included within the five interview protocols administered over a three-year period. Meanwhile, for a more subjective interpretation of orientation to homeland, I revised and analyzed interview transcripts from a subsample of participants. Perceptions and

interpretations of the costs and gains of living and raising children in the home and host country inform the degree to which these mothers are oriented to homeland. Related questions from the survey questionnaires and those from in-depth interviews questions aimed to provide a consistent account of immigrant mothers' orientation to homeland. In other words, both sets of questions were intended to explore complementary views on how the predicting variables presented in the hypotheses, explained OTH. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches I intended to provide, even in a small scale, the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative methods (Collins, Onwugbuzie & Sutton, 2006; Jick, 2008).

More specifically, the quantitative portion of the study consisted of a series of survey questions; the basis of the qualitative data was drawn from select in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze survey data. While a narrative analysis, focused on thematic and content elements, was conducted using the qualitative data. The quantitative analysis tested a set of relationships on how well predicting factors selected for this study explained the outcomes. The qualitative analyses revealed a more detailed picture of the lives of these immigrant women, exemplified how certain relationships came about, and portrayed and contested self and social views of who they are as women, immigrants and mothers.

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

Low-income mothers were recruited at maternity postpartum wards in selected hospitals across New York City. The CRCDE study was designed in a way that each mother was periodically visited during her child's first three years of life (between 2004 and 2008).

A birth cohort of 380 mothers from four different ethnic/racial groups (African-American, Chinese, Dominicans and Mexican) was selected to participate and complete survey questionnaires at home. From within that group of participants, a randomly selected subsample of 29 mothers representing all ethnic/racial groups took part in the qualitative study. From the total CRCDE sample, 97 mothers who self-identified as Mexican were included in the quantitative analysis of present study. The majority of these mothers were first generation immigrants (97%). A sub-sample of nine Mexican mothers participated in a qualitative portion of the longitudinal study. Four of those mothers were selected for the qualitative portion of this study. As one the primary focus of the study was to learn about return migration by first-generation immigrants, the first step in the selection criteria was first to exclude a second-generation migrant. The remaining eight participants were classified based on their responses to whether they intended or not to return to their country of origin. To provide a comparative, but at the same time manageable analysis, I selected four case studies with which I conduct a more comprehensive analysis of two mothers who intended to return and two who mentioned they did not.

Data for the survey portion of the study was collected at five different points, during the recruitment at the hospital (baseline), followed by phone interviews (at 1 and 6 months) and home visits (at 14, 24 and 36 months). Participants in the qualitative portion of the study were periodically visited for one-on-one in-depth interviews and ethnographic field data collection. The subsample of mothers selected to participate in the qualitative portion of the study completed five semi-structured interviews interspersed with four to five additional visits designed to collect ethnographic observations. These individually conducted visits with families were scheduled approximately 10 weeks apart. The in-depth

interviews followed protocols covering a range of topics including childcare, hardships and assistance, mother's education and immigration history, parenting practices, employment experience and schooling. The ethnographic visits consisted of participant observations of family dynamics, mother-child interactions and recording of household structure and family environment.

The survey results, from the total 97 Mexican mothers in the sample, included selected questions relevant to the predictors and outcomes for this study. For the qualitative analysis, transcripts including selected questions from four of the five interview protocols and all five sets of ethnographic field notes written by the fieldworker during each of the nine to ten visits with participants[4]. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, translated into English and double-checked for accuracy. Field worker's visits with families extended over an average of 2 to 3 hours. During those visits survey questionnaires were conducted and completed taking an average of 1.5 hours (sometimes mothers had to take break to feed and care for the babies). Home visits during which in-depth interviews and participant observations were conducted lasted an average of 1.5-3 hours. At the end of each interview all participants received $50 dollars and at some of the visits books were given as gifts to the children in the study. Field workers completed 8 -10 qualitative visits with each participant, the record time of interviews and participant observations that were transcribed averaged 25-30 hours. In some cases, hang out times when field workers accompanied mothers to

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[4] Strategies on the selection of participant's data for the qualitative analysis are explained later in this chapter. Also, a more detailed discussion on how the sample size was an important limitation to the significance of results is presented in the concluding chapter.

hospital check-up visits, to pick up older children from school, or joined them for lunch or dinner added more hours to their visits and an opportunity to get to know them better.

Quantitative Survey Methods

With a defined idea of the predictors and outcomes of orientation to homeland, a thorough review of all questions included in each of the five survey questionnaires (Baseline, 6, 14, 24 and 36 months) led to a selection of a limited set of close-ended questions for which participants had to choose from among a choice of responses, as well as questions that rated participants' attitudes and perceptions according to a defined range of answers presented in a Likert scale system (e.g. absolutely agree to completely disagree). Quantitative data were analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS. Means, standard deviations, missing values and percentages led to diagnostic decisions about the data. Tables of descriptive statistics and frequencies present the distribution of each predictor and outcome (see Tables 1, 2 and 3). Then, hypotheses were tested using correlations and linear regressions. Pearson's correlations (*r*) were used to test the relationship between each predictor and outcomes of continuous variables (see Tables 4 and 5).

Additionally, scatter plots were examined to determine whether a curvilinear relationship existed between variables (e.g., age and return migration). These graphs were used to discriminate various possible outcomes within the data. Finally, linear regression analyses (OLS) were conducted to assess how each of the five predictors (demographics,

social support, financial well-being, public assistance and schools) might account for variation in the outcome variables of return migration and transnational practices.

Variables Operationally Defined

Orientation to Homeland Constructs

The outcome for this study, orientation to homeland (OTH), examined participants' perceptions and behaviors that involved permanent and temporary migration decisions to remain connected to their home country. For the more permanent aspect of OTH I explored perceptions of return migration. The temporary-migration involved studying four aspects of transnational behavior: 1) remittances, 2) whether participants had travelled (in the past two years) or had intentions to travel to Mexico, and 3) how mothers felt about raising children in Mexico as opposed to the United States. As part of the orientation to homeland construct, actual and imagined ways of participation in and with people back home were selected from the 24-month and 36-month survey questionnaires.

Return Migration: I assessed participants' return migration through a question on Mexican mothers' intentions to settle permanently either in Mexico or the United States. The question "Do you see yourself returning permanently to Mexico?" included in the 36-month survey questionnaire, aimed to assess return migration decisions. Participants responded using a 5-point scale that included the following options: Not at all= 1, Very Unlikely= 2, Maybe= 3, Very Likely= 4, Absolutely= 5. By the time data collection started at 36 months, close to 30 % of participants (n=65 down from n=96) had either dropped from the study or we were unable to reach them after numerous attempts to schedule an

interview. When it came to the analysis of data, I made the decision to simplify this 5-point scale into 3 categories: 1= Unlikely to Return, 2= Maybe and 3=Likely to Return. The original 1 and 2 responses were combined to 1, and 4 and 5 were combined as 3 in order to include a larger number of respondents per category for the analysis (See Table 3).

Transnational Practices: First, one way for immigrants to remain connected to the home country and the people left behind is by sending remittances. Participants were asked (at 14 and 24-months) whether they had sent remittances to Mexico in the past year. Responses to this dichotomous variable were recorded as 1= Yes and 0=No. Only the responses given at 24-months were included in the correlation analysis that measured the relationship between remittances and other variables in the study. Still, percentages of those who said Yes or No at both points of collection (at 14 and 24-months) were included in the descriptive statistics analysis (Table 3). Other important questions about remittances behavior, including amount and frequency of remittances sent to the home country, had been included in the original interview protocol but were not analyzed in the present study.

Second, traveling back to their hometowns seemed like the absolute opportunity for migrants to share with family and people back home and remain oriented to homeland. Two questions on travels to the home country asked participants whether they had travelled to Mexico since their child was born (at 24-months) and if they had plans to visit Mexico in the near future (at 36-months). To the dichotomous question of whether mothers "ha[d] made any trips to Mexico since [their] child was born", participants chose No=1 or Yes=2 as their response. When asked if they saw themselves "visiting (returning

temporarily) to Mexico?"; participants chose one of the following 5 options: Not at all= 1, Very Unlikely= 2, Maybe= 3, Very Likely= 4, Absolutely= 5. As with the question on return migration, this 5-point scale was simplified into 3 categories when conducting the quantitative data analyses. The original 1 and 2 responses were combined into "Unlikely to Visit"= 1=, a category of "Maybe"= 2, and responses 4 and 5 were combined as "Likely to Visit"= 3. More details on the quantitative analysis of data and how the orientation to homeland including correlations between OTH constructs and the predicting variables are included in the following chapter (See also the Tables section).

Finally, borrowing from Hondagneu-Sotelo's notion of transnational motherhood, I became interested in how mothers think about the challenges and rewards of raising children in the home or host country. At 24 months, mothers were asked if they thought "raising children [was]": Harder in New York= 1, About the Same= 2 or Harder in Mexico= 3. A follow up question on why it might be harder in one place or the other was not included in the analysis of this study. Instead, questions related to where children might be raised –home or host countries- were explored in the in-depth interviews and participants' responses are furthered explained in the qualitative analysis in chapter 4.

Predicting Factors

Demographic characteristics: Participants' age, education and length of stay in the United States were selected from the baseline survey. It was in this initial interview with participants that a demographic profile of participating mothers was collected. Age in

years, participants' highest level of school completed and the number of years they had been in the United States were used as the demographic predictors.

Social Support: My measure of social support was based on the instrumental, financial and emotional types of support immigrants reported receiving from family, friends and community in the United States. In the survey collection at 14-months, social capital was examined by looking at various types of support based on common situations when people might need help. I selected four questions that indicated the people or places participants might have gone to for help if they were in any of the following situations: if they needed to go away for a few days and needed help taking care of their 14-month child, if they did not have enough money for food, rent or paying the bills, if they needed help finding a job, and if they needed help writing something in English. As participants were probed for up to 3 names by asking "anyone else?", "any other place?", they listed the number of people (e.g. spouse, parent, sibling, co-worker, etc.) or places (e.g. clinic, church, etc.) and ranked them in order of availability to offer help and support if they needed.

Perceived Financial Well-being: Comparative perceptions of advancement and opportunities in the United States and Mexico informed what being poor vs. being financially secure meant for mothers. Three questions included in the 24-month survey explored perceptions of comparative hardship between New York and participants' country of origin. Participants chose one of three possible answers when asked if: "Making ends meet [was]": Harder in New York= 1, About the Same= 2 or Harder in Mexico= 3. A second set of questions collected at 36-months that measured socioeconomic status, also in

comparative terms, were selected to measure the perceived financial well-being of participants in this study. The three questions I selected were: "When you were growing up, was your family better-off or worse off financially than the average family was at the time?", "When your parents were the age you are now, were they better off or worse off financially than you are now"? and "How about now, would you say that you and your family are better off or worse off than the average family in the US?" Participants answers were recorded as Worse Off=1, The Same=2, and Better Off= 3.

Perceptions of Public Assistance: Public assistance geared to support children in low-income families was measured based on participants' attitudes and perceptions of public assistance. Five questions asked at baseline assessed participants' attitudes about public policies. Participants' perceptions of public assistance were ranked using a 4-point Likert scale, going from Disagree a Lot= 1, Disagree= 2, Agree= 3 to Agree a Lot= 4. The degree to which they agreed or disagreed to the hypothetical use of public assistance by some mothers included looking at how comfortable some mothers felt about: 1. "Getting financial help from a program in my neighborhood if I needed it"; 2. "Getting help from the government to pay for food", 3. "getting help from the government to pay for child care", 4. "Getting help with child care from a program in my neighborhood if I needed it" and 5. "Getting help from the government to pay for medical care". Of the above five statements, the first three corresponded to cash types of assistance, while the last two - child care programs and medical care- were non-cash types of assistance. Additionally, three questions taken from the 14-months survey inquired about participant's perceptions of the potential consequences of having received government assistance. Participants were asked

if they thought government assistance could hurt their chances of 1."Getting a job in the future", 2. "My child succeeding", and if it could hurt an immigrant mother's chance of 3."Getting citizenship". Responses to all questions were registered on a 4-point scale that included: Disagree a Lot= 1, Disagree= 2, Agree= 3, Agree a Lot= 4. As it will be thoroughly explained in the results section of chapter 3, a descriptive analysis of all variables indicated there was no variability in participants' attitudes towards receiving non-cash types of assistance. More than 90 % of participants agreed -agree or agree a lot- with the statement that mothers would feel comfortable getting help with a child care program and paying for medical care (Table 2). There was more variability in participants' responses to perceptions on non-cash types of assistance. These three questions in addition to perceptions of the impact that any such assistance could have in their lives were included in the correlation analyses (Table 4).

Schools: Migrant mothers' perceptions of schools in the United States were assessed using two questions from the 14-month survey. Participants reported if they thought: "Schools in NYC are of good quality" and whether "Schools in the United States are better than schools in Mexico". Responses were assessed using a 4-point scale that ranged from "Disagree a Lot= 1", Disagree= 2, Agree= 3 and "Agree a Lot"= 4.

Whenever more than two questions within a predicting variable were strongly correlated with each other, those two or more questions were combined into one factor. These factors were intended to provide more strength in the analysis and show how well they predicted OTH. This strategy was implemented within three of the predicting sets of variables -social support, public assistance and schools. First, there was a significant

correlation between two of the social support questions that measured help finding money and getting jobs (r= .33, p<.01). A new factor of social support money/jobs was used in the analysis. Second, two other factors looking at the perceived overall consequences of receiving public assistance were created based on the strong correlations of two sets of variables: first, perceptions of financial assistance hurting parents chances to receiving citizenship and parents' getting jobs (r= .46, p<.01); and second, perceptions of how financial assistance could hurt children's' future opportunities and parents' chances to get citizenship (r= .59, p<.01), as well as the relationship between how receiving public assistance could simultaneously hurt children's future and parents' getting jobs citizenship (r= .58, p<.01). Third, perceptions of American schools measured by how participant mothers thought of the quality of schools in New York City and schools in the United States compared to schools in Mexico, were significantly correlated (r= .59, p<.01). In this last case, I examined the relationship between the two school variables individually and then used the combined factor as I tested the relationship between the predicting variable of schools and the outcome variables. Further analyses and decisions made after these factors were created are explained in chapter 3 (see also Table 4 for all the correlations).

Qualitative Interview Method

Questions from semi-structured interviews that were part of a larger study were selected and categorized. Each participant's data set included interviews, ethnographic field notes and participant's observations. To complete a quantitative/qualitative methodological connection on participants' responses this study, results from the

quantitative analysis guided the narrative parallel and contextualizing strategies I followed in conducting the qualitative analysis. Starting with a parallel strategy for the analysis of data meant finding a systematic relationship between survey and narrative responses to OTH.

I conducted a narrative analysis of transcripts from interviews with participants and researchers' field notes and observations. Interview questions that touched upon issues relevant to my five predictors and two outcomes comprised the qualitative data set. In addition, ethnographic data and researchers' observations helped document each participant's life trajectory and family context. That is, the same predictors and outcomes of orientation to homeland used in the quantitative portion of the study became the categories used in the narrative analysis. A categorical and content approach framed the qualitative analysis. Through these two dimensions of categorical and content analysis used in narrative analysis (Lieblich 1998; as cited in Elliot, 2005), I targeted specific topics/categories corresponding to the predicting variables, and I explored events and experiences meaningful to migrant mothers through a content analysis. Finally, the qualitative data was organized and analyzed using the software packages Atlas Ti, Excel and Word Office.

The data for each of four Mexican mothers who were selected from the sub-sample in the qualitative portion of the study included approximately 8 to 10 sets of field notes and 6 to 8 interview transcripts per participant. As used in the quantitative portion of the analysis, demographics, social support, financial well-being, public assistance and schools were selected as the predictors, and questions on return migration and transnational practices were part of the orientation to homeland outcome. In this sense, the selection of

categories was theoretically driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, a new category which I labeled "concerns and expectations" emerged from the content analysis of all transcripts containing interview and field note data[5].

The qualitative analysis shed light on detailed descriptive data found in the quantitative analysis. In other words, using the survey results as a guideline, I classified the subsample of participants as oriented to homeland or not oriented to homeland based on their answer to the survey question of return migration. Their interest into returning or not returning to Mexico was an initial indication of whether they were to be considered oriented to homeland (OTH) or not.

As I read interviews and field notes from the selected case studies, I kept track of any recurring topics found in interviews or recorded by researchers in their field notes. These additional topics helped contextualize a new and meaningful layer to participants' OTH. During the first read of interviews and field notes, I kept a record of recurrent categories that participants discussed or focused on that did not fit within any of my preselected categories. This contextualizing strategy helped classify and code an emerging category that revealed aspects of orientation to homeland that were not originally conceived in the model for each participant. Then, on a second read of the transcripts (interviews and field notes), additional insights into meaningful, distressing or hopeful experiences of migration, parenting and settlement were revealed in this new category or concerns and expectations.

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[5] Some consider the idea of emerging themes or categories as a passive analytical strategy (Braun & Clarke, 2006); although in this case, the 'emergence' of themes was actively pursued by my close look at the data.

Once all categories were selected, I organized each participant's coded data using the software program Atlas Ti. On a second read of coded field notes outputs produced with Atlas Ti, I identified migrants' views, aspirations, perceptions and behaviors of how oriented to homeland they were. Part of this process of orientation was determined by how participants compared experiences and perceptions of life in the home and destination countries. For example, here are some quotes that exemplify three different views of orientation to homeland. One participant mentioned that "if the economy were better in Mexico, [she] would immediately return". Another one talked about "dreams of going back to Puebla and buying a piece of land [although] the children get used to living here [in the United States] and it is not easy to bring them back […] to Mexico". And yet another participant talked about having reconsidered visiting Mexico once "she heard from friends that American-born children of undocumented immigrant [traveling back to the U.S.] could be taken away from their parents".

Although many of the conversations with participants in this study about their plans to visit or return to Mexico were shaped by economic struggles, conversations highlighted immigrant parents' plans for their children, their life history and provided vital autobiographical narrations (Daiute, 2004). Locating autobiographical narrations over time (Nelson, 1991), such as descriptions of life in Mexico and in the United States, added an important perspective of who these participants were as women, mothers and immigrants, and what they wanted for themselves, their children and their families.

I framed the analysis of each story starting with a background and history narrative. I then summarized the concerns and expectations of these mothers, and expanded on those two according to the predicting elements that I was set to study. In other words, the

concerns and expectations of these Mexican migrant mothers were tied in to one or more of the predictors of orientation to homeland -demographic, socio-economic or institutional factors.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Five hypotheses framed the quantitative analysis of this study. The statistical results presented in this chapter show how demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors in the host country predicted the return migration decisions and transnational practices (OTH) of immigrant mothers. Before reporting on the tests of the hypotheses, I first use descriptive statistics to represent a modal Mexican migrant mother in this study – her individual demographic characteristics, her socio-economic concerns, and her perceptions of government assistance and public schools in the United States. I then present results of correlations concerning the characteristics and conditions that were hypothesized to predict participants' orientation to homeland. Following the results of those tests, I discuss additional correlations found between variables of interest and report on a series of regression analyses.

Portrait of a Mexican Migrant Mother in New York

The typical Mexican mother who participated in the study was a first generation migrant (92.3%) in her late twenties or early thirties (M= 26.9, SD= 5.6). On average, she had been in the United States for eight years (M =7.8, SD=5.0), and by the time she migrated to the United States she had completed no more than a ninth grade education (80 %) (see Table 1). She was most likely to have migrated from a rural town in Puebla, Oaxaca or Guerrero, three main central and southeastern states of Mexico where most migrants who have settled in New York are originally from (Smith, 2006). Social networks between

sending and destination regions of migration facilitate immigrants' journey into the United States and provide aid as they settle in the United States. Our modal Mexican mother had benefited from finding support to care for her children, getting money, finding a job, and getting assistance writing English.

As recorded in our questionnaire, this modal mother listed the number of people available to provide different kinds of support (i.e. husband, cousin, and aunt).[6] On average her largest support network was connected to finding child care (M=1.48), followed by networks for getting money (M=1.07) and finding help with writing English if needed (M= 1.02). The smallest reported network was related to finding support getting jobs (M=0.68). Meaning that, the average mother mentioned having at least one person available to assist her with writing English (64 %) and to provide money (53 %). Although nearly half of the Mexican mothers said they did not have even one person who could help them find a job (47 %), another 50%[7] of them mentioned two or more people they could count on if they needed help caring for their children. Having a larger network available to help with child care than the one available in finding jobs seemed to reflect on the type of support that was more important to our modal stay-at-home Mexican mother. She was more likely to mention kinship networks when it came to support with child care and getting money, whereas coworkers, friends and institutions (e.g. schools, churches or hospitals) were more often sought if she needed help finding jobs or writing English (see Table 1). If caring for

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[6] Questions on social support were framed in a way that allowed participants to list up to three people they could count on for each type of support.

[7] The total of 50% of participants listed here to have mentioned having the largest network available who could help with child care corresponds to 44.4 % of who listed two people and 6.3 % who listed three people they could count on.

her children entailed providing for them, questions on financial support and public assistance revealed to some extent, how beyond the network of support to get money and finding jobs, the value of perceived economic position, and the financial strategies and resources of the average low-income Mexican mother.

When asked about her financial concerns, in most cases our modal mother thought that making ends meet was harder in Mexico than in New York (61.3 %)[8]. There was a connection between these perceptions and how she compared herself to the average Mexican family in Mexico and the average American family in the United States. For instance, the typical mother in this study remembered growing up in her home country on a tighter budget than the average Mexican family (44 %) and in very few instances (16 %), she considered having being better off than the average Mexican family (Table 1). In comparison, only 20% of the Mexican mothers mentioned being worse off financially than the average American family, while little over half the mothers (54 %) felt they were in a similar financial position than any other American family. Despite her idea of being relatively well-off in the United States, in most cases the typical mother welcomed government-sponsored aid.

Two aspects of public assistance that were analyzed in this study were perceptions of the impact of receiving government assistance and the perceived consequences of receiving government assistance (see Table 2). Our modal Mexican mother agreed (agree and agree a lot) that mothers in general would feel far more comfortable receiving non-cash types of assistance (e.g. help with childcare programs and to pay for medical care)

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[8] Only 9.7 % of Mexican migrant mothers perceived making ends meet to be harder in New York than in Mexico.

than receiving money from the government (e.g., financial help, help to pay for food and help to pay for childcare). More specifically, our modal mother in more than half the cases (55.6%) perceived some mothers would agree to receive money to pay for child care (61.4%) and money to pay for food (75%); while virtually all mothers perceived mothers to comfortably agree to getting help from the government to pay for child care programs (93.3%) and to receive medical care (97.8%)[9].

When studying participants' responses to the perceived consequences of the impact of getting government assistance, the average mother in the study perceived government assistance would not hurt immigrant mothers' chances to get a job (64.1%) or interfere with the future of children of immigrants (60.3%). She was more conservative in her perceptions of how government assistance might hurt an immigrant mothers' chances to get citizenship (53.1%). Finally, the way Mexican mothers rated the quality of schools in the United States and compared schools in New York to schools in Mexico suggested that, in general, participants in this study regarded schools in the United States very positively (59.5 %), and believed New York schools to be better than schools in Mexico (62.6 %)[10].

Mexican immigrant mothers in our study were for the most part not interested in returning to Mexico and had fairly often engaged in transnational activities (see Table 3). The vast majority said they were more likely to settle permanently in the United States and

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[9] The "agree" and "agree a lot" responses to mothers' perceptions of the effect of receiving child care and medical care assistance were combined to arrive at the total percentages provided here of (93.3%) and (97.8%).

[10] Total percentages provided here (62.5% and 59.5%) were obtained by combining participants' "agree" and "agree a lot" perceptions to both statements.

did not intend to return to Mexico (70%)[11]. If the modal Mexican mother envisioned a future living and raising her children in the United States, could it be accurate to suggest that she had also stopped participating in the life and events of her community back in Mexico? Knowing and caring for the people in her home town, including how she felt about visiting Mexico, raising children and sending remittances, is an important component to the transnational participation of Mexican immigrant mother's measured in this study. Although a significant portion of these mothers still contemplated visiting Mexico at some point (42%), it was not clear whether they might actually get to travel to Mexico considering that virtually none of them (92%) had been back to Mexico since they first migrated[12]. As far as how they felt about raising their children in Mexico, the mothers' decisions were equally divided among three alternatives: those who perceived raising children to be more difficult in Mexico (30.6%), those for whom it seemed to be harder in the United States (34.7%), and a third group who considered raising children to be equally difficult in either country (34.7%). The one aspect of transnationalism often discussed in the literature as indicative of migrants' connections to their home country is their remittance behavior. In this study, sending remittances was assessed at two points in the study, shortly after their U.S-born children turned one year (14months) and again after the two year-old interview (24 months). A dichotomous variable indicated that in half the cases, the Mexican mother had sent remittances a year after their babies were born

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[11] 70% of participants mentioned they did not intend to return to Mexico-58.3% said it would be "not at all" likely and 11.7% said it was "very unlikely".

[12] Results obtained from the larger CRCDE study showed that the vast majority of Mexican mothers (92%) had not been back to Mexico since they first migrated. As it is explained in the qualitative analysis in Chapter 4, legal status became a major obstacle to participants' ability to travel back and forth freely between Mexico and the United States.

(49.2%), with a slight increase in the percentage of mothers sending remittances around the time the children had turned two years old (61.6%). The reasons as to why mothers continued to send remittances or the slight chances in this remittance behavior were not further explored in the present study.

Orientation to Homeland

Predictors of Orientation to Homeland

As mentioned earlier, orientation to homeland was studied according to how likely it might had been for Mexican mothers to return to Mexico and/or to engage in transnational activities. Five hypotheses explored the extent to which demographic characteristics, social support and perceived financial well-being, as well as perceptions of government assistance and schools in the United States, shaped Mexican migrant mother's orientation to homeland. In this section, I report on the quantitative results conducted on each of these hypotheses (All correlations are reported in Table 4 and Table 5).

1. Mexican migrant mothers who are older, have been in the U.S. for longer and are less educated will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and less likely to engage in transnational practices.

Results from the correlations analyses showed that immigrants' time in the United States predicted their intentions of return migration (see Table 5). The longer that mothers had been in the United States, the less interested they were in returning to their home country ($r = -.31$, $p < .05$). The other two demographic characteristics, age and

education, did not predict their intentions to return. None of the three demographic characteristics set to study, mothers' age, education and length of stay in the destination country, explain transnational participation. Participants' remittance behavior, plans to travel to Mexico, and perceptions of whether raising children might be harder in Mexico or in New York were not explained by demographic characteristics of Mexican mothers.

2. Mexican migrant mothers with a larger network of support in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and less likely to engage in transnational practices.

Social support was assessed by the amount of help migrant mothers had with childcare, getting money and jobs and finding assistance with writing English. None of these four types of support had a significant connection to participants' orientation to homeland. In other words, social support did not prove to have predicted Mexican migrant mothers' intent to return to Mexico or their transnational practices of sending remittances, intent to travel or to raise children in the home country.

3. Mexican migrant mothers who perceive their lives to be financially better-off in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices.

Overall, perceptions of financial well-being (making ends meet) was not correlated to intentions of return migration or to the transnational practices measured in this study. At the same time, mothers who perceived themselves to be better-off than the average American family also reported being less likely to want to visit Mexico ($r= -.27$, $p<.05$) (see Table 5). Yet again, participants were not asked to elaborate on the reasons why they had

or had not visited Mexico. Some might speculate that it is not a lack of interest but other barriers that keep immigrants from traveling back to their home county without restrictions. There were no other significant correlations that explained how financial well-being might have explained participants' orientation to homeland.

4. Mexican migrant mothers who think positively about receiving public assistance and believe it will not interfere with future opportunities in the United States will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices.

Participants' perceptions of cash and non-cash types of assistance were measured as part of how public assistance might predict OTH. Most participants felt that receiving child care and medical care, both non-cash type of assistance, was acceptable[13]. Given how positive their perceptions towards receiving child care (93.3%) and medical care (97.8%) were, and how little variability there was in their responses, these types of assistance were not further analyzed and only responses to perceptions of cash type of programs –financial help, help to pay for food and help to pay for child care- were included in the analysis. The correlation analyses of the three cash-types of assistance that were analyzed as predictors of return migration and transnational participation were not significant. Thus, as expected, positive perceptions of government financial help, help with food and help with child as possibly determining participants' intent to return to Mexico proved to be not significant; nor did they predict transnational practices.

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[13] Participants' positive attitudes -"agree" and "agree a lot"- to receiving child care and medical care assistance were combined to make the total percentages shown here.

5. Mexican migrant mothers who believe that schooling opportunities in the United States are better than those in Mexico will be less likely to intend to return to Mexico and to engage in transnational practices.

The two variables used to measured perceptions of schools were positively correlated with each other ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). This meant that mothers who thought more positively about schools in the United States also perceived the quality of New York City schools to be better than the quality of schools in Mexico. Given this significant correlation between the two predicting variables on schools, a new factor including both of these variables was tested to measure the effect that perceptions of public schools in the United States might have had on the Mexican mothers' orientation to homeland. Using the schools factor as well as the two schools' variables individually led to no significant correlations between perceptions of American schools and the orientation to homeland outcome variables of return migration and transnational participation.

Additional Correlations

Although relatively few of the hypothesized relationships between predicting variables and the outcome of orientation to homeland were found to be significant, correlations among the different predictor variables revealed interesting relationships which provide an insight into life circumstances that might be guiding Mexican mothers' attitudes and behavior.

For example, correlations between demographics and the predicting variables of social support showed that older women seemed to have a wider network of support

available to assist with writing English than did the younger participants (r= .37, p<.01), while the more educated mothers appeared to have a larger network of support finding jobs than did participants with less schooling (r=.25, p<.05). Finally, migrant mothers who had been in the United States for longer listed a larger network of people who could lend them money and help finding jobs than did the more recent migrants (r=.26, p<.01)[14].

Negative correlations between demographics and perceptions of cash type of public assistance showed that younger Mexican mothers perceived more positively that mothers could receive financial support to pay for child care (r= -.25, p<.05), and so did the more recent immigrants (r= -.24, p<.05). Also, those who had been in the United States for a shorter time viewed more positively the idea of mothers receiving financial government help (r= -.26, p<.05) than those who had been in the United States for longer. Meanwhile, perceived consequences of using public assistance varied based on demographics. It was the older women who perceived mothers as potentially compromising future opportunities to get jobs (r= .40, p<.01) and citizenship (r= .26, p<.01) if they were to receive public assistance. Negative perceptions of how use of public assistance could affect citizenship opportunities were also present among the least educated women (r= -.26, p<.01).

Finally, the way mothers appraised the quality of American schools varied according to age and education. Younger mothers rated New York schools more positively than did the older mothers (r= .26, p<.05). Also, mothers who had less formal education were more likely to think that American schools were better than Mexican schools (r= -.22, p<.05).

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[14] That is, when using the factor money/jobs in relation to length of stay in the United States.

As shown in Table 4, there were some other interesting results drawn from the relationship within the variables measuring social support and between social support and other predicting variables. Apparently, resourceful mothers were those who benefited from getting support from different sources. If they had more people that could lend them money if needed, they also mentioned having more than one person that could help them find jobs ($r=33$, $p<.01$), or take care of their children($r= .44$, $p<.01$). A strong and positive correlation between higher scores on support available to get money and those of support having access to jobs ($r=75$, $p<.01$) led me to create a social support factor measuring money/jobs.

This new factor money/jobs showed significant results only when correlated to one of the variables of public assistance. Mothers with a smaller network of support available to help getting money/jobs were more likely to accept government support to pay for child care ($r=-.22$, $p<.05$). This finding makes sense if we think of it as mothers' perceiving it to be alright to use cash types of support from the government to pay for child care, once they had exhausted the possibilities of borrowing money and finding jobs from people they knew. The social support variable measuring help with jobs was also correlated to one of the financial well-being predictors. Results showed that higher scores in the number of people available [in New York] to help them find jobs was positively correlated to perceptions of life in Mexico being harder than life in New York ($r=.46$, $p<.01$). In a way, these results seem to suggest that migrants with a wider social support to help them economically, such as helping to find jobs, had better chances to improve their opportunities in the host country and reflect on how more difficult it might be to make ends meet in Mexico. Finally, mothers who had fewer people available to lend money was

negatively correlated to perceptions of government help affecting future chances to get a job (r=-.28, p<.05). In a sense, this result could suggest that whenever the options to borrow money from family, friends or acquaintances is limited, relying on government assistance is cautiously considered as participants perceive that it might have future negative consequences, such as when applying for jobs.

The correlation analyses on perceptions of cash types of assistance showed that immigrant mothers who had positive perceptions of mothers receiving financial help – cash- had also positive perceptions on them getting support that could pay for food (r= .31, p<.01) and for child care (r= .39, p<.01). Similarly, positive perceptions of public assistance helping to pay for food was correlated to positive perceptions of mothers getting support that paid for child care (r=33, p<01). Perceptions of cash type of public assistance were not significantly correlated to the other predicting variables of social support, financial well-being or perceptions of schools. It was only perceptions of public assistance and participants' age and years in the United States, two of the demographic characteristics, that showed some significant results. Both of these correlations have already been discussed in hypothesis 1.

When looking at the potential repercussion of using public assistance, results showed that immigrant mothers who perceived received public assistance as undamaging to future chances to get jobs also viewed they as unlikely to affect their child's future (r= .59, p<.01), or their own chances to get citizenship (r= .46, p<.01). By the same token, participants who perceived public assistance as unlikely to hurt future opportunities for children had similar perceptions on the effect that government assistance could have on immigrant mothers' chances to get citizenship (r= .58, p<.01). As discussed in hypothesis 1

and 2, questions on the perceived impact of public assistance were only correlated to participants' age and education, and to participants' support finding jobs ($r=-.28$ $p<.05$).

As far as perceptions of school in the United States and Mexico, a positive correlation between quality of New York City schools and mother's age ($r=.26$, $p<.05$), indicated that older mothers more often agreed on the good quality of NYC schools than did the younger mothers. Also, the more educated mothers viewed American schools more positively, when compared to the Mexican schools, than did the mothers with less formal education ($r=-.22$, $p<.01$). In terms of perceptions of schools and participants' financial well-being, an unexpected result showed that lower scores on perceptions of schools in New York was associated to Mexican mothers perceiving life to be harder in Mexico than in New York ($r=-.27$, $p<.05$). One way to interpret these results could be that immigrants value jobs and other opportunities in the United States but not necessarily the school system in the host country. On the other hand, as results showed, those who had a positive perception of American schools had an equally positive view on mothers receiving government help with childcare ($r=.30$, $p<.01$). In this last instance, the resulting correlation between perceptions of child care centers and American schools might have to do with how immigrant mothers, as I learned from participant observations and interviews, are not clear about the distinctions between child care centers and "schools" in the United States. In a way child care centers are seen as part of the school system.

Multivariate Analysis

To further explore if participants' demographics, social support and perceived financial well-being, as well as attitudes towards public assistance and perceptions of American schools helped explain orientation to homeland, a series of linear regressions were conducted. Models A to D were multivariate regressions that tested how all 14 predictors[15] explained (a) return migration, (b) where to raise children, (c) temporary migrant visits, and (d) remittance behavior. None of these models was statistically significant. In running these regressions, the variables that were excluded from the models surpassed the tolerance limit of variables that were not relevant, and therefore all models proved to be non-significant.

In addition to the multilevel regression analyses that measured the effect of all independent variables as predictors of orientation to homeland, linear regressions tested the effect of each predictor (e.g., demographics, schools, etc.) on each of the four outcome variables. Some of these regressions included all variables per predictor. Others used clustered variables that simplified the number of predicting variables (e.g., social support, schools).

Return migration. According to the correlation analysis, one the demographic variable, years in the United States, perceptions of New York schools seemed to predict intentions of return migration. However, a multivariate analysis model looking at the

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[15] A total of 14 variables included three demographic variables, three social support variables, three measures of perceived financial well-being, four measures of attitudes towards public assistance and one factor measuring perceived quality of American schools. Social support variables were reduced after creating a factor of support for money and jobs. Perceptions of public assistance items were narrowed down by eliminating cash types of assistance and creating one factor that initially measured perceived consequences of using public assistance by immigrant parents. Finally, the two items looking at perceptions of American schools were clustered into one factor as both items were strongly correlated with each other.

predicting effect of demographic variables explained only a small amount of variance in participants' return migration intentions (R^2= .114). Only 11% of variance in the intent of return migration was explained by Mexican mothers' length of stay in the United States; or as correlation analysis had previously shown, it was the length of time immigrant mothers had been in the United States that predicted settlement intentions (β= -.101, p=.036). The regression models that tested the effect of social support, financial well-being, perceptions of public assistance and of schools in the United States as predictors of return migration showed no significant results.

Transnational practices. As far as the other aspects of orientation to homeland, including whether Mexican mothers might choose to raise children in their home country, would want to visit their home country or sent remittances, none of the linear regressions conducted showed significant results.

Discussion of Results

The results of the statistical analyses showed little evidence to support the predictions regarding the influence of the selected demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors on immigrant mothers' orientation to homeland. A key limitation in this study was the sample size. MI (multiple imputations) aimed to compare if statistical analyses with the original data and missing data samples were significantly different. The results of correlation analyses obtained with the missing data models were virtually identical to the ones used with the original data. In the first place, the problem of working with small samples is, as it has been suggested, that "MI perform very well in small samples

[but] one simply does not have much data to begin with" (Graham & Schafer, 2009, p.560). As has been widely discussed in the literature, networks of social support are critical in the everyday aspects of life and how it molds opportunities for immigrants in a new country. To some extent, existing social and economic ties of migrants in the destination country increase the likelihood of settlement (Massey, 1986), which some suggest results in a tendency to decreased orientation to homeland. The results of this study did not fully capture the strength of existing social and community ties for Mexican immigrants in the New York metropolitan area. I attribute this outcome in part to the sample size restrictions but also to how the framing of questions taken from a secondary data analysis did not capture the existing range of networks of support for Mexicans in this area.

According to participants' perceptions of financial well-being, many of whom grew up being poorer than the average Mexican family in Mexico, making ends meet is harder in Mexico than it is in the United States. This helps explain why, despite hard economic times, migration continues and immigrants seek to settle permanently in the destination country rather than going back to their home country. In this context, it becomes crucial to learn more about their expectations and views of what it might mean for them to provide better and safer opportunities for their children.

Anti-immigrant advocates have argued that women migrate in the first place with the deliberate intention to deliver babies on U.S. soil and to take advantage of American health care and public funds. Results from this study show that having access to public schools was not a determining factor for choosing to remain in the United States. In addition, migrant mothers who had been in the United States longer mentioned feeling less comfortable getting financial and child care types of assistance than did the more recent

migrants. These issues were further explored through in-depth interviews and are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: STORIES OF MEXICAN MIGRANT MOTHERS' ORIENTATION TO HOMELAND

Landscaping Stories of Return Migration

The stories of first-generation Mexican women interviewed for this study exemplify different perspectives on orientation to homeland. Instead of providing an overview of the OTH of all participants, I selected four cases that exemplified two different views of return migration, those who intended to return to their home country, and those who did not. I used the return migration question from the survey portion of the study as the guideline to classify those two viewpoints.

In this chapter I present a background history on each of four women and how their families are constituted, followed by a description of their concerns and expectations and a narrative analysis of interview and ethnographic notes. In this last and more lengthy portion of each story, I examine how these concerns and expectations relate to the predicting variables, research studies and relevant literature on the topic.

In each of the four stories, the background section includes brief sketches of participants' journeys into the United States and characteristics such as the number of members in a family, their immigration status and experiences that served as preambles to shaping their orientation to homeland. Family diagrams help illustrate the structure of each woman's nuclear family, ages and gender of children and whether they were U.S-born, they lived in Mexico or had migrated to the United States. The gender of children and geographical location of all family members are represented with symbols in these diagrams (see Figures 1 to 5) and explained in a code guide in Appendix B (Appendices

section). In the diagrams as in the rest of the case narratives, each person in the family was identified by a pseudonym. Names of hometowns were also changed to protect the identity of participants. Following the background history I introduce the concerns and expectations of migrant mothers. Here I describe some noteworthy topics each mother emphasized as being relevant to their daily life concerns and expectations that were part of larger and more important decisions to their families (e.g. reunite with family, obtain legal documents). Finally I relate their concerns and expectations to one or more of the predicting variables of orientation to homeland: demographics, social support, financial well-being, public assistance and schools. As I explored participants' experiences, beliefs, feelings and perceptions of life in the home and host country, of growing up and living in one place or the other I look into how these concerns and expectations seem to have also informed their orientation to homeland.

To underscore the relevance of using mixed methods in this study, I found that survey questions elicited responses that sometimes mirrored and sometimes diverged from responses to similar interview questions. Specifically, migrant mothers who in the 36-month survey indicated being likely or very likely to return to Mexico, had not articulated the time and circumstances under which they foresaw returning when they were asked similar questions in the qualitative portion of the study. In fact, by the time the 36 month visits were finished, around the summer of 2007, no one had concrete plans of going back to Mexico. Only one participant, who I call Susana, had returned to Mexico before all interviews were completed. Not having Susana's response to the 36 month survey question on return migration and having a limited record of qualitative interviews completed before we lost contact with her led me not to consider her story when selecting

the cases of mother who intended to return. However, a brief background history and a family diagram of Susana are included in Appendix A (see Apendices section).

Organized in two sections, first I present the stories of Amelia and Teresa, the two mothers who spoke about not intending to return to Mexico, followed by the stories of Jessica and Consuelo, the two mothers who said they intended to return.

Mothers Who Said They Did Not Intend to Return

Amelia

Background and History

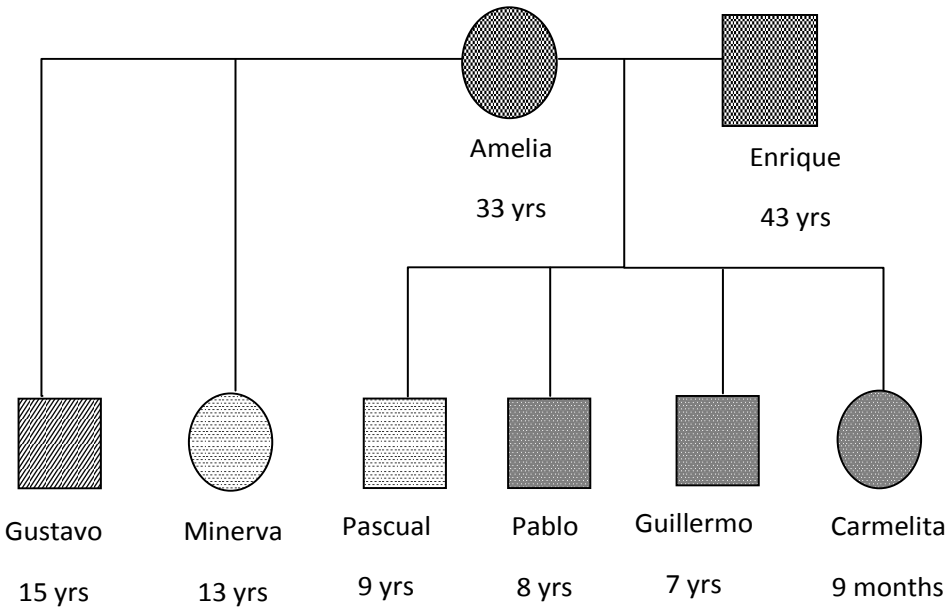

Figure 1. Amelia's family structure and ages of children [at outset of ethnographic study]

Amelia was a mother of two working as an in-house maid in Mexico City before she migrated to the United States. On weekends she travelled to her hometown Zochitlán, a small rural town in the Mixteca region of Puebla, to stay with her children. On weekdays, her family helped take care of Amelia's 7 year old son Gustavo and 5 year old daughter Minerva. It was in one of those visits back to her hometown that Amelia met Enrique. Amelia and Enrique knew each other before he migrated to the United States the first time in his early 20s. He had travelled back and forth between the two countries several times, but on that last trip, when he started dating Amelia, he had gone back with plans to settle

down back in Mexico. Soon after, Enrique found himself unable to find a job, make money to pay his debts, or continue to help his parents financially. Again, he decided he was better off going back to New York. Soon after he left, Amelia found out she was pregnant with Enrique's baby.

Amelia continued working in Mexico City, but even her full-time job paid a very modest salary. When Enrique asked Amelia to join him in the United States, she could not dare to make the trip while she was pregnant but was resolute in her determination to migrate to the United States, but was confident she would find better paying jobs that would allow her to support her children back in Mexico. Shortly after she arrived in New York, Amelia had moved in with Enrique and her plans to return to Mexico soon changed. Amelia had initially planned to migrate for a short while, work hard, send remittances to support her children and go back in a couple of years. Ten years later she had become a mother to three more children born in the United States, 8-year old Pablo, 7-year old Guillermo, and nine-month old Carmelita (Figure 1).

Having grown up in what she described as a very *machista* household, men were the one's making the decisions. At the time her five siblings, three brothers and two sisters, all lived in Mexico but as time passed her brothers started to migrate while the women in the family all stayed behind. Amelia was 23 years old and the first in her family to migrate; when she did they were all shocked that she left without having said much beforehand. Despite her family's vehement discouragement, Amelia left her two older children, Gustavo and Minerva, with a close friend, and Amelia's sister was left with 9 month-old baby Pascual to care for in their hometown in central Mexico. At 33, a slightly overweight, 5 feet

3 inch tall, with yellowish-tanned skin, and her hair indistinctly pulled back in a ponytail, Amelia looked older than her age.

Ten years after Amelia left Mexico, not only did the possibility of visiting Mexico seem remote, but it was very unlikely that she would ever return, given that she had started a new family with three U.S.-born children. A year before Amelia was recruited into the study (2005) her oldest son had join her in New York. Meanwhile, Amelia's teenage daughter Minerva and nine-year old Pascual were to stay in Mexico with their aunt without any clear date in sight of when they might get to reunite with their mother again. Amelia had not seen Pascual since he was 9 months old; she had only seen him in photographs but mentioned that she had been making every effort to talk to both children on the phone every other week. Even though Amelia knew her relatives and friends would be there to look after her children while she worked in the United States, it did not make her decision to leave them behind any easier:

Concerns and Expectations

The main concerns and expectations I identified in Amelia's interview transcripts were how she hoped the sacrifices and difficulties of having her children growing up without their mother and for her to be away from them for so long, would pay off if they continue to work hard in school and develop an interest in furthering their education which would help them get better jobs than she had when she left. Amelia felt strongly about her decision to have her daughter Minerva and son Pascual remain in Mexico, particularly knowing that her teenage son who had migrated to the United States had been depressed since he arrived in New York and had then become suicidal. Also Gustavo's

suicidal attempt had caused a tremendous strain in Amelia and her younger children. Besides having to struggle finding people to help her take care of her other children while Gustavo was in the hospital, Amelia now had to rely on her housemates to lend her money to pay her share of the rent while Enrique was still in Mexico visiting his mother and the money he had left was almost gone. I expand on the relevance of these concerns in light of the outcome and predicting variables of this study.

Orientation to Homeland (Transnational Parenting)

When Amelia decided she could not support her three children as a single mom, she left them behind and migrated to the United States. Once in New York, as she started to live with Enrique, the odds of going back to Mexico got slimmer after she become a mother to three more children. At that point, the best kind of transnational child rearing arrangement Amelia had come up with was to have her children born in Mexico remain there and be raised by her family, and for her to raise her U.S.-born children while remaining in the United States. Migrant mothers who are the primary breadwinners seek all sorts of strategies to provide a better future for their children, keeping them safe and in school. Hill Collins (1998), who questioned the ideology of "modern" motherhood, namely white-middle-class-moms in economically stable circumstances seeking autonomy, addressed the way in which working-class women of color in underprivileged circumstances resort to communal, multigenerational child caring strategies. Similarly, transnational motherhood has become a shared, communal, multigenerational way of child caring taking place across migrants' home and host countries (Dreby, 2010; Galvez, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo et. al., 1997).

Even though Amelia knew her relatives and friends would be there to look after her children while she worked in the United States, it did not make her decision to leave them behind any easier:

> "[I]t was difficult and very hard for me. [It was hard for them] because they were without me and I was by myself without them. It was not easy and maybe fifteen days into it [after she arrived in New York] I wanted to go back, I said I can't stand it here, but I chose not to go back."

Often times, migrant mothers speak of the sacrifices they have made on behalf of their children and the ways in which they try to compensate for the guilt of having left their children behind (Dreby, 2009). Migrant mothers working as domestic workers in countries far away from home admit that having left their children behind was one of the hardest things they had ever had to do; still some still consider it to be the right thing to do (Benhold, 2011; Dreby, 2010). Today, a growing number of families raise and care for children across geographical boundaries. In all, Amelia did not foresee having her U.S. born children moving down to Mexico, neither did she hope for her thirteen year old daughter or her nine year old boy to migrate and reunite with her in the United States. Whenever Pascual, who lived with his half-sister Minerva under the care of one of Amelia's siblings in Mexico, asked his mom when she would have him come and reunite with her in the United States, she avoided answering the question. The most important thing for Amelia was to assure her children she cared for them and let them know she was always going to be there for them and economically support them. She told them that if they approached life by *echarle ganas* (making the best of it), great things could happen, foreseeing how a better

education would open doors to a future more promising than what she had growing up in Mexico. One of Amelia's main motivations in migrating to the United States had been to "*salir adelante en la vida [...] sin tener que andar que aquí para allá"* (to get ahead in life [and] not to go from here to there). Amelia wished for her children a more promising future and hoped for them not to have to suffer "*que no tengan que sufrir"* as she did struggled and lack many things growing up.

At times, Amelia wondered what she could do to make them be good children and stay out of trouble, the way she was feeling towards her older son Gustavo. Journalist Katrin Benhold, after listening to stories of immigrant women who have very little control over how their children are raised, poses the question of how the biological parents remain as role models to their children. In response, a Philippine immigrant working in Paris wondered herself if "[w]hen you are thousands of kilometers away from home, are you still a mother?" (Benhold 2011: para. 28).

Social Support

In small migrant rural towns, like the one in which Amelia grew up, people's lives and activities, relationships and all sorts of affairs are under close watch. Dreby (2009) suggests it is in "an atmosphere of such high dependence on social networks [that] it would be rare for families not to be affected by the opinions of others". Now in New York, Amelia might had no longer been under the watch of her family but perhaps would have been affected by what her family thought about her and her son Gustavo's suicide attempt just as she reprimanded him for being selfish and inconsiderate. Frustrated and overwhelmed, Amelia worried that Gustavo suicidal attempt had set a bad example for her younger

children. In some way, Amelia felt Gustavo's mental health problems had to do only with his inability to cope with life in the U.S. but also something he had deliberately done. In Amelia's view, his suicide attempt had only set a bad example to her younger children who started seeing a psychiatrist after he also started showing signs of depression.

Going from living near six siblings and many extended family members in her hometown in Mexico to having no family to talk to or visit on a regular basis in New York, made Amelia feel so lonely, particularly after the incident with her older son. Throughout the course of the study, her mood and expectations noticeably shifted from being an optimistic and cheerful woman to someone who seemed defeated and depressed. While transnational kin support, as in Amelia's case, was essential in sustaining stable childcare arrangements for children left behind in the home country (Dreby, 2010), social networks that can provide information and support directly linked to their children's needs (Galvez, 2011) are valuable to how migrants cope with the many challenges of life in the host country.

In the host country, working-class immigrant mothers with no kinship networks find themselves weighing the pros and cons of getting back to work and finding child care for their infant children. Many of them find that taking low-paying jobs is not worth the money especially when most of their salary would have gone towards paying child care for one or more children. Amelia, who eventually chose to be a stay-at-home mom, found herself in such predicament:

> "A woman who lived next door took care of my kids. One day I did not stay at work, I came back and found [my children] crying. I found out [she] used to hit them. After that, I said 'nobody ha[d] the right to put their hands on [them]'. You ask for a

> favor, only to have a dollar more […] but that is not everything in this life [...]. Not for me, [my children] come before anything else".

Sources of support in the host country are essential in providing practical daily assistance (Ryan, 2007), but to also help parents cope with unexpected circumstances. When Gustavo's suicidal incident took place, it was one of her roommates who called 911. While he was rushed to the hospital and checked into the psychiatric ward, Amelia was also concerned with who would take care of her other children. Enrique's relatives, her housemates, and a friend of hers all took turns picking up her two other boys from school, helping with homework. She still needed to figure out who would look after her 10-month old Carmelita while she stayed at the hospital overnight with Gustavo. A mix of anger and frustration left Amelia feeling abandoned by her husband and left down by what she considered her selfish son. Amelia recalled a conversation she had with Gustavo before he was released from the hospital. She had told him:

> "Look at how you are complicating things. What you are doing? […]You are not the only one with a problem. Now everything is worse for all of us at home. [She added she felt] a mixture of rage and sadness, I felt awful. I felt like leaving [him] there and not taking [him back home]".

The emotional roller coaster Amelia went through during that time made her realize the importance of having a network of support. She was grateful for friends and family she could rely on. Kinship-based networks are often assumed to be the more trustworthy sources of support, although as Menjivar (1995) argued, sometimes kinship networks

become hostile and conflictive. Ever since Amelia arrived in New York, she sent money to Mexico to support her children, to pay for food, clothes and school supplies. At one point, when Amelia's brother and his wife became her children's guardians, they were spending the money on themselves instead of providing for Amelia's children. She did not know about this until Gustavo, her older son, migrated to the U.S. and informed her what had been going on. A frustrated and enraged Amelia said that it would be hard to ever trust

Perceptions of Financial Well-being

Amelia's story as a single mother of three who migrated to the United States left her children behind might not be as unique as it seems. As sociologist Joanna Dreby explains, immigrant parents who leave children behind "are not acting impulsively or out of desperation, [but] weigh the economic opportunities available in the United States, as well as the personal benefits they may gain from migration"(2010: p.29). Earning a meager salary, Amelia faced an unsettling scenario of having to raise three children on her own. There were few prospects of a better life in Mexico, especially "*cuando uno trabaja duro y lo que ganas es una miseria"* (when you do very difficult work and what you earn is a miserly wage). In Amelia's case, she was making no more than 6 dollars a day and raising three children on her own when she decided to migrate. Making $5 dlls a day, "at 13 pesos to the dollar and an 8-hour workday, [meant that] a minimum wage employee in the US earns 13 times as much as one in Mexico." (Sahani, 2010: para.4).

As Amelia described the many opportunities she had had for herself and her children since she left Mexico, she compared life back home and her present life in New York. She believed everything was possible in the United States, whereas in Mexico, "*no*

importa cuanto trabajes, aún si vives para trabajar, no ganas ni siquiera lo suficiente para vivir (no matter how much you work, even if you live to work you don't [ever] have enough to live). Amelia spoke of strategies to stretch a budget in ways that would have been nearly impossible for her back home. She provided a detailed comparison of much she could buy for her family with twenty pesos in Mexico and twenty dollars in New York. Although the comparison of currency, pesos to dollars, was to a certain extent inaccurate, because of exchange rates, it illustrates important budget considerations. To put this in context, the minimum wage in the U.S. averages $7.25 per hour, while in Mexico it is about $57 MX pesos for a full day's work. On the average participants in our study reported earnings of $20 U.S for 3 hours or half a day of work (H.Yoshikawa, personal communication, March 6, 2012). Thus, even for low-skilled undocumented migrants who are often paid less than minimum wage, working in the United States would still offer better chances that there would always be food on the table. Or as Amelia explained:

> "Twenty pesos over there buys you nothing. Not even a kilogram of eggs. [L]ife in Mexico is very expensive. […] In the U.S. with twenty dollars I already bought two, even three days of food […] at the end of the day with twenty pesos [in Mexico], I can't do anything, not even to feed [my children]".

Not only that, Amelia recalled days when her family went without much to eat. Even with both her parents working, the family of eight at times had barely enough money for food. In a place like Zochitlán "it [was] very difficult to live well even though [people seemed to] have everything. Money is what [was] lacking there", even though Amelia described her hometown as *como de sueño* (everything people could dream of). She spoke

of a quiet, clean and pretty village with large forests and clean air with fruit trees that yield pears and apples, peaches and plums. The reality was that people in Zochitlán were very poor and had little opportunity to make a living. Despite all its beauty, her enchanting town had driven many of its inhabitants to emigrate. It was only migrants' remittances that seemed to create better life chances for people in Zochitlán.

People from Zochitlán engaged in internal migration long before they started coming to New York. They routinely had held jobs as domestic workers in the city of Puebla, and further away in Mexico City; while siblings, cousins and grandparents helped taking care of their children. Sometimes both parents would go away to work in larger urban areas. In Amelia's household, even when both of her parents went out looking for work, she remembered there was not enough money for food, clothes and shoes for her and her siblings. Her parents used to buy a new garment or a new pair of shoes for the children only when their shoes and clothes were completely worn, ripped and mended time and again. She and her siblings grew up wearing clothes that were donated or handed down to her parents from people they knew or worked for in the city. Amelia vividly could remember the excitement of buying a new pair of shoes for herself once she started working. Before then, she grew up thinking that wearing new clothes was a bit lavish:

> *"si tienes dos, cinco, seis cambios de ropa, eso es mucho. Te puedes cambiar de ropa tres veces por semana o tal vez no repetir lo mismo que te pusiste hasta después de 8 días "[…]*
>
> "if you have two, five, six changes of clothes that was a lot for one. You could change clothes three times a week, or even not repeat a garment until 8 days later".

Raising children of her own in the United States on a small budget, Amelia resorted to other alternatives to provide for her children. She now sorted through used clothes and shoes that parents at her children's school donated to poor families.

In New York, financial concerns came for Amelia in bundles along with other stressful situations. There always seemed to be something else besides money problems. Enrique returned to Mexico to take care of his mother, and what was supposed to be a short visit had already turned into six months away from Amelia and the children. The money Enrique had left was running out. She still needed to provide for her two children who were still in Mexico, while raising four other children in the United States. Financially and emotionally she found herself in a strenuous position; after her 15 year-old son tried to kill himself, Amelia's 7-year-old son, Guillermo, started talking about suicide as a suitable choice for people who no longer wanted to live. Both Amelia and Guillermo started going to therapy and taking antidepressants. She was pleasantly surprised when she was approved for free health care that paid for Gustavo's medication. Because her husband was in Mexico and she was very short of money, one of his relatives lent her the money to pay her share of the rent and she was able to afford food using food stamps that paid for milk, eggs, juice and other basic groceries for her younger children. Amelia admitted this kind of assistance was saving her five to ten dollars a week, which became a significant relief to her already small budget.

Demographics (Education)

In many low- and middle-income (LAMI) countries, poor families, as they weigh the costs and benefits of sending their children to school, are more likely to choose to invest in

their sons than in their daughters' education (Alderman & King, 1998; Binder, 1998). Some of the factors taken into account when making such decisions are household size, family income, siblings' birth order, and the value parents place on schooling (Binder, 1998). Amelia was the second of six siblings, three boys and three girls, and to further a girls' education in her family was not expected nor encouraged. She was enrolled in elementary school when she was seven years old and completed only the first three years of grade school. At one point, when Amelia was 18 years old and working in Mexico City, she thought about going back to school and she then enrolled in an evening school program. She was living with her older brother at the time and when he found out about Amelia's intentions to go back to school, he scolded and threatened "*que la iba a golpear"* (to smack her). He warned Amelia not to waste time or money and to focus on keeping her job and earning money. Amelia decided it was not worth the trouble of trying to go back to school:

> "My brother was very demanding (exigent) […] he meddled too much (*se metía mucho conmigo*) and would not let me be free or make my own decisions […] [My family] never supported me, they always said that if I was working, what else could I want?"

The emotional roller coaster Amelia went through during that time made her realize the importance of having a network of support. She was grateful for friends and family she could rely on. Kinship-based networks are often assumed to be the more trustworthy sources of support, although as Menjivar (1995) argued, sometimes kinship networks become hostile and conflictive. Ever since Amelia arrived in New York, she sent money to Mexico to support her children, to pay for food, clothes and school supplies. At one point,

when Amelia's brother and his wife became her children's guardians, they were spending the money on themselves instead of providing for Amelia's children. She did not know about this until Gustavo, her older son, migrated to the U.S. and informed her what had been going on. A frustrated and enraged Amelia said that it would be hard to ever trust them again.

Public Assistance (Comparing Mexico and U.S.)

The financial difficulties that Amelia's family experienced when she was growing up were largely a result of their inability to afford health care. In Amelia's experience, good health care in Mexico was available only to wealthy people. In theory, universal health care in Mexico is by law available to all and fully or partially subsidized by the government. However, in Amelia's experience, overcrowded hospitals and overscheduled doctors who don't care for patients makes public health care awful. Amelia's mother had died of cancer a few years before she left Mexico. She believes that it was not so much the illness that killed her mother, but her family's inability to afford the right treatment. Amelia's family could have gotten the right diagnosis and timely treatment if they had paid private practice doctors and hospitals, but by the time they visited an oncologist in Mexico City, her mother was at a terminal stage of breast cancer and the doctor told them there was almost nothing else to do. A very angry Amelia recalled her frustration not only at the family's economic constraints, but also at her father's *ignorancia y machismo*. As I recorded in my field notes to a visit with Amelia:

> "Unlike her brothers, [Amelia] took care of her [mother] every day until her death, […] The doctors said that cancer had spread and all they could do was remove [her

> breast]. With anger and sadness in her voice and her facial expression that her dad decided not to approve the operation because he did not want his wife to be missing a breast. […] if he did not have "complete woman", he would not be happy".

In contrast to her experience with public health care in Mexico, Amelia found herself more at ease navigating the health care system in the United States. She had been surprised and grateful for the amount and the different types of formal and informal public assistance available to her and her family. Nevertheless, she also mentioned experiencing discrimination. At her local clinic in The Bronx, Amelia felt Latinos were repeatedly mistreated by African American personnel. It happened to her more than once until she stopped going there and switched to the hospital in Manhattan. It didn't matter that she had to take the subway and have a longer commute, she felt people treated her better there. Perceptions of being profiled and discriminated against in health clinics and other medical facilities by African American and even Latinas has also been described by others conducting research among Mexicans and the health care system (Galvez, 2011).

Schools

Amelia believed that Mexican schools were better at educating children than American schools. In Mexico, children learn to respect their teachers, whereas in American schools, most children are rebellious and do not respect teachers. Her best advice to her children was then to put forth their best effort (*echarle ganas)* and to be obedient to their teachers' commands. Most importantly, what Amelia wanted was for her children to make

something of themselves in the hopes that education would allow them to have access to better paying jobs.

Amelia knew that education was the key to success and in retrospect, despite the sacrifices of being away from her children, she felt extremely proud to be able to afford and provide a better education for her children back home. According to Amelia people in Mexico who had little education did not get good jobs and would always remain poor, they would be taken advantage of, and there was not really room for social mobility.

Having completed no more than third grade, Amelia's own prospects of getting well-paid jobs and earning enough money to feed, clothe and pay for her children's education in Mexico was nearly impossible. Amelia was very proud that her older daughter Minerva wanted to become a teacher. She had constantly encouraged her to prioritize school and not to give up. When she last spoke to her on the phone she told her "*Si Dios quiere tus sueños se van a cumplir"* (God willing, you [will] fulfill your dream).

Back in Amelia's hometown, good schools were located a long bus ride away and were still only affordable to wealthy parents. The quality of public schools was often explained both in terms of quality and distance, until people from these rural towns started to emigrate. Poorly funded public schools were, in some cases, suddenly transformed by the remittances migrants were sending. Migrant parents were contributing to building better schools which allowed more children the opportunity to enroll in better schools, or at least in better looking schools.

Amelia's perception of how remittances have an impact on children's education was partly accurate. On the one hand, as Sawyer (2010) has noted, migration is related to development in Mexico, as remittances being sent have helped to feed, clothe and school

children left behind. Although this is an important accomplishment, according to a recent study conducted in a rural town in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, it was not remittances but migrant mothers' education levels which predicted children's school performance (Sawyer, 2010).

Teresa

Background and History

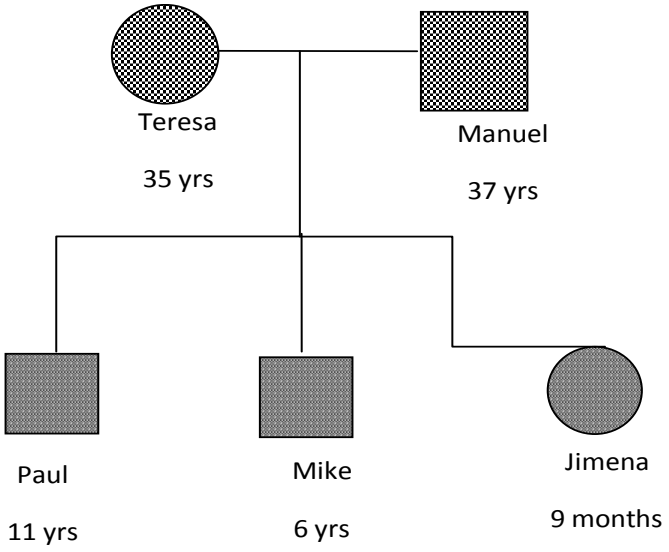

Figure 2. Teresa's family structure and ages of children [at outset of ethnographic study]

Thirty-five year old Teresa was born and raised on the outskirts of Mexico City. She was 20 years old when she crossed the Mexico-U.S. border through the Arizona desert in 1991. Unlike the stories she had heard from people at the border, her journey fortunately was an uneventful experience. As she described it, "*en un minuto estábamos en Mexico y al otro ya estabamos en los Estados Unidos*" (one minute we were in Mexico and the next one we were in the United States), Teresa's brother had offered to pay for Teresa's trip across the border in exchange for bringing with her his 11 year-old son and 9 year-old daughter who had until then lived in Mexico. Teresa's nephews had not seen their father since they were very young.

Teresa was the third oldest of nine siblings, five boys and four girls. Eight of the nine siblings had migrated to the United States at one point--three of them went to New York, two to Chicago, one of them was in Las Vegas and the last one, who had lived in California but travelled back and forth between the two countries, had recently returned to Mexico. Apparently her siblings who lived in Chicago, Las Vegas and California were older and either because they had migrated when she was still young or simply because they lived far away she was not very close to or spoke much about their lives. She was closer to her two sisters and brother who already lived in New York with their families. When Teresa first arrived in New York she lived with an aunt in Brooklyn.

Teresa grew up in Mexico City but frequently visited her grandmother in her home town of Tenezomoc, a three and a half hour drive southeast from Mexico City. It was during one of those visits to her grandmother that Teresa met and started dating Manuel. Teresa still lived and worked in Mexico City but on weekends would visit her grandmother and Manuel. Manuel worked in the fields growing seasonal crops until one day, like many other young men in his town, he decided to migrate to the United States. At that point, Teresa and Manuel had been going out for two years, seeing each other only on weekends. A year later Teresa also migrated to New York where she knew not only Manuel but her brother and sisters who had migrated before her. In fact, she credited her older brothers' support and encouragement to come to New York more than her desire to reunite with Manuel. Still, shortly after she arrived in New York, Teresa and Manuel moved in together and shared an apartment with Teresa's sister Laura and her family.

A 5 feet tall and stocky woman, with a round face, brown skin and small almond shaped eyes framed by long curly eyelashes, Teresa was always very neat about her

appearance. She wore medium sized hoop earrings and a delicate thin golden necklace with a diamond shaped crystal. Even when she wore her hair tightly pulled back in a high bun, with almost no makeup and dressed casually in jeans, cotton t-shirts and flats, she always looked impeccable.

Conversations with Teresa were always engaging. Her face lit up and one time steam almost came out of her as she described stories with a full range of emotion. She spoke of the moment she learned she was having a girl after two boys. Or when she got very emotional and teary-eyed as she talked about not having had the chance to travel back to Mexico and give a last goodbye to her father before he died. Teresa could not go back and visit her dying father because she could not risk having to cross the Mexico-U.S. border again without papers.

Concerns and Expectations

Three main concerns that stood up during conversations with Teresa were first of all, how she thought of not having being an option at the moment to consider going back to work while her children were young. The facts that Jimena was only 9 months-old and that Teresa would have to find some kind of afterschool program or child care arrangement if she were to look for a job, deterred her from the idea. Being a full-time mother in a suburban area where there is no easy access to public transportation had made Teresa feel very isolated. Finding a job would be an opportunity to gain a bit of independence and contribute to her household economy. Second, linked to this issue of Teresa being a stay-at-home mom was the fact that living on one income had put the family on some financial constraints. Teresa and Manuel shared their perceptions of financial well-being and what it

might mean to achieve their American Dream. Lastly, Teresa was deeply worried over the possibility of being deported. Hearing on the news about the rising numbers of raids and deportations across the country had alarmed Teresa over their own undocumented status. She shared her concerns over how the possibility of her or Manuel being deported to Mexico and the implications of family separation in the future and integrity of her family. Following, I explore these concerns in the context of the predicting variables of OTH.

Orientation to Homeland (Return Migration and migrants' legal status)

Towards the end of our study I called Teresa one day to schedule our next visit. Once we had agreed on a time and date, she brought up what she had been watching on the news on the debate about the New York governor's attempt to give undocumented immigrants the ability to obtain driver's licenses. Teresa had heard of a Mexican immigrant in Arizona who had been stopped by police; after police found he had unpaid parking tickets they arrested him and put him in jail overnight. When he was arrested, the fact that he was in the country illegally emerged. After spending the night in jail he was released but was waiting to be deported. The idea that one day Teresa and Manuel could end up being deported, or the risks involved in getting arrested for nothing while out driving running errands, had terrified her. The more Teresa thought about undocumented immigrant parents waiting to be deported back to their home country, the more she ruminated how to best protect themselves and protect her children if either Manuel or her were to face deportation.

As she envisioned all kinds of scenarios, from who would take care of the children to how would she pay the bills if Manuel was deported and she did not have a job, Teresa

realized she needed to become more independent and at least learn to drive. She envisioned the problems and the kinds of solutions she would have to be prepared for. Would she and the children stay behind if Manuel was deported? Would they go back to Mexico? What kind of job would she be eligible for? And who might take care of her children? These concerns had a strong connection to Teresa's orientation to homeland. Then there was the fact that neither Teresa nor Manuel wanted to reunite with anyone back home. On the one hand, most of Teresa's family had already migrated to the United States and no one other than a sister and her mother, with whom she had a strained relationship, were still living there. Manuel, on the other side, had not been in contact with his siblings since he migrated as a teenager. In the end, both Teresa and Manuel felt no attachment to anything or anyone back home. They felt their lives, their children and their future were all here in New York and they would much rather see their children grow up here than to have to return to Mexico.

Across the United States, "only eight states -Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington" still issue driver's licenses without proof of legal status (Bernstein, 2007:para.7). When, in late 2007, Governor Spitzer proposed legislation that would have allowed foreign nationals to obtain New York state driver's licenses with valid foreign passports, the outcry, criticism and opposition of many New Yorkers eliminated any chances to make such legislation happen (ibid).

Social Support

Researchers have pointed out that it is not uncommon to see residential overcrowding among Mexican migrants in large urban places (Myers & Lee, 1996).

Domestic space may be used and distributed differently for new immigrants, the way it happens in rural Mexico (Pader, 1991). Migrants create multipurpose rooms to split the cost of housing and save money to send as remittances to their families back home, offer not only economic but social benefits. One of the advantages of sharing a household with many other relatives or acquaintances is that it provides, as a mother indicated, trustworthy people she could count on with child care whenever needed. When Teresa and her sister Laura shared an apartment in Brooklyn, not only were they splitting living expenses but they also supported and helped each other with household chores and taking care of each other's kids. Trust and reciprocity made this living arrangement worthwhile for both families.

During the first couple of years in the United States, Teresa held some short-term jobs, but she had not been back to work since she became a full-time mom. Her husband Manuel, who had been in the United States for 17 years, had held the same job making desserts in a factory in upstate New York. For nearly a decade since Teresa and Manuel moved in together and lived in Brooklyn, it took Manuel a nearly two hour commute each-way to get to work. At some point he started sharing a place with some coworkers and would stay upstate on weekdays and take the train back to Brooklyn to spend weekends with the family. When Teresa finally agreed to move upstate, the hardest part for her was to adjust to life in the suburbs. With no public transportation and having almost no shopping areas or parks within walking distance, she spent most of her days at home, cleaning, cooking, washing and taking care of the children. Despite how dull her routine life seemed Teresa knew she would not have to put her baby daughter in daycare and start

looking for a job anytime soon. Meanwhile, for Manuel there was little hope of moving up in his job and getting a raise.

When Manuel and Teresa decided to move upstate New York, it became hard to leave behind her family and the lifestyle they had grown accustomed to over nearly a decade. Teresa's day to day hassles and the quietness of a suburban life were very hard to take. Other than a niece who was a young teenage mom trying to finish high school, Teresa hardly knew anyone. She felt very isolated not having access to public transportation, and limited access to shopping areas or public parks was one of the reasons why she had been hesitant to move upstate. Teresa's transition to the suburbs was very difficult. Some of the small but very important changes to Teresa's lifestyle are exemplified in a set of ethnographic field notes I took during one of my early visits to the family in their home upstate.

> "There are no corner stores or delis where to shop […] Whenever Teresa needed to go grocery shopping, pick up the kids from school, or run any kind of errands and even when she was running out of diapers for Jimena, she had to wait for Manuel to get off work and drive her to the store. Amelia had to walk a long road to pick up her children from school, which became a hassle during the cold winter days. In upstate New York, the scenery is very different from the noisy and crowded atmosphere near the Brooklyn subway station where Teresa's family used to live. […] Getting off the Metro-North train, one sees quiet tree-lined streets with two-story houses framed by low wooden fences, landscaped front yards and SUVs parked along the main streets in town. Cars made a full stop at intersections to let pedestrians walk, which made Teresa feel comfortable and safe whenever she had to go to walk [in

> streets without sidewalks] pushing a stroller and having 6-year old son riding a bike by her side. With no sidewalks [except those] off the main street near the train station, you rarely see people walking by the side of the road, only family houses lined up next to each other and cars parked on driveways."

Migration researchers who have studied patterns of Mexican migration to new destinations agree that marital status and having children influence peoples' decisions to move to the suburbs (Zúñiga & Hernández-León, 2005). This has been true for many other groups who move to suburban areas. Unlike many other immigrants who sought to escape the high costs of living in metropolitan areas in search of better schools in safer neighborhoods (Alba 1999; Leach and Bean, 2005), recent immigrant groups moving to the suburbs were not always middle-income married people seeking a better life-style and a place to raise a family. Suburban areas had become "more ethnically and racially diverse" destinations as a growing number of non-English speaking, non-affluent, nor acculturated immigrants had settle there (Alba, Logan, Stults, Marzan & Zhang, 1999).

Many of Teresa's neighbors were Latin American immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico. Manuel, who had held his job in upstate New York for 17 years, had seen the transformation of the area where over the past nearly two decades. Teresa noted that there were many non-white Hispanics in her building but also some "a*mericanos*" and *"morenos"* (terms she used to refer to white and black people respectively). Despite knowing that there were some other Spanish-speaking people in her building and neighborhood, Teresa struggled with having to spend all day inside her apartment, taking care of the children, cleaning, cooking, doing laundry, supervising

homework, and running errands that kept her busy all day making her feel secluded. As she pointed out, there were days that "*siento que me ahogo"* (I feel I am drowning), and that was the price Teresa mentioned she was willing to pay for having her children grow up in a safer environment and attending better schools than the ones in Brooklyn that her nephews were enrolled in.

Perceived Financial Well-being

Research shows that low rates of maternal employment among Mexican families lead to high rates of poverty (Crowley, Lichter & Qian, 2006). In the case of Teresa and Manuel, his earnings kept their family of five barely above the poverty line. Nonetheless, it was interesting to hear how neither one of them thought of themselves as being poor. In their view, poor people in the United States are those strictly living on welfare. Teresa declared there were people who unfortunately seek assistance, food and supplies from the government, besides seeking help from churches and community organizations, not always because they are in need, but because they wanted to save a little extra money. In her view, "unless [people] were dirt-poor and their children were *muertos de hambre* (starving to death), they should forego getting this kind of help". After having experienced poverty in Mexico, Teresa and Manuel felt that people in the United States had it easy and are often unappreciative of their good fortune and the benefits available to them. In all, "*hay una gran diferencia entre ser pobre en los Estados Unidos, y ser pobre en Mexico"* (there is a big difference between being poor in the United States and being poor in Mexico).

Teresa had not had a full-time job since her older son Paul, now eleven, was born. That was when she worked in a garment factory sewing labels on t-shirts and other

garments. Teresa got paid by the amount of labels she sewed, one cent per label. She arrived in the morning and sometimes would not get up from her chair until she left in the afternoon. Even taking bathroom breaks, she knew it ate into some of her time and that was money she could have been making. Teresa explained how the sewing machine as it gained speed went so fast that it hit her belly. She was afraid it would hurt the baby and she quit this job when she was seven months pregnant with her first son, Paul.

Afterwards she did some house cleaning jobs, but eventually stopped doing that too after her second son Mike got sick one time and needed to be hospitalized for a couple of weeks. After being away for weeks without notifying the people whose houses she cleaned that she had been in the hospital with her children, Teresa felt too embarrassed to call back or even return. Now that she had three children, she explained how again, *"si yo me detengo es por mi hija"* (if there is something that stops me, that's my daughter). Teresa had plans to start looking for jobs once Jimena, her now 9 month-old daughter, was old enough to go to school, which I interpreted might have meant no earlier than two perhaps three years. In all, Teresa had mixed feelings about being a mom and getting back to work. On the one hand, she regretted not being always available to her children; on the other hand, she was ready to feel independent, to work and contribute to the household economy.

Manuel grew up very poor in his small rural town in the arid mountains of the Mixteca region in central Mexico. He worked in the fields growing corn and other seasonal crops that produced just enough to eat. To alleviate poverty, like many other young men in his town, Manuel decided to migrate to the United States when he turned eighteen years old. In Manuel's view, unless people inherit land, money or receive substantial remittances

from relatives abroad, it was rare for anyone to become wealthy in rural Mexican towns. Further, Manuel presented the following scenario comparing how salaries in Mexico only stress the serious earning disadvantage compared to salaries in the United States. In the latter, even when migrants were earning $200 a week, Manuel estimated they could buy food –meat and vegetables- and clothes with $50, and still have $150 left for other family expenses and for savings. The staple meal for poor people in Mexico consists of corn tortillas and beans, so when Manuel talked about being able to buy meat on a regular basis, this was seen as a sign of status and wealth. When Manuel talked about people in Mexico earning "two hundred pesos a week [which] could rarely buy meat", it seemed to stress the gap in salaries between the two countries. For many, this gap had become the single most important motivation to emigrate. In other words, as Manuel explained, "*lo que uno gana aquí [en los Estados Unidos] en una hora, es lo que gana en un día completo en Mexico".* (What someone earns here [in the United States] in an hour is a day's salary in Mexico).

As far as how to make a better living and the place they hoped to be in the future, Teresa wished they could one day buy a house while Manuel fantasized about opening a bar, which he thought could be a gold mine. A more immediate and realistic goal they both agreed upon was to have a little more money to start saving for their kids' college education. Teresa's experiences of economic struggles and education in Mexico vis-à-vis those that she hoped for her children in the United States had come to define, to a certain extent, her orientation to homeland.

Schools

Whether they would have enough savings by then, or whether her sons "might join the army," Teresa wished for them to be able to further their education. Otherwise, as Teresa told me, there was always the chance for their sons *que se metan al ejercito* (to join the army) that pays for their education. I tried to conceal my own views about joining the army in order to get an education, so I simply added that having good grades was also valuable when applying for financial aid, and that they could perhaps get student loans. Teresa's dream was for her children to have a promising future and good jobs in the United States, which she found far from having been possible for herself growing up in Mexico where her only alternative after her parents could not help her stay in school past 9th grade, was to take a job that paid very little money. As she mentioned over and over again, Teresa viewed education as a key aspect to succeed in life and the door that would allow her children to achieve in the United States what she did not have back in Mexico.

Growing up, Teresa's mother had her and her sisters helping with household chores and taking care of younger siblings. Teresa recalled with some distress how her mother cared little about her homework, hassling her to make sure that she completed her household chores. She lamented that her mother would rather have her daughters clean and cook than to have them focus on school work. Teresa was 15 years old when she stopped going to school. Her mother wanted her to stay home and help her out, but Teresa's dad was supportive of whatever decision Teresa wanted to make, to either stay in school or start looking for a job. Teresa started working full-time in a doctor's office when she was 16 or 17 years old. She held this job for nearly four years until she decided to migrate to the United States, when was 21 years old.

Now that Teresa was a mother, she emphasized how she had never asked her children to do household chores before school work, the way her mother did. She constantly reminded her two older sons that their only responsibility was to study and do well in school, because "*cuando ustedes regresan de la escuela, la cena está lista..hay comida, todo esta limpio, la ropa lavada, la comida caliente"* (when you come back from school dinner is ready … there is food for you to eat, everything is clean, clothes are clean, food is warm). It was therefore that if Teresa was doing all the house chores, she expected her boys to do very well in school and worry about nothing other than their homework.

Researchers have stated that seeing things in perspective, the way life was for them back home and the life they had since they had been in the United States, helps migrants best assess what have been the costs and benefits of migration. As Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco put it, "everything from their pay, quality of life at work and the schooling of their children is framed in comparative terms" (2001, p.87). The authors refer to this approach as a "dual frame of reference" through which immigrants appraise their experiences in the United States in comparison to what they had in their country of origin. Take for instance the way immigrant parents compare the kind of education they received growing up in Mexico with the schools and quality of education available to their children in the United States.

Teresa shared an interesting observation about the importance of being taken into account by teachers and the school principal. As she explained, schools in Mexico have a different approach of relating to parents of school children than they do in the U.S. In Mexico, parents do not actively participate in their children's education: "*tu vas, dejas a tus hijos en la puerta de la escuela y no ves nada de lo que les enseñan*" (you go and leave your

children at the school door and you don't see what they teach them), and are merely informed of events and activities that will take place throughout the school year. In contrast, Teresa had come to value the way parents in American schools were given "an opportunity to go to the school, to see how [children] study, to see how they work and what they do".

During an early interview with Teresa, she mentioned feeling very positively about the school her children were at now that they had moved to the suburbs in upstate New York. Teresa felt children were being educated in a safer environment and the ratio of teachers to students was smaller, compared to New York City schools which she found to be overcrowded and kids tend to be neglected by teachers. It was interesting to learn how as time passed her feelings towards the school and school personnel in her suburban area had changed after an incident took place with her teenage son Paul. One day Teresa's 12-year old son Paul came home after school shaking as he narrated an incident in which two boys pushed him around until he fell in the middle of the street and was nearly struck by a car passing by. Apparently Paul had accidently bumped into one of his schoolmates when he was walking down a hallway; the other boy had dared Paul to meet him outside school at the end of the day, and that is when the boys knocked him down to the floor. Teresa was very angry for what had happened but more so by how Paul had mentioned that what had hurt him the most was what the other kid had yelled at him. "*Lo que mas le dolió es que el otro niño cuando caminaba para retirarse le haya gritado "fuck you Mexican*" (what hurt him the most was to hear the boy, as he was walking away, yelled at him: fuck you Mexican). Teresa was very angry and felt helpless not to be able to address this issue with the principal because she did not speak English. She did call the school and had her teenage

niece Marisa repeat verbatim what she wanted to tell the school principal. Overall she felt the other children should have been suspended and that Paul was being discriminated against because nobody had done anything about it.

The fact that many immigrant settlers to non-traditional suburban destinations might have limited English language skills, lack acculturation or wealth, and in some cases have no legal documents, suggests this to be a different demographic of people from the larger ethnic enclaves found in traditional urban migrant destinations. Living in a non-traditional destination with no ethnic enclave and nearly no one she could count on as a support system had defined Teresa's daily life experiences as an immigrant and a mother. Luckily for her, nearly every weekend they drove to Brooklyn to spend time with her sister and her family.

Women Who Said They Would Return

Jessica

Background and History

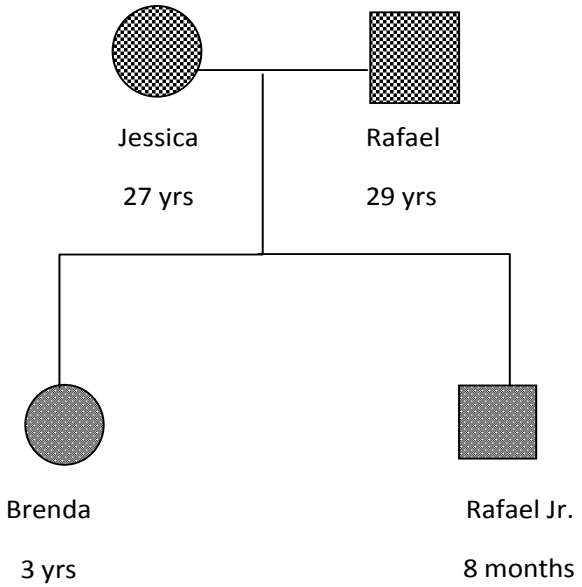

Figure 3. Jessica's Family Structure and ages of children [at outset of ethnographic study]

Jessica's father was the first in her family to migrate to the United States. When he later returned to Mexico, he paved the road for his children who migrated after him. Like her father, many people from her rural town in the Mixteca region of Puebla had helped to establish a migrant network. Jessica and her brother Cirilo had arranged to follow the same route that her father had used when crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. At their final destination in New York, they knew people from their same town to reach out if they needed any assistance.

Jessica, the oldest of eight siblings, five girls and three boys, was 19 years old and her brother Cirilo was 17 year old when they left their hometown in Puebla in 1997. As Jessica described it, migration was a family decision taken out of economic necessity and it was expected that Jessica and Cirilo being the oldest should help support their large family. Jessica remembered it was a cold winter night in January when they crossed through the desert. At the Mexico-U.S. border it was total darkness and the group of people she was with had to hide from the Border Patrol, *como se ve en las noticias* (as they show in the news).

Growing up, Jessica lived a very sheltered life; her father was a very jealous man, and she knew very few people outside her family. Jessica felt *encerrada* (enclosed) at home. Both her parents worked and she, being the oldest, had to cook, clean, prepare meals, sew clothes, and tend to her siblings. This dynamic continued once in the United States, as Cirilo kept a close eye on his sister, discouraging her from going out without him and demanding she stay in the apartment whenever he was not around. Despite being under the watchful eye of her brother, eventually Jessica found a job, met more people and became more independent. Working outside the house and having that much freedom to go where she wanted was an eye-opening experience. Outside work, she was going out and meeting friends without having to ask for permission. Through mutual friends, Teresa met her husband Rafael, who was from a neighboring town in rural Puebla.

Teresa and Rafael soon moved in together and shortly after Jessica found out she was pregnant. By the time Jessica came into the study she had just delivered her second child. Rafael and Jessica had two children, three year old Brenda and 8 month-old Rafael Jr. (See Figure 3).

Concerns and Expectations

As for many other mixed-status families, for Jessica the idea of going back to her home country and visit her family was soon dismissed once she started thinking of the implications of traveling without legal documents. Jessica and her husband longed to raise their children close to family, but still they would not fully consider moving back to Mexico but wished they could make their stay in the United States legal and be able to travel back and forth. One expectation that she felt she had more control over was to make sure she could help her children become good students and further their opportunities in life. Jessica often stressed how education was the key that would open doors for her children unlike the reality of many children in rural Mexico who have limited access to schools beyond the 6th grade, let alone good schools. As much as she wished children in Mexico would have an opportunity to continue studying and improve their chances to get better paying jobs, Jessica had been instrumental in having her younger siblings migrate to the United States, as she did with one of her sisters who moved in with her shortly after she finished high school. The way Jessica's father had paved the way for her children to migrate to the United States, Jessica and Rafael became an indispensable link for family and friends moving to New York. The network of support developed by Jessica, her siblings and in-laws had made life in the United States a less isolating experience than what many other immigrant mothers experience. Help from family, particularly when it came to taking care of children, had allowed Jessica to go back to work, something many Mexican first-generation mothers don't get to do while they have young infants. Having a two-income household has also helped the family with their expenses as well as to continue to help their families back home.

One methodological point to make is how selecting Jessica as one of the mothers who intended to return to Mexico was based on her response to the survey question on return migration. However, transcripts from her interviews did not show any indication that she and her family had seriously considered going back to Mexico. In this sense, Jessica's stories exemplify the longing for home and staying abroad of undocumented Mexican parents. Following I describe how these concerns and expectations relate to the outcome variable of return migration, and the predicting variables of demographics, social support and financial well-being.

Orientation to Homeland (Return migration)

By the time her older daughter Brenda had turned two years old, Jessica and Rafael visited Mexico to have their families meet the baby and celebrate their wedding with their families back home. The plan was to visit for about eight week and then go back to the United States. In the end, when they found out that crossing the border had gotten more difficult and risky, they ended up staying in Mexico for much longer until they could cross back into the United States. After that, even though she missed her parents, Jessica knew they would not be able to travel back to Mexico again unless they got legal documents to travel back and forth into the United States without risks or restrictions.

She had always remained very close to her family in Mexico and now that she had her children she wished she could be raising her children next to her parents in Mexico. She missed them. She had not seen them in almost ten years and there were days she wished she could *simplemente comprar un boleto de avión e irme a Mexico* (just buy a plane ticket and go back to Mexico) to visit her mother. Then again, she knew that if she travelled

back to Mexico it would not be easy to return to the United States if she did not have legal documents.

Jessica and her husband Rafael were hoping to become U.S. residents and be free to travel back and forth. Once they had *los papeles* (their legal documents) not only would they be able to travel but they thought they would have better chances to get better paying jobs. Jessica had shared that not having to live in the shadows seemed to be crucial to enjoying a better life in the United States. Because they did not have enough funds to continue paying a lawyer who had promised Rafael he could get a legal work permit, for now they were simply hopeful one day they could become legal residents. In the meantime, Jessica admitted that "having family in the US makes a difference" and that was at least comforting.

Demographics (Education)

In her small rural town in the state of Puebla, in central Mexico, most children only completed grade school (K-6); there were a few junior high schools and no high schools in her town. While growing up Jessica had a fervent interest in learning and going to school. As she explained, "for me it was important to make it to college". If parents wanted children to study beyond the ninth grade, they would have to take a three-hour bus ride to the city capital of Puebla and attend schools with more resources than the ones in her town. It was not only the long commute that made it seem difficult. Even though these were public schools parents had to pay fees and school supplies, all of which added up to significantly higher costs than what parents had to pay at her local school. Being the oldest

of eight children, Jessica did get a chance to go to high school, but as the family grew, her parents could no longer afford to pay for her younger siblings' education.

Money was limited and Jessica started working after high school. Her earnings did not add much to cover the family's expenses and at one point the family decided that it might be time to send Jessica and her brother Cirilo to work in the United States as they could better help the household economy if they sent dollars back home. This economics approach (Massey et. al., 1993), which explains migration as a collective decision to maximize income and minimize risk, was exactly the strategy followed in Jessica's family. As Jessica explained, coming to New York was a family decision taken out of *necesidad económica* (economic necessity). When she first started working she soon realized that if she spoke English she might be able to get better paying jobs. Language barriers limited not only her salary but also her communication with the people she working for. In her first job as an in-house nanny, communicating with the kids she took care of was not as problematic as trying to talk to their parents. She remembered seeing them moving their lips and speaking words she could not understand, which left Jessica feeling *muda y sorda* (mute and deaf). For two years she worked as a nanny and while the kids called her by her true name, their parents always called her Maria. Jessica wanted to correct them and clarify her name was not Maria but could not find a way to tell them in English. As she was telling this story, she started laughing adding how one day years later, she ran into this family and, as she had interpreted, it was not until the children greeted her calling out to Jessica that the parents realized that her name was not Maria. Although I believe there was more to this story than a confusion of names, Jessica mentioned this anecdote stressing how language barriers affect work conditions. Slowly but surely, Teresa felt she learned a

little bit of English just from watching TV and interacting with the children she babysat for, but also, later on when she took ESL classes.

As she reflected on this issue of learning the language, Jessica saw how education could only help one get better jobs and better paying jobs. At one point, as we talked about schools in Mexico and schools in the United States, she mentioned how if she had the chance to convince people back home, she would have advised them to go to college and discourage them from coming to the United States. Ironically, it was not long after that conversation that Jessica's sister, Soledad, had just graduated from high school and had called Jessica to help her arranged her trip as she had planned to migrate to New York. As migration studies have reported, familial and community migrant networks increase the likelihood of migration (McKenzie & Rapoport, 2004). No doubt Soledad had considered migration a more attractive opportunity than to stay in Mexico and continue her studies. When Soledad finally migrated, she lived with Jessica for a couple of months in their small New York apartment until she found a job as an in-house nanny and moved to New Jersey.

Social Support

Eight years after they arrived, Jessica and Cirilo had families of their own and were living in Queens, New York. Between work and taking care of children, they rarely saw each other but remained close to each other and the rest of the family back in Mexico. Jessica and Cirilo had created a support system that helped relatives back home looking to migrate to the United States. Two of their younger sisters had since moved to the United States. Soledad, one of the younger ones, had moved to New York with Jessica right after

high school. While their sister Celia had migrated to Pennsylvania to reunite with her husband who had migrated before her.

Jessica recalled how her life had dramatically changed since she became a mother. She was happy to devote herself to her children, even when that meant becoming again more of a homebody. Unlike many other Mexican mothers of newborn children, Jessica was one of the few mothers that did go back to work shortly after the baby was born. Jessica cleaned houses four days a week and occasionally made a little extra money babysitting for a friend. Compared to African-American and Dominican mothers, Mexican mothers in this study preferred being stay-at-home moms and caring themselves for their children rather than having to pay for child care services (Yoshikawa, 2011).

The story of Jessica's migration became an ensemble of stories in which social and financial support extended beyond the nuclear family. Three of her siblings had lived with her at one point in New York right after they migrated and while in the midst of moving in and out of apartments. There was Cirilo, with whom Jessica first migrated in 1997, and Tina, who stayed in New York with Jessica before she moved to Pennsylvania to reunite with her husband. And their younger sister, Soledad, had followed on the steps of her siblings and had moved to New Jersey, where she found a job. Jessica and Manuel became a central link in this wide web of kinship network between Mexico and the United States. Siblings and in-laws had lived with them at some point before they moved on their own to places in New York and New Jersey, Philadelphia and North Carolina. The arrangements and responsibilities of their family's network reveal different sorts of strategies aimed to provide financial, emotional and practical assistance with family living in on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border.

Life in New York was very expensive and Jessica and Rafael had discussed the possibility of moving to Raleigh, North Carolina, where one of Jessica's cousins lived. Relatives in Raleigh, North Carolina had depicted a more friendly and comfortable life than the one they had in New York City; housing was cheaper and more spacious, schools seemed to be better, and the cost of food and transportation was much more affordable. From those conversations, Jessica had realized that life in North Carolina was not only more affordable but families could have a better quality of life once she compared the cost of rent, food and transportation to those in New York. If Jessica and Rafael were to move to Raleigh, N.C. they would join the hundreds of Latino immigrants who increasingly look at non-traditional states as settlement destinations (Massey, 2008; Griffith, 2005).

Perceived Financial Well-being

In her closely-knit family, decisions to migrate always had a financial impact. From the moment she arrived in New York, Jessica provided financial assistance to her family by sending remittances. Later on, as siblings and extended family migrated, she offered them a place to stay, helped pay for some of their expenses until they found jobs, and babysat for them once they found jobs and had no one to look after their children. Jessica had become an essential link in her family migrant network.

Even before migration, being close to her family and helping them financially was very important to Jessica. When Jessica and her brother first settled in New York, they sent remittances on a regular basis; later on when they had children of their own, they continued to do but it was less regularly than before. At times, unexpected expenses of family back in Mexico became the priority and they would send them money even if that

implied making it hard later on to pay their own monthly bills. For example, one time Rafael had sent $400 to Mexico to pay for the medical expenses of his son. His son, who had been born even before Rafael and Teresa met, was living in Mexico with his mother. Rafael barely knew or spoke to him, but helped with these kinds of expenses whenever needed. Another time Jessica had to pay a $200 phone bill for calls to Mexico that her sister Soledad had made from her house when she lived with them when she had just migrated.

As is true for many other immigrants, a way to afford paying rent in New York was for Jessica and Rafael to share an apartment with relatives and acquaintances. At one point they had up to ten people living in a two bedroom apartment. Jessica, Rafael, and their two children, Brenda and Rafael Jr., shared a room, while Cirilo, Rosa, and their 7-year old daughter Lupita shared the second room. When Cirilo moved out, it was Rafael's brother Constantino, his wife Dolores and daughter Catalina who shared the second room in the apartment. At another point, when Soledad had just migrated to New York, she slept in the same room with Jessica, Rafael and Rafael Jr., sharing a bed with little Brenda. Siblings and relatives moved in and out and at times it was not that clear who was living in the apartment and who was visiting. For example, after Cirilo Jr., was brought into the U.S. from Mexico, Cirilo and Rosa looked into moving to another apartment, but for some time the four of them stayed with Jessica. The same thing happened with Constantino's family; after he moved out of the apartment, his wife and daughter were back at Jessica's apartment while he was making arrangements to move the family to Raleigh, North Carolina.

Being surrounded by family members who could help take care of the children and strengthening family networks compensated for the crowded living conditions. Although

Jessica confessed that it was hard having so many people living in one apartment, she liked having her niece Lupita around to play with her children. Lupita who was seven and Brenda who was five years old at the time, *jugaban como si fueran hermanas* (they played like sisters), while Lupita played older sister to Rafael Jr. as she *lo besa y lo abraza mucho* (kisses and hugs him a lot). For the most part Jessica and sisters-in-law took care of each other's children. They took turns whenever one had to work and others were at home. Another type of arrangement was whenever one of the women was in the house, while others were out working, she would get paid to look after each their children. One time Jessica was not working and her sister-in-law Dolores paid for her to take care of Catalina. Later on Jessica worked cleaning houses and paid her sister Soledad $40 to watch the kids three times a week in the afternoons, and when Soledad moved out, it was her sister-in-law Rosa to whom she paid $30 to watch over her two kids. Ultimately, a child care arrangement within the family was something Jessica felt most comfortable with. Not only was it the most economical of options, but having people she trusted was the most important thing.

Flows of Mexican migration are alive and well, and continue to prove that job opportunities and a prospect of a better life in the United States trumps the one left behind in Mexico. Jessica mentioned that earning and saving money was easier in the United States. Availability of jobs and fostering strategies to save money meant immigrants could count on more substantial incomes than if they were back in their home country. Rafael, for example, participated in what people call "vaquitas", which literally translates as little cows, a strategy in which five people each contributed $200 a week to a pool of money and one of them would take $1,000 on any particular week. Using vaquitas and relying on full

or even part-time jobs guaranteed monthly wages that allow them to meet their expenses and take care of their children. Financial security was extremely important to how Jessica and Rafael laid out their plans for their future. And, whenever discussions about returning to Mexico would surface, they knew finding well-paying jobs would not be easy.

Becoming a mother was a major step in Jessica's life. For a short period of time she was no longer *encerrada* (enclosed) and got to enjoy living a relatively unsupervised life. Away from the watchful supervision of a jealous father in Mexico, and at one point defying her brother's need to restrain and monitor her whereabouts in the United States, Jessica made friends, went out to parties, had a job and earned her own money, until she met Rafael and got pregnant. Still, Jessica was happy where she was in life, caring now for the well-being of her children and wanting them to be successful by furthering their education.

Consuelo

Background and History

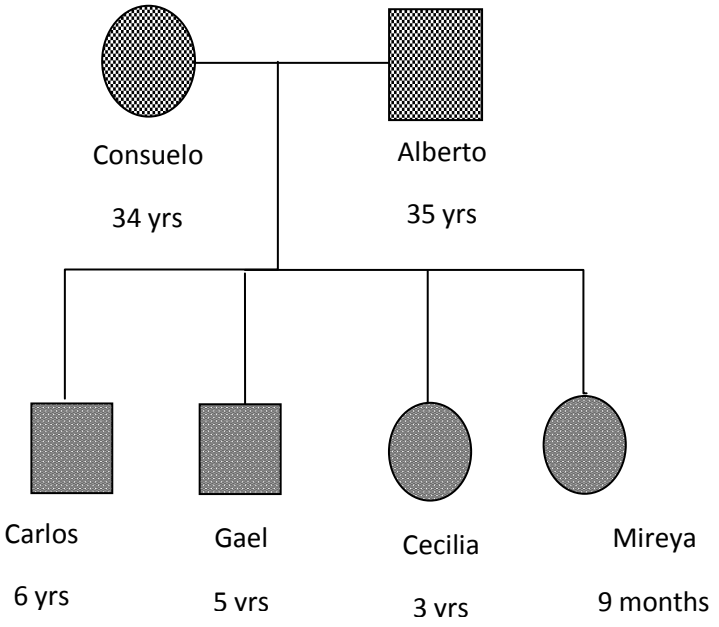

Figure 4. Consuelo's family structure and ages of children [at outset of ethnographic study]

"*Te vas por que quieres, no por que tienes*" (you are leaving because you want to, not because you have to), Consuelo's dad told her when she showed up one day announcing she was leaving for the United States. Originally, Consuelo had planned to migrate to Los Angeles and stay with one of her half-sisters. Her plans changed when she found out her friend Margarita and her brother Alberto were planning to migrate. They were heading to New York, and just like that Consuelo chose her final destination in the U.S. Margarita's brother, now Carmen's husband, had lived in New York for six years and, after spending a couple of months back in Mexico, was planning to migrate again. Consuelo, Margarita and

Alberto, along with four other young men from their hometown San Miguel, in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca, left together heading north to the border.

Consuelo's parents were peasants who raised chickens and lived very modestly; they could barely make enough money for food but not enough to pay for all their children's education. Growing up in Mexico, Consuelo remembered most children did not have more than a sixth grade education. First there were no junior or high schools in her hometown in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca and the nearest school was far away from her hometown. Consuelo had actually attended junior high and took the one hour bus back and forth every day for three years until she completed 9th grade. After that, she looked for a job and started working to help her parents with the household expenses and to pay for the education of her younger siblings.

At 18 years old, Consuelo moved to Mexico City with an aunt, a four hour drive north-east from her town in Oaxaca, because she had to help the family and there were no jobs in her hometown of San Miguel. In Mexico City, Consuelo had two jobs and was organized with money. She lived very frugally and divided her salary in three parts: One part she sent to her parents to pay for her younger sister's education, another went to her aunt for room and board, and a third part was mostly savings. Once her younger sister turned ten and finished elementary school, Consuelo was not responsible for paying for her education. Then, she thought she could use her savings to pay a *coyote* who would help her make it to the United States.

Consuelo was 28 years old when she first migrated. She made the journey into the United States through California with a girlfriend Margarita, Margarita's brother Alberto, and two other young men from her hometown of San Miguel. Alberto had been in New

York before and knew how shady and unpredictable it could be waiting at the Mexico-U.S. border to find someone to cross with. They contacted a *coyote* in the border town of Nogales who would guide them on their crossing and would get paid once they made it to the other side. They failed three times, getting caught by Border Patrol, until they finally made it. Crossing the border was just the first hurdle. They walked for three days in the Arizona dessert and were held in a house in Tucson until relatives or friends paid coyotes for having them crossed safely. Consuelo recalled it felt as being kidnapped and waiting for someone to pay their ransom. They were told not to step out of the house and were warned not to make any noise which might alert neighbors. Finally they were taken to the airport and handed a one-way ticket to New York. The trip from San Miguel to their final destination in New York took them 20 days.

Consuelo and her friend Margarita started living with Consuelo's aunt when they first arrived in New York. She was kind enough to offer them housing and also helped them find jobs, while some of Margarita's relatives helped them navigate their way into the city. Alberto was sharing two-bedroom apartment with six other male migrants, where no women were allowed until eventually Consuelo and Alberto started dating and moved in together.

Consuelo was about 5' 6'' tall, she had light dark skin and big dark eyes, and she was not heavy but big boned. Her shining dark black hair she kept pulled back in a low pony tail and she never wears any makeup. She kept a soft voice and a slow rhythm when she talked, which caught my attention as she always seemed to be calm and collected despite her busy life as a full-time mother of four children ages, six to 9-months (Figure 4).

Concerns and Expectations

Being shy, quiet and occupied with keeping an eye on everything surrounding her left little room for Consuelo to engage in open conversations from which I could learn more about her concerns and expectations. On more than one occasion, Consuelo's husband Alberto would be back from work while I was still in the house finishing an interview. It was during those instances and the one or two times I was invited to stay over for dinner when I learned more about the family's intentions to return to Mexico. It was Alberto who explained how their older son Carlos was born with a contracted chest. This was not a life threatening condition, but he might need a surgical procedure to correct it when he gets older. Consuelo and her husband had discussed they would not consider going back to Mexico before they know more about Carlos' health. Consuelo's dreams of going back to Mexico focused mostly on the opportunities for her children to be more in contact with nature, run around and be in an overall safe environment. She felt the streets and schools in her neighborhood were not very safe. Now that the children were young, and she was a full-time mom, she was always around to pick them up from school or the school bus stop, be with them at home in the afternoons while they played or did homework and over the summers she and her husband would spend long afternoons with them at the park. In sum, she was around them enough to know what was happening in their lives. But, as they grow older she knew things would change. Consuelo would prefer for her children not to attend junior high and high school here in the United States. Seeing police cars parked outside school to prevent kids from getting into fights or to protect them from drugs and violence made her uncomfortable. These were real issues she knew would be hard to keep her children safe from. For the moment, now that the children were young and her son Carlos'

health was not an issue, she was OK being in the United States and talks about going back to Mexico were not constantly present. As I expand on these two concerns that Consuelo brought up during our interviews, I present how they reflect some of the outcome and predicting variables of this study.

Orientation to Homeland (Return Migration)

Unsafe neighbors where children are exposed to gun shots at a local bar and domestic violence episodes down the hallway in her building alerted Consuelo to the kind of environment her children were growing into. Consuelo had witnessed all sorts of danger not only outside schools, but in her neighborhood and in her building. Consuelo found many of these scenarios unpleasant and contributing to an unhealthy environment for her children to grow up in, adding that at least in her town of San Miguel in Oaxaca, kids would grow up in a healthier and safer environment. Given Carlos' chest condition they would have to stay for at least another seven or eight years, until he turned 16, before they would even consider going back to Mexico.

The fact that she was a mother of four children all under the age of six who kept her on her toes and yet always appears to be peaceful and undisturbed was very revealing of her personality. Consuelo worked around the clock every day, cooking, shopping, washing clothes, cleaning and taking kids back and forth to school, medical check-ups, the playground and an occasional visit to a fast food restaurant. In comparing the life she had in New York to that growing up in San Miguel, Consuelo noted that life back in San Miguel was quieter and safer. For instance, she felt children did not have much room to play in small New York apartments the way she remembered in San Miguel, where kids played

safely outdoors surrounded by cats and dogs, cows, donkeys and baby chicks. Consuelo also found New York to be dirtier, noisier and more violent. She did not feel at ease knowing there were drugs and violence that could put her children on the wrong path when they grew older.

Alberto and Consuelo had talked about going back to Mexico someday but they had no concrete plans as to when they might return. They had been sending money to Alberto's father who oversaw the construction of a house they were building in San Miguel. For the time being, their main motivation was to stay in the United States until their older son Carlos was 16.

Social Support

Following on this chain of migrant's support, Alberto later on was helping some of his younger cousins pay a *coyote*, offering them a place to stay and helping them find jobs.

At one point, Consuelo's sister, Graciela, lived in Philadelphia with her husband, Constantino, and their two daughters. Graciela one day decided she had to go back to Mexico and be with her mother, who was very ill. She left for Mexico with the two girls and Constantino stayed behind. After a couple of months, when he was having a hard time finding jobs once the harvest time was over, Constantino moved to New York to stay with Consuelo and Alberto. What was supposed to be a temporary arrangement extended for several months as Graciela soon found out how complicated it would have been for her to migrate back to New York. After a year of living apart, they decided he would be the one going back to Mexico to reunite his family but first, he needed to work hard in New York and save as much money as possible to perhaps start a business back there.

Consuelo and Alberto had a couple of other close relatives living in New York City. Every so often they would all get together for a birthday party, someone's baptism or a Sunday lunch. Other than these occasional family gatherings, Consuelo's life and activities revolved around the children's schedules. Like many mothers, an average day in the life of Consuelo would start very early in the morning and end late at night. Starting at 6 a.m. she would get the kids ready for school, make breakfast and prepare lunches; after 10 pm she would try to fit in some quality time with Alberto after the kids had done homework, taken showers, finished homework and been put to bed. In between all that, Consuelo went in and out of the apartment several times throughout the day, to drop her older son at the school bus stop, walk the next one to school, then take her daughter to day care, and later pick up the older son from school early in the afternoon. Sometimes her day included stops by the grocery store or going for medical checkups which she tried to fit in between dropping off and picking up children from school. Whenever she knew an appointment might go for longer and that she would probably be late to pick up the kids, Consuelo's brother-in-law would step in and help out picking up Consuelo's older son from school during his lunch break.

Consuelo had been a full-time mom since Carlos, her oldest son, was born. Now with four children, she had her hands full and had no plans to go back to work anytime soon. Having a job might help pay for child care for her youngest child, Mireya, but Consuelo would still have to figure out who might take care of her other three children, ages six, five and three. When she last had a job in a laundromat, she worked 12-hour shifts from 9 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. Working a twelve hour shift left little time to do anything else. Besides, Consuelo did not want her children to be raised by someone other than herself, as

her half-sister living in Los Angeles had chosen to do. Consuelo's sister worked full-time and her son was put in child care from a very young age. She spent very little time with her son; not only did she not see him the hours she was working, she had a friend dropping him off and picking him up late in the afternoon. By the time the boy was seven-years old, he had grown up not having his mother around much and sometimes called her sister's friend "mom". For Consuelo it was such a sad story that mothers would get to spend too little time with their children and she did not want that for her children.

Consuelo did her best to stretch their one salary by shopping at different grocery stores and using food stamps. Her two daughters qualified to receive milk and other produce through the WIC program and all four of her U.S.-born children were eligible to free health care and education. Alberto felt able to support his family and believed they shouldn't have to seek *"cosas gratis"* (free stuff), as people in their neighborhood did, often going to churches and other community centers to get food and supplies.

Public Assistance

Having been born in the United States, Consuelo's children were eligible to free health care. Trips to the dentist to check on Cecilia cavities, Mireya's visit to the emergency room like the time she had a very high fever in the middle of the night, and eye checkups for Gael were all free of charge. Consuelo felt very fortunate knowing that her children had access to all this good quality free health care. Consuelo also took advantage of other public assistance. As part of the WIC program, she received food coupons for her younger ones. This extra help complemented a tight grocery budget. Alberto felt OK about receiving this kind of help, but did not want Carmen to "get free stuff" from churches or

other organizations as some women in the neighborhood had encouraged her to consider. Yes, they lived on one income, but Alberto told Consuelo that he was capable to providing for his family.

Six-year old Carlos' overall health was good, but in the long term his chest condition could affect him on a daily basis. A surgery to correct his inward built ribs would have to be done here in the United States. Otherwise, if they were to leave for Mexico and have this procedure done there, it would most likely have to be done at a private hospital, which they would not be able to afford. As far as they were concerned, in Mexico there was no program similar to Medicaid that provided full medical coverage like the one all four of their children had in the United States. Alberto then explained it will be best to wait and evaluate Carlos's health condition before making any plans of going back home.

Otherwise, they felt a state hospital in Mexico would not have the equipment to do such type of procedure, they didn't know about public insurance that might and in the end to have this done in a private hospital without insurance it was something they would not possible afford. Despite how much Consuelo wished her children were growing up in a safe, free environment where they could have the freedom to run around and play outdoors as children do in her native in San Miguel, she believed that having access to more education and health care services in New York would best benefit her children.

Schools

Conversations with Consuelo were for the most part concise and very straight forward. Although she always seemed to feel comfortable in my company, I hardly got to see more of her and her plans beyond what was happening in her daily life and routine as a

mother of four. Consuelo valued the fact that children in New York could have free access to education starting at a very early age, and she valued discipline in school in the early stages, as well as school safety later on. She seemed concerned that beyond elementary schools, public education -junior high schools and high schools- in New York were not good.

The two older boys went to the public school in their neighborhood. Cecilia was enrolled in the Head Start Program and midway into the study, when Mireya was about 18 months, she was admitted in an Early Head Start program Consuelo had been referred to by Cecilia's teacher. Consuelo spoke of Head Start programs (HS) as schools for young children where the most important thing was for children to learn to socialize outside their household. Even at this early age, she wanted her children to have teachers who are committed to teaching. In Cecilia's HS program, each group has a teacher and an assistant. On numerous occasions, teacher's assistants did not show up and moms, as they dropped off their children, were asked if they could stay for the day and help teachers. Despite her busy schedule, Consuelo found ways to become engaged in the girls EHS and HS programs, as when she volunteered to help Cecilia's teacher as an assistant for a day, or when she cooked and tabled a stand at the hospital during a fund raising event for Mireya's EHS's field trips.

Consuelo's suggestion that children who do well in school are those who seem to be learning and behaving was an example of how she valued discipline as part of education. As far as her role in her children's education, Consuelo was used to seeing the authority of teachers as something parents do not question, even when she at times might disagree. From what she knew, Gael and his older brother, Carlos, had both been diagnosed with a

language disability. Carlos's social skills had improved since he started going to another school. Then she was told that Gael would have benefited from having more personal attention at the new school. When Gael's teacher suggested she should have him enrolled in a Special Education program for the following school year, she agreed to do it even when she did not know much about his diagnosis or how and why he might benefit if transferred to this other school.

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Orientation to Homeland

Do migrants' plans to return to their home towns change after they become parents of U.S. born children? Through the stories of Amelia, Teresa, Jessica and Consuelo I explored how migrant mothers feel about raising children in the United States and what their motivations and expectations were for themselves and their children. I found that the well-being of their children, which was explained as offering a safe and healthy environment and promising opportunities, was commonly shared. The interpretation of what entails living in safe and engaging environments was often understood as something more than what they had when they were growing up. It was discussed in terms of having more education, nicer schools, better health services, more material goods and more spacious living arrangements. As mothers they valued having a network of support that could help them with their children but could also provide emotional support. In one instance, the emphasis was on how the mental health of a family member could disturb the well-being of the whole family. These factors, which cover the demographic, socio-economic and institutional aspects of migrants' lives, help us understand their orientation to homeland and their plans to return or not to their home country.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

"[Anti-immigration laws] affects every aspect of our lives: housing, work, transportation, children, health ..." Maria Trinidad Garcia on the new Alabama anti-immigration law (On the Rise in Alabama, 2011).

At the turn of the 21st century, the Mexican population had emerged as the largest immigrant group in the United States. Young women of child-bearing age who migrated sometime between the late 1990s and early 2000s had partly contributed to the Mexican-origin growing population (Pew Hispanic Center, Dec. 1st.2011). In this study, the significance of demographic, socio-economic, and institutional factors I explored, as influential to the settlement of immigrant mothers, was limited. However, concerns and expectations of Mexican mothers in the study revealed key factors that might have shaped immigrant families' intentions to return to the home country or stay in the host country.

In this chapter, I reviewed the more compelling results of my studies, including the quantitative results, the qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews and ethnographic notes. Then, I relate my findings to the existing literatures on Mexican migration, transnationalism and return migration. Finally, I discuss some limitations of the present study and conclude by presenting some key concerns and expectations concerning the legal statuses of migrant mothers raising American-born children. I suggest that the current economic and political climate have become distressing factors to many Mexican immigrant families in this country, especially families with members having mixed immigration statuses. In this context, the safety and integrity of family members have

taken priority over some other factors I had originally identified as possibly predicting immigrants' orientation to homeland.

Demographic Characteristics as Predictors of Orientation to Homeland

The results of the present study conducted with Mexican-origin women living in New York City, showed that participants had been in the United States an average of 7.8 years and that the length of stay in the United States of these participants was significantly related to their intent to return to Mexico. Specifically, migrant who had stayed longer in the United States had weaker intentions to return to their home country. As stated by Mexican migration scholar Leo Chavez, Mexican migrants' length of stay in the United States is partly determined by their geographical proximity to the United States-Mexican border (1994). Chavez's study, comparing Mexican settlers in Dallas, TX., and San Diego, CA., showed that those who lived in Dallas had been in the United States relatively longer than people who lived in San Diego. Consistent with Chavez's premise participants in this study living in New York, farther away from Mexico than cities in the southern states of the U.S., were less likely to intend to return to Mexico than to stay in the United States. As far as the two other demographic predictors, age and education, the tendency was for younger and less educated mothers to be less interested in going back to Mexico, but the results from the quantitative analysis did not significantly support the hypotheses that age and education predicted return migration.

Results from the interview data did not include discussions on how age, education or time in the United States might have contributed to mother's transnational behavior

(e.g., sending remittances, visiting Mexico and beliefs about raising children in Mexico or the United States). However, the narrative analysis revealed that the drawback of having had limited access to education in their home country became for some mothers the motivating factor to encourage their children to remain in school and pursue an education, thus reducing the likelihood of the mother or the family as a whole returning to Mexico. As one mother recounted, people in Mexico who had little education would not get the good jobs and would remain poor. Such viewpoint appears to have contributed to mothers' perceptions that children might be better off staying in the United States than to return to Mexico. Still, discouraging evidence shows that nearly 70% of Mexican children live in low-income households in the United States with incomes below the poverty line. At the same time, research has shown that undocumented parents working long hours in low-wage jobs do not have the time to spend with teenagers and keep track of how they are doing in school. As a result, teenagers are dropping out of high school at staggeringly high rates (Chaundry & Fortuny, 2010; Crowly et. al, 2006; Semple, 2011b). Stating that education could transform the lives of immigrant children is an accurate proposition. The grueling challenge would be to figure out how Mexican immigrant parents, working low-paying jobs and struggling with low-literacy and language barriers, could help their children succeed and stay in school.

Socio-Economic Characteristics as Predictors of Orientation to Homeland

As discussed in the previous section, the longer immigrants stay in the United States, the less likely they are to want to return to their home country. The present

economic recession and high unemployment rates, which coincided with a decrease in the flow of undocumented migrants in 2009 (Passel & Cohn, 2010), could not be accounted as actual indicators that immigrants and their families have reversed the trend of permanent settlement. In fact, there is "no evidence of a recent increase in the number of Mexican-born migrants returning home", particularly the undocumented Mexican migrant population, which account for nearly 60% of all undocumented migrants in the United States (ibid, p.iii). Even for poor and low-income immigrant families, facing harsh economic times in the United States does not seem to compare to the realities many of them faced growing up in economic deprivation back in their home country. In a way, for some of these immigrant parents of American-born children, it appears as if parenthood had instilled a new set of values and priorities including their attachment to homeland and transnational commitments (i.e. remittance behavior).

The fact that more often migrants arrive with or reunite with nuclear and extended family members in the destination country helps explain how immigrant who choose to settle abroad and cut their transnational links, do so more easily if they have a network of people in the destination country (sometimes larger than the remaining one back home). In some cases finding a community of migrants who are originally from Mexico and even their same hometowns is equally comforting. From emigration to settlement, ethnic, cultural and religious communities have played a crucial role on immigrants' getting access to resources, information, people and jobs available in the host country. The structural and functional significance of social networks available to parents affects how children are cared for and socialized. In examining the orientation to homeland of Mexican immigrant parents, statistical results of this study did not show that social support was available to

help care for children, assist with writing English, or the network size available to lend money or find jobs in the United States contributed to either immigrant mothers' intent to return or decreased transnational participation. At the same time, interview data revealed how immigrant parents sought and reciprocated support from family, friends and community members in their adopted country when it came to caring for children. Comparing the child raising strategies of low-income mothers of different ethnic groups, Yoshikawa (2011) found that when it came to seeking care for their infant children, Mexican mothers were less likely to use formal child care services than were Dominican, Chinese and African-American mothers. The sample of low-income Mexican mothers in this study was not only more likely to reach out to nuclear and extended family members when they needed help to care for their children; they were also less likely to be employed outside the home than were the other ethnic and immigrant groups (i.e. Dominican, Chinese, and African-American).

As one of the Mexican mothers in this study put it, the logic of whether to work outside the home or remain full-time primary caretakers of newborn and infant children was simple math. It would not had been worth working long hours in poorly paid jobs if the earning they made would barely pay or simply match the cost of full-time child care.

Institutional Public Programs as Predictors of Orientation to Homeland

Results derived from the survey data in this study did not support predictions that intentions to return to Mexico and transnational practices were affected by immigrants' perceptions and use of public assistance and public school in the United States. The fact

that immigrant households receive more public assistance than do native households (Camarota, 2003) has bolstered claims that immigrants become "magnets" of welfare (Borjas et. al., 1996). However, many of the immigrant-headed households who receive public assistance are composed of mixed-status families where government support is available only to the U.S.-born members of the family. The problem is not only whether children benefit from available public resources, but how undocumented parents feel about accessing those resources. It all comes down to how the immigration status of parents has the potential to improve or obstruct the well-being of their children (Capps & Fortuny, 2006; Yoshikawa, 2011). Mexican immigrant mothers who participated in the present study were more interested in receiving non-cash than cash types of assistance intended to pay for the health and care of their children. Paying for child care or entrusting people outside the family with caring for children was not a common practice among Mexican mothers.

A narrative analysis of interviews in this study showed how caring and providing for children meant being actively present in the life of children and taking advantage of any available resources. This might explain the wider interest in having access to medical and child care assistance than in getting money to pay for childcare services outside the home. As far as perceptions of American schools are concerned, poverty, lower parental education, and limited English proficiency have all been associated with gaps in school readiness for children of immigrants (Nord, & Griffin, 1999). While it is true that immigrant parents with limited English proficiency and poor educational attainment were less likely to help children with homework and to participate in school activities (Capps et al. 2005), it would be important to shift the focus from the limitations of immigrant parents

to their potential contributions. In other words, it might be best to learn how to engage immigrant parents in the schooling and performance of their children and as a result help parents feel empowered and more involved in their children's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991).

In line with research studies that have addressed the theoretical and practical implications of how public assistance improves the lives of low-income immigrant families, the results of this study showed how immigrants' perceptions of public services and government assistance in the host country could expand our understanding of the use of and beliefs about immigrant parents' government assistance. At the same time, a look into parents' perceptions of public assistance has provided an insight into the priorities of immigrant parents and how they inform their orientation to homeland.

Limitations of the Study

Restrictions on the sample size and having worked with secondary data analysis were two important limitations of the present study. Both aspects, I believe, reduced the likelihood of some results in the quantitative analysis from being significant; restricting at the same time any possible generalizations on the qualitative results. The sample size on the original longitudinal study encompassed four ethnic groups (African-American, Chinese, Dominican and Mexican), was large enough to draw interesting comparisons. But, given my research interests and the nature of the present study, I focused only on the Mexican subsample which was relatively small (n=98). In addition, the challenges of retaining participants in a longitudinal study resulted into working with an even smaller sample when analyzing some of the quantitative data (n=65). To compensate for the small

sample size in this study, the mixed-method analysis that I used offered a valuable combination of quantitative and qualitative data (Gable, 1994). On the one hand, the quantitative results of this study showed limited support for the hypotheses that selected demographic, socio-economic and institutional factors predicted migrant mothers' OTH. Meanwhile, in-depth interviews with participants provided valuable insights into these Mexican migrant mothers' concerns and motivations and therefore aspects that did affect their oriented to homeland. Apparently, mothers' living conditions and experiences back home vis-à-vis those available to their children in the host country were partly influential on perceptions of life in Mexico and in the United States, which also influenced settlement and other daily-life decisions.

As far as the restrictions on the use of survey data that might have best suited the aims of my study, I found that the type of questions asked in the original study did not always fully capture what I wanted to investigate. For example, to learn about the type and amount of social support available to migrant mothers in the host country, I used questions related to social capital. Although the questions in and of themselves were relevant, the measuring scale was not ideal, which in this case was to assess the type and amount of support relevant to immigrant mothers. What was not captured was how social support might have influenced how comfortable they felt about relying and trusting people in their community and how that compared to what it would have been like if they were back in Mexico. Also, in determining the perceived impact of schools, I would have asked these mothers of newborn and infant children questions related to their knowledge and perceptions of preschool and daycare programs in the United States –not only schools in general- and how those compared to similar programs in Mexico.

Lessons Learned

When it comes to return migration decisions, "changes in the economic and employment conditions in destination countries" (Lainos & Cavounidis 2008:1) are not the sole aspects leading migrants to return to their country of origin. Other reasons, from the cultural process of adaptation that affects the identity of returnees (Sussman, 2011) to cultural gaps that push migrants to social exclusion (Takeyuki, 2009), have been recently identified in the literature as motivations for return migration. In spite of these new research findings, the focus on the individual migrant has overshadowed the family-oriented decisions of immigrant parents to either return home or remain abroad (Djajic 2008). At times, child-orientated migration decisions conflict with the work-oriented decisions that single migrants would have prioritize. One of the few studies on return migration to consider the weight that children have in the decision-making process of immigrant parents highlights the number and gender of children as significant predictors of return migration (Dustmann, 2003). This study, conducted in Germany, showed that the strongest predictor of an immigrant parent's decision to return to the country of origin was the future welfare of children. A common immigrant's struggle is when familial and financial concerns pull in opposite directions. Data from the present showed how financial concerns proved to be more important to one of the Mexican mothers than her eagerness to reunite with her parents back in Mexico. One of the mothers in the study came to the conclusion that it would be very difficult to secure well-paying jobs in Mexico that would support their immediate family and continue to provide for the extended family whom they

sporadically helped. In the end, although she wished she could simply "just buy a ticket and fly back to Mexico", this mother knew it would only happen "if the economy was better over there".

Although this study was not designed as a study of undocumented women, quantitative results along with participants' interview data revealed legal status to be an important filter of their perceptions of life and opportunity in the United States. At times, their legal status became a troubling reminder of their place in society as they went about their daily life and in the way they interacted with personnel in public institution (e.g. doctors, nurses or teachers). This heightened sense of being perceived as an outsider or a threat is something other researchers have also heard about during interviews with Mexican migrants speaking about their experiences with school personnel and staff at medical centers (Galvez, 2011; Massey & Sanchez, 2010).

The growing numbers of children born in mixed-status families highlight the need to revise existing immigration and domestic policies in the United States, particularly those affecting the integrity and well-being of families. Fifty-nine percent of mixed-status families in the United States are of Mexican-origin (Passel & Cohn, 2011). One of the mothers in the study mentioned having travelled to Mexico when her now 12 year old son was three. Thankfully, both she and her son made it back to the United States safe and sound, herself by foot across the border and her son by plane to New York with a friend who had *papeles*. Years later, when she learned her father was dying of cancer and wanted to see him again, Teresa knew it would have been much more costly and dangerous to cross the border back to the United States. With tears in her eyes, she told me she regretted not being able to say a last good-bye to her father before he died. There are many

stories like Teresa's in which undocumented parents of U.S.-born children measure risks that can impact the welfare of the whole family.

Decisions undocumented parents make, even when taken in the best interest of their children, are often times convoluted and emotionally draining. Such is the case of parents who left children back in the home country under the care of family and friends and for whom the parenting experience is often reduced to the remittances they send and a weekly phone call. For example, a single mother of three children who participated in this study made the heartbreaking decision to migrate to the United States leaving her children behind, among them a 9-month old baby. Amelia knew she had to find a better paying job to provide for her children, which she had not been able to find while she was working in Mexico City. Women's motivations to migrate, from the moment they leave their home country to the trail of experiences crossing the border, settling in a new country and having children grow up away from their home town and families, all have some bearing on how they 'mother' and envision a future for themselves, their families and their children. As it has been suggested, the experiences that define motherhood are "moderated by [life] circumstances, the settings in which they mother, and their social relations" (Woollett & Marshall, 2001, p. 174). For many mothers in this study, who spoke little English and had limited educational attainment, their children's language proficiency was seen as the bridge out of the isolating conditions that language barriers had so far represented for them. Some of these immigrant mothers took pride in seeing their children become native English speakers, even if it came at the cost of feeling themselves isolated and unable to communicate with them. Research has shown that parents and grandparents can become even more isolated when their children and grandchildren refuse to communicate in the

parent's native language, which becomes more problematic to parents who feel already isolated if they are living in non-ethnic enclaves (Arriagada, 2005; Yoshikawa, 2011). In a classical assimilation model, economic success is a reflection of an immigrant's level of assimilation. For example, a study conducted among Turkish immigrants in Germany showed that those who migrated to Germany at a younger age were more likely to assimilate and become economically successful (Dustmann, 2003).

While it is true that parenting strategies, including where to settle and raise children, are for many parents inevitably linked to the legal statuses of immigrant parents and their children, many factors other than citizenship have been documented to elicit immigrant parents' decision to stay in the host country, not merely citizenship. The anti-Mexican sentiment in the United States has been aimed not only at the undocumented adults but also their children. According to the March 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS), of the total 11.2 million undocumented immigrants, an estimated 4.7 million were parents to minor children. The growing population of children of immigrants in the United States might be what has exponentially magnified the perceived threat of a Mexican origin population. Deportations during the Obama administration have reached high record levels. In 2010, 73% of a total 390, 000 people who were deported were of Mexican origin (Taylor, Lopez, Passel & Motel, 2011). While parents spend months, even years in detention centers before being deported, many risk losing custody of their children who are kept in foster care at an average rate of 25 months (ibid). The emotional cost of guilt, depression, loneliness and separation from children that undocumented mothers in detention centers experience resembles the emotions expressed by mothers who migrated

to the United States and left children back in Mexico under the care of family and friends (Dreby, 2010).

The discourse that Mexican-origin women come to the United States to abuse the welfare system, have children, and look ahead to claiming citizenship through their U.S.-born children is not new to the 21st century debate on immigration. In fact, during the 1970s legislators in the state of California were promoting "an immigration control platform focusing on the fertility of Mexican-immigrant women [...] aimed to incite fear in the general public for the advancement of an immigration control agenda" (Gutierrez, 2008 p. 93). An imagined scenario in which a Mexican male productive force could be temporarily employed in the United States while keeping the female reproductive burden back in Mexico was not so far off from how guest-worker programs were originally outlined. In fact, encouraging and making return migration easy was intended to decrease the probability of long-term settlement of guest workers (Massey & Liang, 1989). In a post-1965 era, permanent settlement of migrants put into question the assumption that migrant workers were here temporarily. Immigrant settlers grew in numbers and forty years later, by 2006, an estimated 6.6 million unauthorized Mexican immigrants were living in the United States (Hoefner, Rytina, & Campbell, 2007). What is more, as they became parents of U.S.-born children, the chances of them or their children of going back to their home country become slimmer and slimmer.

With federal immigration policies getting tougher in recent years, immigrants are being left in a more vulnerable position. Deceitful lawyers have taken advantage of migrant workers trying to get work permits or legalize their status in the United States, such as the recent case of more than 300 immigration lawyers across the United States who were

suspended from practicing in immigration courts for having misrepresented and ripping off undocumented migrants (Frosch, 2009). Such cases are not a rarity. One of the mothers in this study spoke of her experience trying to get legal residency. Jessica and her husband Rafael thought they were on the road to get permanent residency when a lawyer handling their case had told them he was close to getting the working visa he had applied for back in 1995. The lawyer handling their case had mentioned that in this last series of consultations and payments they had to make towards getting their paper work done, they would have to pay him $2,000 (to cover costs for the application and his fees) and an additional $1,000 fine for having entered the U.S. without proper documents. At that point, Jessica and Rafael had decided to put everything on hold until they could gather all the money the lawyer had asked.

Despite their own interest in staying in the United States and raising children here, undocumented parents are haunted by the possibility of being deported. These are valid concerns given that 100,000 undocumented migrants were deported between 1998 and 2007 (Falcone, 2009). Mixed-status families, that is, families with at least one member of the family being an undocumented immigrant and at least one other being a citizen or legal resident (Fix & Zimmerman, 1999; Passel et. al., 2011), worry about the possibility of having to raise children in households torn apart by deportation. Tensions between new immigrants and local communities vary widely from state to state. Similar to the situation of immigrant families in California in 1970s, immigration laws that have been recently passed in states like Arizona, Alabama, and Georgia have institutionalized practices that promote and justify inflammatory racial rhetoric such as the unfounded propaganda that immigrant mothers use children as “anchors” to remain in the United States and abuse

public resources (CNN, 2005; Zorn, 2006). It is somehow surprising to think that the undocumented Mexican population in the United States, which constitutes an approximate 2.1 % of the overall population, has captured nationwide bigotry from media outlets, anti-immigrant groups, mainstream legislations and state and local officials, from Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Kris Kobach (Secretary of State of Kansas) to the notorious Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, AZ. This small sector of the population has also become the main target of an U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) program eager to keep its deportation quotas at about 400,000 per year (Hsu & Becker, 2010).

In all, first-generation migrants appraise their experiences in the United States using a "dual frame of reference", which psychologists Marcelo and Carola Suárez-Orozco discuss as a strategy by immigrants to evaluate new experiences in comparative terms (2001). From the interview portion of this study, we learned that at the same time that immigrant mothers praised the extent to which children in the United States had access to resources and opportunities far beyond what they had while growing up in Mexico, they shared concerns on how the life-style, the neighborhood, and the pace of life in a metropolis like New York could jeopardize the values and traditions they hoped to instill in their children. For example, Consuelo and her husband praised the advantages of how their children had full medical coverage through Medicaid in the United States, and as far as they were concerned there was no health care program in Mexico that would give their children full medical coverage. On the down side, the pace of life in New York City, its unsafe neighborhoods and street violence could expose her children to all kinds of dangers as they grow older. In short, the benefits of having medical coverage for the children in the United States stood against the opportunity of offering the children an environment they could

grow up having more freedom to play safely in outdoor spaces in rural San Miguel, as oppose to small and crowded New York apartments. Consuelo had not been back to Mexico for a decade, when she first left for the United States. The family's decision to remain in the United States was influenced by both personal concerns and circumstances, as well as by the reality of U.S. law and immigration policy. This dual frame of reference was present in narratives of other women in the study as they spoke of this vacillation between wanting to stay in the United States and longing to return to Mexico.

Implications and Future Directions

Despite speculations that Mexican immigrant women arrive in the United States with deliberate intentions to settle permanently in this country, results of this study suggest that immigrant mothers' decisions about the future of their children and their intentions to return to Mexico or to settle in the United States are influenced and often driven by many other aspects of parents' life-experiences and expectations than their prospects of getting citizenship. Scholars who have investigated the dynamics of transnational Mexican migrant families have found that not only economic support (Hondagneu-Sotelo et. al., 1997) and strengthening of social networks (Herrera Lima, 2001) are important. Migrant parents also care about transmitting gender roles, national identity (Dreby, 2006; Smith, 2006) and teaching children about religious and cultural practices (Smith, 2006). As for the process of adaptation in the new country, the present study explored immigrants' personal strengths and shortcomings (e.g. education), the depth and extent of networks of support, the economic hardships growing up as compared

to their financial expectations in a new country, their perceptions of public services and public schools and how they compared to the health care and education poor families in Mexico. In all, it is more than seeking citizenship it is all of these factors which contribute to lessen circular migration and to increase permanent settlement in the host country and to how oriented to homeland immigrant parents may be.

In this climate of harsh immigration policies, legitimate concerns of undocumented parents range from the insurmountable barriers in their daily lives to the threat of family separation. Mexican mothers in this sample addressed both of these concerns. In a sense, their orientation to homeland might just be another example of a 'dual frame of reference' where Mexican immigrant parents decide, for the sake and prosperity of their families, to settle in the United States and the only actual connection to the people and places back home is their longing for a life there.

Overall, immigration status was central to every aspect of the lives of migrant mothers. Legal status was an obstacle to traveling between the United States and Mexico and it was also a problem in terms how others perceived them. Participants mentioned being aware of or having being reminded of their legal status when looking for jobs or apartments, during visits to hospitals, clinics and schools and interaction with employers and landlords, nurses, doctors or teachers.

Scholarly work has begun to identify concerns of "mixed-status" families, including access to public assistance and services for native and foreign-born members (Van Hook & Balisteri, 2006). Compared to conditions and opportunities in their homeland, migrant mothers might have foreseen jobs and education, health care and access to public services in the destination country as contributors to the well-being of their children. But, as

deportation of parents of U.S.-citizen children rises, safe-guarding the integrity of families and the emotional well-being of children might be what best constitutes the well-being of children of immigrants. In the first half of 2011 alone, ICE "removed 46,486 parents of U.S.-citizen children from the United States" (Wessler, 2011, p. 11).

In the end, recent immigration laws in states like Alabama and Georgia are "as much an ineffective solution to economic woes as a xenophobic reaction by an already bifurcated community to the arrival of new immigrants" (Huang, 2011, p. SR5). As far as the experience of Mexicans immigrants in New York goes, this relative new arriving community to a relatively welcoming state has also experienced abuses and discrimination at the hands of employers, landlords, and public services personnel. For the approximately 4.5 million U.S-born children who have at least one parent living in the country without legal documents (Passel & Cohn, 2009), fears of deportation and family separation have been a real threat over the past couple of years (Hagan, Eschbach & Rodriguez, 2008; Caps & Fortuny, 2006).

In the end, it is often the case that the faith of immigrant parents and their children, the possibility of deportation or legalization of pending immigration statuses is in the hands of the political powers and legislation enacted by state and federal governments now and in the years to come.

TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the predicting variables demographics, social support and financial well-being (Research Question 1).

Predicting Variables				
Demographics				
	Range	MS (SD)		
Age	18 - 44	26.9	(5.6)	
Education	0 - 16	7.9	(3.4)	
Length of stay in United States	1 - 25	7.8	(5.0)	
Age of mother at migration	1 - 41	19.0	(5.7)	
Social Support				
Types and Size of Social Support that could help with:	Child care	Getting money	Finding a job	With writing English
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
	1.48 (.784)	1.07 (.793)	.68 (.701)	1.02 (.612)
0	12.7 %	22.6%	47.6 %	21.9 %
1	36.5 %	53.2 %	42.9 %	64.1 %
2	44.4 %	17.7 %	7.9 %	12.5 %
3	6.3 %	6.5 %	1.6 %	1.6 %
Financial Well-being				
	Harder in Mexico	Same	Harder in N.Y.	
Making ends meet is:	61.3 %	29.0 %	9.7 %	
	Worse off	Same	Better off	
Growing up, was your family better off or worse off financially than the average [Mexican] family?	44.4 %	39.7 %	15.9 %	
	Worse off	Same	Better off	
Now, are you and your family better off or worse off than the average family in the United States?	20.6 %	54.0 %	25.4 %	

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the predicting variables public assistance and schools (Research Question 2).

Public Assistance					
Feels comfortable getting help from the government towards					
Type of Assistance	**Cash**			**Non-Cash**	
	Financial help	Help to pay for food	Help to pay for child care	Help with a child care program	Help to pay for medical care
Disagree a lot	7.8 %	1.1 %	4.5%	0 %	0 %
Disagree	36.7 %	23.9 %	34.1 %	6.7 %	2.2 %
Agree	48.9 %	71.6 %	59.1 %	85.4 %	80.2 %
Agree a lot	6.7 %	3.4 %	2.3 %	7.9 %	17.6 %
Receiving government assistance now will hurt my future chances of…					
	Getting a job		My child succeeding		Getting citizenship
Disagree a lot	9.4 %		9.5 %		4.7 %
Disagree	54.7 %		50.8 %		42.2 %
Agree	31.3 %		38.1 %		45.3 %
Agree a lot	4.7 %		1.6 %		7.8 %
Schools					
	Schools in NYC are of good quality			**Schools in the U.S. are better than schools in Mexico**	
Disagree a lot	1.1 %			2.2 %	
Disagree	24.7 %			16.5 %	
Don't know	14.6 %			18.7 %	
Agree	44.9 %			56.0 %	
Agree a lot	14.6 %			6.6 %	

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the outcome variables of Orientation to Homeland.

Orientation to Homeland's Outcome Variables			
–Return Migration-			
Do you see yourself returning (permanently) to Mexico?			
Not at all	58.3 %		
Very Unlikely	11.7 %		
Maybe	4.5 %		
Very Likely	8.3 %		
Absolutely	16.7 %		
– Transnational Practices-			
Have you sent remittances to Mexico? (@ 14 months)	No	Yes	
	50.8 %	49.2 %	
Have you sent remittances to Mexico? (@ 24 months)	No	Yes	
	38.3 %	61.6 %	
Have you made any trips back to Mexico [since your child was born]? (@ 24 months)	No	Yes	
	92.1 %	7.9 %	
Do you see yourself visiting Mexico?			
Not at all	34.4 %		
Very Unlikely	7.8 %		
Maybe	14.1 %		
Very Likely	29.7 %		
Not at all	14.1 %		
Do you think raising children is:	Harder in Mexico	Same	Harder in N.Y.
	30.6 %	34.7 %	34.7 %

Table 4. Correlation among Predicting and Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	5.1	5.2	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Demographics																				
1. Age	1																			
2. Education	-0.16	1																		
3. Yrs in U.S.	.42**	-0.16	1																	
Social Support																				
4. SN child care	-0.05	.08	.03	1																
5. SN money/jobs	-.00	-.02	.26**	.07	1															
5.1 SN money	-0.13	.10	.01	.44**	.75**	1														
5.2 SN jobs	.09	.25*	-.05	.13	-.06	.33**	1													
6. SN English	.37**	-.02	.05	.14	-.01	-.02	.16	1												
Financial Well-being																				
7. Making end meet	.08	.19	-.00	.19	.22	0.21	.46**	.08	1											
8. Hardship in Mexico	-.16	.08	-.04	-.11	-.13	.05	-.02	-.23	-.28*	1										
9. Hardship in the U.S.	.06	-.09	-.21	.15	-.12	.16	.02	-.13	-.06	.40**	1									
Perception of Pub. Assist																				
10. Financial help	-.16	-.00	-.26*	.04	-.11	.12	.10	.05	.01	.08	.00	1								
11. Help with food	-.06	-.02	-.01	-.08	-.03	-0.13	-.11	-.08	-.07	.17	.02	.31**	1							
12. Help with child care	-.25*	-.00	-.24*	.06	-.22*	-0.03	.01	.04	-.18	-.00	-.09	.39**	.33**	1						
13. Hurting jobs	.40**	.05	.24	.03	-.09	-.28*	-0.11	-.01	.00	-.01	-.03	-.10	-.11	-.06	1					
14. Hurting children	.24	.04	.17	.23	-.12	-0.19	-.15	-0.04	-.06	-.07	-.17	-.13	-.17	.10	.59**	1				
15. Hurting citizenship	.26*	-.26*	.15	.13	.10	-0.19	-.19	.10	.00	-.09	-.12	.00	-.00	-.05	.46**	.58**	1			
Perceptions of Schools																				
17. Schools in N.Y.	.26*	-0.15	0.19	0.21	0.06	.11	.21	0.23	.27*	-0.2	-0.08	0	0.01	-.02	-0.07	0.02	0.24	-.04	1	
18.U.S. vs. Mexican	0.02	-.22*	0.19	-.04	0.09	.14	.07	0.12	.17	0.01	.00	-.01	0.02	0.06	-0.13	0.01	.30*	-.02	.59**	1
OTH OUTCOMES																				
A. Return Migration	-0.14	0.14	-0.31*	0.01	-0.14	.02	-.00	-.07	-.05	-.03	.10	-.07	-.15	-.13	.04	-.07	-.10	.13	-.05	-.18
B. Raising children	-0.13	-0.13	-0.28	0.17	0.02	.10	-.12	-.22	.03	-.14	.12	-.07	.10	.04	.01	.15	-.01	.06	.05	.02
C. Has travelled to Mex.	-0.16	-0.01	0.03	0.02	0.18	.15	.08	-.19	.07	.05	-.27*	.13	.11	.18	-.12	-.02	.07	.08	-.05	-.08
D. Sent Remittances	.04	0.08	-0.21	0.16	.00	.08	0	.24	.15	-0.08	.06	-.03	.01	-.11	-.06	-.10	.14	-.14	.06	.16

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Correlations between Outcome and Predicting Variables

	A. Return Migration	Transnational Practices		
		B. Where to raise children	C. Travelled to Mexico	D. Sent Remittances
Demographics				
1. Age	-0.14	-0.13	-0.16	.04
2. Education	0.14	-0.13	-0.01	0.08
3. Yrs in U.S.	**-0.31***	-0.28	0.03	-0.21
Social Support				
4. SN child care	0.01	0.17	0.02	0.16
5. SN money/jobs	-0.14	0.02	0.18	.00
5.1 SN money	.02	.10	.15	.08
5.2 SN jobs	-.00	-.12	.08	0
6. SN English	-.07	-.22	-.19	.24
Financial Well-being				
7. Making end meet	-.05	.03	.07	.15
8. Hardship in Mexico	-.03	-.14	.05	-0.08
9. Hardship in the U.S.	.10	.12	**-.27***	.06
Public Assistance				
10. Financial help	-.07	-.07	.13	-.03
11. Help with food	-.15	.10	.11	.01
12. Help with child care	-.13	.04	.18	-.11
13. Hurting jobs	.04	.01	-.12	-.06
14. Hurting children	-.07	.15	-.02	-.10
15. Hurting citizenship	-.10	-.01	.07	.14
Schools				
17. Quality of N.Y. schools	-.05	.05	-.05	.06
18.American vs. Mexican	-.18	.02	-.08	.16
OTH OUTCOMES				
A. Return Migration	1	0.14	0.04	0.13
B. Where to raise children		1	0.11	-0.32
C. Has travelled to Mexico			1	-0.19
D. Sent Remittances				1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

APPENDICES

Appendix A

A Mexican Migrant Mother Who Returned to Mexico

Susana

Background and History

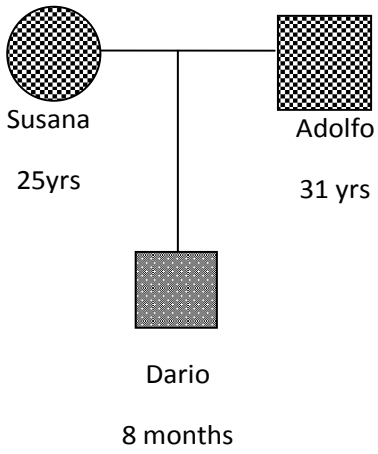


Figure 5. Susana's family structure and ages of children [at outset of ethnographic study]

Unlike any other Mexican mother who participated in this study, Susana arrived in the United States on a student visa in 2002. Susana was 22 years when she arrived with her 17-year old brother, who also had a student's visa. Their uncle Vicente, who had been living in the United States for 20 years, was instrumental in getting them student visas by acting as their guardian. Although Susana and Luis arrived with student visas, they never enrolled in school and instead looked for jobs shortly after they arrived. Eventually their visas expired but they stayed and have been in New York since. Vicente offered to have them live with him and helped pay for their expenses until they both found jobs and moved out.

To Vicente's disappointment, Susana moved in with her boyfriend Adolfo and when she told him she was pregnant, Vicente was disappointed. As her guardian, he felt responsible for Susana's decisions, and felt Adolfo was not the right person for her. Susana had gone to college and received a degree in computer technical support, whereas Adolfo was a high school dropout. Besides, Adolfo had fathered two children who were living in Mexico with their mother and with whom he had no contact.

Susana and Adolfo lived in the Bronx in a two-story house with three bedrooms and one bathroom, which they shared with five other immigrants from Mexico. Susana, Adolfo and baby Dario had one bedroom. Luis, Susana's brother, slept in the living room, and four young men lived in the remaining two rooms on the second floor of the house. She felt embarrassed at how small and crowded their bedroom was. Their living arrangement in New York bothered her, particularly because she recalled having grown up in Mexico City in a well-off household.

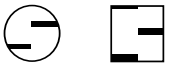
Susana is about 5' 2" tall. She has black eyes, long hair and a dark complexion. She appeared to be quiet and distant but would easily warm up and be very chatty and open when talking about her upbringing in Mexico. Other times she was timid and spoke in a soft voice. Susana was the second of five children, three girls and two boys. Susana felt they had a good life and a stable family until her mother left the family and later on filed for divorce. Apparently, Susana's mother at first had not wanted to tell where she was because she feared her husband would come after her and beat her. Susana was 20 years old at the time and still remembers how shocked and hurt she felt that her mother had abandoned them. Susana found out through of one of her aunts that her mother had migrated to the United States and was living with their uncle Vicente, her mother's brother. When Susana

and Luis first arrived in New York, their mother was still in New York and for a couple of months they all lived together in Vicente's home. Being together helped Susana soothe some of the resentment she felt for her mother. After Susana's mother returned to Mexico, the relationship between her parents started to improve.

Susana seemed settled with her life in New York and was even making plans to go back to work. Susana had also mentioned her mother was looking to apply for a tourist visa and travel back to New York and help her take care of Dario. The fieldworker made numerous unsuccessful attempts to contact her and schedule the next interview. We lost contact, and eventually learned that she might have returned to Mexico. Susana had never mentioned before any plans to return to Mexico.

Appendix B

Guideline to Family Structure of Migrant mothers in this study

	Migrant mother living in the United States
	Migrant father living in the United States
	U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants
	1.5 or 2nd generation, Mexican-born children who migrated to the United States
	Children of immigrants living in Mexico

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