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Uncovering nodes in the transnational social networks of Hispanic workers

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UNCOVERING NODES
IN THE TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS
OF HISPANIC WORKERS

A Dissertation

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

in

The Department of Geography & Anthropology

by
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M.S., Western Kentucky University 2007
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As I sat down to write the acknowledgment for this research, something ironic came to mind. I immediately realized that I too had to rely on my social network to complete this work. No one can achieve goals without the engagement and support of those to whom we are connected. As we strive to succeed in life, our family, friends and acquaintances influence us as well as lend a much needed hand.

Ten years ago, I enrolled in a certificate program in Middle Tennessee State University's Department of Geosciences. My objective was only to take a few GIS courses so that I could find a decent job making maps. During the program, I met Dr. Doug Heffington, a cultural geographer who organized student trips to Latin America each year. Doug soon convinced me to traveling with him to Costa Rica the following summer. That trip changed my life. It was the first time I experienced human geography in the field. Suddenly, all those seemingly abstract facts, dates, and figures concerning the cultures, economies, histories and societies that I had learned in a far-way Tennessee classroom became perceptibly real. Evidence of colonialism, neo-colonialism, as well as the resistance that always accompanies these modes of governance and economic control were apparent in the cultural landscape of this small country. I realized that only through a geographical perspective could one truly comprehend the connections and causes that shape a particular place as well as the people who call it home. Thanks Doug! You put me on this path.

The following autumn, I entered a master's program at Western Kentucky University. At Western, I continued making trips to Latin America with Dr. David Keeling. David introduced me to new ideas, ideologies, and social as well as political theories. He also taught me how to

approach them with a critical eye. Dr. Katie Algeo, however, patiently showed me how to flesh out my critiques and opinions on paper.

My master's thesis looked at the burgeoning Hispanic population in Nashville. I wanted to do in-depth fieldwork with newly-arrived Hispanics. This desire led me to make lasting friendships with scores of people from Latin America. Many of those friends are part of the family I refer to in this study as the Garcias. They openly welcomed me into their lives and went out of their way to support me in my master's thesis as well as this dissertation. (Thanks Alex!) Through them, I made so many contacts in both the United States and Mexico. One the most interesting and helpful people I met was J. Guadalupe Lopez Dapia. Guadalupe was the patriarch of the García family and the *abuelo* of the person I refer to as Juan in this dissertation. He lived his entire life in San José Iturbide, but he traveled annually to Nashville to visit family. When I did my fieldwork in San José Iturbide he helped me in any way that he could to find answers to the all the questions I sought. Sadly, Guadalupe passed away unexpectedly this year. I hope this work can serve as a means to honor his memory.

My time at Louisiana State University has proven to be the most valuable experience in my academic career. The scholarly skills and knowledge that I have gained are second-to-none. I am proud to say that I studied geography at LSU. I am honored by the respected scholars who sit on my dissertation committee. I take great pride telling other cultural geographers that each one of you has been an important influence in my academic career.

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In New Orleans, I met some of the nicest, most sincere individuals I have ever known. To all my friends from Honduras and Nicaragua, *Mil Gracias por "echarme una mano!"* These people made my research in New Orleans and Central America possible. They helped me organize focus groups and recruited immigrants to interview. I cannot imagine how I would

have been able to conduct fieldwork in El Paraíso or Jalapa without their help. Through contacts in their transnational social networks, I always found a free place to stay, a person to interview, and *comida* to eat. Their friends and family took me into their homes and provided me with all I needed. What I cherish most from that experience, though, are the friends that I made during my research. Thanks Alexis!

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the little studied but socially salient processes through which Latino migrant laborers find work, travel, and obtain documentation using transnational social networks spanning between their places of origin and destinations in the United States. This project focuses on the creation and maintenance of these transnational linkages with a particular interest in their expansion into locations throughout American South, the region with the highest growth rates of Hispanic populations. The aim is to understand how such migrant-labor processes influence migratory patterns and result in place creation, both in these case studies and more generally.

The case studies in this dissertation are a Nashville-Guanajuato, Mexico transnational social network and a New Orleans-El Paraíso, Honduras-Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua transnational social network. Although independent of each other, the transnational networks of these migrant groups geographically overlap in the American South, thus providing a basis for comparisons and contrasts as well as for understanding their spatial, temporal, and social imbrications in both immigrant sending and receiving communities. The networks presented in this work are highly relevant because they are analogous in their structure and function, yet dissimilar in their origins and migratory histories. Nashville is a more established node connected to Guanajuato, a long-standing source node of migrant workers to the United States. New Orleans, however, is a recently emergent node for immigrants from El Paraíso, Honduras and Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua, becoming a destination for contemporary migrant workers only after Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of the city in 2005. Furthermore, compared to Guanajuato, El Paraíso is minor source of migrants to the United States.

I employ a transnational methodology involving extensive qualitative fieldwork in migrant nodes spread across the southern United States, Guanajuato, and the departments of El Paraíso, Honduras and Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua. I call attention to the agency of migrants by underscoring the various strategies and tactics they utilize to be mobile. Likewise, I analyze the interpersonal bonds of transnational migrants and demonstrate how these social linkages are traceable between and among individuals and the locations they inhabit, whether they be dense, sparse, local, or geographically far apart.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Human migration—the movement of human beings across geographic space in order to inhabit other locations—is a spatial process inherent in our species. As Ratzel (1896:9) postulated over a century ago, “restless movement is the stamp of mankind.” Since venturing out of eastern Africa some 50,000 - 60,000 years ago, modern human beings have expanded across the Earth, settling every continent and major landmass save Antarctica (Wells 2002; Manning 2005). Throughout our history, mobility has been an essential part of human development. Population movements between established communities have propelled the circulation of culture, religion, ideas, and technologies, reshaping both migrants’ origin and destination societies (Goldin, Cameron, and Balarajon 2011). Indeed, this trend continues into the twenty-first century, as there are now more than 200 million immigrants¹ worldwide (IOM 2013).

A stark contrast, however, sets contemporary migrants apart from those of the past. Certainly, the catalysts for movement remain the same: to search for new opportunities or to escape religious or political distress in a particular locale. These “push and pull” factors have been and will continue to be the principle causality behind migration. The difference lies in the ever-increasing interconnectivity of the modern world through new and modified uses of communication and transportation technologies. Globally networked, these technologies have collapsed the social distance between physically distant locations, thus allowing migrants to move with more ease than ever before, while simultaneously sustaining strong social and economic links to their places of origin.²

The development of these migratory practices, which lesson the importance of national borders and enable migrants to be rooted in both sending and receiving communities, represents a break from earlier prevailing concepts in migration scholarship. Until the end of twentieth century, approaches to the study of international migration assumed that immigrants either assimilated completely into their host society and lost nearly all ties to their countries of origin, or they failed to assimilate and soon returned to their native countries (see Thomas and Znaniecki 1927; Park 1930; Handlin 1951, 1973; Takaki 1993; Alba and Nee 2003). In either case, the nation-state played a key and rigid role in how migrants were classified and analyzed in international migration studies (Bailey 2001). National borders clearly demarcated the threshold of who could be classified as an international immigrant. Voluntary immigrants moving for economic reasons from one nation-state to another could easily be distinguished from involuntary or forced immigrants, such as refugees or persons in bondage (i.e., slaves). Those individuals involved in short-term or temporary migration—such as sojourners—were differentiated from those immigrants who permanently settled in new communities outside the borders of their home countries. In effect, migrants could be placed in simple, non-ambiguous categories, such as immigrant, emigrant, expatriate, returnee, or refugee.

This fixed, analytical typology facilitated positivist approaches to migration studies, but it also limited the range of inquiry for scholars interested in international migration at a time when rapid globalization was both increasing the number of international migrants and diminishing the significance of national boundaries (Portes 1996; Robinson 1998; Bailey 2001). By the 1980s, social scientists began questioning whether traditional approaches in international migration scholarship—informed by and developed in service to the nation-state—were adequate for

capturing the migratory practices they observed in the field (Kearny 1991; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994). Prevalent migration theories at that time did not take into account the multiple attachments that migrants (and their children) were developing between sending and receiving communities nor could they explain the character of emerging contemporary immigrant communities that was seemingly “unbounded” to nation-states (Rouse 1991; Levitt and Waters 2002; Smith 2006). As a result, a new conceptual tool was needed that could account for these novel manifestations in migratory practices that clearly transcended national borders.

In order to resolve this quandary a small group of anthropologists in the United States proposed an analytical concept that recognized the multiple connections, interactions, and activities that migrants concurrently maintain in both sending and receiving communities (Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen 2004). Such migratory processes were designated as “transnational” (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994). At the time, the adjective “transnational” was only being employed in economics and political science to describe corporate entities as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations with established bases in more than one country (see especially Nye and Keohane 1971). For social and economic inquiries, this signified a paradigm shift from considering nation-states as the primary unit of analysis to analyzing global systems and networks (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1995; Robinson 1998). This disjuncture from the nation-state as the principle frame of reference in migration studies opened up fresh perspectives for understanding how migrants move, operate, and survive in the present phase of globalization. Similarly, it provided theorists the space necessary to explore abstract postmodern and poststructural ideas, such as in-betweenness, third

space (e.g., Bhabha 1994; Soja 1996), and cultural hybridity (e.g., Hall 1991; Appadurai 1996;).

Glick Schiller (2005:440), one of the scholars behind the concept, describes transnational studies

as:

[Highlighting] processes and connections across specific state borders. State actors and institutions are understood to be important participants in shaping but not limiting the social, cultural, economic, and political linkages of people. Transnational studies allows us to theorize about the changing role and nature of the state by keeping state processes and structures within our frame of analysis and yet not confining our field of study within the borders of any one state.

This definition is applicable to a host of processes and activities that go beyond national borders and territories. Therefore, in order to reduce some of the ambiguity that accompanies such a broad concept, scholarly discourse on transnationalism is often bisected into global macro-forces described as “from above” and cross-border micro-level practices and activities labeled “from below” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Transnationalism “from above” is seen as weakening modern nation-states through the redistribution of corporate activities across the globe, the emergence of supra-national banking and financial firms, international agreements, global media networks, and the relocation of industrial production from core nation-states to the periphery (Robinson 1998; Vertovic 2010). Transnationalism “from below” represents how small-scale, non-state actors—usually those migrants who possess low or average human capital—live their everyday lives across borders and how their activities, livelihood, and life decisions impact communities in both sending and receiving communities (Levitt and Waters 2002). In this vein, transnational research is seen as prioritizing the empowerment of migrants at the local scale (Faist 2010).

These approaches in transnational studies, which are deemed necessary to understand the various phenomena presently unfolding as a consequence of global capitalism, are not without criticism. Skepticism is often directed toward the claim that transnational activities are something novel (e.g. Mintz 1998) and thus were absent prior to the establishment of planet-spanning telecommunication technologies, such as the internet and inexpensive cellular phones, as well as ease of movement via commercial air transportation. To be sure, long-distance trade and administration networks preceded the current era of globalization and were even common during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Bamyeh 1993; Marcovits 1999; Hunt and Murry 1999; Grant, Levine, and Trentmann 2007). Likewise, at the turn of the last century European immigrants who arrived to destinations in the Western Hemisphere, such as the United States or Argentina, sometimes maintained communication—albeit severely limited—with intermediaries, friends, and family in their native countries (Foner 2000; Gutman 2012). Thus, parallels between present-day immigrant practices and those of previous immigrants can be made. Nevertheless, the degree of deterritorialization of capital, media, and people, which began several decades ago and continues to intensify well into the twenty-first century, far exceeds anything that has occurred previously in human history.

The proposition of this dissertation is developed through a “transnationalism from below” approach to human migration. Drawing on the concepts of transnational social fields (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1992, 1995; Glick Schiller 2010) and migration systems (Singer and Massey 1998), I explore the cross-border interpersonal networks that link migrants, returning migrants, and non-migrants together through friendships, kinships, labor interests, and an attachment to a shared place of origin. My interests lie in how these transnational social

networks develop, how they strategically serve contemporary migrants, and how they are responsible for the mobility and geographic distribution of migrants in both established and emerging immigrant destinations. In particular, I am interested in the deconcentration of Latino³ immigrants from older gateway states and metropolitan areas in the United States to new locales that historically have had little experience with Latino immigration. The new geography of Latino immigration is most salient in the southeastern United States, which has witnessed an unprecedented surge in immigrants from Mexico and Central America in the last two decades (Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005; Massey 2008). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the percentage of persons who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino in southern states leaped 57 % between 2000 and 2010, nearly four times the growth for the total population of the region.⁴ This demographic phenomenon is evident through the cultural imprint of Latino newcomers on land/cityscapes across the American South as well as their integration into the workforce and school systems of southern urban areas and rural communities (Mohl 2003; Drever 2008; Shultz 2008; Chaney 2010; Winders 2011). Thus, this research focuses on the transnational social networks of Latino immigrants who are actively engaged in this current immigration process and demonstrates the significant role that these networks play in the spatial distribution contemporary immigrants.

Attention to migrant networks is hardly new in migration scholarship. Since the early twentieth century, researchers have noted the existence of these networks and their function in channeling immigrants to places of reception (e.g., Thomas and Znaniecki 1927; Tilly and Brown 1967). To date, research on migrant networks has been multidisciplinary, with important contributions by geographers (Mitchell 1997; Castles and Miller 2009). This interdisciplinary

approach to the social networks of migrants has led to more comprehensive conceptual frameworks for understanding human mobility and migration patterns by focusing on both the historical relationships between sending and receiving communities and the network-based social, economic, cultural, and political linkages (Samers 2010). Migrants who are embedded in these networks are regarded as social actors who are actively shaping not only their livelihoods but also the lives of those with whom they are connected both abroad and in their home communities.

Through the theoretical lens of transnationalism, researchers studying social networks have produced in the last couple of decades a wealth of literature on how contemporary immigrants integrate into receiving communities, cope with the rigors of settlement, and influence affairs across borders in their home communities (Bailey 2003). Many of the earlier studies emphasized the relationship between “home” and “host” communities (Charles 1992; Gmelch 1992; Richman 1992; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton-Blanc 1995; Levitt 2001). More recently, some researchers have moved beyond that relationship to study the new types of transnational spaces and places that are emerging, which are made up of multiple nodes “in an overlapping network of diasporic sites” (Trotz 2006). Some geographers have developed models of such transnational spaces, determining categories, hierarchies, and connections among the “cultural hearths” and “diasporic nodes” of transnational social networks (Voigt-Graf 2004; Yeh 2007). Other research has focused on social relations between transnational migrants and their originating society, as well as on the “brain gain,” dual nationalities, multiple ethnic identities, gender relations, and multi-local kinship networks (Gmelch 1992; Thomas-Hope 1992; Byron

and Condon 1996; Byron 1999, 2000; Hyndman 1999; Nagar 2003; Nagar et al. 2002; Potter et al. 2005; Potter and Phillips 2006; Conway and Potter 2006; Olwig 2007).

Political relations form another research topic through the investigation of political refugees and studies that involve voting by transnational migrants, such as in circumstances in which Mexicans or Haitians vote in elections in their native countries while living in the United States (Hyndman and Waton-Roberts 2000; Hyndman 2001; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008). A number of studies have focused on ethnic and place-based identities related to transnational social networks (Fouron and Glick-Schiller 2002; Divya Tolia-Kelly 2004a, 2004b; Chaney 2012). Other scholars have taken note of the positive and negative socioeconomic impact remittance has on sending communities (Lowenthal and Clarke 1982; Conway and Cohen 1998; Miyares et al. 2003). Of particular interest to geographers has been the impact of remittances and circular migration on landscape change. Findings range from strong community regulation of migrant use of communal lands to maximize benefits and minimize impacts, to dramatic land abandonment due to labor shortages, to agricultural intensification on the basis of new access to capital (Durand and Massey 1992; Mutersbauh 2002; Black 1993; Byron 2007; Mills 2007; Skinner 2007; Jokish 2002).

Despite the impressive breadth of scholarly inquiry into transnational social networks, some aspects remain understudied—particularly the multiplicity of transnational factors involved in the labor processes of migrants, their residential mobility within host countries, and the extension of networks after migration (Higuchi 2010). This is a critical gap for researchers who study contemporary immigration in the United States, especially for those who are interested in the expansion of Latino immigrants into non-traditional destinations. Currently, the United

States is the largest reception country for immigrants in the world, home to roughly one out of every five international immigrants (U.N. 2008). Latin America serves as the United States' largest source of immigrants, and, as a result, a vast number of transnational social networks now overlap the United States and many sub-regions of Latin America (IOM 2013). Due to both documented and undocumented migration coupled with high birth rates, Latinos constitute the country's largest minority: 16.3 % of the population in the United States identified itself as Hispanic or Latino during Census 2010, 7.3 % as Mexican (Clemetson 2003; U.S. Census 2010). As of 2010, more than 50 million Latinos lived in the United States, over 18 million of them foreign born (U.S. Census 2010). In addition, Latino males are the most mobile demographic in the United States. Long concentrated in the Southwest, California, Florida, and a few large northern cities such as Chicago and New York, the Latino population is now dispersing across the country to areas with very low proportions of Latinos but with a high demand for low-skilled labor (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005).

Researchers have revealed various characteristics of the transnational social network created by Latinos, largely reflecting the topics addressed in the general literature on transnational migrants (Davis 2000; Cano 2005). Included among these topics are the processes involved in place creation, as in Hispanic enclaves or border towns, the persistence of social linkages between sending and receiving communities, the impacts of remittances, the transformation of gender relations, and participation of migrants in politics in both origin communities and the United States (Massey 1990; Bailey et al. 2002; Kivisto 2003; Miyares et al. 2003; Arreola 2004; Durand and Massey 2004; Moran-Taylor 2004; Cravey 2005; Martiniello and Lafleur 2008; Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008; Schmalzbauer 2008). Yet, there is a dearth of

empirical investigation in the broader literature on transnational migrants about the functionality of transnational social networks in matters of mobility and what role they play in the dispersal of Latino migrants in the United States, specifically those located in the American South.

The limited research that does exist indicates that migrants use transnational social networks to locate jobs and that many employers use these same networks to recruit employees (Johnson-Webb 2002; Shultz 2008; Chaney 2010; Blue and Drever 2011). More so than advertisements in newspapers or employment agencies, word-of-mouth information passed along transnational social networks plays a central role in the labor market for Latino migrant workers. How that process integrates more generally into transnational social networks, however, is only vaguely understood, and many questions concerning the formation and extent of these interpersonal connections remain unanswered. For example, are these networks limited to only one sending and one receiving community, or are transnational social networks constructed of multiple nodes in both the home and host countries of migrants? If multiple nodes do exist in the network of a migrant group, where are those nodes located spatially, temporally, and socially? How are they created and maintained? Are they static or continuously in flux (i.e., expanding and contracting)? What human agents (migrant and non-migrant) operate in these networks, and how are power relations structured?

Finally, there is often a lack of consideration for geographic spatial concepts in the literature concerning migrant networks (Samers 2010). That is, the rise of transnational ideas and arguments in contemporary migration literature excessively deemphasizes physical distance, international borders, and the still-relevant authority of national governments. Contrary to the “neither-here-nor-there” impression that transnational literature often evokes, most immigrants

are not free to move about the globe with little concern for national laws of their home or host societies. Immigration and national security policies enacted by political states continue to influence significantly the flow and mobility of migrants to and from various destinations. Therefore, a geographic approach is essential for analyzing social networks because it includes (and underscores) the important role space, political states, and localities play in the movement of transnational migrants.

Objectives

The objectives of this dissertation, therefore, are to fill this critical research gap relevant to the emergence, development, and operation of transnational social networks in relation to Latino workers in the United States. Given the immaturity of scholarship on this particular aspect of transnational social networks, a data collection and interpretation approach is necessary at this stage in the research process. Much of my objective is therefore more inductive than deductive, and the insights gained into the relevant processes will serve as the basis for specific hypotheses in subsequent projects. Based on the state of knowledge presented in this dissertation and my research thus far, Latino migrants move into a metropolitan area, they extend existing transnational social networks through which information flows about employment opportunities along backward and forward linkages. From this premise, I posit that particular metropolitan areas act as nodes through which both information and the migrant workers pass; that each of those nodes is dominated by a disproportionate number of Latinos from specific hearths in Latin America; that the nodes funnel migrant workers from those hearths into the transnational social networks; and that those flows of migrants include both documented and undocumented workers.

This project's particular focus is the transnational social networks utilized by Latinos with nodes in the so-called New Latino South. My aim is to examine how Latino immigrants develop, maintain, and utilize transnational social networks by juxtaposing two groups of Latino migrants, each group originating from a different Latin American country and currently residing in different communities in the American South: Mexicans from the state of Guanajuato and Hondurans from the department of El Paraíso. Both of these groups are spread through different cities and towns that represent nodes in a transnational network. However, some nodes are more significant within migrant networks of specific groups than other nodes and serve as hubs for mobile Latinos in the United States. Previously, these communities were almost exclusively located in traditional Latino or Hispanic gateway cities, such as Los Angeles or Houston. Yet, in the past three decades a shift has been underway that redirects the flow of Latinos away from these long-established destinations. New settlement trends designate southern metropolitan areas, such as Nashville, TN, Charlotte, NC, and Atlanta, GA, as emerging reception cities for Latin Americans bound for the United States. Similarly, New Orleans, LA—which less than a century ago boasted key commercial and migration ties to Latin America—has after Hurricane Katrina reemerged as a prominent destination for Latino immigrants. It is within these types of nodes that I base the weight of my investigation into transnational social networks. For Mexicans, the metropolitan area of Nashville operates as the nodal focal point in the migration network of transnational migrants from Guanajuato (and other Mexican states). New Orleans is the principle site of focus in my analysis of transnational migrants originating primarily from El Paraíso, but also from other locales in the interior of Honduras as well as the Nicaraguan border community of Jalapa.

The research for this dissertation is conducted using a transnational mixed methods approach to address the social processes through which Latino migrants find work, travel, and obtain documentation through transnational social networks and to assess the formation of such networks across national borders. This methodology triangulates multiple data sources collected through multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in both the countries of migrants' origin and destination as well as published scholarly work and various secondary sources (e.g., relevant literature, media,). This garners a more thorough understanding of transnational social networks and elucidates the geographic dimensions that influence contemporary transnational migrants. The techniques used to generate qualitative data include the following: participant observation, formal and informal interviews, and focus groups. This research is cross-cultural, and fieldwork involved direct and sustained social contact with migrants and other agents involved in the transnational social networks under study in order to gain access to members of these multi-sited networks and to reveal the full scope of experiences in which the individuals embedded in these networks are engaged.

In terms of intellectual merit, this dissertation contributes to a growing body of research on the impact of transnational social networks have on local and national politics, development, ethnic and national identity, and gender and family relations by revealing influences these networks have on labor and their involvement in the processes of landscape transformation through which places change over time and space. This project also has a broader social impact because the United States is the largest recipients of immigrants in the world, the majority of them Latino and many of them transnational migrants in the sense that they maintain strong familial, cultural, social, political, and economic relations in both their communities of origin

and in the United States. This study, therefore, amplifies our knowledge of the character, scope, and scale of the processes involved in transnational social networks related to migrant labor and their potential impact on communities in the United States. As a final point, by juxtaposing two case studies of transnational social networks, this research highlights the importance of a geographical perspective in migration scholarship, particularly transnational studies, by giving attention to the relationship between migration and place. That is, the effect place (and space) has on the mobility and survival strategies of transnational migrants and the effect transnational migrants have on the various communities in which they interact.

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Each chapter is further divided into sections. Following this introduction to the topic, hypothesis, and objectives of this research, chapter two synthesizes a brief but descriptive overview of scholarly approaches to human migration with an emphasis on the theoretical and substantive contributions of geographers. Chapter two also engages the concept of transnationalism by considering how its theoretical application from a geographic perspective strengthens academic scrutiny of migrant networks. Chapter three expounds on the methodology applied in this research. I give further detail about how my target population was selected and elaborate on my incorporation into the communities of these transnational migrant groups. Chapter four focuses on transnational Mexicans from Guanajuato living in Nashville. In this chapter, I present a history of Mexican migration to the United States before discussing how Nashville emerged as a new destination for immigrants from central Mexico. I then analyze the city's central role in the transnational social networks of *Los Inmigrantes Guanajuatenses*. Chapter five examines transnational social networks of Hondurans from El Paraíso based in New Orleans and the establishment of a new nodal

destination in Cookeville, TN. This chapter also begins with a review of the migratory history between the United States and Honduras. I compare and contrast the results of both case studies in chapter six. By juxtaposing Mexicans' transnational social networks with those of Hondurans, a clearer picture comes into view on how these social networks factor into the mobility of Latinos in the United States. Chapter seven brings together the summaries of concepts and propositions explored in this dissertation and argues for the application of geographical inquiry in social networks of transnational migrants.

Endnotes

¹ In his dissertation, I use the term “migrant” and “immigrant” interchangeable. The word “immigrant” is often used to describe a person who migrates to another country for permanent residence. In the case of the participants in this study, permanent settlement is not always part of their overall migration strategies. England (2006) and myself (Chaney 2012) have used the term “transmigrant” to describe contemporary transnational immigrants. In this work, however, I only use the terms “migrant” and “immigrant,” though; I add the adjective “transnational” to these labels in places.

² Harvey (1989) has remarked that previous interpretations and relationships between time and space have been altered by the proliferation of new innovative technologies in communication (telephones, fax machines, internet) and travel (auto, rail, air travel). He argues that capitalism is the principle motive behind this space-time compression as the need to overcome spatial distances is required in order to maintain capitalism's expansion. By reducing time and space, production cycles are accelerated and new markets develop.

The sociological result of this time-space compression, which is central to globalization, has been described by Giddens (1990) as an intensification of global social relations that now link localities in ways never before experienced in human history. Further, he asserts that these worldwide connections are so strong and instantaneous that what happens in one location directly influences events in places far away. While neither Harvey nor Giddens were speaking specifically about contemporary immigration, the current theories relating to transnationalism are built upon their observations. Both the global forces of capitalism and the collapse of time and distance through technological advancement are central to contemporary human mobility and our attachment to place and each other.

³ The United States Census Bureau applies the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” to an individual of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. I use both terms in this dissertation, although the participants in this study routinely use the label “Latino” to describe themselves and others from Latin America.

⁴ U.S. population figures in this dissertation are based on data provided by the United States Census Bureau unless otherwise cited. All U.S. decennial census enumerations are found at www.census.gov. Quick references are available through the U.S. Census' American Factfinder application, while data compiled in Summary Files 1 and 3 (SF 1 and 3) give more detailed information about the demographic composite and distribution of persons whom identify themselves as Hispanic. Data from SF 3 was used for various decennial census counts and are cited in the text by the year. However, criteria used by the Census Bureau to identify and record persons as "Hispanic" or "Latino," continues to evolve from decennial count to count. This results in limitations in sequential tracing of demographic trends and patterns. Furthermore, undocumented populations are sometimes reluctant to participate in census counts. This reluctance suggests that the official enumerations published may be undercounts (see Romero 1992).

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHY'S CHANGING ROLE IN MIGRATION SCHOLARSHIP

“...international migration is a constant, not an aberration, in human history.”
—Castles and Miller 2009:299

Migration of any sort is a geographic undertaking. Thus, it only makes sense that geography should be part of any conceptual framework that explores phenomena of human migration. In this chapter, I highlight the principle approaches to and theories of migration that geographers have contributed to scholarship and those originating from other social science that have been significant to migration research in geography. Of course, a complete, thorough synthesis of all the ideas, conceptions, and contribution of geographers of over centuries would require a much more capacious document than a dissertation chapter. For that reason, I present a selective outline of the more influential thoughts and approaches in migration scholarship that have guided the discipline's analytical focus in North America before exploring contemporary concepts currently being engaged.

The Roots of Migration Scholarship in Geography

In some ways, one could argue that academic scrutiny of migration practices and patterns has roots firmly based in the discipline of geography. Carl Ritter, one of the founders of modern geography, speculated that human populations had been in continuous motion throughout history and was of the opinion that the nomadic peoples of his time were remnants of prehistoric tribes (Kluckhohn and Prufer 1959). His thesis on migration and development focused on the interrelation between human groups and their physical environments. Like his German contemporaries, Ritter looked for ways to illustrate how different groups of people's experiences and situations were a product of their particular histories. Unlike others, such as Wilhelm Von

Humboldt whose ideas of different human histories centered on psychological factors, Ritter conceived that physical environments determined human development, arguing: “The customs of individuals and nations differ in all countries, because man is dependent on the nature of his dwelling-place” (1863: 318 quoted in Bunzl 1998: 41). From this context, he sought to establish a law of migration governed by landscapes (i.e., coastal plains, mountain ranges, rivers).

Some years after Ritter’s death, Fredrick Ratzel, who had been introduced to Ritter’s work by Mortiz Wagner, set out to further explain the dispersal of humans by means of geographic features. Ratzel, too, wanted to deduce and systemize past human mobility and migration by means of geographic determinants (see Ratzel 1882, 1891). His interest in human migration originated from his travels to North America but was cultivated through his friendship with Wagner (Sauer 1971). Wagner's views on migration were formulated around the idea that the various evolutionary paths of different species were a consequence of isolated development (Minot 1890). From a Darwinian perspective, he posited that after migrating into a new habitat, species adapted accordingly for survival (Wagner 1873). Although Wagner’s generalizations about the effects of migration and geographic isolation broadly applied to all of the earth’s flora and fauna, he took an interest in the human movement and migration from his travels through the Mediterranean and the Americas—particularly in German immigration and settlement in the United States. Therefore, it is of little doubt that Wagner’s work was on Ratzel’s mind when he toured the United States in the 1870s. Upon returning to Germany 1875, Ratzel began publishing papers on human migration and its cultural impacts among other topics. He expanded on Wagner’s premise of geographical diversity as a circumstance of time and movement by applying it to cultural traits of different peoples (Sauer 1971). And, in this regard, he advocated

an anthropogeographic methodology that involved geographic descriptions of a given region and a rigorous ethnographic inquiry of the people(s) who inhabited that region. Information gathered from this approach could then be coalesced into a synthesis representative of the various cultural and historical differences of humankind (Semple 1900). Ratzel's publication *Anthropogeographie* (vol. 1 1882 and vol. 2 1891), which promoted his theories about human distribution and human-to-nature relationships, would later have considerable influence on American geographers such as Carl Sauer and Ellen Churchill Semple (Mathewson 1996).

Ratzel's ideas on human movement, expansion, and colonization were not only of interest to scholars studying past migration but were also pertinent to the present state of affairs in Germany and beyond (Mendieta 2006).¹ And, whether he intended it or not, his concept of *Lebensraum* (1901) would later be perverted to support the bellicose expansion of the Third Reich (Wanklyn 1961; Olwig 1998). Nevertheless, under its original meaning, *Lebensraum* simply stood for the geographical surface area required to support a living species. When applied to human populations, a certain society or nation was metaphorically described as a living organism. This perspective viewed colonization as a principle component of *Lebensraum* (Smith 1980). Ratzel was a proponent of the German colonial movement, and he believed that colonization—which could include invasion and conquest—was necessary for a people to cultivate new farmland as a means to maintain a society, in particular one with a large agrarian base.

It was after the defeat of the German Empire in World War I that Ratzel's concept of *Lebensraum* gained popularity among German nationalist and conservative politicians searching for an ideology with the characteristic of scientific respectability that legitimized disregarding

the Treaty of Versailles and justified the reconquest of the vital territories considered stolen from the German *Volk* (Smith 1980). During the interbellum period, misrepresented ideas of Lebensraum were disseminated by conservative ideologues as a means to attract support for radical German conservatism. The loose use of analogies to explain Lebensraum by describing political states as organisms needing space to grow was conceptually simple enough for people to grasp and enabled politicians and expansionists, including Adolf Hitler, to distort the concept for propaganda purposes (Troll and Fisher 1949; Basin 1987). Thus, by the 1930s Lebensraum had become the Nazi Party's argument for military-backed German expansion (Housden 2001).

However, the demise of Nazi Germany, brought an abrupt end to the Lebensraum project, and in the discipline of geography, Lebensraum's association with German geopolitical aggression compelled many researchers to refrain from using biological metaphors (e.g., organic) to describe political entities (e.g. nation-states) and ethnic groups (Harvey 1990; Olwig 1998). In the United States, academic geography briefly moved towards a more descriptive science in an attempt to narrow the discipline's analytical focus to the study of place and location of regions. Many geographers, most notably Richard Hartshorne (1939; 1956), believed that by casting aside value-laden terms such as "landscape" and abandoning the inquiry to historical relationships between environments and societies, academic geography would become an objective scientific field that could steer clear of political discourse. This mode of thought, labeled "regional geography," soon gave way to a quantitative overhaul that centered geographical analysis on numerical techniques and methodology (Burton 1963). This newfound enthusiasm for mathematical models and inferential statistics followed the prevailing positivist trend occurring across academia in the 1950s and 1960s. Like regional geography, the new

quantitative geography endeavored to make the discipline more objective. This charge was led by Schaeffer whose influential 1953 paper countered Hartshorne's regional approach to academic geography. Schaeffer argued that the aim of geographers should be to strive to uncover general laws (Peet 1998). Schaeffer's interests were mainly in economic geography, but his views were concurrent with the quantitative movement taking place in post-war academia. Even in sociology, quantitative methods were being employed to uncover laws and detect generalizations concerning social processes, like behavioral patterns, population forecasting, and migration.

Positivist Approaches to Migration

The brief account above highlights a paradigm shift in geography that is crucial for understanding the constricted theoretical scope of migration research produced by American geographers in the second half of the twentieth century. Approaches and methodologies applied to migration studies followed the general trend occurring in other sub-disciplines in geography. This so-called quantitative revolution involved a positivist perspective that sought to eliminate subjectivity through the development of empirical facts. These facts were acquired through mathematical equations and models from which it was assumed spatial laws and norms could be identified and then universally applied to different locations and regions (Barnes 2001). Thus, geographers studying migration were focused on finding patterns and regularities within the spatial flows on migrants. Both Ritter and Ratzel had also pursued general laws of migration, and Ratzel's work later gave contours to Semple's (1911) arguments as to why humans migrate, as well as how their environments determine their cultural and behavioral development. Yet, Ratzel's theories on migration were no longer appealing, and Semple's environmental

determinism had been deemed invalid. As a result, geographers had to look elsewhere for methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks that could provide the scientific, value-free results they desired.

Geographers found a starting point for quantitative research in the work of Ernest George Ravenstein (1885, 1889), a fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, who in 1885 had outlined a series of “laws of migration” which aimed to predict migration trends and patterns using census data (Lee 1966; Zelinsky 1971; Tobler 1995). Ravenstein’s analytical approach was attractive because it relied on methodological individualism, which treats individual migrants purely as the unit of analysis (Samers 2010). Ravenstein examined population movements within the United Kingdom at the county level by comparing census data from 1871 and 1881. He surmised that population fluctuations in counties were due not only to simple birth/death rates but also to immigration and emigration. In order to test this, he divided the United Kingdom’s population into simple classifications based on whether a person was native to the county he or she currently resided in; if person had moved from a bordering county; if a person was originally from the kingdom (i.e., England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) or from another; or if a person had immigrated from another country all together. Ravenstein also included the sex of individuals in his analysis. Therefore, he was able to identify distinctions in the migratory behaviors of men and women. Ravenstein’s model opened the door to population tracking within the British Isles. Counties could be delineated as either a county of absorption (1885:198) or a county of dispersal (1885:199). Counties of absorption took in more migrants than the number of emigrants they lost. In contrast, counties of dispersion had a net loss of population due to the higher number of residents emigrating than immigrating. As migration patterns—or “currents” as Ravenstein

labeled then (1885:198)—emerged from this vast data compiled through the United Kingdom’s census, Ravenstein argued that they could be generalized as laws. Initially, he proposed seven laws, summarized as follows:

1. Most migrants travel only a short distance, which can develop into a current of migration to urban centers of commerce and industry (i.e., absorption centers), which is reflected in the number of people in the area of origin and the number of people in the area of destination.
2. As a consequence of the first law, gaps in rural population as people move to urban centers of absorption are filled by individuals who migrate from other rural areas. This creates a population movement/migration that filters to all corners of a nation (and beyond).
3. The process of absorption in areas occurs at the expense of areas of dispersion.
4. Following the third law, then, each main current creates a compensating counter-current of migration.
5. Great centers of commerce or industry are more capable of attracting migrants from farther distances.
6. Urban residents are less migratory than those of rural areas.
7. Females are more migratory for short distances than males.

According to Ravenstein, the main impetus behind migration is the search for labor and better and/or stable wages. These centers of commerce and industry are in need of laborers and potential laborers are in need of employment. However, both are “unevenly spread in space” (White and Woods 1980:7). Therefore, the economic development of urban areas act as a magnet that pulls workers from other areas. In like manner, areas of few economic opportunities and low wages can push emigrants to growing urbanized centers. Ravenstein classifies migrants as those who travelled only short distances; those who travelled long distances; stage migrants; and temporary migrants. In each case, economics was the only determinant behind migration considered by Ravenstein. Castles and Miller (2009:22) criticize this approach for being,

“individualistic and ahistoric,” because it assumes that migrants are entirely knowledgeable about the wage differences and economic situations of potential migration destinations. Furthermore, how they obtain this knowledge, actually make the move, secure employment, and find housing is not provided by his model, nor does it consider any social or historical possibilities. Nevertheless, certain principles still appear valid today, such as the intense economic pull of large, dynamic urban centers (see Sassen 1991; Castells 1996; Frey 1998).

Ravenstein’s methodology for analyzing migratory “currents” established the general systematic framework for a deluge of migration studies in the twentieth century. The emphasis on economic factors as the principle force behind both long and short distance movement made his model attractive to social scientists outside geography (Castles and Millier 2009; Samers 2010). Lee’s (1966, 1969) later reformulation of Ravenstein’s Laws into a “Push-Pull” theory of migration enabled researchers to weave push and pull causes into neoclassical theories of migration surrounding labor demands and supply in a global economy. Many of these neoclassical views are still prevalent in migration studies and have been applied to macro-level research on migration between Latin America and the United States (Massey et al.1998). For example, Poire’s (1979) theory of dual (referred to also as “segmented”) labor markets argues that developed nations require workforces made up of both high and low human capital. The lack of low skilled workers among a native population for secondary jobs can prompt employers to look to migrants as potential employees. Thus, developed nations are the force pulling immigrants from their home communities to fill jobs in advanced economies. In larger urban areas, labor can be segmented into particular geographic locations of a metropolitan area, thus giving rise to ethnic enclaves where low skilled migrant laborers are concentrated (Portes and

Bach 1985). Indeed, this is observable in current Latin American immigrant communities in the southeastern United States, such as Nashville (see Chaney 2010).

Push-pull factors have also been utilized in structuralist explanations for international migration. Wallerstein's (1974) seminal "world system theory" arranged nation-states into a hierarchal system involving core, semi-periphery, and periphery rankings based on their role in a global capitalist economy. Within this theoretical model, individuals from poorer, less-developed countries are compelled to immigrate (pushed) to core countries in search of work due to disruptions in traditional agricultural and other basic labor sectors. These disruptions are brought on by the reorganization and exploitation of peripheral economies by powerful capitalist multinational corporations (often headquartered in core countries). A key component of world system theory is its argument that the current global economy can be chronologically linked to the development of European capital markets in the 16th century. For dependency theorists, this gave a historical foundation to their claims that international migration was a "structural consequence of the expansion of markets within a global political hierarchy" (Hirshman, Kasinitz, and DeWind 1999:41). By the 1980s, Wallerstein's theory had gained currency with scholars seeking macro-economic explanations for migratory flows between Latin America and the United States due to its central premise that global markets and multinational corporations wield direct influence over raw resources, land, and labor in underdeveloped nation-states (Portes and Walton 1981; Massey 1988).

If Ravenstein's laws set the scholarly tone in migration studies for geographers and other social scientists, then C. Warren Thornthwaite's work was, perhaps, the prototype for quantitative models of migratory patterns (and urban development) in American geography.

Known more for his contributions to climatology during the 1950s and 1960s, Thornthwaite (1934) also published a short book on internal migration in the United States based on census data. His methodologies involved concepts and techniques that would later become commonplace in geographic analysis of migration (Wheeler and Brunn 2002). Like Ravenstein, Thornthwaite considered economic factors to be the primary motivation for relocation. He described population movements with climatic terminologies that gave his migration processes a certain scientific character. For example, to illustrate forces compelling individuals to move from one place to another, he explained (1934:1), “the amount of migration from one area to another is directly proportional to the pressure gradient between them.” Although Thornthwaite’s methodology did not involve complex mathematical formulas, he did reference Ohm’s Law ($I = E/R$), comparing migratory currents to electric currents. This type of differential attraction model would later become common among economists; however, Thornthwaite’s work is rarely referenced (Tobler 1995; Wheeler and Brunn 2002).

What is equally intriguing about Thornthwaite’s dalliance in migration and urban geography are his mentors and influences. His professional interest in human geography occurred while he completed his doctorate (1930) at the University of California at Berkeley. Thornthwaite’s dissertation examined the urban development of Louisville, KY, from an analytical stance (Wheeler and Brunn 2002). His dissertation advisor was Carl Sauer, who later helped him secure a position as the chief of the Climatic and Physiographic Research Section of the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C., and was undoubtedly influential in his views on human geography. It was probably this relationship with Sauer that led him to minor in anthropology at Berkeley.

Thornthwaite's time at Berkeley coincided with the expanding rift in American academic geography brought on by two competing traditions mentioned earlier in this chapter. The Berkeley School (led by Sauer) stood as the citadel for an academic geography centered on the physical, cultural, and historical analysis of landscapes and places. On the other hand, the Midwestern School of thought (associated with Hartshorne) endorsed a descriptive, regional approach to geographic analysis. This disciplinary fissure undoubtedly played some role as to why Thornthwaite did not continue researching human (urban) geography, as well as why his early work on the matter remained largely unknown for decades to follow. Wheeler and Brunn (2002:467) suggest that in the 1920s and 1930s, doctoral dissertations on urban geography were primarily written through the theoretical lenses of the Midwestern School, which primarily sought to describe economic factors and regional land uses. In contrast, Thornthwaite employed an analytical methodology based on research and fieldwork in specific urban area. Therefore, his dissertation was topical rather than regional. This seems to have contributed to the difficulties Thornthwaite had getting articles from his dissertation published. Simply put, his form of geographical analysis was not intellectually en vogue during the 1930s. After receiving the position with the Department of Agriculture, Thornthwaite abandoned all professional research in urban geography and migration.

The disciplinary direction and boundaries of earlier twentieth century American geography were also being formulated outside the discipline itself. While geographers, particularly those studying urban areas and population, chose a strictly quantitative path to generate data, other social scientists were carving out their discipline's methodological turf. Sociologist Robert Park of the Chicago School (another influence on Thornthwaite) aggressively

sought to differentiate the methodological and analytical roles of disciplines considered social science—mainly those between geography and sociology. Park is best known for his research on migration, assimilation, and race relations based on his and his colleagues' ethnographic fieldwork in the immigrant communities in Chicago during the 1920s (Ballis Lal 1990). Park was familiar with the migration research of geographers, citing Semple in his paper "Human Migration and the Marginal Man" (1928). Similar to German geography of the time, he comfortably included biological terminologies to explain demographic phenomena taking place among the various immigrant groups settling in the city of Chicago. His research fell under the label of human ecology, which at the University of Chicago at the time was considered the disciplinary intersection of sociology and geography (Gross 2004). However, the regional turn in geography—initially launched in 1918 by Fennerman (1919) and later propagated by Hartshorne—allowed Park (1921:8) to divorce geography from human ecology and unabashedly pigeonhole the discipline as:

[A science] concerned with the visible world, the earth, its location in space, the distribution of the land masses, and of the plants, animals, and peoples upon its surface. . . . As soon as the geographer begins to compare and classify the plants, animals, and the peoples with which he comes in contact, geography passes over into the special sciences, i.e., botany, zoology, and anthropology.

Hepple (2008: 1538) argues the Park was determined to demote "geography to a minor, idiographic role" in human ecology. To Park, whose approach to research was grounded in American Pragmatist philosophy, methodologies in sociology were to be centered on ethnography and encourage direct engagement with the individuals and communities under study (Deegan 2001; Gross 2004). In contrast, Park's contemporaries among American geographers opted more and more for positivist methods to explore human and social processes, which of

course did not require researchers to participate in or directly communicate with target populations. Consequently, ethnography simply drifted out of the methodological toolkits of geographers.

From Abstract Models and Determinist Accounts to Integrative Analytical Frameworks

Another underlying characteristic of migration literature produced by geographers through much of the twentieth century was the primary objective to formulate overly-general theories of migrations (Findlay 1992). These concepts were abstractly designed to apply to all migratory processes regardless of the racial, ethnic, religious, political, or national differences that defined migrants under examination. Geographers attempting to explain the nature of migration patterns from a quantitative point of view often relied on physical analogue models (Gale 1973). A perfect example is the gravity model, which was first applied to migration by Young (1924) and later reintroduced by Stewart (1947) and Zipf (1946). Gravity models posit that movement between two places is a result of population size (mass) of and the distance between the places in question.² In other words, the gravitation attraction between two locations influences migration flows. Stouffer's (1940, 1960) law of intervening opportunities also puts forth a general abstract theory postulating that the migratory pull capability between two locations is determined by the known opportunities available in each place rather than distance.

Both gravity models and Stouffer's law have their analytical roots in Ravenstein's laws (Greenwood and Hunt 2003). These approaches were attractive to geographers and other social scientists because they are relatively simple to develop, and if census data is available are universally applicable to all spatial scales of migration (i.e., local, inter-state, national,

interregional, and global). Zelinsky (1971) insisted, however, that general theories of migration must also include a temporal dimension. His hypothesis of "mobile transition" stated that the rate of mobility increases as a society (nation-state) experiences economic advancement. Therefore, as a country advances along a linear path of development so, too, will the level of migration follow a certain pattern. Zelinsky's argument was not a critique of analogue models but rather an additional analytical tool that could generally account for different migratory phases during the economic evolution of nation-states.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new branch of structuralist (or historical-institutional) approaches, such as the aforementioned dependency theory and world system theory, provided migration scholars a new theoretical dimension of determinist explanations that were believed capable of providing a universally-applicable explanation for the mass movement of people from former colonies to former colonial metropolises (e.g., the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and France) and neo-colonizer states (e.g., the United States). Developed through Marxist and neo-Marxist theories, these concepts were originally designed to explain internal migratory phenomena but later were expanded to describe the causality behind major migratory flows occurring between developed and developing nation-states. The post-war boom years in Western nations were marked by an influx of migrants filling labor shortages. These theories, critical of global capitalism and the consumer-based economies of first world states, presumed that migration was a direct result of inequalities between wealthy and poor nation-states (Zolberg 1989). Proponents argued that structuralist concepts correctly illustrated how a capitalist world order created and maintained dominant/subordinate relationship between certain world regions.

An analytical caveat regarding both the abstract models and the structuralist arguments for migration relates to their goodness of fit and predictive capabilities. The gravity model suffers from the simple fact that it is too abstract to ever fit real world migration patterns. Moreover, Skeldon (1990:45) points out that Zelinsky's migration transition hypothesis was never based on empirical results and stresses the need for more scrutiny and revisions. Many of the general conceptual models developed by positivists shared a simple tenet with structuralist scholars: that market forces were the determinant force behind migration (Borjas 1989). In other words, wage disparities between two locations are the sole engine driving migration flows.

Such an assumption is flawed in several ways. First, it deemphasizes the impact that national governments can have on internal and international migration. Second, a purely market-focused concept can only function if migrants are rational economic actors who are aware of wage differences in different locations (Castles and Miller 2009). Thereupon this assumption leads to another fallacy, especially within the structuralist and neoclassical veins of thought: if market forces are the chief determinant which motivate potential migrants, and if these potential migrants hail from poor, rural classes before moving to wealthy, developed countries, then these migration flows should mainly be made up of persons escaping poverty and lack of opportunity in their home countries. This is hardly the case.

While economic factors are certainly an important determinant, and while many immigrants seek some form of a better life as they relocate, contemporary immigration is made up of individuals from all socioeconomic classes (Samers 2010). Motivations behind emigration are not solely based on wage disparities, nor do potential emigrants always leave rural, underdeveloped communities for larger advanced communities. This is evident in Marcus'

(2009, 2010) multi-sited ethnographic case studies of Brazilian immigrants in Boston and Atlanta. Marcus highlights that fact that many Brazilians come from middle class backgrounds and hail from large metropolitan areas like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Furthermore, he argues that the motivation to emigrate is not to escape abject poverty or joblessness, but rather a curiosity and sense of adventure cultivated by their geographical imagination of the United States. Similarly, Walton-Roberts (2004) demonstrates in her research on Indian migration to Canada that the national immigration policies of Canada encourage "skilled worker" immigrants, which has resulted in a steep rise in the flow of educated immigrants from India rather than unskilled or semi-skilled immigrations from the lower classes of Indian society.

The explanatory appeal of abstract mathematical models and omnipotent capitalist forces has no doubt waned in migration scholarship. However, their explanatory powers have not been completely supplanted as much as they have been relegated to just one of a host of possible factors or approaches researchers can deploy as a means to understand contemporary migration. In the last few decades, new ideas from across the social sciences have brought into question the reliance scholars place on grand theories and quantitative methodologies to capture the reality of any social phenomena. These new perspectives—often falling under the paradigmatic labels of postmodern and poststructuralist—have challenged the primacy of positivism and empiricism. Contrary to overarching theories, postmodernism questions objectivity and rejects notions of absolute truths, arguing that such ideas and metanarratives are socially constructed and subject to change (Lyotard 1984; Duncan and Ley 1993). In essence, postmodernist approaches require the researcher to reconceive his or her concept of culture, society, and behavior when a study involves the representation or explanation of any human activity. These approaches have been

the key for developing discourses that are sensitive to alterity, difference, and the Other (Duncan 1996). Furthermore, their analytical perspectives broaden the study of power and power relations beyond the confines of simple economic and structural concepts. Individuals are recognized as having agency, and attention is given to the influence they wield on other individuals, groups, culture, space, and place. To operate from within this perspective, researchers must examine these practices, routines, and life strategies in local contexts, thus, reducing the scale of inquiry to everyday lives and individual actions rather than conducting broad studies that aim to generalize actions and patterns.

In geography, postmodernism and poststructuralism have been pivotal in the discipline's cultural turn, laying the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of a research agenda critically concerned with social practices, human agency, identity, and the politics of representation (Duncan and Ley 1993; Jackson 2010). “New” cultural geographers recognize the plurality (or complexity) of culture(s), find interest in subcultures, and question their positionality as researchers (Jackson 1989). They demonstrate how to textually interpret human-made landscapes and identify the politics and discourse of power embedded within architecture (see Duncan 1990). They explore discursive practices and the different ways in which power relations are managed, imposed, and evaded. Furthermore, poststructuralist perspectives provoke cultural geographers to raise questions as to why certain people, things, ideas, and places have been well-represented while others have been missing from the analytical focus and scholarly representation of researchers (Shurmer-Smith 2002). In this vein, postcolonial and feminist theorists set out to elucidate the experiences of the subaltern.

For migration studies, postmodernism and poststructuralism open up an array of approaches to understanding past and present human mobility. However, to successfully work within these paradigms, researchers must often employ methodological strategies that require getting their hands dirty in the field. That is, in order to analyze migratory practices, researchers often must directly engage those migrants (and other actors) whom they are studying. An emphasis should be placed on the researcher's subjectivity as well as his or her intersubjectivity with the target population within the specific contexts of place, space, and positionality (Dowling 2005). Factors such as residential status, income level, education level, racial and ethnic identities, gender, sexuality, and religion all play an integral part in how a researcher interacts with the participants of a study. Likewise, where these interactions take place affect dialogues, perceptions, actions, and relationships. Thus, researchers must always be critical of his or her representation of others as well as of social and cultural practices. This, of course, stands in direct opposition to a positivist stance that assumed that accurate representation human behavior could be produced through mostly quantitative means.

Another characteristic of contemporary migration scholarship that emerged from the postmodern and poststructural line of thought is the development of research agendas that are informed by multidisciplinary perspectives. This creates a more holistic approach to understanding the dynamic and diverse forms that human migration takes. By pulling from different corners of social sciences, migration researchers are more capable of assembling methodological and conceptual frameworks that capture general patterns, while simultaneously teasing out distinct practices and strategies particular to a migrant group. This has resulted in scholarly collaborations in migration scholarship across the academic fields of sociology, social

anthropology, history, political science, and more recently human geography (e.g. Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León 2005; Massey 2008; Faist, Fauser, and Kivisto 2011). The point of intersection of these different philosophies creates an interdisciplinary space that incorporates and scrutinizes myriad ideas, hypotheses, concepts, viewpoints, ethics, and methods put forth by different academic specializations. It is within this space that migration scholars can construct research schemes and techniques tailored to the study and interpretation of a range of migratory phenomena. Thus, a variety of concepts and ideas comes into play which migration researchers can flexibly employ to explain macro and micro processes during a time of rapid social and economic change provoked by globalization (Brettell and Hollifield 2008). This allows researchers to weave together the general economic, political, and religious causes behind migration with the personal perspectives, accounts, and influences of the individuals involved in each particular process. The results are studies that more accurately capture the complexities of contemporary human migration as well as the nuances particular to different groups, locales, and spaces.

I locate my research and methodological approach within this interdisciplinary space and endeavor to contribute a geographical insight into human mobility to its repository of concepts and perspectives. From here, I turn my attention to the central themes and ideas that inform my research.

Transnationalism, Networks, and the Geographical Concepts of Place, Space, and Scale.

In the introduction of this dissertation, I define and explain the concept of transnationalism, which has become intensely popular as of late in the lexicon of migration

scholarship. Yet, it is the term's extensive employment to describe a seemingly endless range of contemporary migration practices and processes that threatens its theoretical and explanatory value (Vertovic 2001). Smith and Guarnizo (1998:4) warn that transnationalism runs the risk of "becoming an empty conceptual vessel," and, as a consequence, too vague to be a useful analytical tool. Indeed, the term transnationalism, like "globalization," has taken on a catch-all quality. It may be its "inherently transgressive quality," as Mitchell (1997:101) explains, that makes it so appealing, as transnational practices enable migrants at some level to challenge the powers and policies of central states. Whatever the reason, migration scholars have been liberal with its usage and continue to find ways of flexibly applying it to almost all activities that migrants engage in between their destination country and country of origin.

Moreover, participation in transnational social fields has also been extended to non-migrants in both home and host countries, thus raising serious questions about the limits of transnationalism's conceptual reach. Just as one could argue that globalization touches all of our lives in one form or another, one could also argue that we all engage directly or indirectly in some level of transnational activities, whether they be interactions with family members deployed in military services overseas; affiliation with religious or community organizations financially supporting communities in the developing world; or the international businessperson who must continuously engage in communities and societies outside his or her home country. These are certainly extreme examples of transnationalism; nevertheless, without putting up conceptual parameters around the various social, economic, or political activities that reach outside the borders of a nation-state, transnationalism begins to lose its analytical capabilities.

Geographical approaches offer a solution to this quandary by linking the geography of migrant transnational spaces with sociological discourses of social space in order to determine who operates in cross-border relationships for various needs. This is achievable through a sophisticated treatment of spatial concepts. For some theorists, like Bhabha (1994), the abstract appeal of transnationalism is the idea of “in-betweenness” and “hybridity,” wherein the marginalized have unbounded spaces to resist hegemonic narratives of race, culture, or nation. Nevertheless, transnational migrants are still bound to physical locales. Whether in a sending or receiving community, migrants and non-migrants involved in transnational activities are directly affected by place, boundaries, territories, distance, and the laws and policies of different levels of government. Therefore, transnational activities all occur in spaces located between or among fixed places. Accordingly, researchers must be sensitive to the political, social, and cultural boundaries that divide as well as connect the physical places located within transnational social fields by considering how specific places influence migration flows and behaviors (Cravey 2003; Samers 2010). Implementing such an approach in scholarly inquiry also helps to elucidate how migration flows rearrange, change, or manipulate the physical and social characteristics of both destination and origin communities.

The level of engagement of migrants and non-migrants in activities considered transnational can be better assessed by considering spatial or geographic factors in research methodologies. Voigt-Graf (2004) aptly demonstrates this in her comparison of the transnational experiences of three different ethnic Indian communities located in multiple countries throughout the globe. She develops spatial models based on each group’s culture, locations, and migration history in order to uncover how different Indian immigrants and their relatives organize

transnational spaces. Voigt-Graf's case studies show that transnationalism manifests itself in different ways depending on the migrant group in question. However, equally crucial in determining migration flows and immigration strategies is the question of where transnational migrants are located in determining migration flows and immigration strategies. She points to how the different socioeconomic and political situation of each immigration destination factor into the different lifestyle choices transnational migrants make, such as relocation, marriage partners, and employment.

Voigt-Graf's emphasis on transnational networks and nodes is the aspect of her study which is most pertinent to my research. The diasporic character of Indian immigration creates social webs that are nodal in nature and planet-spanning. Voigt-Graf illustrates how nodes are added to networks by virtue of new migration and can disappear when migration and communication flows with other nodes cease. Thus, these transnational networks are dynamic rather than static or fixed and are responsive to an ambit of cultural, political and economic factors that are found in each nodal community.

The theoretical basis for migration networks can be found in network theory (Taylor 1986; Massey and García-España 1987; Boyd 1989; Massey et al. 1993). Network theory, sometimes referred to as "chain migration" in older migration literature (see Price 1963), states that the interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants are the key component behind migration flows. These interpersonal ties include kinship, friendships, and other kinds of acquaintances in both sending and receiving communities. They function as a strategic means to minimize risks and hardships associated with immigration (Krissman 2005; Castles 2007). For immigrants who possess low human capital, these networks are attractive

because they can provide employment opportunities to low- or semi-skilled jobs in destination countries. They also may provide potential migrants the information necessary to initiate emigration—for example, through these networks, migrants can find crucial border-crossing contacts for individuals without proper documentation (Herman 2006). And once new migrants have arrived at a destination, other established migrants in that network are usually available to help newcomers find housing and meet other needs.

Network theory is definitely an expedient approach to contemporary immigration studies, especially when conducting qualitative research from a postmodern perspective. This is because it recognizes the agency of migrants embedded in networks while not discarding the structural forces that at some level affect migration flows, such as wage disparities, political conflicts, and immigration laws of the states. However, while network theory acknowledges that market stimuli do play a role in migration flows, individuals remain the key actors that ultimately make the decision about movement between origin and destination communities (Neumann and Massey 1994). These actors rely on their social relationships to relocate. At times, these decisions may be taken in consultation with other family members or friends. Yet it is important to note that the relationship between actors is frequently asymmetrical in that certain actors hold more power than others. Migrants long-established in a destination community can act as gatekeepers and can choose to provide or withhold vital information or even employment to those wishing to emigrate. This means they are capable of influencing who can come and who cannot. Potential migrants in sending communities usually will not risk emigrating if important actors in receiving communities are not supportive.

This power dynamic between different network actors can be explained by Bourdieu's (1986) idea of "social capital." Social capital has been one of the most successful conceptual exports from sociology to other social sciences in recent decades (Portes 2000; Adler and Kwon 2002). In its original theoretical conceptualization, the term "social capital" simply applies to social relationships and ties intentionally accrued by individuals and groups in hopes of securing socioeconomic benefits in the future. It also argues that the level of cohesion among members of a particular community is enhanced by social capital in that individuals are able to build relationships more easily with each other based on the similar cultural knowledge they share. Small (2009:6) refers to this as "the obligations that people who are connected may feel toward each other, the sense of solidarity they may call upon, the information they are willing to share, and the services they are willing to perform."

As a concept, it has been used to study the relationships and interactions between parents and their children (Hao 1994), as well as the economic development of metropolitan areas and even nation-states (Putnam 1993). More recently, it has shown to be useful in the analysis of interactions and social connections among migrants embedded in networks. Browning and Rodríguez (1985) first used the term to describe the development of interpersonal bonds Mexican undocumented migrants relied on to settle into new communities. Applying social capital to immigration opens up a clearer understanding of the social mechanisms responsible for particular migration flows and patterns. Likewise, through a transnational lens, it can be utilized to explain the ways different social ties are developed and maintained in transnational spaces linking communities in origin and destination countries. For potential migrants wanting to

emigrate, the positive social capital they accumulate with others embedded in these transnational social networks is indispensable.

That said, migrant networks are not just beneficial to potential migrants; they can also serve as a resource for immigrant and native employers residing in destination countries. Johnson-Webb (2002) suggests that employers advantageously recruit cheap immigrant labor via the informal social networks of their immigrant employees and suggests that this tactic is partially responsible for recent influx of Latinos in the southern United States. Krissman (2005) goes further by arguing that migration studies developed through network theory are incomplete unless they account for non-migrant employers and others network actors who benefit from immigration. Accordingly, Krissman (2005:6) points to the supply and demand labor needs in both sending and receiving communities, concluding that many migration studies derived from network theory are “too heavily weighed toward supply-side factors due to a narrow focus on labor-sending hometowns and the migrants originating in them.” Therefore, he stresses that scholars interested in migrant networks must consider the influence that non-migrants in destination countries have over migration flows, in particular employers that rely on immigrant labor. He asserts that these employers are extremely important actors in informal migrant networks, and they rely on these networks as an inexpensive recruitment tool.

Krissman is particularly critical of Massey’s (1993) work on Mexican migration networks arguing that Massey’s scope of analysis is myopic because the methodological focus is centered only on families from sending communities: consequently, it neglects other fundamental actors embedded in informal social networks. Furthermore, Krissman claims that inattention to non-migrant actors who seek inexpensive, reliable employees through the informal

channels of migrant networks actually has negative consequences for immigrants because it supports the erroneous idea that migrants from poorer countries cross borders without any employment leads and, thus, take jobs from native citizens. This, in turn, impacts immigration policies and results in stricter immigration guidelines and harsher treatment for immigrants. If, however, policymakers were to consider that many immigrants were actually informally recruited by native employers to satisfy labor demands, then immigration policies could be adapted to more accurately (and justly) manage documented and undocumented labor demands.

The idea that transnational migrant networks play a significant role in the redistribution of immigrant populations away from traditional or gateway destinations, indeed, merits further scrutiny. According to Light (2010), these social networks are responsible for why potential migrants choose to bypass traditional immigrant communities for other localities. This premise rests on both structural and migrant agency assumptions as to what primarily affects migration strategies. First, Light argues that as traditional immigrant reception areas (e.g., global cities) become saturated by the continual flow of new immigrants, pressure upon mainstream labor, housing, and infrastructure builds to a critical level. This drives down wages and living conditions, as well as strains local governmental budgets. As a result, municipalities experience a decline in economic conditions and an increase in impoverished residential neighborhoods.

Ultimately, as the lifestyle standards of non-migrant denizens decrease, municipal governments are compelled to create or aggressively enforce labor and housing codes that are either directly or indirectly aimed at low-income immigrants. Immigrants react by seeking out employment opportunities in other communities away from these traditional immigration hubs. As they settle in new destinations, they relay information back through their transnational social

networks, informing friends and family in sending communities about salaries differences and living conditions in both their old and new residential locations. If their income and lifestyle have improved, they will most likely encourage potential migrants to avoid traditional destinations for other locations in reception countries.

Light's argument is based on his research in Los Angeles, and it provides a general starting point as to why Latino immigrants have opted to relocate or completely bypass traditional gateway cities. Certainly, his hypothesis can be strengthened by further research on Latino immigrants arriving to new locations. Similarly, his study lacks a strong geographic component that would better illustrate his main assertion that immigrants are "deflected" away from first-reception cities to second- and even third-reception cities. It also lacks an ethnographic component that could verify how migrants utilize their transnational social networks to transmit vital information about living and job opportunities to others and how this can inevitably redirect migration flows to other destinations.

Bunnell et al. (2012) call for more attention to social relationships and human spatial mobility. In their recent work on the geographies of friendships, they assert that qualitative approaches that trace practices of social relationships "through/in mobile social life offer further possibilities for those interested in the everyday and microgeographies of transnationality. Practices of friendship are reconfigured through a range of transnational mobilities, producing particular (re)configurations of social geographies in destinations, places of transit and even in sites of origin" (502: 2012). Furthermore, they argue that the ethnic binders which researchers often wear limit their focus to only the friendships within a specific group or even sending/receiving community, thus rendering invisible all other social/friendship connections

that are instrumental. In the case of Latino immigrants, particularly in the American South, those friendships forged with Anglos or non-Latinos are a critical component to their mobility and resettlement strategies.

Granovetter's (1973) seminal work on networks supports the importance of social relationships outside one's groups. He argues that the social world of humans is just as reliant on casual, non-group acquaintances (weak ties) as it is on the close-knit group bonds (strong ties) of lifelong friends and family. Granovetter suggests that, for example, when looking for a job it is more advantageous to utilize one's "weak ties" to find prospective opportunities because weak ties play an essential role in one's ability to communicate and inquire outside one's own social group. One's casual acquaintances are deeply embedded in his or her own social cluster and weakly linked to other social clusters. In other words, by branching out or moving beyond our immediate social relationships, we can exponentially increase our chances of searching out all kinds of new, propitious opportunities.

Because dense migration networks now span the planet, connecting places hemispheres apart, geographical places are not independently detached from other places. Rather they are interconnected at some scale to one another, forming a network of connections through which objects, individuals, and technologies all move. Sheller and Urry (2006) argue that social sciences should embrace approaches to migration research that centralizes our mobile character by taking part in "the new mobility paradigm." A principal tenant of this ideal is that methods of analysis should be constructed on theoretical foundations which focus on the fluidity and connections of people rather than on a "sedentarist" premise that treats human activities as "a-mobile" phenomenon (Shelley and Urry 2006: 208). This "mobile turn," as Canzler, Kaufmann,

and Kesserling (2008) refer to it, is a developing interdisciplinary endeavor seeking to understand “mobility” as a concept through which different geographies that we as individuals or a collective experience in a world-in-process are interpreted and comprehended. Geographical ideas of place, space, and landscape should be perceived as something that we pass through and alter. Thus, places are always in flux and descriptions of them should maintain this perception as a principle characteristic rather than depicting them as motionless or static (Adey 2009).

Individuals can also be viewed as subjects in motion who are “translocal” or not anchored to just one place. Conradson and McKay (2007) points out that migrants are often described as integrating into one place (e.g., a destination). This view anchors migrants to a location and thus neglects possible engagements in other localities, such as places of origin. They suggest that the lives of migrants can be located in a continual reference of diaspora and places of origin. Transnational social networks as described in this dissertation definitely fit neatly within this vein of thought. For the participants of both case studies, mobility is a part of life. Even after settling in a destination, participants admit that they never abandon the idea of relocating if need be. Their identity, however, is fixed to their places of origin. Furthermore, frequent movement between various locations is an important part of life for several individuals with whom I worked. Being mobile or and able to relocate at a moment’s notice is central part of their labor strategies. For some, it is a lifestyle. Thus, the theoretical and methodological approaches laid out in this work aim to be a constructive contribution to new conceptualizations of human mobility in this era of globalization.

Endnotes

¹ Considering the demographic events occurring in both Germany and much of Europe in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Ratzel along with other German academics turned their attention to human distribution and agricultural sustainability. Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), Europeans—especially those of the peasant class—had been on the move at unprecedented levels, both within Europe and across the Atlantic to the Americas (Vecoli and Sinke 1991; Hatton and Williamson, 1998). Although there had been an almost constant flow of German migrants to North America since the seventeenth century, immigration to the nascent United States accelerated in the first half of the nineteenth century and continued until the beginning of the twentieth century (Billigmeier 1974; Wust and Moos 1983). Between 1800 and 1860, 22% of immigrants who arrived to ports in the United States were of German origin (Castles and Miller 2009).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of Germany's economic strength through its heavy industrial and mining sectors instigated a directional change in migration flows from and within the newly-formed German empire. Intra-German migration increased as German peasants abandoned agricultural labor in the east for employment opportunities in the industrializing west (particularly in the Ruhr region). The resulting labor shortage on farms prompted wealthy Prussian landlords to recruit Poles and Ukrainians laborers. Polish settlements quickly sprang up in parts of Prussia. Ironically, this was distinctly contrary to earlier migration trends. For centuries German-speaking peoples had participated in *Ostsiedlung*, or the settlement of Eastern Europe, and this trend continued well into the 1800s with the establishment of new German communities throughout eastern Poland. Nevertheless, German nativist fears and pan-German nationalism stirred anti-Polish sentiments that soon led to the removal of new Polish communities and deportation of thousands of Poles from “ancestral” German lands inside Prussia.

² Although the application of gravity models are not as common now as they once were in immigration analysis, they are still in use, particularly by economists (see, for example, Karemera, Iwuagwu, and Davis 2000; Lewer and Van den Berg 2008).

CHAPTER 3

APPLYING A TRANSNATIONAL METHODOLOGY

In the introduction of this dissertation, I specified that the methods applied in my research are “transnational” and “mixed.” These adjectives hold such broad meanings that may actually muddle rather than clarify my data-gathering strategy. For that reason, a more detailed explanation of the techniques I used to obtain data and answer research questions is in order. I also emphasized the importance that my methodology placed on the geographical dimensions of transnational and migration phenomena. That is, the socio-spatial processes involved in the movement and settlement of contemporary Latino immigrants in the United States and the impact this has on both sending and receiving communities. Therefore, in this chapter, I explicate the multi-sited ethnographic approach that I developed to engage my research propositions. I also elaborate on the theoretical and conceptual approaches that inform my research agenda. Finally, I draw attention to the difficulties that can eventuate when conducting multi-locale, transnational research through qualitative analysis.

Participant and Site Selections

In any qualitative approach to a research topic that involves ethnographic techniques, it is crucial that the researcher have some type of rapport with the individual(s), community, or organization in which he or she is interested (Crang and Cook 2007). From the start, this relationship with a target population will determine the direction of a research project and shape the outcome of its results. The associations that a researcher makes with key members of a community will affect his or her access to potential informants as well as the spaces that may be of critical interest to the analysis. Likewise, the level of rapport and comfort between a

researcher and informant will impact what kind of information or data is gathered (Dunn 2005). Taking all this into consideration, a researcher must weight his or her options about choosing members of a target population or social group who can assist in different ways during the data-gathering phase of research. Making these initial contacts can be achieved in multiple ways: conducting preliminary fieldwork in a target community; working directly with target groups in occupations that are in close contact with group members; relying on relationships developed during past studies of a particular group or community; and through word-of-mouth networking (i.e., gaining access through third-person associations).

The structure, objectives, and style of my research methodology obligated me to use various means to find contacts and gatekeepers as well as establish access to spaces in which Latino immigrants operate. Latinos, especially those without legal documentation, face federal, state, and local governmental policies that are often hostile toward immigrants. Thus, considering the uncongenial character of many immigrant destination communities—and that of many members of those communities—Latino immigrants can be extremely guarded about their immigration status, lifestyles, social connections, and employment. Because my objectives were to uncover the migration strategies and transnational social networks of marginalized or disadvantaged immigrants, it was imperative to build new strong relationships with members of my target population and strengthen already-established friendships with members with whom I had previously worked. This was further complicated by the fact that my research framework called for a detailed analysis of two different groups of immigrants whose social networks span across multiple locations both within and outside the United States. This meant that I would have to foster close, amicable relationships with group members for each case study in order to

gain enough trust to facilitate the level of ethnographic research needed to complete my research. Moreover, I had to ensure that I would be given contacts and access to both groups' friends and families in Latin America. Finally, I wanted each case study to be located in different sites to allow a distinct comparison to determine if the transnational social networks of these unrelated immigrant groups function in a similar manner.

Although I was living in Louisiana at the time I wrote my proposal, I chose to focus the first case study on Mexicans from the state of Guanajuato who lived in Nashville, TN. This was a natural choice for three reasons. First, I had previously worked with several members of this group while completing my master's thesis, and I had developed a close friendship with one family in particular. Second, it was actually while working with these *Guanajuatenses* that I first became aware of the significance of transnational social networks in the arrival and distribution of Latino immigrants to new destinations in the American South. Several members of this community had historically immigrated to western states only, such as Texas, California, and Washington—prior to the 1990s. However, during the mid-1990s, job opportunities—mainly in construction—attracted many Guanajuatenses from traditional western destinations to growing southern metropolitan areas, such as Atlanta and later Nashville. As a result, I already had some preliminary data on their migration patterns and strategies. Third, I had previously traveled to two different sending communities of this group: San José Iturbide and León. Thus, I was generally familiar with these communities, and, after having lived in Mexico, I was very comfortable with the customs, culture, and vernacular of the area.

Post-Katrina New Orleans provided me with an opportune urban area for my second case study to meet Latino immigrants who had arrived to the city via transnational social networks.

Nevertheless, identifying a target population to conduct this part of the research proved to be much more difficult since I had no previous contacts or knowledge of gatekeepers in the New Orleans metropolitan area. In the summer of 2008, I moved from Baton Rouge, LA, to New Orleans as a means to get involved in the area's Latino community and meet potential participants in my research. My strategy consisted of volunteering for Latino-focused organizations and working for Latino non-profits, such as Catholic Charities, which worked directly with those immigrants who lived on the margins of society and would likely rely on informal social networks. Initially, I limited my search to Mexicans; the idea being that locating fieldwork abroad in just one country would be much easier to pursue. In fact, I met many Mexican immigrants who conveyed that they did indeed utilize transnational relationships and contacts to migrate both to and within the United States. Yet, most of the individuals I spoke with were in New Orleans on a temporary basis, and as initial reconstruction phase began to slow, many left for other cities and communities in the United States or simply returned to Mexico.

By 2009, I had become the associate director of a small non-profit called *Oportunidades NOLA*. This position put me in contact with a variety of Latinos in the New Orleans area. New Orleans long commercial connection to Honduras via the banana trade ensured that much of the post-Katrina Latino population came from Honduras' northern coast. However, while working with *Oportunidades NOLA*, I began to meet a number of Honduran immigrants from interior departments, such as El Paraíso and Olancho. Most of these immigrants were sojourners and lacked any strong connection to New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina. In addition, I noticed that several would leave New Orleans for a period of time to travel to other cities and states to

work. If construction work slowed down or ended in other locations, they might return to New Orleans for work or just temporarily stay with friends and family. Although I observed this with other groups (i.e., Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, and Mexicans), the number of immigrants from El Paraíso and my accessibility to them made this group a perfect candidate for my case study.

Multi-Sited Fieldwork

Any case study involving transnationalism must consider phenomena anchored in at least two different nation-states. If the study is qualitative, then attention must be placed on the social relationships, activities, and movements of those persons engaged in and impacted by transnational processes. Bailey et al. (2004:129) assert that to understand the cross-border interactions and associations of transnational migrants, researchers must shift their analytical attention to multiple sites located both in receiving and sending communities because “anchored in these sites, the intricacies of daily life comprise the basic unit of analysis.” Furthermore, ethnographic research that incorporates multi-sited methodologies is much better positioned to uncover and observe the cultural activities, associations, and changes of a target population at the local level. George Marcus (1995:102) argues that from this vantage point, a “comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study whose contour, sites, and relationships are not known beforehand, but are themselves a contribution of making an account that has different, complexly connected real-world sites of investigation.” The strength of this approach, he goes on to say, lies in its ability to crosscut conceptual dichotomies—such as local/global, lifeworld/systems, or structure/agency—giving the researcher a clearer idea how a phenomenon is developed and affects different scales of human interactions. Guarnizo, Sánchez, and Roach’s (1999) study of transnational Colombian communities located in Los Angeles and

New York exemplifies this advantage. By comparing the social, geographic, and economic characters of two established Columbian communities located in different immigrant reception cities, they are able to distinguish clear differences in how Columbians adapt to their host societies as well as how they interact with their home communities. They conclude that transnational relations and activities of migrants do not follow a linear path of development. Rather how transnational connections that immigrants maintain with their sending communities are contingent on multiply factors, including the socioeconomic character of an immigrant group as well as from where immigrants originate from and to where they migrate. This is a noteworthy point because it demonstrates the importance of geography in any research pertaining to immigration as well as how migrants adapt to host societies.

Conway and Cohen's (2003) multi-local work on transnational Mexicans in Oaxaca further shows how a methodology set up to compare findings from different sites bolsters the validity of their conclusion. Their focus is on how families and communities make decisions about migrating based on financial possibilities generated through remittances. Conway and Cohen's case study includes 13 *municipios* and is conducted at the local level using family households as the basic unit of analysis. This comparative approach creates a clearer, more comprehensive picture of how migration strategies are devised, allowing the researchers to formulate convincing generalizations about contemporary immigration between the United States and Mexico.

Alan Marcus' (2009) work on the transnational migration processes of Brazilians is also developed around a multi-sited methodology that focuses on two sending communities in Brazil (Piracanjuba, Goiás and Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais) and two receiving communities in

the United States (Framingham, MA, and Marietta, GA,). Marcus' interviews with Brazilians reveal that "place" matters in that it influences how immigrants interpret their reception by members of the host society. A host society's reception of newcomers is an important factor in an immigrant's decision-making process about whether to stay in a receiving community, move on to another location, or to return to his or her home country. Using a semi-formal interview format, he illustrates through survey results and block quotes that Brazilians hold different perceptions about geographical regions in the United States. Interestingly, their perceptions are in line with common established stereotypes about the social character of communities in the northeastern United States and the American South. In other words, Brazilians generally conveyed that New England was less hospitable than other destinations, and that the "South" was much friendlier and climatically agreeable. This information, of course, is transmitted back to Brazil and can persuade a potential immigrant's decision on where to move.

Furthermore, Marcus' multi-sited fieldwork enabled him to show how transnational social fields simultaneously lead to changes in the landscapes of both sending and receiving communities. Brazilians in the United States decorate their ethnic businesses with the bright national colors of Brazil and sell Brazilian merchandise and products in their stores. Marcus (2009:183) posits that these establishments are where Brazilians recreate cultural spaces that give Brazilian immigrants a feeling of being "at home." However, Marcus' findings also highlight how returnees recreate spaces in Brazil that are reminiscent of their experiences in the United States by opening businesses in sending communities that are similar in name and ambiance to those in receiving communities, such as the Atlanta Music Hall and the Stop-Shop Merceria. These representations can sometimes found in the architectural styles of newly-constructed

homes of returnees. Marcus provides examples of new homes in Minas Gerais bearing facades that aesthetically resemble those found in homes in the southern United States.

Those methodological tactics that require the researcher to operate in multiple sites were key components of my fieldwork. To map accurately the transnational social networks of Latinos and to decipher how they function, I conducted fieldwork in both sending and receiving communities in close sequential order. This work enabled me not only to ask those who operated in these networks what their roles in and opinions of transnational relationships were, but also to observe firsthand the socioeconomic activities and processes that result from these relationships. Because my research interest dealt mainly with the mobility and expansion of Latino immigrants in the United States, I had to travel to several sites in the American South. My case study of Hondurans from El Paraíso led me to conduct fieldwork in New Orleans, Cookeville, TN, and Hopkinsville, KY. Research with Mexicans from Guanajuato was primarily focused in Nashville and Atlanta. The number of sites I worked in was limited by financial and time constraints. As a consequence, I was unable to visit all locations in the United States that could be considered nodal destinations for both groups. In some cases, I relied on phone interviews with certain members of both groups living in other cities that I felt could significantly contribute to my analysis. This included phone interviews with persons in Oklahoma City, OK, and Houston, TX.

My research abroad took me to multiple sites in Honduras and Nicaragua and to two communities in Guanajuato, Mexico. In Central America, I spent a total of six weeks conducting fieldwork during the summer of 2011: four days in the town of Jalapa, Nicaragua, and the rest of the time in several communities in El Paraíso, Honduras. The largest city in El Paraíso is Danlí.

It serves as the regional hub for the area and as such is the most developed urban area in the department. As a result, I used Danlí as my central base and made trips out to the surrounding communities to work with friends and families of Honduran contacts in the United States. These trips took me to small villages and hamlets, such as Las Lomas and El Naranjo, where I usually spent between three or four days living with families embedded in the transnational social networks I was studying. However, members of these families oftentimes lived in Danlí or traveled there weekly; thus, I was able to conduct some interviews there as well.

I traveled to Mexico at the end of December 2011 and returned to Tennessee the following January, spending a total of almost four weeks in Guanajuato. My fieldwork was primarily focused in the city of San José Iturbide and two adjacent *colonias* or peripheral communities called Cinco de Mayo and La Luz. I also included the city of León in my fieldwork, visiting families there with connections to Nashville. I had previously visited all of these sites in 2006 and, therefore, already had some rapport with some of the individuals with whom I wanted to work. However, I made new contacts in San José Iturbide who were willing to be interviewed by just merely walking around the communities, eating in restaurants, buying *pulque* (a drink made from the fermented sap of maguey), and visiting local cantinas.

Fortuitously, once people learned I was from Nashville, many wanted to converse with me. It seemed that almost everyone I met had some family member or friend living in Tennessee or Atlanta. This definitely underscored the nodal connection between San José Iturbide, Nashville, and Atlanta.

Ethnographic Strategies

The results of this research were drawn from a variety of methods that I employed and managed over a seven-year period. As mentioned above, my relationship, interviews, and observation with immigrants from Guanajuato began in 2005. Of course, this relationship and ethnographic inquiry was strengthened and expanded during the course of my dissertation. Findings were mostly derived from qualitative approaches that better enabled me to understand the social behaviors behind contemporary Latino migration as well as reasons for those behaviors, whether they are influenced by structural forces or independently chosen by individuals. I focused especially on ethnographic techniques and formal and informal interviews. Participant observation served as the most vital method that I utilized during the preliminary and data-gathering phases because it was, unequivocally, what made the information generated in this research so rich and revealing. Through direct and frequent engagement with my target population I was able to nurture confidential relationships with key members of both groups. This is not to say that I was able to transcend what Valentine (2002) dichotomously refers to as “insider” and “outsider” status. Instead, I was integrated into the life worlds of both groups, taking on my own role in the everyday activities, problems, endeavors, and even migration strategies of group members. Nevertheless, as a United States male citizen who was often interacting with undocumented immigrants of both sexes, I always tried to stay aware of subjectivity and my positionality.

My concern about power relations, prompted me to try to develop a reciprocal relationship, in which those persons being researched are also in a position to benefit in some ways from the project. Of course, I was unable to actually equalize social positions between the

groups I worked with and myself. Therefore, what I attempted to do was to be available to assist participants with various issues and problems that I was capable of resolving with much more ease than they were. This included translating services and accompanying immigrants to court appearances; doctor and hospital visits; helping enroll the children of immigrants in schools; buying computers and teaching basic computer skills (i.e., word processing, familiarity with search engines, using Skype and Facebook); buying automobiles; bailing immigrants out of jail; and so on. Similarly, in New Orleans, I worked as an advocate for immigrant rights as well as immigrant access to social services while being employed at Oportunidades NOLA. In both Nashville and New Orleans, I developed language acquisition curriculum and taught English as a Second Language (ESL). I also performed such tasks while conducting fieldwork abroad.

This effort to make my research mutually beneficial for my target populations opened up an array of social spaces where certain interactions among group members take place that I never would have had access to through simple acquaintanceships. In fact, deep friendships and bonds inevitably emerged through the course of this project. These friendships also extend to the sending communities in Latin America. As a result, I was invited to and participated in a host of different activities and events, including weddings, graduations, *quinceañeras*, birthday parties, weekend outings, concerts, dances, sporting events, vacations, Catholic mass, protestant church services, and even Alcohol Anonymous events for Latinos. It was within these social spaces that I witnessed some of the most important exchanges of information between community members concerning work, employee recommendations, and migration strategies that might have otherwise remained hidden. These informal meetings and get-togethers are some of the spaces where immigrants casually network and convey information about which immigrant destination

offers the best jobs and whether these places are hostile or welcoming to Latinos. Therefore, I often carried a small notebook, iPad, voice recorder, or smartphone with me to make notes in the case an interview or relevant observation serendipitously presented itself.

My participation in these social spaces of Latino immigrants also enabled me to make more sense of the events and actions conveyed to me during interviews with group members. That is, I was able to contrast the answers given during interviews and focus groups with the observations I made when interacting with group members. This is not to say that I wanted to catch those I interviewed giving false information; rather, I was able to construct a more valid account of how individuals embroiled in immigration processes and transnational social networks come to see or perceive the activities in which they (and those around them) are engaged. This participation was decisive to my research because the stories and accounts that group members communicated to me sometimes conflicted with each other. For these reasons, Crang and Cook (2007:14) insist that ethnographers must discern the reasons or motives behind these variations of perspectives and, thus, “cannot take a naïve stance that what they are told is the absolute ‘truth.’ Rather, research must involve the struggle to produce *inter-subjective truths*, to understand why so many versions of an event are produced or recited.” Indeed, perceptions of those involved in transnational fields vary for different reasons. Persons who remain in sending communities generate ideas about life in receiving communities that often differ from how immigrants in these communities actually experience life abroad. These ideas are formed through both depictions of the United States in media (e.g., movies, music, magazines, news reports) and the information conveyed through transnational social networks. In some cases, immigrants abroad may purposely distort information for different motives. At the same time,

non-immigrants in sending communities also have their reasons occasionally to misrepresent events or exaggerate situations in their communities. This practice in both sending and receiving communities was revealed through the juxtaposition of interviews, focus groups, and observations during fieldwork.

Interviews and Focus Groups

In the preceding subchapter, I mention the advantages of being prepared for unexpected data-gathering opportunities to present themselves. In my case, this refers to always being ready to observe an unanticipated social practice or action relevant to my research, or even to conduct unscheduled interviews with persons of interest. I incorporated this flexibility into all aspects of my qualitative analysis because I recurrently found myself in situations in which I had to make on-the-spot decisions about my interviews' format and application. Overall, I found it more effective to be pragmatic during the interview process and to leave myself open to adjusting my interview format to fit any circumstance that arose. For example, in my research proposal, I specified the number of persons with whom I believed I needed to conduct recorded interviews and focus groups in order to generate sufficient information to answer my research questions and support my hypotheses. I initially anticipated that between both groups I would need to interview over 50 persons (including focus group participants). This total included 10 to 15 semi-structured, recorded interviews with immigrants from Guanajuato living in the United States and 10 to 15 semi-structured, recorded interviews with immigrants from El Paraíso also living in the United States. Correspondingly, I would conduct similar interviews in both sending communities with those involved in some capacity with the transnational social networks under study. I also intended to hold focus groups in each principle research site (i.e., Nashville, New

Orleans, Guanajuato, and El Paraíso) consisting of between 6 and 10 individuals. Both formal interviews and focus groups were to be recorded, transcribed, and then coded with the aim of identifying corresponding patterns in the migratory practices of both groups. However, I soon realized that strictly adhering to the proposed interview and focus group scheme was not practical in the field.

I regularly encountered problems when conducting recorded interviews with participants or when trying to hold focus groups. Sometimes, after scheduling a formal interview, informants would not show up. At other times, informants would insist that I not use a voice recorder during the interview. Many informants found the voice recorder intimidating for a couple of reasons. As one older Mexican female informant confessed, “It makes me nervous, as if I were talking on the radio.” Other informants were clearly worried that recorded information could have negative repercussions for them or their labor and residential situations. I also confronted similar challenges during focus groups. In these predicaments, I improvised by trying to reasonably adhere to informants’ concerns while still capturing the information I sought. Therefore, I turned the recorder off and resorted to taking notes in some scheduled interviews. My perspective was (and still is) that my questions, which probed personal details of immigrants’ lives, could be interpreted as an annoyance or an inconvenience to respondents. This especially could be true for immigrants without proper legal documentation who were explaining measures (oftentimes illegal) that they take to migrate, secure employment, and find housing. Even after explaining the purpose of my research and that my conclusions could potentially be used in favor of Latinos in immigration debates, many participants never seemed to see the broader advantages of taking part in this study. Instead, many participants contributed

out of friendship and the rapport between us. One brief conversation I overheard before my first focus group with Hondurans perfectly illustrated this. A male participant had recruited two other Honduran immigrants to partake in the discussion. To my recollection, I had never met the two immigrants whom he had brought. Therefore, I had no prior relationship with them. While I was preparing for the focus groups in an adjacent room, one of these men asked the participant who brought them why I cared about their migration history and needed the information. The participant with whom I have developed a cordial relationship responded that he really did not have an idea but that I was a “*buena onda*” and that he wanted to help me out with my project regardless of what it was.

Not all the unforeseen circumstances that sometimes led me to deviate from my proposed interview format were necessarily negative. In fact, on a few occasions unanticipated information about transnational migration strategies that was extremely germane to this research was revealed through happenstance, as some of my key participants recruited potential interviewees that did not exactly fit the criteria of my methodology. For instance, during a second attempt at coordinating one-on-one formal interviews with several Hondurans from El Paraíso, a key participant brought along a Nicaraguan immigrant with whom he worked. I knew this person because he had been an ESL student of mine the year before. I greeted him and asked him why he came to be interviewed. He responded that he thought he was a candidate for my research because I was interviewing Latinos in New Orleans who had immigrated via friend and family contacts based in El Paraíso. I then discovered that the Honduran transnational social network that I was investigating extended across the Honduran border to small communities in Nicaragua, such as Jalapa. This particular revelation altered my approach in identifying and

mapping the transnational social networks of my target populations. Likewise, it called attention to the fact that just as the nodes in the social networks of Latino immigrants spread across different communities in destination countries, sending communities are also multi-nodal and may not be located only in one country. This recognition broadened my research perspective to take account of individuals operating in these transnational social networks whom I had not originally considered. I would later find in Nashville that the social network of immigrants from Guanajuato was in a constant state of reconfiguration in order to incorporate (and exclude) new contacts regardless of from where they actually originated.

The format developed for formal recorded interviews consisted of both fixed and open questions. In all interviews, I made sure to collect certain “standard” information, such as age, origin, time in the United States, as well as number of locations lived in (if applicable), and number and locations of family and friends in the United States. This information was utilized to generate simple quantitative data that could be used to make simple comparisons of trends between groups and outline basic numeric characteristics of social networks. After gaining answers to this standardized list of questions, I directed the interview toward a relaxed and flexible discussion with open-ended questions. I always began this stage of the interview with general questions pertaining to the lives of immigrants and non-immigrants. For example, I might start with “How have you enjoyed being in the United States?” or “When did you decide to migrate?” My aim was to get an in-depth conversation going that would lead to other more-personal tidbits of information. In some cases, interviewees would recount their life histories, starting from their childhood and finishing with their current situation. In other cases, some interviewees were more timid or reserved, only giving short, direct responses to my questions.

When this type of response occurred, I continued probing for relevant information with follow-up questions. However, I found that the best approach to getting participants to open up was to move away from a strictly interviewer-interviewee structure toward a casual conversational exchange. In other words, although I presented the themes that I wanted to discuss, I allowed for an open dialogue between myself and participants to materialize from which I let participants interview me about my thoughts, opinions, and life history. By doing this, participants became much more comfortable. I sometimes shared my own immigration experiences, admitting that due to circumstances out of my hands, I, too, had lived in Mexico without legal documentation. This admission usually provoked a laugh, but more importantly it often made undocumented participants more at ease conversing with me about sensitive issues, such as unauthorized crossings into the United States.

The themes of formal interviews always focused on migration, employment, and the hopes and ambitions of my target groups. Most interviews lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. In total, I recorded 28 formal interviews with persons involved with the El Paraíso transnational social network, and 26 with persons connected to the transnational social network originating out of Guanajuato. These interviews were later transcribed and coded in order to make the data captured more manageable and easier to mine for information relevant to my research interests (see Cope 2005; Crang and Cook 2007; Delyser et al. 2012). I implemented two coding strategies in my analysis. First, I used descriptive and *in vivo* code systems to categorize simple questions concerning which cities have immigrants lived in and which cities their friends are located in as well as to spot certain reoccurring phrases in interviews that revolved around topics such as job opportunities and immigration. I then applied analytic codes,

which helped to identify patterns within and between both immigrant groups. This application allowed me to find different connections between themes of interest, such as how to cross borders without a proper visa, how much to rely on friends and family, planning and achieving life goals, how find work, and so on. Finally, for those interviews that were not recorded, notebooks were kept with a focus on pertinent information revealed by participants, and notes were compared with interview transcripts to look for similarities in the narratives given by participants.

I continuously compared the accounts given by members of my target population to my own observations and experiences while conducting fieldwork at different sites. In fact, my understanding of my research interests was always evolving, changing course when something I did not expect appeared in an interview or while observing events in the field. This means that I needed to think and rethink about events and actions that were described to me or actually unfolding before my eyes. Unanticipated findings or revelations required me to make adjustments along the way; however, I never considered this an impediment to my research but an important beneficial characteristic of my approach to fieldwork because the theoretical underpinnings of my methodological framework are constructed on grounded theory (see Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmez 2006). Grounded theory requires researchers to empirically identify themes and trends from data gathered in the field. During and after this process, researchers then can begin to posit ideas and make generalizations about phenomena derived directly from their data, thus, “grounding” their claims in the real world. This approach was advantageous to my research because it allowed me to not only inductively recognize certain thematic commonalities

among my target populations but also allowed me to be flexible and open to new ideas that arose during the data-gathering process.

Mapping Social Networks

Networks are firmly entrenched facets of our everyday lives (Barabási 2003). We rely on them to handle our finances, access media, acquire products, maintain communication with others, and link geographic places. *The Oxford Dictionary* (2012) defines a *network* as “a group or system of interconnected people or things.” This definition can be applied to myriad different connections, such as banking systems, religious organizations, computer systems, political movements and so on. My interest, however, is centered on the role of social networks in human mobility and place-making. Transnational networks are fundamental tools for the current phase of globalization and the expansion of capitalist markets. Sassen (2002) calls attention to this necessity by pointing to the interconnectivity of global cities like New York, London, and Tokyo. These cities serve as nodes in a global flow of information, goods, capital, and people, and, thus, become primarily locations for international corporations, governmental agencies at different levels, and non-governmental organizations. Like magnets, they attract immigrants from different socioeconomic backgrounds, pulling them from all corners of the planet. This idea of nodal global cities being organized in a planet-spanning network is a macro level perspective; however, the flows of people, capital, and information can be observed at multiple scales. Immigrants also create formal and informal networks between their places of origins and any destinations. As immigrants settle into new destinations, interactions of different forms (e.g., financial, communication, human movement) occur between their place of origin and new homes, establishing a link between two locations or nodes.

The transnational social networks of migrants manifest in physical geography and thus can be mapped through locating the various nodes that comprise a network (Voigt-Graf 2004). Nevertheless, the nodes of transnational migrants are not always as fixed or enduring as nodal global cities. Rather, some immigrant destinations may be short lived as employment opportunities end or anti-immigrant laws are implemented to drive away immigrants. On the other hand, other immigrant destinations can unexpectedly emerge, attracting immigrants with high wages and permanent job opportunities. Certainly, the massive clean-up and reconstruction effort in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina provides an excellent example of this. In other cases, the passing of lax immigration laws in a community or non-enforcement of existing laws can influence to where individual migrants relocate. For instance, San Francisco, which is sometimes referred to as a “sanctuary city,” supports a policy that protects undocumented immigrants from being deported on minor criminal charges. Finally, for those immigrants who frequently relocate in search of new employment opportunities, one or two established locations can serve as a home base or hub from where they know they can always return if circumstances in other destinations become unfavorable.

What determines a location’s hub status depends on several factors and one of the aims of this methodology is to identify these factors. The expansion of Latinos into the southern United States, is largely due to the existence of these immigrant hubs and nodes in the transnational social networks of immigrants. Yet, as Latour (2005:131) asserts, “a network is a concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something, not something to be described.” This concept is important because it is a reminder that the maps that we create to depict the transnational networks of groups or organizations are merely our representation of how we

conceptualize social linkages. In other words, those whom I am observing do not see themselves as embedded in a transnational social network. Instead, they describe their actions as a commonsense use of contacts that enables them to immigrate to their desired destinations. For that reason, I focus my analysis on the social ties between Latino immigrants in both sending and receiving communities. The hubs and nodes that I identify are actual locations that can be plotted on a map; however, my tracings of the transnational social networks are visual representations of the relationships that bind the Latinos with whom I have worked both to each other, as well as the communities in which they are embedded.

Throughout this dissertation, I rely on various sources to contextualize and strengthen my research. These sources include national censuses, non-governmental sources, published scholarly work, and periodicals. These data sources provide necessary descriptions of the characteristics of places, spaces, phenomena, and groups that comprise the focus of my project. Census data obtained from national databases of the United States, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua make available spatially referenced information that allows for analysis and comparisons to be made of different locations at different scales. I also utilized a variety of other published governmental sources from all locations of interests (e.g., Consejo Nacional de Población, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Geografía, the Federal Reserve) as well as official publications by international bodies (e.g., the United Nations Organization). In addition, I accessed collected data from non-governmental organizations such as the Mexican Migration Project based at Princeton University. Published research on immigration is copious, and I have made great use of many previous studies to better inform my research. Nonetheless, I found media publications (local magazines and newspapers) as valuable sources of information. For

example, local publications, such as *The Gambit* and *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans or the *Nashville Scene* and *The Tennessean* in Nashville, often contain relevant articles that give perspectives of events and trends that are particular to a specific region or community. Therefore, they capture the sentiments and opinions of the denizens and prominent community members that specifically pertain to local occurrences.

Making Sense of the Data

It would be hard to quantify the time spent collecting data for this study. As aforementioned, I began observing Mexicans from Guanajuato in 2005. Since starting this dissertation, I have traveled to three Latin American countries, moved to two cities in the United States, and made outings to communities across the American South. As a result, I collected a wealth of data from which to construct my analysis. I was able to find valuable bits of qualitative data to create a thick description of my target populations by sifting through my interviews, focus groups, and notes. I then enhanced these descriptions by weaving them together with secondary sources to generate a more complete picture of the transnational social networks of Latino immigrants by placing the experiences and strategies of participants in this study into the larger global context of contemporary immigration. Therefore, this research captures firsthand how migrants in the twenty-first century move across borders and establish new immigrant destinations. They achieve and maintain this mobility in the face of ever-changing challenges brought on by unstable, cyclical capitalist economies and strict immigration policies at all levels of government. Nevertheless, the willingness to take on these challenges demonstrates the determination that human beings have to cross geographical boundaries—both

physical and political—in order to suit their needs or desires, whether these are financial, religious, social, a sense of security, or simply adventurous curiosity.

CHAPTER 4 THE LEGACY OF MEXICAN MIGRATION & EMERGING TRANSNATIONAL GUANAJUATENSE NODAL COMMUNITIES

On the North American continent between 25 and 32 degrees north latitude extends a 2,000-mile political boundary that separates two of the largest national economies on the planet. The United States, located to the north of this border, ranks as the largest national economy in the world with a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of more than \$15 trillion (World Bank 2012). Directly south of the United States—and in its economic shadow—lies the Republic of Mexico, home to the world’s fourteenth largest economy with a nominal GDP of \$1.18 trillion (World Bank 2012). When combined, these free market economies comprise almost a quarter of the planet’s GDP. These impressive macro figures and world rankings, however, cloak the socioeconomic disparities that exist between the two nations. When adjusted for purchasing power parity, the GDP per capita of Mexico is \$16,440 compared with \$50,610 in the United States (World Bank 2012). Although in the last five decades Mexico has displayed significant progress in pulling much of its population out of poverty and expanding its middle class, several indicators concerning the republic’s overall quality of life still show that it trails its northern neighbor. According to the United Nations’ (2012) Human Development Index (HDI), Mexico’s current levels of education, access to information, and standard of living are equivalent to those of the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. This disparity between these bordering nations’ general standard of living, coupled with periodical violence in Mexico and an established migratory tradition, serve as the primary catalysts for an almost uninterrupted flow of Mexican migrants to the United States over the last century.

Today, more than 32 million Mexicans reside in the United States (U.S. Census 2010). This number will undoubtedly continue rising if past trends are any predictor of the future. What is difficult to foretell, though, is which locations in the United States will experience the highest growth of Mexican immigrants. History tells us that several factors precipitate the flow and direction of Mexican migration to the United States. These factors include macro-level forces on both sides of the border brought about by labor reforms, labor recruitment, economic restructuring, and immigration policies. Therefore, this chapter begins with an overview of immigration between the Mexico and the United States that highlights not only the political and economic causes but also the shifting geographic migratory patterns that develop as a consequence of changes in macro-structural forces. I conclude this overview in Nashville, TN, where, after a generation of settlement, Mexicans have rooted themselves in the local community. At this juncture, I briefly pivot my focus to Guanajuato, Mexico, and certain sending communities that link to transnational migratory nodes in the American South and beyond. This focus provides the contextual backdrop for a micro-level analysis that looks deeper into how the restructuring of macro-level forces initiate new geographies of Mexican immigration and settlement. It is from this vantage point that I illustrate the essential role that transnational social networks play in contemporary human movement and mobility through my direct engagement with members of a transnational community from Guanajuato.

Early Destinations and the Development of Long-Term Geographical Migration Patterns

An often overlooked irony in the migratory history between the United States and Mexico is that it was Anglo-American settlers who first crossed national borders with the hope of finding better opportunities in Mexico. The Mexican government was concerned about the

expansion of the United States into the interior of the North American continent. Although the nascent nation held claim to territories north of the Rio Grande, they remained sparsely populated (Davis 2003). Thus, policies were put in place to promote settlement in these territories as a buffer to encroachment from the western expansion of the United States. At the behest of the Mexican government, *empresario* Stephen Austin recruited Anglo-American families to settle the northern state of Coahuila y Tejas along with Mexican citizens from the southern states of the republic.¹

By the 1830, Austin's recruitment efforts had been so successful that 9,000 Anglo-Americans had migrated from the United States—they outnumbered Mexicans three to one. Friction between Anglo-Americans and the federal Mexican government inevitably developed over issues of slavery, import/export duties, and restricted trade access to the cotton market in New Orleans. Anglo-Americans immigrants had brought along black slaves at just the time Mexico was abolishing slavery, and many grew cotton that was sold via New Orleans (Lowrie 1932). Just as contentious to their arrival, most of the former United States citizens were not interested in assimilating into the Mexican culture. They continued to speak English and rejected converting from Protestantism to the state religion of Catholicism. In an unsuccessful attempt to remedy these dilemmas brought on by Anglo newcomers, the Mexican government tried to close the border between the United States and Mexico. Nonetheless, Anglo-Americans continued crossing the border illegally, and by 1834 more than 20,000 Anglos lived in what would later become Texas (Miller 1985).

The cessation of Texas to the United States under the conditions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 technically brought an end to Anglo-American migration to Mexico.

Texas was now part of the United States as were the western territories of Upper California and New Mexico. Anglo-Americans freely moved west, establishing settlements all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Mexico, on the other hand, grappled with less territory and greater political instability. A new constitution in 1857 reorganized Mexico's national map by merging some states and granting statehood to territories. This reconfiguration continued through the next decade. During this period, migration between the United States and Mexico remained low. Mexico's national population numbered just below eight million, and the majority of Mexicans were located far south of the border (Heisler 2008). Furthermore, most of rural peasants in Mexico were locked into a feudalistic-like peonage system maintained by debts to *haciendas*.

Two notable exceptions to the near-idle migratory movement between the United States and Mexico during this period, however, were Mexican gold prospectors heading north from Sonora to participate in the California Gold Rush, and the emergence of a small but important community of Mexican exiles in New Orleans. The temporary community in New Orleans consisted of liberal intellectuals and politicians banished from Mexico by President Santa Ana. The most famous member of these exiles was Benito Juárez, who later became president of the Mexican Republic in 1861 (Hamnett 1994). While in New Orleans, Juárez, along with other distinguished Mexican exiles—namely Guadalupe Montenegro and Melchor Ocampo—began drafting the Plan of Ayutla to oust Santa Ana and reestablish Mexico as a republic. New Orleans had long-served as a launch pad for military endeavors into Mexico. Starting the 1810s, filibustering expeditions into northern Mexico aimed at wresting Texas from Spain and later the Mexican Republic were being backed by investors in the burgeoning Crescent City (Francaviglia 1998). By the 1830s, both Anglo- and Hispano-Texans used New Orleans as a base for supplies

and men during excursions against Mexico's central government (Gaillardet 1966; Lewis 1973). By the following decade, the city was the principle port of embarkation for troops headed to the Mexican-American War (Johnson 1998). After Juárez returned to Mexico to topple Santa Ana, the city remained home to a small Mexican community—a point that underscores the fact that Mexican immigrants have long been part of at least one southern city's demographic composite (Sluyter et al. 2014).

By the end of the nineteenth century, a steady flow of Mexican farm labor to western U.S. states had developed. This trend began and was amplified under the dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz, which lasted over 35 years. Díaz's macro-economic initiatives to quickly modernize Mexico dramatically shifted Mexican immigration patterns within the United States. President Díaz had been partially successful in industrializing Mexico. Under his rule, Mexico gained a nationwide rail system; developed a growing urban population; and created a new economic structure based on export agriculture and mineral extractions (Hart 1987). The land reforms that Díaz's regime implemented lead to the consolidation of small rural farms and landholdings in favor of capital-intensive agricultural practices. The negative effects of Díaz's progressive policies were massive labor displacements and neglect of rural poverty, which in turn generated strong pressures to immigrate north to the United States—pressures that intensified after the collapse of his regime (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005).

The socioeconomic situation that developed under Díaz coincided with the arrival of the United States' expanding railroad network, which reached the Mexican-American border at the turn of the twentieth century. During this period, the southwestern United States served the country's thriving industrial northeast as a rich mineral and agricultural extraction area. An

unceasing demand for cheap labor developed in order to staff new mines, factories, railroads, and fields throughout New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, and Texas. Capitalist Anglo-entrepreneurs had originally relied on Chinese (and later Japanese) immigrants as a source of manual labor (Frazier 2006). Thus, much of the early development of the western United States fell on the backs of Cantonese immigrants. This labor option essentially disappeared under the Chinese Exclusion Acts of the 1880s. And, in 1907, the Gentlemen's Agreement restricted the small labor pool of Japanese immigrants. As a result, recruitment efforts steered south of the border (Durand and Arias 2000).

The integration of the U.S. and Mexican railroad networks enabled Anglo-industrialists to penetrate deeper into the heart of the Mexican Republic in their search for low-skill workers. The western states of Jalisco and Michoacán and the central state of Guanajuato quickly developed into important sources of immigrant labor, providing a third of all recruited workers by 1900 (Cardoso 1980). Immigrant labor shortage resulting from the outbreak of the First World War exacerbated the recruitment efforts for Mexican workers. Between 1913 and 1924, the annual number of documented Mexicans entering the United States jumped from 10,000 to 106,000. In consequence, the 1920s witnessed a record surge in immigrants from Mexico, documenting 621,000 entries between 1920 and 1929 (Cardoso 1980).

Arriving Mexican immigrants often settled in either existing Mexican communities in destination states or in labor camps designed to house recruited workers and their families (Moore and Pachon 1985). In the New Mexican city of Albuquerque, for example, the traditional Spanish-colonial plaza, which had long served as a congregating space for Mexican residents, was transformed into the Mexican enclave, or *barrio*, in the now "American" city.

This was initiated by the location of city's first passenger and freight railway station some two miles from the colonial plaza (Roberts and Roberts 1988; Bryan 2006). Newly-arrived Anglos naturally opted to locate their businesses and homes in close proximity to area's rail service as it was the economic lifeline of the community. As a consequence, long-time Mexican families and denizens were commercially and residentially segregated from the growing Anglo-American population. Thus, Mexican workers arriving at the turn of the century settled into the older, colonial section of the city known as "Old Town."

In Los Angeles County, the city of Santa Fe Springs developed out of an early twentieth century labor camp. The discovery of oil in 1907, a vibrant citrus industry, and the demands for low-skill labor prompted recruitment efforts from south of the U.S. border. Those who heeded the call were funneled into designated immigrant camps, which laid the foundation for a community that even today is primarily Mexican.

The emerging pattern of Mexican enclaves throughout the western United States followed railroad lines (Arreola 2007). This network of railways connecting population and economic centers facilitated the movement of Mexicans who were either being recruited by Anglo companies or who had decided to venture north in search of work. Those who followed railroads into inner cities found jobs through contractors. Oftentimes, these contractors worked for companies that offered employment in other locations. As a result, they redistributed many Mexican laborers to other communities. Spur lines that sprouted off main railway arteries carried Mexican migrants to almost every city or township served by train in Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, as well as Kansas City, KS, and Nebraska.

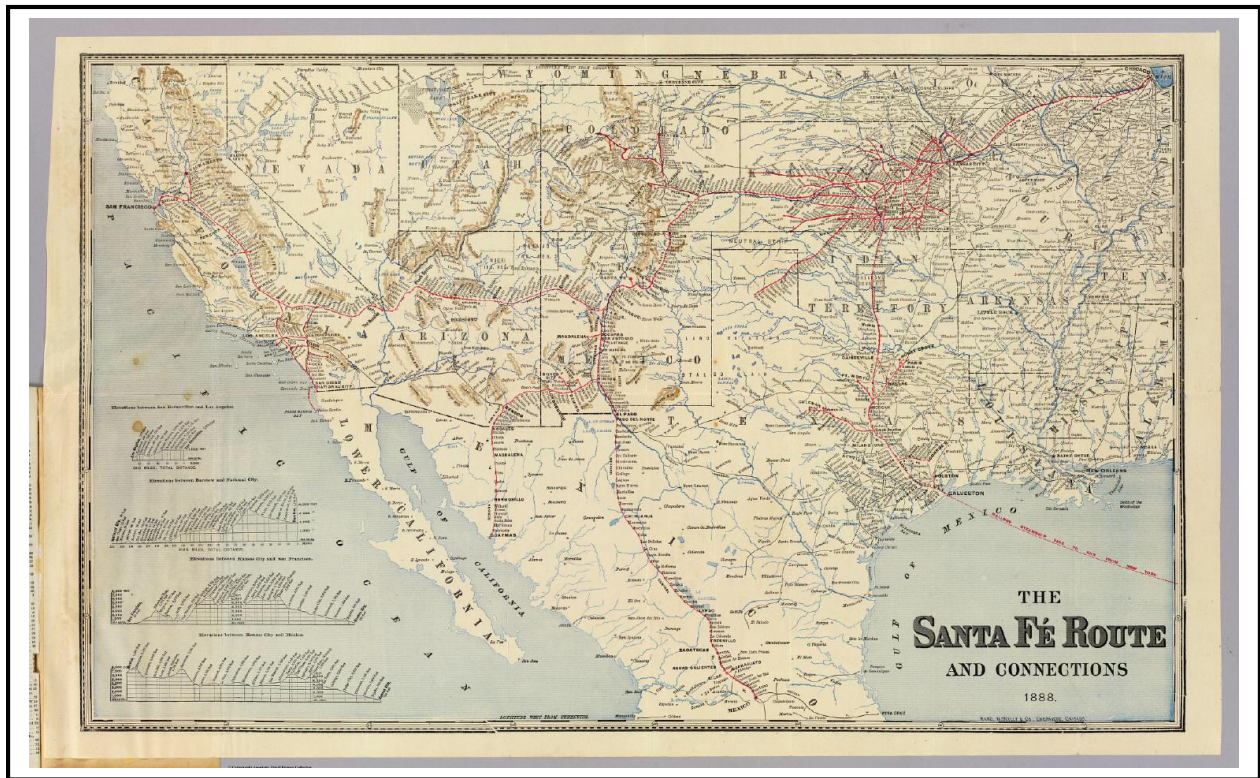


Figure 1 Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad Company Map (1888) David Rumsey Collection

The influx of Mexican immigrants into the western and southwestern United States during the first decades of the 20th century was not only a result of economics and labor needs. The chaotic Mexican revolution that began in 1910 also prompted a significant number of middle- and upper-class Mexican families to look north for refuge. All in all, a true figure of entries from Mexico during this period is impossible to uncover. Unregistered border crossings stretching back to the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were just as common as legal entries. Since the California Gold Rush in 1848, Mexican men had made their way north in search of opportunities by simply crossing the porous, lightly-patrolled U.S.-Mexican border. Although border patrol stations were established and border agents were dispatched to entry points into the United States in 1907, security was relatively lax, thus making “illegal” crossings easy and common (Samora 1971). Nevertheless, during this particular period there were few

reasons for able-bodied men to migrate illegally from Mexico to the United States. Although rigid immigration restrictions establishing national quotas and literacy tests were passed by Congress in 1917, aggressive lobbying by agricultural employers ensured an exemption for Mexican laborers. In fact, Mexicans could basically enter the United States at will and without passports (Shain 1999). In 1921, the United States enacted the first guest worker program that was designed to maintain a reliable pool of immigrant workers from south of the border (Rosenblum et al. 2012).² Of those Mexicans who did come legally after 1917, an estimated two-third of those “temporary” workers never returned to Mexico.

The ease of movement between the United States and Mexico was brought to an abrupt end by the crash of the U.S. economy in 1929 (Hoffman 1974). The Great Depression and later the Dust Bowl’s ecological devastation to agriculture in the Great Plains states decimated all the essential components that drove the United States’ economic engine. The massive closing of banks severely restricted access to capital. Consumerism quickly came to a halt causing a drop in prices for materials such as cotton, and, thus, directly impacted large and small cotton farms in immigrant reception states like Texas. Suddenly, Mexican farm hands faced massive personnel cuts to labor either from the closure of large farms or from farm and property owners switching their focus to less laborious and more profitably endeavors, such as cattle ranching. Likewise, the rapid mechanization of agriculture labor diminished the need for low-wage workers as tractors and harvest combines became more available. The employment situation in border states where Mexican immigrants were concentrated was exacerbated by the internal migration of Anglo-Americans who had lost their farms and jobs from the combination of economic constriction and the unyielding drought of the 1930s. As unemployed Anglos moved into

agricultural areas such as the San Joaquin, San Gabriel, and Pomona Valleys in California, they displaced the Mexicans and other non-Anglos (e.g. Filipinos) working in the fields (García 2002).

As the depression worsened in the 1930s, the federal government worked with state and local governments to stem the flow of Mexican immigrants. The increasing high unemployment of former laborers put more pressure on social safety nets and programs meant as relief for communities (Moore and Pachon 1985). At the same time, animosity against Mexicans was on the rise. The response was simple if not draconian: “get rid” of persons of Mexican descent (see McWilliams 1933). Local agencies employed several different strategies to get Mexicans off governmental relief doles, such as stoppage of welfare aid and creation of “Mexican Bureaus” that worked to get Mexican individuals to voluntarily repatriate.

Arreola (2007:97) characterizes the Great Depression as the interlude between two distinct waves of Mexican migration. During the 1930s, the first continuous flow of immigrants to border states came to a trickle as compared with the previous two decades. Between 1931 and 1943, recorded annual entry of Mexicans averaged only 2,013 (Arreola 2007:98). The evaporation of the once-copious job opportunities in *El Norte*, coupled with mounting pressure from the U.S. government to actively remove and deter immigrants from south of the boarder, made the journey north less and less attractive. Undoubtedly, information about the lack of work and unjust treatment of immigrants by governmental agencies was propagated throughout Mexico by the 400,000 Mexicans who were repatriated or deported between 1929 and 1934 (Moore and Pachon 1985:137).

Ya Regresamos: The Bracero Program

What is remarkable about the ebbs and flows of migration between the United States and Mexico is the promptitude in which migrant flows and counter flows react and adapt to sudden changes in internal and external macro-forces. Just as the door was open for Mexicans to cross the border by the need for labor during World War I, then only to be slammed shut by The Great Depression, World War II once again instantaneously swung the door wide open. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States entered the second great war of the century—fighting in not one but two theaters of operation. Consequently, the sheer manpower needed to maintain two major military fronts created a labor shortage that was evident in the sudden plunge of the country's employment rate, which reached 1.2 % in 1944 (U.S. Census 1970).

In response to the shrinking low-skill labor force, agricultural growers—particularly in California—prompted the federal government to hastily change their stance toward immigrants originating from Mexico (Craig 1971). Agriculture sectors were hit hardest by the shrinking labor pool since low-skill Anglo workers who were not enlisted in the Armed Forces usually abandoned farms for well-paying jobs in the growing defense industry (Bickerman 2001). In 1942, the United States and Mexico arrived at a temporary worker agreement known as the Bracero Accord. Under this accord, programs were established to allow Mexican workers under federal supervision to temporary immigrate to the United States to fill positions left open by the wartime labor shortage. Railroads soon followed, negotiating their own wartime programs for recruiting temporary Mexican workers in order to meet their labor needs (Driscoll 1999).

South of the border, the Mexican government was still struggling with severe rural poverty brought on by decades of racist land reforms, violent internal conflicts, and the global economic depression. Although the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas had made great strides in redistributing millions of hectares to peasants, their gains toward improving the nation's agricultural output fell short of providing enough stable jobs for the rural poor (Massey et al 1987). Rural poverty in Mexico after all had recently been exacerbated by the half million "repatriated" returnees during the 1930s. As a result, the Mexican government was more than happy to work with the United States to ensure some level of temporary employment for the republic's rural *peones* living in abject poverty. Likewise, a secondary advantage was that temporary workers, or *braceros*, would acquire valuable technical agricultural skills that would later benefit Mexican agriculture (Bickerman 2001). In 1942, 4,203 Mexican laborers entered the United States legally under the Bracero Program. The original program was expected to be a temporary effort to be terminated at the end of the war. However, the program was renewed after the war and then extended during the Korean War, before finally ending in 1964. After a short-lived and unpopular deportation program known as Operation Wetback (1954), which was instigated to remove illegal braceros, the number of documented braceros entering the United States peaked at 445,200 (Martin 2003).

In total, the number of documented braceros who crossed the U.S.-Mexican border between 1942 and 1964 was 4.6 million. During the same period, 4.9 million Mexicans residing and working in the United States without documentation were apprehended by U.S. authorities (Martin 2003). Both of these numbers include individuals who crossed into the United States multiple times; thus, this draws attention to circulatory migration patterns and the beginning of

transnational connections. The number of apprehensions also highlights the long-established tradition of illegal crossings necessitated by labor demands in the United States, lack of adequate job opportunities in Mexico, and strict immigration policies. To be a candidate for legal migration via the Bracero Program, potential migrants had to first acquire a letter of recommendation from the presidency of their local municipality (Craig 1971). They then had to present this letter along with their birth certificate to officials at a recruitment center in Mexico. Those accepted after a review of their documents and a health exam were sent to one of five processing centers located in the border states of California, Texas, and Arizona. Candidates were then reexamined and assessed on their farming experience by U.S. officials. Those who passed this final phase were transported via bus or train to farm destinations at the expenses of the growers participating in the program.

Men who were unable to gain access to the program often joined other labor migrants crossing into the United States clandestinely. On both sides of the border, employers and employees relied on informal seasonal migration. Initially, the state of Texas did not participate in the Bracero Program (Scruggs 1963). Texas growers were weary of what they considered too liberal work guarantees, as well as the established minimum wages of 30 cents per hour. Likewise, Mexican officials had purposely excluded Texas from a list of emigration destinations due the state's history of discrimination and mistreatment of Mexicans laborers. Although Texas did eventually join the program in 1947, many growers continued to rely on undocumented migrants, who seasonally crossed the porous northern Mexico and Texas border. South of the border, many Mexican men in need of work opted to circumvent the bureaucratic red tape of the official immigration process knowing that they could easily find work through informal

channels. Heisler (2008:68) claims that braceros often spread through word of mouth very cynical news about the “opportunities” provided by the official Bracero Program that most likely encouraged migrants to opt for crossing without legal documentation.

By the end of the Bracero Program in 1964, the geographic profile of Mexican immigration and residence of the United States was heavily skewed toward traditional destinations in border states—seemingly unchanged from the 1910s and 1920s (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Accordingly, Texas and California remained the loci of Mexican settlement in the United States (Gutiérrez 1995). Both states served as the largest recipients of braceros during the program, a third of which hailed from Jalisco (7%), Michoacán (16%), and Guanajuato (11%) (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001). Nevertheless, new patterns and non-traditional destinations were beginning to emerge whereas other established destinations, such as Kansas and Colorado declined. Chicago, IL, for example became a destination for Mexicans during World War I. Many were recruited to replace the high number of Anglo-American men who had left for war, as well as to make up for the cutback in European immigrant labor (Taylor 1931). During the 1920s and 1930s, Illinois was home to just over 2% of all Mexicans in the United States (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). By the 1960s, the state contained 5% of Mexicans in the United States, almost all of whom lived in Chicago. Many of the Mexicans in Chicago worked in factories and steel mills located in the south near Gary, IN, which too became home to a small immigrant community. Other non-traditional states with strong agricultural sectors—such as Michigan, Ohio, New York, Wisconsin and Washington— also recruited braceros (Fernández 2010).³ Although the number of Mexicans in these states was minuscule

when compared with the southwestern states, they represent the beginning of Mexican immigrant redistribution in the United States.

New Policies, New Norms, and Undocumented Immigration

Building on the momentum of Civil Right movements and victories in the 1950s, the 1960s marked the advent of a more egalitarian national ethos that sought to remove institutionalized discrimination at all levels of government. History often focuses on the sociopolitical advancements made by African Americans during these decades; however, the novel approaches to immigration that continue into the twenty-first century are also deeply rooted in this era (see Frazier 2006). In the decade following World War II, the United States experienced rapid growth in various economic sectors and advanced in technologies that sometimes required particular skill sets and experiences not always abundant in the general population. At the same time, the spread of communism, or “Red Scare,” generated sympathy among U.S. citizens for those persons who had fallen victim to the spread of communistic regimes around the globe. As a result, the first post-war Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the McCarren-Walter Act) was amended in 1952. This change in the immigration law in the United States established provisions that, while maintaining a quota system, allowed the emergency entry of refugees who were fleeing political turmoil, sought skilled immigrants, and gave preference to immediate family members of U.S. citizens.

The second post-war change to U.S. immigration law occurred thirteen years later in 1965, under the Hart-Cellar Act. This watershed act has had more effect on the demographic composition and origin of immigrants than any other policy in the history of the United States. Frazier (2006:19) attributes its passing to a “more liberal element of Congress” that held

influence during the height of the Civil Rights movements, as well as the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The Hart-Cellar Act did away with the discriminatory quota system that essentially barred immigration from Africa and Asia, and restricted large-scale immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Under the new system, each country was allotted 20,000 visas per year. As with the McCarren-Walter Act, preference was given both to immediate family members (quantitative restrictions did not apply to spouses and children) and skilled workers. The world was divided by hemispheres (east and west), each of which was given a quota. The Eastern Hemisphere was limited to a total of 190,000 visas annually, and the Western Hemisphere's ceiling was set at 120,000. Cerrutti and Massey (2004:18) point out that while Hart-Cellar removed barriers for many non-Latino groups to legally come to the United States, "old national-origins quotas were silent about immigration from Latin American and the Caribbean, and before the Hart-Cellar Act, Mexicans could enter the United States in any number as long as they met certain qualitative criteria (having to do with health, fitness, and political affiliation)." Technically, this is true, but as I have briefly highlighted so far in this chapter, other equally discriminatory procedures were applied at times in an attempt reduce or restrict migratory flows from Mexico.

The result of Hart-Cellar has been an ever-increasing diversification of the U.S. population. New ethnic geographies are evident in land- and cityscapes throughout the country. Even though annual numerical restrictions were placed on immigrant entry from Mexico under new immigration provisions in 1968 and 1976, the Mexican population in the United States has grown exponentially since the 1960s (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). Zúñiga and Hernandez-León (2005:9) dub this period as the "Undocumented Era." Indeed, evidence of a

surge in undocumented immigrants is discernible from the annual number of aliens apprehended in the United States from the late 1960s until the 1980s (Cerrutti and Massey 2004). In 1968, 87,000 undocumented immigrants were apprehended; however, by 1986 that number had jumped almost 2000% to 1.8 million. Yet, aggressive deportations could not effectively dent the growth of persons in the United States who identified themselves as Mexicans. Informal opportunities for undocumented laborers, and economic woes in Mexico, higher-than-average fecundity among Hispanics all factored into the demographic increase.

The end of the Bracero Project may have concluded the largest official immigrant recruitment campaign in the history of the United States, but it by no means ended the demand for low-skill, affordable labor in the United States nor the exigency of underemployed Mexicans who lived in poverty to find stable incomes to support their families and better their lives. If temporary work visas (e.g. H-1, H-2) were unattainable then plan B was the obvious choice. Rural Mexicans had long resorted to clandestinely crossing the U.S.-Mexican border to acquire employment, and there was no shortage of employers willing to hire Latinos *sin papeles* (without authorized documentation). Ironically, one of the unanticipated consequences of the Bracero Project was that it actually buttressed the labor practice of employing unauthorized immigrants. Krissman (2005) draws attention to this in his study of informal recruitment customs and processes between employers and Mexican immigrants that are commonly overlooked by government officials, policy makers, and some academics. Krissman (2005:11) points out that during the Bracero Program local actors (both immigrant and non-immigrant) on both sides of the border:

[C]reated myriad networks between Mexican hometowns and swathes of the United States where mining, railway, and farm labor markets became dominated by immigrant workers, and the strengthened many other networks that had been created during previous formal and informal recruitment campaigns.

The post-Bracero impact of these networks is indubitable. Almost half of the braceros recruited during the projects twenty-two year span came from four Mexican states: Zacatecas, Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán (Corona 1987). As mentioned above, recruits were mainly sent to traditional border states, such as Texas and California; however, some travelled as far as the Midwest and Northeast. The personal connections, contacts, and familiarity with immigrant destinations made during the bracero years facilitated future migration to these places long after the Bracero Project expired (see Haney 1979). In fact, documented braceros sometimes either over-stayed their visas in reception communities, or they simply returned unauthorized afterward. Once there, these bracero “trailblazers” established formal and informal relationships with employers and acclimated themselves to their new communities. This, in turn, stimulated new emigration from their home communities as economic prospects in Mexico became more tumultuous.

Between 1960 and 1980, Mexico’s population doubled, far outpacing the country’s ability to generate enough jobs for those entering the workforce each year (Rhonda and Burton 2010). This challenge was most salient in the rural areas of Mexico, and it instigated internal migration to urban areas such as Guadalajara and Mexico City, and external migration to destinations in the United States. To make matters worse, substantial inflation and the devaluation of the Mexican peso in the late 1970s compounded the problems caused by the demographic explosion, thus, making the uncertain financial situation of many Mexican families

even grimmer. Stories of opportunities and good fortune from family members and friends living in *El Norte* funneled back down to young men as well as young women in rural communities throughout Mexico—especially to those located in central and western states. Undoubtedly, these stories stirred the geographical imagination of young Mexicans eager for stable work and a chance to better their position in life. As a result, a steady stream of immigrants flowed across Mexico’s northern frontier on their way to various destinations in the United States where a cousin, uncle, brother, or friend could offer them shelter and/or help them get a job. New or first-time immigrants joined with recurrent immigrants on the journey north. The knowledge of those who had made the grueling trip before made passage much easier for those making it for the first time (Cerrutti and Massey 2004). Both first-time and return immigrants often relied on experienced “coyotes” who knew how to slip past border patrols.

By 1980, an estimated 1.13 million undocumented Mexicans were living in the United States, 80% of whom had entered since 1970 (Passel and Woodrow 1984). On average the annual net flow of undocumented Mexicans during the 1970s—most of whom were young males—was estimated to be somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 (Jones 1982). During the same decade, 680,000 Mexicans entered the country legally (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001). The U. S. Census (1980) enumerated 8.74 million persons of Mexican origin, making Mexicans the largest Hispanic subgroup on the United States mainland. But even this number was conservative, since many undocumented Mexicans were assumed not to have participated in the national decennial count (see Passel 1983). This rise in immigration coupled with the high fertility rate among Mexican women in existing communities ensured a long-term demographic

trajectory of growth (Moore and Pachon 1985). The birthrate of all Hispanics during this period was 23.5 per 1000, higher than both whites (14.2) and blacks (22.3).

The 1980 U.S. Census also illustrated that Mexicans immigrants by and large chose traditional destinations—such as California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado—that were already home to large Mexican populations, which Saenz (1991) later referred to as “Aztlán.” Almost three out of four Mexicans lived in just two states: California with 3.36 million and Texas with 2.75 million. Within these states, the U.S. Census recorded some population shifts from Texas to California as well as to Illinois. The 1980 Census also recorded an expansion (albeit small) of Mexicans to non-tradition states in the American South (e.g., Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana) (Arreola 1985). In many of these states, movement was most notable in small towns of 10,000 inhabitants or less, thus, suggesting Mexicans were acquiring employment in agriculture.

The unyielding flow of illegal crossings and undocumented immigrants prompted action from President Ronald Reagan and the United States Congress that would unforeseeably alter the geographic distribution of Mexican as well as Central American immigration in the United States. In 1986, a new immigration act known as the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) became law. One of its main provisions granted broad amnesty to three million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States (Dept. of Labor 1996). More than two million of these newly-legalized persons came from Mexico. At the same time, other provisions were put in place that authorized additional investment in border security; stricter penalties for employees who knowingly hired undocumented immigrants; and measures that further restricted undocumented immigrants from accessing to governmental programs such as welfare

(Rosenblum et al 2012). Those undocumented immigrants who were eligible for legalization could be divided into two groups. The first group applied to special agricultural workers (SAWs) that had been employed for at least 90 days prior to May 1986. The second group consisted of undocumented immigrants who had continuously resided in the United States since 1982.

Predictably, the amnesty program had the greatest impact in California. In Los Angeles County alone more than 800,000 were legalized under IRCA (Phillips and Massey 1999). What was less predictable were the ramifications of aggressively tightening of the U.S.-Mexican border as well as the sudden legalization of millions of undocumented immigrants, many of whom had previously worked and operated in the shadows of the formal, mainstream society. Although arguments abound on how exactly IRCA contributed to the redistribution of Latinos (particularly Mexicans) in the United States, most scholars agree that the catalysts for the sudden demographic shift can be narrowed to a combination of several key factors. Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) suggest that the flooding of labor markets in traditional immigrant destinations with newly-legalized workers made these communities less attractive to potential immigrants. This, in turn, led not only potential immigrants, but also immigrants already residing in the United States, to consider new, non-traditional destinations for employment opportunities. With legal residency in hand, those Latinos who once feared straying from the safety of certain traditional communities were now free to move about the country.

Another unforeseen effect of IRCA was the geographic shift it forced in clandestine border crossing. Border entry points that were highly trafficked by undocumented immigrants, such as those in San Diego, CA, and El Paso, TX, became U.S. border patrol's focal points for

reducing unauthorized entries. These border cities had long served as nexuses for illegal crossings between Mexico and the United States, especially for those migrants heading for southern California, Texas, and several other west coast agricultural destinations. By restricting the flow of undocumented immigrants at these entry points, migrants, often guided by coyotes, looked for other areas that could be crossed more easily, thus steering border crossers to risk trekking through dangerous, sparsely populated terrain such as the Arizona Desert (Spencer 2009).

As mentioned in chapter two, Light (2010) argues that the steady influx of poor immigrants to metropolitan areas eventually overwhelmed local housing and public services and, therefore, led to the passing of local and state policies intended to deflect immigrants to other locations. Probably the most infamous example of this occurred in 1994, when California tried to implement Proposition 187, a discriminatory piece of legislation aimed directly at undocumented immigrants. Although Light (2010:30-34) asserts that as housing and labor markets become saturated, immigrants looked for greener pastures elsewhere, he is reluctant to declare IRCA completely responsible for this saturation and, thus, the downward trajectory of wage labor in cities such as Los Angeles, sighting instead macro-economic factors that were occurring nationwide. Nevertheless, he does concur that these trends did follow IRCA's passage and the mass dispersal of Mexican immigrants resulted from changes in wage labor compensation in the 1990s and the rising price of rent in certain areas.

IRCA also brought about another unintended consequence that would set the norm for informal labor practices not only in older, established Latino destinations but more pertinently in the expansion of Mexicans and Central Americans into new destinations in the American South.

A key provision and purpose behind IRCA was to reduce illegal immigration by holding U.S. companies and businesses accountable for employing immigrants without legal documentation. This was actually the first time in U.S. history that employers could face civil and criminal penalties for doing so (Durnad, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). The sudden shift in federal law and the legalization of immigrants who traditionally comprised the bulk of a low-wage labor pool, almost immediately instigated the development of new employment strategies between employers needing inexpensive, reliable labor and undocumented immigrants needed steady paying jobs. Labor subcontracting quickly became a common solution to countermeasure stringent hiring regulations, especially in the construction and agriculture industries (Phillips and Massey 1999; Krissman 2000). This loophole essentially allowed employers to utilize a seemingly limitless supply of low-skill labor legally accessible through subcontractors. Many of these subcontractors typically were/are immigrants with either citizenship or legal documentation. By signing a contract with U.S.-based employers, they agree to provide the required amount of laborers for a set amount of time as well as serve as intermediaries between employers and laborers. Employers directly pay subcontractors the amount specified in the contract, which includes the wages of third party laborers. Often, companies simply hand a check to the subcontractor when the contracted work is finish. The subcontractor then pays laborers individually from his or her bank account.

The culmination of changes to immigration norms, strategies, and policies brought on by IRCA coincided with economic hardships in Mexico. The 1980s, sometimes referred as *la década perdida* (the lost decade), was a time of currency crisis and hyperinflation as the once-lucrative state petroleum enterprise practically buckled in 1982 under the weight of rising oil

supplies on the world market. In an effort to hastily remedy this economic predicament, Mexico was encouraged by the U.S. Treasury, World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund to embark on a path of rapid economic restructuring that consisted of neoliberal, free-market reforms and ultimately more exposure to the global market economy. As with the land reforms under President Díaz nearly a century before, incentives were put forth to privatize communal lands and agricultural production. Then, to make Mexico's financial woes even worse, the Mexican Peso Crisis of 1994 further destabilized an already precarious situation. Although the Clinton Administration quickly intervened by loaning \$20 billion in an attempt to buoy the devalued peso, real GNP fell 9.2 % and between 1994 and 1996 mean manufacturing declined 21% (McKenzie 2001). As a consequence, unemployment skyrocketed. Thus, in spite of all the policies and compromises built into IRCA to curb illegal immigration, unauthorized crossings along the United States' southern border soared through the 1990s as young and middle-aged Mexicans headed north for stable work in the United States' growing economy.

During first years of the new century the annual average inflow of undocumented Mexican immigrants reached 500,000—actually eclipsing the annual number of legal entries from Mexico (Passel and Cohn 2011). Peaking in 2007, the number of undocumented Mexicans in reached seven million, constituting around 60% of the undocumented immigrant population in the United States. Since 2007, however, the number of unauthorized crossings has dropped to 150,000 and the total number of undocumented Mexican immigrants is estimated to have declined to 6.1 million (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzales-Barrera 2012). Despite the federal government's touting of the effectiveness of more aggressive immigration and border control, the recent recession and subsequent drop in construction are more likely responsible for the

recent downward trends (see Massey 2005). Between 2005 and 2010, 1.4 million Mexicans and their families returned to Mexico (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzales-Barrera 2012). Most returnees went voluntarily, whereas less than 35% are estimated to have been deported. As a result, the total Mexican-born population in the United States is twelve million after cresting at 12.6 in 2007.

New Destinations in the American South

In the decade following IRCA, Latino settlement patterns began to expand far beyond the southwestern United States, Florida, and a handful of large metropolitan areas, such as New York and Chicago. This shift has brought on social, cultural and landscape changes to communities that never before were host to large concentrations of persons of Latino descent. In no other region has this demographic phenomenon been more pronounced than in the American South. The 2010 Census enumerated 18.2 million Latinos living in the southern United States; thus, as a region this is second only to the western United States with 20.6 million. As mentioned in the introduction, this redistribution of Latino immigrants has been most evident in southern communities. Excluding Texas and Florida, the total number of reported Latinos in the South increased from less than 600,000 in 1990 to 3.6 million in 2010, a 500% increase (U.S. Census 2010). Accordingly, the southeastern United States has also become home to a large number of undocumented Latino immigrants. In total, there are an estimated 1.65 million undocumented persons residing in the American South the vast majority of who come from Latin America (Passel and Cohn 2008). How many of undocumented Latinos participated in the decennial count is impossible to say; nonetheless, the 2010 Census' enumeration of Latinos in southern states is unarguably conservative.

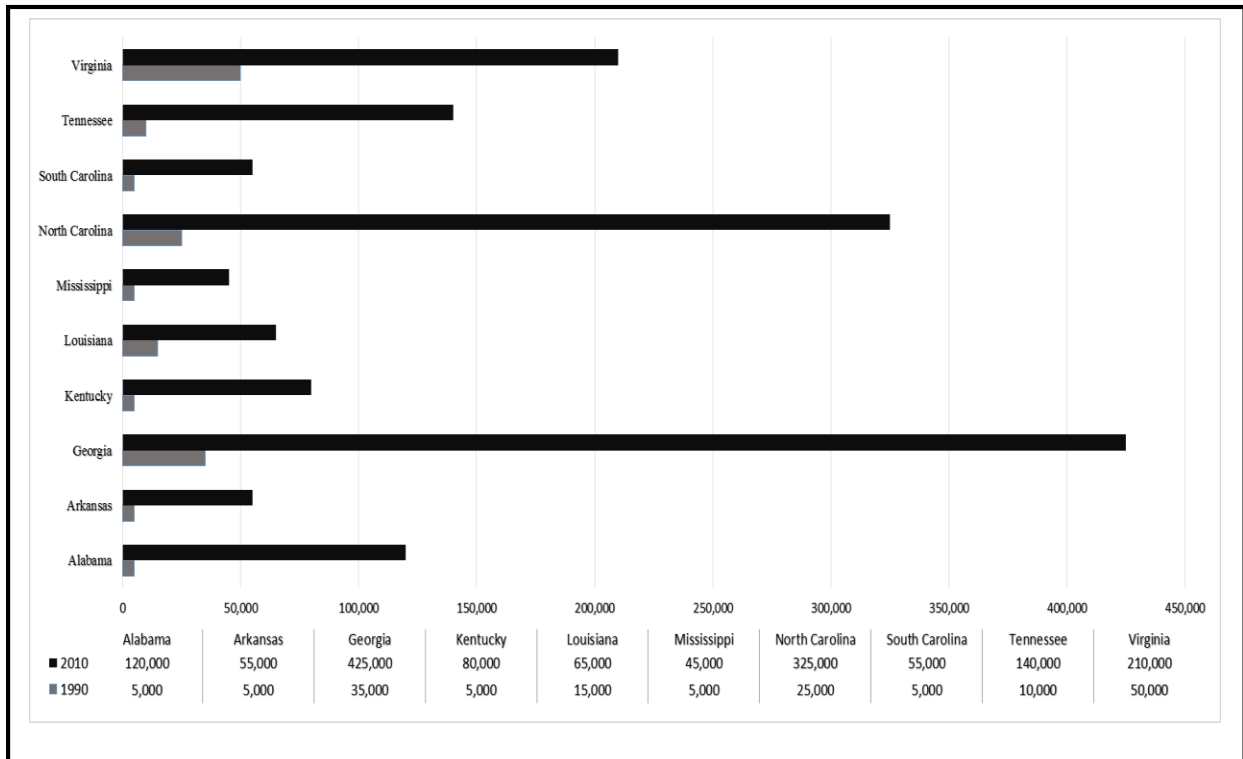


Figure 2. Undocumented Hispanic immigrants in select states (1990 & 2010).

If macro-economic push factors can account for much of the emigration out of Mexico to traditional Latino destinations in the western United States, then macro- and micro-social, economic, and political pull factors are all responsible for the relocation of Latinos to new communities throughout the country. In the American South, robust economic progress and emergence of nationally and internationally significant metropolitan areas all interconnected through connected commerce, history, cultural, and geographic propensity has spurred both population and job growth throughout the region. This web of southern cities—which includes Raleigh, NC, Charlotte, NC, Atlanta, GA, Nashville, TN, Memphis, TN, Birmingham, AL, as well as a host of smaller urban areas—comprise the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion (PAM) (Todorovich 2009). PAM generates a gross regional product of over \$1.1 trillion, therefore, making it one of the largest economies in the world.

This development constitutes the primary factor behind the Latino immigration to the area. A plethora of jobs in the service industry, construction, and manufacturing provide opportunities for low-skill immigrant employees and educated immigrants lacking required credentials to work as professionals in the United States (Murphy, Blanchard, and Hill 2001; Suro and Singer 2002; Pasal 2005). And, just as labor saturation in traditional Latino destinations (e.g. southern California) make employment prospects in other regions more attractive, cheaper housing prices and generally more comfortable standards of living have also attracted Latino families to southern urban and suburban areas (Furuseh and Smith 2006; Light 2010). The notion of a more wholesome, safe lifestyle for families that ideally could be found southern cities, such as Nashville, persuaded many Latinos to either move from urban areas like Los Angeles and Houston or arriving Latinos to bypass these traditional gateways all together (Chaney 2010). Just as persuasive, many of these nontraditional destinations had lax laws and policies towards undocumented immigrants. In Tennessee, for example, the 2001 state general assembly enacted a law that allowed persons without a social security number to obtain a driver's license—this law, however, was reversed in 2004.

The expansion of Latinos into the American South is not just limited to urban areas; it is found in rural communities stretching from Arkansas to southern Appalachia. Kandel and Parrado (2004) note the astonishing high growth rate of Latinos in nonmetropolitan areas in southern states. Their research along with Cravey's (1997) work in North Carolina illustrate how vacancies in jobs that native Blacks and Whites shun, in particular the poultry industry, have led companies with rural operations to turn to Latinos immigrants as a willing source of labor. Focusing on Tennessee, Drever (2006) highlights a variety of low-skill industries found in

rural and non-urban communities ranging from food processing operations to wholesale nurseries that rely on Latino employees. As a result, concentrations of Latinos, mainly from Mexico and Central America, are sprinkled throughout the state.

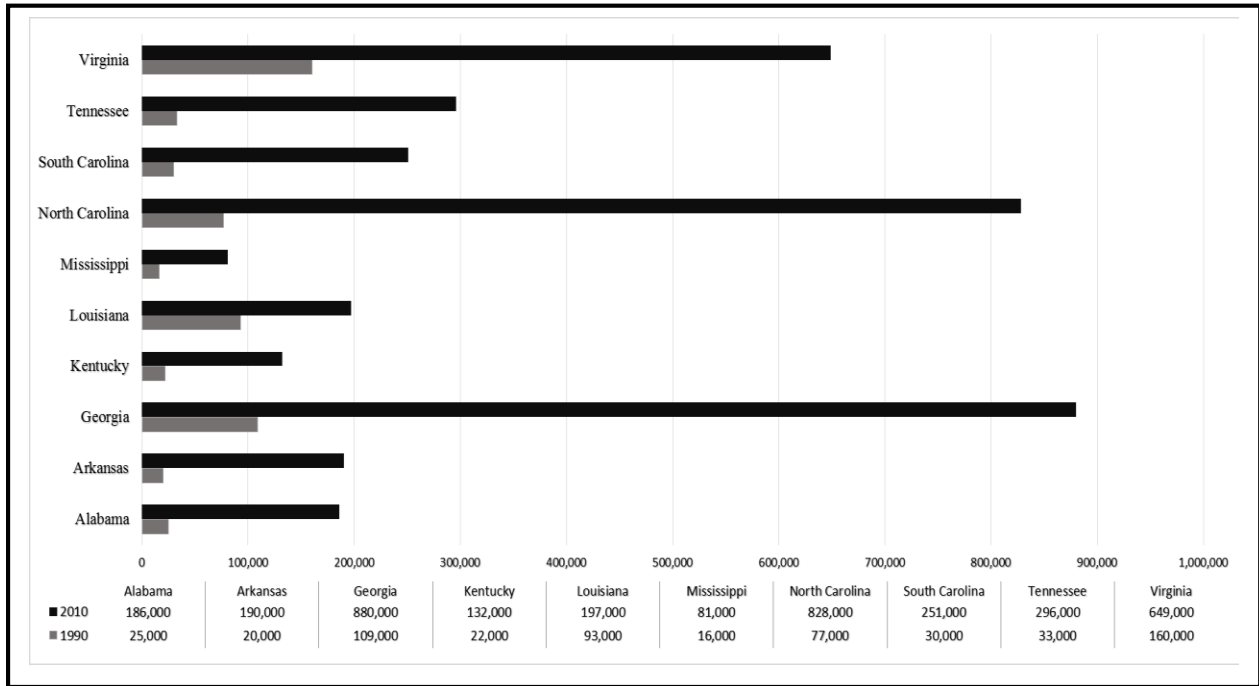


Figure 3 Population of Hispanics enumerated by U.S. Census in select states (1990 & 2010).

From Mexico to Music City

As other states in the American South, before 1990 the population of persons defined as Hispanic or Latino in Tennessee was negligible as compared with Texas or California. Yet, as with the other eight southern states (including Missouri) that comprise its border, Tennessee has in the last two decades become a destination for Latin American immigrants. Between 2000 and 2010, the Volunteer State had the third fastest percentage growth of Hispanic population in the United States—just behind South Carolina and Alabama (U.S. Census 2010). The 2010 decennial count reported a 134% increase of Hispanics residing in Tennessee, far outpacing any

other ethnic/racial group defined by the United States Census Bureau. Of the enumerated 290,059 Hispanics in the state, Davidson County (where Nashville is located) is home to the largest concentration.⁴ The county officially boasts 61,117 Hispanic persons, which constitutes one out of ten of its residents and more than 20 % of the state's entire Hispanic population. The 13 county metropolitan area—which is the largest in the state with roughly 1.6 million inhabitants—accounts for 35 % of all Hispanics in the state. Nevertheless, as many organizations in Nashville, researchers, and even the census workers suggest, the real number of Hispanics in the metropolitan area, as well as the state, is certainly higher (Chaney 2010; Winders 2011; Nagle, Gustafson, and Burd 2012).

The rise of Latinos in the American South and the attention it has gained among researchers, policy makers, and denizens often leads to claims that Latino newcomers have challenged a centuries-old racial dichotomy between Anglo Blacks and Whites (e.g., Mohl 2003; Smith 2006; Marrow 2008; Winders 2008). Indeed, this notion is applicable to many southern communities. As the so-called Mecca of Country Music, Athens of the South, and a nexus of civil war history and later African-American Civil Rights movements, among other claims and titles to southern culture, Nashville is considered a quintessential southern metropolis. Yet, just as the city's fame for Country Music overshadows all other musical genres produced in Nashville, general assumptions about its demographic composite make it easy to overlook the area's immigration heritage. During the 1800s, the city was a southern destination for German immigrants, many of whom residentially concentrated just north of downtown in a now-trendy neighborhood that still holds the name Germantown (Davis 2008). Likewise, Nashville has long been home to a large and distinguished Jewish community (Frank 1976). Much of the

contemporary ethnic and racial diversity found in the metropolitan area, however, is, in part, a result of refugee relocation programs managed by the federal government and Catholic Charities. Since in the 1970s, resettlement programs have brought refugees escaping political instability from international locations across the globe such as Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Somalia, and more recently Burma. Nashville also holds the unofficial title of “Little Kurdistan,” boasting the largest population of Kurds outside of Kurdistan. The arrival of Latinos, therefore, is just one component (albeit the most conspicuous) of the metropolitan area’s non-Anglo population.

The transformation of Nashville into a significant Latino destination can be traced to the early 1990s. Winders (2006:173) points out that the arrival Latinos to the city came right after the initial wave of Latinos to communities in North Carolina and Georgia. Reasons for this can be attributed to a couple of factors. First, Nashville’s economy accelerated in the 1990s, creating a demand for both high- and low-skill labor. Unemployment during the decade never reached above 6%, and in 1999 it dropped well below 3% (Federal Reserve 2012). Jobs abounded in construction, restaurants, hotels, and office and residential cleaning services. These employment opportunities coupled with relatively friendly immigration policies made Nashville an attractive relocation alternative for Latinos already living in the United States (Winders 2006). Second, as Latino men began settling in Nashville and the surrounding area, many made headway in niche occupations in construction such as roofing, plumbing, and carpentry (Chaney 2007).

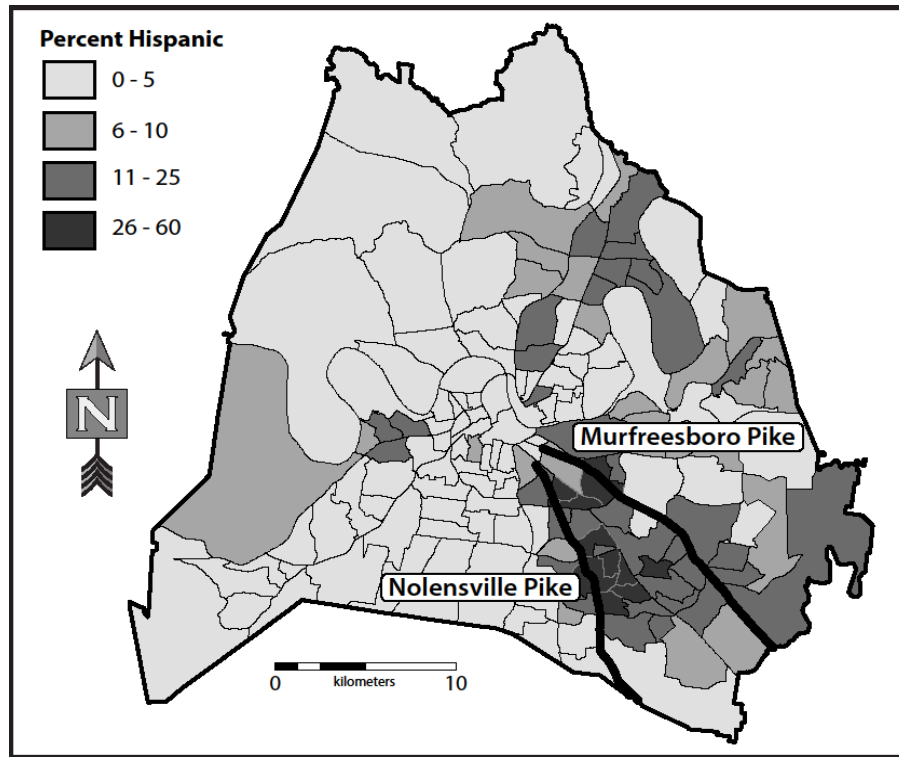


Figure 4. Map of residential distribution of Hispanics in Davidson County at the 2010 census tract level. Map by James Chaney.

By developing strong business and personal relationships with local construction companies and builders, Latinos guaranteed themselves a steady flow of work for years to come. As with other communities in the South, contractors took advantage of the work arrangements made possible through subcontractors. As previously referred to in this chapter, Latino subcontractors could provide a seemingly unlimited supply of inexpensive labor. Depending on the number of laborers needed to complete a project or work at a location, Latino subcontractors in Nashville and beyond rely on an informal network of friends, family, and acquaintances to recruit able-bodied workers (Chaney 2007). In like manner, Latino immigrants, both those already stateside and those planning to come, utilize their relationship with established subcontractors and contacts to acquire jobs in Nashville or in other communities if need be. This

strategy is essential for undocumented immigrants vying for jobs in communities that enforce immigrant employment laws.

The sheer number of Latino immigrants as well as the speed of their arrival to Nashville is nothing less than impressive. In just 20 years, the number of reported persons who identify as Latino or Hispanic has jumped 700%, from less than 8,000 in 1990 to more than 60,000. This exponential growth is clearly visible in the city's southeastern subdivisions. Two major thoroughfares—Nolensville and Murfreesboro Pikes—serve as vital arteries through this section of Nashville, connecting various neighborhoods that are home to the majority of Davidson County's Latino population. Whereas other significant clusters of business and residential clusters of Latinos are found in the city, such as in the community of Madison, the localities that run adjacent to these two pikes hold a concentration of Latin American immigrants that provides a critical mass to sustain an enclave (Chaney 2010). In the vicinities surrounding both Nolensville and Murfreesboro Pikes, one finds an array of businesses, churches, and services geared toward Latino residents. Likewise, marquees and billboards advertise in Spanish as do signage in windows. In fact, in many businesses (Latino or non-Latino) Spanish serves as a *Lingua Franca*.⁵ Although Nashville's Hispanic enclave is home to and utilized by various Latino nationalities, the Mexican cultural imprint is the most salient. In 2010, persons of Mexican origin comprised 61% of the Davidson County's reported Latino population.

Therefore, it is of little surprise that long-time residents of Hispanic origin in Nashville, describe Mexicans as the founders of the city's *barrio Latino*. In fact, southeast Nashville and particularly the areas around Nolensville Pike are often referred to as "Little Mexico" (Chaney 2010; Winders 2013). Other Latino immigrants of non-Mexican nationality, however, often

bewail that non-Latinos mistakenly assume all Latinos in Nashville are Mexican. As one Peruvian friend explained to me, “when I worked at Cracker Barrel, no one could ever remember I was from Lima, Peru. It was just easier for them to assume that I was from Mexico. Funny thing is, I’ve never been there.”



Figure 5. Typical streetscape along Nolensville Pike depicting Hispanic businesses.

A glance at recent census data gives a sense of permanence to Davidson County’s Mexican community. The 2010 U.S. Census enumerated 20,788 men and 16,491 women of Mexican origin. Although the number of reported women is lower than the number of men, these figures suggest that the city is a destination for more than just temporary workers or sojourners. Rather, it demonstrates that families are laying down roots and integrating into their host community. Definitely, the growing number of Hispanic children enrolling in local schools

further testifies to this (Chaney 2010). Migration from Mexico historically was considered a mostly gendered experience as it was largely men who made the journey north. Yet, since the 1980s, Mexican women have increasingly chosen to migrate to communities in *el otro lado* (a common moniker for the United States), thus leading to what Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) describe as the “feminization of migration.” And, just as their male migrant counterparts, many women have had to resort to clandestine entry. Mexican women more often than men rely on coyotes or male friends or family to actually guide them across the U.S.-Mexican border instead of risking the trip alone (Donato and Patternson 2004). In many cases, female immigrants are going north to reunite with husbands, boyfriends, and sons. To be successful, they are just as dependent if not more on the advice, knowledge, and transnational contacts that male family members or acquaintances can provide them on how to actually make the passage and minimize all risks.

Venimos del Corazón Cultural de México: Guanajuato

Situated in the geographic center of Mexico, the state of Guanajuato conjures up the image that many have of both old and modern Mexico. Since pre-Columbian times, areas that now fall within its contemporary borders have been inhabited by indigenous peoples. After the conquest, colonial Guanajuato was a primary mining territory for the Spanish Empire thanks to the rich veins of gold and silver that run through its soils. Later, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, *el Padre de la Patria*, launched the war of independence from the city of Dolores in Guanajuato, eventually ending Spanish control not only of Mexico, but also of Central America. Its cultural heritage and Spanish-era baroque architecture are recognized by UNESCO and attract tourists from all over the world. To Mexicans, Guanajuato represents rural landscapes, bountiful

agriculture, colonial history, and *vaqueros* (cowboys). The state's central location places it in the middle of *El Triángulo Dorado* (The Golden Triangle)—the economically-important area between Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Mexico City where the majority of the Mexico's population and industrial activity is located. Yet, it is Guanajuato's migratory activities that symbolize the historical and contemporary labor and migration relationship between Mexico and the United States, and, in turn, epitomize the conceptualization many in the United States have of Mexican immigrants.

The movement of persons between Guanajuato and the United States stretches back to the turn of last century when labor recruiters from the United States arrived on trains in search of inexpensive, low-skill workers (Cardoso 1980). Guanajuato provided U.S. companies and farming operations a nearly inexhaustible flow of young, landless peasants with little economic future in Mexico (Gamio 1930). Espinosa and Cebada (1993) point out that many young, able-bodied men jumped at the opportunity to go north as a means to escape what was virtually slavery at the hands of *hacendados* (wealthy landowners) and even the clergy who also controlled large amounts of land throughout the state. Later, in the 1940s, Guanajuatenses eagerly participated in the Bracero Program, and by the program's end in 1964 one out of ten braceros came from Guanajuato (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001).

Braceros returning home during and after the demise of the recruitment project, often came back with the financial means to start new lines of self-employment, such as livestock ranching and manufacturing (Durand 1994). Carreras (1974) found that some braceros returned with automobiles to begin taxi services. There is little doubt that these small endeavors, made possible by income earned in the United States, inadvertently spurred future migration as other

Guanajuatenses—especially younger males—realized that a temporary trip north could be a good investment for them and their families in Mexico for years to come. Needless to say, access to visas and, thus, legal entry was harder to come by for most potential migrants hoping to better their circumstances through temporary employment in *El Norte*. As a result, many men (and to a lesser degree women) from communities across Guanajuato ventured to the United States as undocumented immigrants (Ramírez García and Román Reyes 2007). Montes de Oca, Molina, and Avalos (2009) remark that it was during this Bracero period, as well as the following decade, that Guanajuatenses established ties in U.S. communities that would later develop into transnational networks. These social networks linking communities in Guanajuato to those in the United States grew stronger during the economic hard times of the 1980s and 1990s as recurrent and first-time immigrants depended on these networks to make the trek north as well as to maintain their households and businesses in Mexico.

Guanajuato, along with Zacatecas, Jalisco and Michoacán, continues to be one of Mexico's principle immigrant sending states (CONAPO 2012). Before the economic recession of 2008, more than 9% of all Mexican immigrants residing in the United States were estimated to be from Guanajuato (Albo and Ordaz Díaz 2011). What is more telling about the importance of migratory activities between Guanajuato and the United States are the economic benefits sending communities receive from Guanajuatenses working in receiving communities. Thirty percent of all remittance that enters Mexico is sent to just three states: Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato (CONAPO 2012). Between January and June of 2012, more than \$131 million was remitted to the households in Guanajuato by family and friends working throughout the United States (Banco de Mexico 2012). Although the state's modern economy is quite diverse, boasting

lucrative agriculture to manufacturing sectors, international remittance plays an essential role in economic and financial activities in local communities. Money remitted back to sending communities is used or invested in several ways. Seventy-five percent of Guanajuatenses receiving money transferred from the United States are women (Pastor and Huerta 2007). In some cases, husbands or boyfriends send remittance to maintain their families left behind. In other cases, children residing in the United States supplement their mothers' household income (Monte de Oca, Molina, and Avalos 2009). Often, migrants in the United States invest part of their earnings in the education of family members still in Mexico by paying university tuition or purchasing computers necessary for school work.

More tangible investments made through remittance are in property. Income generated in receiving communities allows migrants to buy land or businesses, build houses, and contribute funds to other projects. These types of real estate ventures give a sense of intransience to the ties transnational immigrants have with their communities of origin. Even for those migrants who may never plan to move back to Guanajuato, owning property reinforces membership to a community and demonstrates to other local denizens their transnational bond as well as commitment to a hometown (Mooney 2004). However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all funds remitted for tangible purchases are simply intended for the betterment of a migrant's life, family, or community. The influx of remitted cash to households in communities of origin is also responsible for a rise in conspicuous consumption (Cornelius 1991). With extra cash in hand, non-migrants in sending communities are more likely to purchase items that were once out of reach, such as better televisions, new furniture, elegant clothing accessories, or kitchen appliances. What is more, these purchases along with investments in real estate elevate the

status of both the senders and recipients of remittance. Those immigrants who invest in local projects and activities become patrons who are esteemed by other community residents (Smith 2006). On the other hand, recipients of money from family in the United States are sometimes able to make small loans to those in their community; thus, these families may be viewed as benefactors to community members in financial straits. Finally, perceptions of improved status through migration are sometimes exhibited by returning migrants. For example, transnational Guanajuatenses visiting home on vacation or for other purposes may indicate their financial gains made abroad, by sporting fashionable attire, driving popular automobiles, or using an expensive smart phone. In any of these cases, the display of socioeconomic success in the United States unquestionably contributes to the attractiveness of migration.

San José Iturbide as a Transnational Nodal Anchor

Surrounded by the Sierra Gorda in northeast Guanajuato lies the township (and municipality) of San José Iturbide. Built around a quaint plaza and adorned by a Catholic church as its centerpiece, the pueblo resembles any other small town in central Mexico. The area is blessed with rich soil that has been toiled for generations to produce maize, alfalfa, broccoli, and oats among other staple crops. The green fertile fields circling the town are bordered by statuesque magueys, with arid rolling mountains ascending in the horizon from every direction. Just five minutes east of *Carretera 57* (Interstate 57), San José Iturbide is the first major stop in Guanajuato on the carretera heading north out of Querétaro. Yet, most motorists and freighters simply pass by the town's exit without even a glance as they continue on to San Luis Potosí, Monterrey, or further to the U.S.-Mexican border.

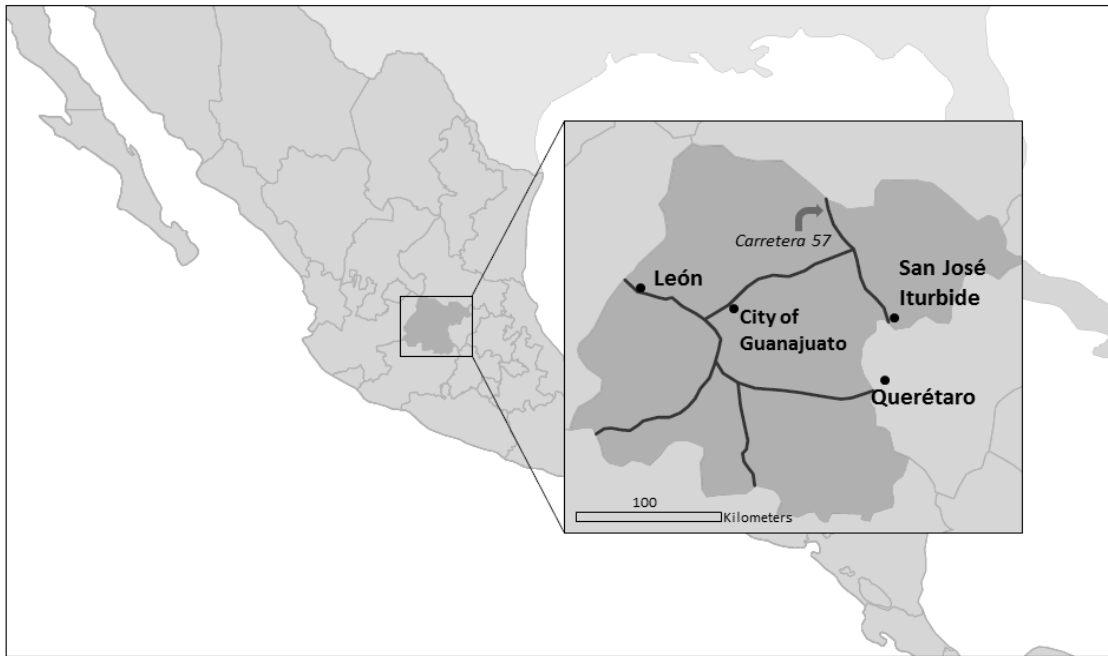


Figure 6. Location of San José Iturbide & León, Guanajuato in Mexico. Map by James Chaney & Hannah. Moyer.

Nevertheless, the municipality has benefitted from both its access to Carretera 57 and proximity to metropolitan Querétaro. In the last two of decades, industrial production has grown to become the principle economic activity followed by retail (GTO 2012). Agriculture, however, remains an important component of the community's livelihood with cultivation taking place on both commercial and privately held lands. Certainly, the development of these sectors in recent years has helped to lower unemployment in the area and lifted the general standard of living and well-being of residents. In fact, between 2000 and 2005 the municipality of San José bettered its relative position from 752 to 681 in the Mexico's HDI, an indicator the federal government uses to monitor the welfare of its population. The HDI recorded a rise in the average income of inhabitants and a decrease in the infant mortality rate.



Figure 7. Overlooking San José Iturbide from an adjacent hill.

Yet, despite the developmental gains made in San José Iturbide, there remains a high level of inequality, particularly in access to education and socioeconomic advancement (Ay. San José 2009). In 2005, an estimated 13% of the population was illiterate (INEGI 2005). Women are more likely than men to have completed basic education and on average earn much less than their male counterparts. The average income in San José Iturbide during last decade was less than the national average. At the same time, the municipality's population continued to grow—from 54,661 residents in 2000 to 72,411 by 2010 (CONAPO 2012). Currently, women outnumber men: 37,774 to 34,637. The demographic growth is in part due to a high birthrate, especially among adolescent girls. National health service officials report that in 50% of first

sexual encounters among Mexican youths no sexual contraceptives are used (Ay. San José 2009). Conversations with local health workers indicate that the rate is much higher in eastern Guanajuato. This partially explains why 38 % of children in San José Iturbide are living in households below the poverty level (Ay. San José 2009).

Socioeconomic inequality and the lack of well-paying employment explain the high level of participation in the local informal economy and the migratory culture held by many community residents. San José Iturbide ranks as a “high migratory intensity” municipality by state and federal indices (Ay. San José 2009). Luis Vargas who manages the local government’s department of immigration calculates that 35 to 40% of households have at least one member living in the United States. This is a discrepant figure when compared with the mere 5% reported by CONAPO (2012). Luis asserts that the Mexican census’ count is disproportionately low. The inconsistency between the two figures could be a result from the new methodological strategy the federal census initiated for the 2010 count. The change made in methods for quantifying households linked to migration definitely impacts the families with whom I worked. The 2000 census methodology considered a household as being part of a *vivienda* (household). Therefore, several families being made up of siblings and their spouses living next to each other or on the same property, for example, were categorized as a household. In the 2010 census, however, each “home” or individual family unit is designated as a household, and, in turn, enumerated separately from others although they may reside in the same building, compound, or property. In the case of those families who participated in my research, several lived in what they considered the same *vivienda*, but could be calculated by the census as multiple dwellings.

One instance of a caveat created by the new method is the situation of a single mother living in an attached household of the vivienda where I stayed while in San José. This woman had two illegitimate children with a married man. As a result, her household consisted of her and her two children. She receives remittance from her brothers, sisters, and nephews in the United States. Likewise, her children, both boys, talk to their cousins, aunts, and uncles living in the United States and dream of joining them when they are older. Her family members abroad are transnationally embedded in her family's life. Yet, according to the 2010 census methodology, unless she or one of her sons has emigrated, her household does not have an immediate family member living abroad.

Internal and external migration coupled with family and friend contacts in other communities are responsible for the networks migrants in San José Iturbide developed with Mexicans from other areas of Mexico. There are not set rules as to how contacts are made nor are there temporal or relational frameworks that limit who can be included in these social networks. Therefore, networks are never static but always reorganizing. They can be enlarged or reduced depending on the level of focus one wishes to make. Furthermore, as I discussed in the methodology of this research, these networks are conceptual tools used to trace the connections between individuals and thus be viewed as social links made through perspective of the researcher. My case study in Mexico is derived through my fieldwork with migrants from San José Iturbide and their contacts from the same community, as well as those contacts from other locations. In my particular study, the social network I focus on is primarily comprised of migrants who hail primarily from two small adjacent communities on the outskirts of the town of San José Iturbide. The larger community, Cinco de Mayo, is a *colonia*. The smaller community,

La Luz, is a *rancharía* and surrounded by agricultural land. La Luz is less than a five-minute walk from Cinco de Mayo. Migrants from these communities have strong social bonds with each other as many of them are related. Equally, they have family and friends in San José Iturbide proper and in Querétaro, León, the city of Guanajuato, Mexico City as well as myriad other places. Therefore, if these persons are interconnected to an almost infinite number of others persons who are or could be potential migrants, why should I primarily focus on these individuals in this research?

The reason is simple: within this particular group from San José Iturbide are actors who are more active and essential to the international mobility of others embedded in these social networks. They are, if you will, the movers and shakers responsible for the current migratory patterns connecting certain destinations in the United States to those in Mexico. Those migrants, who came to Atlanta and Nashville at the end of last century, are now economically and socially rooted in these metropolitan areas. They facilitate others in their social network to migrate, work, and even return to Mexico. This includes those from San José, but also includes contacts from the larger cities such as León, as well as contacts made in U.S. locations. In the second part of this chapter, I embark on a more intimate, descriptive analysis of the transnational social network that has emerged out of the municipality of San José Iturbide, Guanajuato, and now extends to several destinations in the southern United States, and more specifically the cities of Nashville and Atlanta.

A Conversation with Sojourners from León

In February of 2006, I held a lengthy interview session with eight men from León, Guanajuato, all of whom were living in a rented house in Nashville's Hispanic enclave. These

men worked in plumbing crews run by members of one family from San José Iturbide. The theme of my interviews concerned each person's experiences in the United States, with particular attention to Nashville. Two things stood out in those conversations that relate to this research. The first was that of the eight persons with whom I spoke, two were over the age of 30. These older immigrants had immigrated to the United States several times in their adult lives, usually to Texas and California, but also to Ohio. It was not until they received a call from a friend in 2004 about work in Nashville that either one had ever been to Tennessee. The six younger men, however, had never lived in any other city in the United States other than Nashville. They had been recruited directly from León to Nashville, and, for that reason, most were unfamiliar with other communities in the United States.

The other notable revelation from those interviews was the living arrangements of these men. All shared a large home with several other Latino immigrants. All the occupants were plumbers from León, and all had arrived to Nashville through contacts. None of the men living in the house had legal documentation, and all had crossed into the United States with the aid of coyotes. Once in Nashville, they were provided employment and a place to live with utilities. Their only responsibilities were to show up for work and pay the rent and bills of the house. Working 40 plus hours a week at \$15 or more an hour, with rent and bills divided among multiple tenants, made living in Nashville very economical.

For a young man from the lower class of Mexican society, an opportunity like this is an investment in his future. One can earn enough money in three or four years to build a house in Mexico, buy an inexpensive automobile, or pay for a family member's education. If a laborer on a crew chooses to stay in Tennessee, he can potentially earn enough money to purchase a house

in the United States and start a new life. Indeed, both the younger and older men with whom I spoke confessed that coming to Nashville was a pivotal moment in their lives in that it enabled them to realize their dreams in both Mexico and the United States. Pepe, a 31-year-old man, had traveled extensively in the United States working in construction while trying to save enough money to finish his home in León and provide a “good life” for his three daughters in Mexico. The stability of employment he found working as a plumber in Nashville, he believed, all but guaranteed that he could return to Mexico a wealthy man. Several of the younger men, however, handled their earnings more frivolously than Pepe. Pepe’s nephew, Ray was 24-years-old at the time of the interview. He had come to Nashville two years prior, and was enjoying to his “freedom” and weekly paycheck. If he had stayed in Mexico, he explained that he would be working for his dad as a mechanic in his family’s *llantería* (tire shop). In Nashville, Ray informed me, as a single man he did not have any family restrictions hanging over him. Instead, he was free to go out to bars and dance clubs every weekend and, with cash in hand, and enjoy his outings to the fullest.

The opportunities provided to these men from León were part of an agreement they had made with members of the García family, who at the time worked as subcontractors for established local plumbing companies in metropolitan Nashville. The Garcías informally sponsored these men from León by loaning them money to entering the United States clandestinely; offering them room and board at a home rented in by a member of the García family; and providing them work on a plumbing crew. In return, these men were obligated to pay back the loaned money through their labor on crews and work exclusively for the Garcías. This agreement was lucrative for both parties. The men from León were guaranteed employment

and a place to live without concern of legal documentation. The Garcías were guaranteed a supply of labor through the transnational social networks of the men from León.

During the first years of the twenty-first century, Middle Tennessee's residential and commercial real estate market billowed to unprecedented levels. Accordingly, a demand followed for skilled and semi-skilled labor in construction among other services. Several young men of the García family first arrived to Nashville during the 1990s and had established working relationships with several local plumbing companies. Their good rapport and reputation enabled them to secure a continuous flow of contract work, which consequently, required them to maintain large plumbing crews capable of operating at multiple construction sites. The result of Nashville's growing economy, the establishment of the García family, and steady demand for construction labor immediately established Nashville as a nodal immigrant destination within the social networks of Guanajuatenses from certain sending communities. In fact, instead of being the second or third choice for immigrants already in the United States, by 2005 Nashville was the primary destination for both young men and women from León and San José Iturbide.

Since my first interview with Guanajuatenses in 2005, several important occurrences and factors have impacted Nashville's Latino community, such the national economic recession, implementation of strict laws aimed at undocumented immigrants (e.g. 287 g), and tighter security along the U.S.-Mexican border. Nevertheless, the García family's business and recruitment through transnational social networks has endured, bringing immigrants from sending communities in Guanajuato directly to Middle Tennessee.

From Los Angeles, to Atlanta, and Finally to Nashville: The Search for New Opportunities

The novelty of Nashville's nodal position in the transnational social networks of Guanajuatenses makes it opportune for research on the diffusion of Latino immigrants from traditional destinations to new immigrant communities in the American South, because many of the first immigrants from San José Iturbide to arrive are still living and working in the metropolitan area. Therefore, they are able to give firsthand accounts of how and why Nashville developed into a primary immigrant destination. Likewise, these trailblazers were part of the wave of Latino immigrants that chose to relocate from California and Texas to southern cities, such as Atlanta, Nashville, and Charlotte. And so, their personal stories reveal firsthand why they chose to seek out new communities in which to settle.

The García family's relocation to Nashville and the extensive transnational social networks that have developed after their arrival is all the result of one family member, who serendipitously discovered a lucrative niche industry in Middle Tennessee: plumbing installation in residential construction. This individual's—Juan—settlement in Nashville is responsible for completely altering the migration patterns of individuals from San José Iturbide leaving for the United States. Moreover, his story is an exemplar of the much larger trend during the 1990s of Latino immigrants resettling in non-traditional destination states.

Juan was born in 1977 in a one-room house in the small community of La Luz. His parents were never married. As a result, his childhood was spent between his father's home in San José Iturbide, and his mother's home in the peripheral community of La Luz. Both Juan and his mother described to me in detail the poverty that their family faced in the 1980s, living on the fringes of San José Iturbide. In 1994, at the age of 16, Juan and a few of his friends decided to

immigrate to the United States They followed the well-worn path to California that men from their community had peregrinated for decades. The group clandestinely crossed the border using routes frequented by other migrants from central Mexico. Juan settled in Pasadena and lived with friends for two years. Through the kinship networks of his father's family already living in the metropolitan area, he found employment at a carwash, earning \$11 an hour. According to Juan:

That was not the idea I had when I moved to the United States. I grew up poor and wanted more than I had. I wanted to support my family. Originally, I wanted to build a house in La Luz, buy a car, and start a family. But, on \$11 an hour, it was not possible. In Los Angeles everything is expensive; I couldn't save enough money. Also, there was no way to advance in my job.



Figure 8. A vivienda in La Luz that belongs to the García Family.

Disappointed with California, Juan returned to San José Iturbide in 1996 with a new migration plan. His uncle (on his father's side) had recently relocated from Texas to Atlanta. He was working for contractors, installing plumbing in residential construction sites throughout the

Atlanta metropolitan area. During the 1990s, men from San José Iturbide commonly found work as plumbers in Dallas and Houston. The profession in these cities, however, had become saturated. This motivated Juan's uncle to investigate other growing metropolitan areas where semi-skilled laborers were in demand. Georgia provided the fortuity Juan's uncle was looking for. Atlanta's labor pool of semi-skilled, inexpensive workers was, at the time, too small to fully meet the demands of the burgeoning construction industry. For that reason, Juan explained, his uncle invited him to go to Atlanta and take advantage of abundance of work opportunities. Juan had only been in San José Iturbide six months before leaving for Atlanta. In that time, though, he married his girlfriend before emigrating.

Nineteen ninety-six was as monumental year for Atlanta. The city hosted the Olympics and was profiting from a healthy business climate. Juan arrived after the games and moved in with his uncle and a few other men from San José Iturbide. He recalls an almost euphoric feeling among Latinos laborers:

When we arrived, there was so much work in construction, we could have worked seven days a week. It was exactly what we were looking for. I bought a Honda Prelude (used) and began sending money back to Mexico. It was the first time I really ever had extra money. And, if I worked harder I could earn more.

Al, Juan's younger brother of the same mother, told me that Juan's fortuitous success in Atlanta quickly trickled down to La Luz:

I was still in *secundaria* (junior high school or middle school) when Juan was living in Atlanta. He used to send me money and clothes from the United States. It was really the first time that I had nice things. I remember kids making fun of me because I had always been poor but suddenly I started showing up to school in really nice clothes. Later, Juan

gave me his Honda and built a house in La Luz. He still lived in Atlanta, but I moved in. I used to throw parties there; it was fun.

Juan's current role as well as position within his family living in La Luz can be traced to his time in Atlanta. His mother, Margarita, had married another man in the late 1980s and had five younger children with him in addition to another son, Al, from another relationship. Margarita and her children all lived in La Luz, in dwellings connected to Juan's grandfather's home. Margarita's husband had immigrated to Washington State. He worked as a seasonal agricultural laborer and rarely earned enough to remit to his family in Mexico. Margarita attributed the lack of remittance from her husband on his vices, particularly alcohol, complaining that instead of sending money to her, he chose to drink away his weekly paycheck. Financial support fell to Juan, who took it upon himself to make sure his mother and siblings were taken care of. At the age of 18, he had become the transnational breadwinner of La Luz.

The constant demand for reliable labor in plumbing enabled Juan to promise employment to others from La Luz and nearby Cinco de Mayo. In 1997, he talked Ciro, his mother's brother, into leaving La Luz for Atlanta. That May, Ciro and several other men from San José Iturbide left for the United States. At the time, Ciro remembered, that it was easy to clandestinely cross the border into Texas. He explained that if you went with an "experienced" migrant, that person would know where along the river there were no border patrols. This trip was Ciro's first to the United States. He had only worked on farms around San José Iturbide. Ciro confessed to me that he had never heard of the city of Atlanta until the Olympics. Thus, when Juan asked him to come, he had no real concept of the where he would be going. This confession about no knowledge of his destination is telling because it demonstrates the unfamiliarity Mexicans had

with new southern destinations during the national shift in Latino migration patterns occurring in the 1990s. As an adolescent, Ciro told me that he remembered seeing license plates on the cars of migrants from Texas and California. Those states, he insisted, were where people from San José Iturbide would always migrate. In contrast, Georgia was uncharted territory for migrants.

Initially, Juan, Ciro, and others from San José Iturbide resided just off Interstate 20 on the east of Atlanta. Within a year, Ciro moved to Buford Highway, an area of just north of downtown Atlanta that is home to a large number of Latino immigrants. Juan, however, did not move with his uncle. The company he was employed by had acquired contract work in other southern metropolitan areas, like Birmingham, AL, and Nashville. Juan was sent with other crews to work for several weeks at a time on job sites. It was during this period that Juan says he saw an opportunity to become more autonomous and forge his own destiny. While in Nashville, he realized that, as with Atlanta, the metropolitan area was growing due to a healthy economy. Unlike Atlanta, there was a smaller number of Mexicans working on plumbing crews. Juan says that he came to this realization because the company he was working for in Atlanta was obtaining contracts in Nashville due to their competitive pricing bids. This company, he asserted, could operate less expensively and more efficiently because they subcontracted the actual labor to Mexican plumbing crews. Juan explained to me that he asked himself why he should work for a company in Atlanta that sent him to Nashville, when he could just organize his own crews and, “*trabajar por mi cuenta*” (be self-employed) in Nashville. His epiphany motivated him to take the initiative to drive to local contract plumbing companies in the Nashville area to personally introduce himself and offer his services as a subcontractor. Within a

month, he had found a company willing to work with him, and in 1998, he moved to Nashville renting an apartment near Nolensville Pike.

The actions Juan took to relocate to Nashville and become self-employed are significant because these indisputably show him exercising agency to improve his situation despite his immigration status and linguistic limitations (at the time Juan spoke very limited English). Juan actively formed, and would later maintain, essential relationships with local, non-Hispanic members of Nashville's host society that facilitated his economic success in Tennessee. At the same time, the favorable outcome of his risky endeavor to affranchise himself from a plumbing crew in Nashville and launch his own business instantaneously propelled his social position among those from his community both in the United States and Mexico. That is, the power relations between Juan and other migrants from San José Iturbide—including members of his family—were suddenly reorganized. Juan had migrated to the United States just as many other young males from his community had done, yet he boldly took a risk that quickly paid off. Now, he was obtaining contract work, organizing, and recruiting laborers from Atlanta, Houston, and Guanajuato. Juan had become a central figure within the social network of his peers and family.

Juan's relocation to Nashville also makes him an immigrant trailblazer. With no other contacts from his community, he chose to settle in a new city without the assistance of others. Without question, he established a beachhead in Tennessee that set the stage for Nashville to become a nodal destination in transnational social networks originating from San José Iturbide, Cinco de Mayo, La Luz, and later León, Guanajuato. Atlanta, however, continued, as it remains today, to serve as a nodal destination. While Juan recruited young men from work crews in Atlanta, Houston, as well as Dallas, others from San José Iturbide now living in Atlanta attracted

friends and family to Georgia. Ciro explained to me during an interview in Mexico, that in 2002 he returned to La Luz to visit his family. When he returned to Atlanta, he brought with him friends, cousins, and nephews. At the time, he said, Atlanta seemed to be the preferred destination, although young men were now leaving for Nashville. Nevertheless, Houston and Dallas also remained popular. According to Ciro and others who participated in this research, those two cities had long been locations where both young men and women from Guanajuato had emigrated to. In turn, many families in San José Iturbide were transnationally linked to both of these Texan metropolitan areas.

Initially, Juan focused on recruiting close friends and his immediate family. His younger brother, Al, arrived directly to Nashville in 1999. Al had finished “*preparatoria*”—an educational system that is equivalent to high school in the United States but prepares students for careers—and was employed at a factory owned by Colgate-Palmolive and located in San José Iturbide’s industrial park. Juan had contacted him about working for one of his crews in Nashville. During Al’s first year in the United States, he worked under Juan on a small plumbing crew made up of others from San José Iturbide, learning the trade. Al recounted how Juan obligated him to publicize their services and expand their contract options by stopping by the offices of local plumbing companies. Al was performing in an apprentice role so to speak. Juan trusted Al because he was his younger brother, and he needed an assistant on whom he could rely. Al had grown up without a father and was learning what he considered “important things about being professional” from Juan. Both Juan and Al attributed their work ethic to their shared grandfather; however, Al was now living in a new country and had only Juan to rely on for

guidance. Juan, according to Al, was a person of *buen ejemplo*, which loosely translates as a good role model.

This characterization of Juan as a *buen ejemplo* and professional is an image shared not only by members of Juan's family, but also by immigrants and their families from San José Iturbide, Cinco de Mayo, and La Luz. Al is only four years younger than Juan and so grew up with him. Juan's younger siblings through his mother, however are much younger. For that reason, their concept of him and his role in the family is based more on his actions, endeavors, and success since he immigrated to the United States. In other words, they lack any strong memories or impressions of him when he lived in La Luz. His relatively quick prosperity in the United States earned him a high level of respect and admiration among non-family members as well, which he has been able to sustain as well as capitalize on. Moreover, he has assumed the position of a benefactor through his organization of informal patronages assisting scores of young men and women wishing to come to the United States. The growing housing market in Middle Tennessee that characterized much of last decade enabled Juan to exponentially expand his business ventures and in consequences recruit more laborers to work on his plumbing crews. To acquire more labor, Juan began financially assisting his friends and family immigrating to Nashville, which he continues to do. For those immigrants without legal documentations, Juan sometimes loans them money to hire a coyote, as well as arranges transportation to pick them up at a terminus (usually a city in Texas) and bring them back to Nashville.

By the turn of the century, both Nashville and Atlanta were gaining favorable reputations as destinations in and around San José Iturbide. Enough time had passed to assure that neither city's appeal to Latino immigrants was just a temporary phenomenon. Instead, men and women

had settled in both metropolitan areas generating a continual flow of people, capital, and tangible goods between these nodal communities. As a result, a familiarity with these locations formed in the geographic imaginations of non-immigrants in San José Iturbide. During an unexpected interview opportunity in January of 2012 at a local cantina in San José Iturbide, I spoke with several older men, about their families in the United States and immigrant destinations in the American South. None of these men had ever been immigrants, yet two had traveled to the United States on business or vacation. What was noteworthy about our conversation was the shared notions and concepts these men had of Tennessee and Atlanta. One man, had three cousins living right outside Nashville, and, although he had never visited them, enjoyed describing to me how peaceful and lush the countryside was in Tennessee. The first of his cousins arrived there in the late 1990s and had “put down roots” after marrying a local woman. More telling about the familiarity these men had of Tennessee, however, was their knowledge of college and professional sports teams. National Football League games are regularly shown in Mexico; therefore, it is little surprise that many Mexicans know of the Tennessee Titans or the Atlanta Falcons. Yet, knowledge about regional college teams, such as the University of Tennessee’s Volunteers, is less expected. One of the men I conversed with had become a “fan” of the University of Tennessee after receiving football paraphernalia as a Christmas gift from an immigrant cousin.

On several occasions, I passed denizens on the streets of San José Iturbide who were wearing sport teams paraphernalia from Tennessee, further attesting to the new links between this small town and the American South. Such causal cultural markers adopted by these locals highlight the growing awareness that San José Iturbide as a sending community has about the

host societies in new receiving communities; and, from a broader perspective, these are indicative of changing migration patterns within the United States. Just as Ciro remembered license plates on cars from Texas and California when he was growing up, younger generations are already familiarized to some degree with societies in the southern states. These anecdotal comments and observations carry a larger significance because they illustrate how within a very short span of time the attention or interest an immigrant sending community gives toward specific geographic places can shift, in this case from southern California or Texas to northern Georgia or Tennessee.

The Labor Structures and Recruitment Strategies Embedded in the García Family's Transnational Social Networks

On my first trip to San José Iturbide in 2006, I chatted with three adolescent men on the front porch of a home in La Luz. All were interested in conversing after learning I was from Nashville. Two of the three were members of the García Family and had cousins, aunts and uncles in both Atlanta and Nashville. The other young man had family in Texas, but he was considering following his friends to Georgia or Tennessee if he were to ever decide to emigrate. Five years later in 2011, I happened to see one of these three men in Nashville during a birthday party for one of the children of an immigrant from La Luz. He had come a year before with the financial help of Juan. He was currently living in Nashville with Juan's sister Clementina, and her husband, Osberto, who rented rooms to immigrants from San José Iturbide, as well as laborers on Osberto's crews. He informed me that he was planning to move to Atlanta, where his cousin and friend (the two other adolescents I met with him in La Luz) were living. In

addition, his brother and several other family members had relocated to Atlanta, and for that reason, he thought he would be more comfortable.

For the men and women involved in this transnational social network originating from San José Iturbide there are often several employment options available in different destination communities. A laborer can potentially find a position on a plumbing crew in Nashville, Atlanta, Houston, and Dallas just by contacting someone in the García's extended family or someone already employed in their crew. This flexibility often works in the favor of both the crew leaders and laborers. If work has slowed down in one city but increased in another, a crew leader in the location with a larger workload can call the crew leader who is experiencing a slowdown to recruit workers on a temporary or sometimes permanent basis. This is beneficial to a crew leader when a decrease in contract work forces him to constrict the number of laborers in a crew. For example, if a crew leader has six laborers on one crew, and two of those laborers are married with children but the others are young men with no ties or obligations holding them to a location, then that crew leader may give priority to those two men with families if contract works slows by delegating all work orders to them. For the other laborers, he may contact another crew leader in the area or in another city to see if that leader needs extra employees.

Equally, individual laborers are free agents in that they can solicit work on another crew if they feel they can earn more money or simply if they are not satisfied with their current employment situation. This flexibility provided by these transnational social networks empowers laborers by giving them more control of their lives while in the United States. This freedom occasionally has negative repercussions for crew leaders because laborers may leave without giving any notice, negatively impacting the quality of a crew's performance by

unexceptionally reducing the number of available of workers. The unpredictability this causes crew leaders creates a constant (albeit usually minimal) sense of uncertainty between contractors and subcontractors due to the possibility that a “job” will not be finished on time or not completed correctly. This uncertainty can directly affect the professional relationship between the crew leader and contractor in that a crew deemed unreliable may not be offered future contracts.

This risk of labor attrition that crew leaders and organizers face actually helps to maintain favorable work conditions and certain benefits for laborers. Crew organizers try to create a work environment suitable for reducing attrition through competitive pay, providing some level of medical insurance, and sometimes providing housing. Likewise, if an employee wishes to make a large purchase, such as an automobile, an employer may lend (interest free) the employee the money for a down payment. Housing, as in the case of the immigrants from León, is an important incentive for laborers to stay in a particular city. During the housing boom, the García family rented two large homes near Nolensville Pike to house recruited laborers who worked on their several crews. In either house, laborers were free to choose the crew they wished to work on and change houses if a space was available. Since all of the laborers were undocumented, all bills as well as the rental contracts were in the names of members of the García family who had legal documentation. Since neither Juan nor his younger brother (who now works independently) were legal residents, they occasionally used the names and social security numbers of Juan’s U.S. born children instead of their names in order to open accounts and lease houses. All rent and bills, however, were paid by the tenants, all of whom worked for one of the crew leaders of the García family.

Although these labor and residential relationships may appear, on the surface, as just informal understandings between an employer and employee to ensure the basics a laborer would need to live and work in a location, the relationships and bonds that develop between the Garcías and the men working on their crews are much more complex and intimate. Outside work, crew members spend their free or recreational time with crew leaders going to bars, restaurants, nightclubs, Mass, *jaripeos* (Mexican bull riding rodeos), and sometimes Alcohol Anonymous meetings. For newly arrived laborers, these group activities help to accustom them to a new, foreign environment. The birthdays of laborers are also celebrated and gifts from the crew leaders are given usually in the form of money or dinner and *borracheras* (an outing to bars for the purpose of becoming intoxicated). In December, Juan holds an annual *posada* (end of the year Christmas party) at a large event hall. All crews are invited as are other families and friends of the Garcías. Juan pays for all food and drinks. Crew leaders give each laborer an annual bonus, usually consisting of a couple hundred dollars. Occasionally, though, gifts may be designer clothes, MP3 players, or a computer.

Juan's mother Margarita has played a fundamental role in acclimating immigrants to Nashville. By 2002, Juan's mother and all of her children had settled in Nashville. At that time, four of Margarita's children were under the age of eighteen and studying in schools. The responsibility of tending to four children in a new culture and her lack of English skills led her to not work outside of her house. Instead, she decided that she could contribute to her sons' businesses by focusing on the mental wellbeing of both her family and laborers. In 2004, Margarita and her husband purchased a home in the Hispanic enclave where they began to regularly host small get-togethers for the crew laborers. Margarita took it upon herself, to cook

authentic Mexican food, such as *gorditas*, *tamales*, and *chicharón*, and deliver these dishes weekly to the houses where her family's employees lived. Laborers purchased the food items in bulk for a small fee. This venture ended, however, when Margarita opened a Mexican restaurant and had to devote her time to a legitimate business. Now laborers and others from San José Iturbide regularly frequent her restaurant where they often receive discounts or special deals on food and drink. Many of the men were part of Margarita's family, and so she had known them all of their lives. However, others were friends of members of her extended family and before moving to Nashville were strangers to her. Nevertheless, Margarita explained to me that she wanted all of the men involved in her sons' business to feel comfortable:

Think about it, Jim, many of these *muchachos* are only 18 or 19 years old, they are a long way from home and don't have family here. Can you imagine leaving home and not being able to see your family for two or three years. They get lonely, and need to know they have friends here.

These acts of kindness and consideration boost morale among laborers and help to maintain a loyal workforce, but that is not the primary reason behind their compassion. The García's often mentioned that they have been blessed with their lives in the United States, and that through hard work and patience they have or almost have *logrado el sueño americano* (achieved the American dream). They believe it is their responsibility to help others. During a focus group discussion with the García family (minus Juan), all participants shared a story of growing up in poverty and living without the simple comforts they say "*gringos*" take for granted, such as automobiles, daily meals with meat, flat screen televisions, and computers. Al added that the transnational migration that occurs San José Iturbide and Nashville and Atlanta, has lifted many families in La Luz and Cinco de Mayo out of poverty, and improved the local

economy as a whole. Indeed, this claim appears evident when one tours the city and its colonias, which I will discuss in detail later. Therefore, these transnational relationships shared among the Garcías and those who they employ appear a not to be only a simple financial venture that benefits both parties but also part of a larger collective undertaking to develop and improve the sending community of these transnational migrants.

The Garcías definitely constitute the most important component within this particular informal labor recruitment process. In order for them to keep the process in motion, those who are crew organizers and/or leaders must work together, keeping open communication among themselves, as well as with their counterparts in Atlanta and to a lesser extent in Houston and Dallas. One factor that has been essential to their success is their reliance on certain family and close friends who hold important positions within their plumbing businesses. The amount of contract work that the Garcías and their crews rely on is a directly tied to the ebbs and flows of the housing market. A downturn may leave entire crews without steady work for weeks, whereas a sudden spike in construction can overburden a crew to the point of not being able to fulfill the all their work obligations stated in a contract. This trust and sense of loyalty to other crew members is based on family ties and proven friendship. In principle, each crew leader works independently of the other, and is mostly responsible for managing his crew and worksites. Likewise, he usually obtains his own contractual work and pays his employees in cash by directly depositing checks in his bank account.

For the purpose of this research, I label all crew leaders with family ties to Juan under the last name García because one pseudonym for an identified group is much more operable. However, this blanket pseudonym gives the impression that all crew leaders are brothers of the

same last name, when in fact several are half-brothers, cousins, *cuñados* (brothers-in-law), and close friends. Regardless, most are related to Juan by either blood or marriage. Those who are not are extremely close friends of Juan that have earned his trust through years of either working for or alongside him. Although this is no formal hierarchy in among crew leaders, Juan ultimately holds the most respect because of his time in Tennessee, his rapport with local contractors, and financial achievements. But, whereas this respect may enable him to influence others in his social network, members of his family and other crew leaders make life decisions independently.

Since Juan organized the first crew in 1998, the number of crews connected to the García family has grown and continues to do so. Until 2012, Juan worked primarily with one local contractor but also picked up contracts with other local and out-of-state companies. One of these secondary local contractors became Al's (Juan's younger brother) main source of contract work after he separated from Juan's crew to work independently. Juan recently launched his own contract plumbing company, which he anticipates will enable him to increase the number of laborers he can directly and indirectly employ.⁶ Nevertheless, he currently has several crews operating under him, each of which are led by family members or friends. In the summer of 2012, his younger brother Ray, who was working for Al, organized a crew under Juan's new company. Also, two of Juan's brothers-in-law by marriages to his sisters are now working with Juan. One brother-in-law, Ignacio, is an independent subcontractor running his own crew, working with several local companies. The other brother-in-law, though, works directly for Juan as a crew leader. The brother of Juan's wife also immigrated to Nashville to work as one of crew leaders. The rest of Juan's *socios* (associates or business partners), are friends from San José

Iturbide, León, or Mexico City. Those from San José Iturbide are old acquaintances or recruits, while those from León or Mexico City are contacts he made in Nashville and Atlanta.

Although all crew leaders acknowledge some level of informal allegiance to each other whether it be because of family ties or a history of working together, this by no means suggests their interpersonal relationships are always cordial. Disagreements arise over a host of reasons. Occasionally, work-related conflicts arise, such as one crew leader conscripting laborers without consulting first with the other crew leader, or a disagreement about payment on shared work. These disputes are usually resolved within a few weeks as tempers cool. Spats over family matters and arguments among friends tend to be less serious, although they last much longer. However, when matters of contention between members of the García family manifest in the form of disloyalty or betrayal, discord and grudges may endure for months. The impact reverberates through the family as well as the crews as individuals begin to take sides.

In March of 2012, a heated dispute occurred when Al's younger brother, Ignacio—who at the time was his equal business partner—decided to stop working with Al and form his own independent crew. Ignacio informed Al of his resignation on a Friday, and on same that day, he withdrew all the money from a joint business account they shared. This act was viewed as deceitful by many, but most upsetting for Al was not the money but the suspicion that Ignacio had planned his actions long in advance, timing his move to coincide with the arrival of several young men coming from San José Iturbide to work as laborers on plumbing crews. These men were originally going to work on crews under both Al and Ignacio. Instead, they followed Ignacio after his departure. This left Al undermanned and without money, thus placing him in a difficult predicament. Fortunately, he was able to retain some laborers as well as pull some from

other crews; however, his sense of betrayal and this act of disrespect by his younger brother pitted several laborers and family members against one another.

Ignacio claimed that he was not earning enough with Al and that he had to find the means to support his soon-to-be wife and their two children. Ignacio has legal residency in the United States and can legitimately apply for plumbing licenses, open bank accounts, and take out insurance with his name. Al, on the other hand, did not have a work visa at the time and had to rely on Ignacio and others to handle many business-related affairs. As a result, the controversy between both parties was who was taking advantage of whom. In the end, Margarita and Juan (among others) eventually helped to settle the matter on the bases that family should be able to resolve such problems and that a discord among crew members was not positive for anyone. By Ignacio's wedding in July of 2012, Al had forgiven Ignacio and both had put their differences aside. Within three months, Ignacio was lending laborers to Al's crews to help install plumbing in new subdivisions that needed to be urgently finished.

Despite the occasional disagreements, the Garcías and those with whom they are closely associated willfully try to put their differences aside for the mutual benefits for all. Osberto's wife, Clementina, insisted, "we have to depend on each other here if we want to make it. If you don't have someone, you are taking a big risk. A lot of Latinos come here, get in trouble or get depressed and turn to vices. If you don't have support you may never escape it." Clementina is a firm believer in her statement about immigrants needing support when they succumb to "vices." Her husband Clementina, immigrated first to Atlanta in 2001 with friends from San José Iturbide before moving the following year to Nashville. He admitted to me that he never intended to settle down and start a family in Tennessee. Perhaps for that reason, he took

advantage of what he considered a substantial weekly income from plumbing to indulge in vices, such as alcohol and more serious illegal narcotics. At the time, he was not married to Clementina. She had just ended a relationship with another man—also a plumber from San José Iturbide—who had moved to Houston. Nevertheless, they were dating. When Clementina realized that Osberto had an addiction she decided to involve her family in his rehabilitation. Osberto and Clementina both joined an Alcohol Anonymous groups for Latinos. Within a year they became principal members and turned their attention to helping others, especially laborers working in their family’s extensive network of plumbing crews. Anyone (i.e., family, friends, or laborers) within their social network can turn to Clementina and Osberto for help which comes in multiple forms. In some cases, they just invite someone seeking help to Alcohol Anonymous meetings. In other cases, they rent rooms in their homes to recovering alcoholics, thus providing them an alcohol-free environment until they are in a position to take care of themselves. More recently, Juan has taken part in assisting laborers and others in his social network who have an addiction problem. Although he is not a member of Alcohol Anonymous, he feels that he has a responsibility to help not only those who work for him but also other immigrants from Mexico if they lack any kind of family support group in Nashville. Juan has given assistance in the form of helping rent homes as well as hiring those in need of employment.

The García family, along with other Guanajuatenses in Nashville, applies different strategies to live and work in the United States. Although the economic dimension of their strategies is a central priority, there is a magnanimous, community-oriented component to their actions. In interviews, participants often talked about their successes and challenges in pluralistic terms. In separate conversations, individuals employed the idiom, “*si uno hace malo*

todo se paga,” or “if one person does something bad we all pay,” when discussing the importance of maintaining a strong community bond while in the United States. This notion refers to any problem immigrants from Guanajuato may be involved in, from police arrest to domestic abuse to addiction. From this perspective, it is everyone’s responsibility to be vigilant and involved in each other’s lives. If a problem arises, say with the police or something related to work, it is in everyone’s best interests to try to resolve it as soon as possible. Likewise, both laborers and crew leaders view their economic advancement as a team or community undertaking. All participants I spoke with came from humble beginnings, and all want to better not only their personal socioeconomic situation but also that of their home communities in and around San José Iturbide. To do this, they must work together. However, different persons in their social network have different roles. And, although no one considers his or her role or position as official, individuals tacitly take on a responsibility that conjointly benefits themselves and other immigrants with whom they associate, as well as help to ensure that Nashville remains a favorable nodal destination within their transnational social networks.

The Flexibility and Expansion of Social Networks

The social relationships humans forge and maintain are rarely bound to insular groups made up of individuals of the same family, ethnicity, religion, or community origin. Rather, our interpersonal relationships continually extend, contract, and reorganize, especially with other individuals who have similar interest or are dealing with similar circumstances (Brunnell et al. 2012). This is certainly the case with Latino immigrants in the United States. After arriving to a new community, Latinos often meet other immigrants from Latin America who are experiencing the same challenges, situations, and adjustment processes. These relationships, coupled with

familiar culture and a common language, naturally help to foster friendships between Latino immigrants from different communities of origins. The linkage between the transnational social networks of immigrants from León and immigrants from San José Iturbide typify the formation of these bonds. Although friendships are a component of this connection, mutual benefits in the form of labor arrangements are an underlying priority. I began my qualitative findings in this chapter with a narrative of men from León who were employed on the García family's plumbing crews. At the time, these men were living in homes that were rented under the name of members of the García family. Before coming to Nashville, these men had never met anyone from the García family; however, through the friendship of Juan, the trajectory of a small network of immigrants from León was redirected from other destinations in the United States to Nashville.

The amalgamation of social networks between migrants from San José Iturbide and León developed from a simple favor asked in 2003. A friend and co-worker of Juan asked if there were any positions available on a plumbing crew for his cousins from León. At the time, Juan's brother, Al, was in need of laborers. Al's contract work from a local plumbing company was growing, and there were not enough laborers available to fill the number of crews Al needed to organize. Juan referred his friend to his brother. This informal referral initiated a connection between two separate transnational social networks from Guanajuato that continues to last. Within a year of Juan's referral, twelve men from León were working on Al's crews. Several men from León also took positions on Juan's crew. Later, when Osberto became independent, he too employed several laborers originally from León.

The number of laborers working on the García's plumbing crews fluctuates in concordance with the housing market. The years 2006 and 2007 were peak periods for the

García family's plumbing ventures. The economic slowdown that followed, however, reduced labor demand, leaving crew laborers without steady work. Some laborers reacted by finding jobs in other low-skill contract work, such as painting or roofing, whereas others relocated to other cities or returned to León. The economic doldrums that persisted after the initial collapse of the housing market also forced Al and his brother Ignacio to engage in side projects to earn money, such as making house calls as plumbing repairmen, food delivery, and contract painting. In the winter between 2010 and 2011, Al was unable to obtain any contract work in plumbing for six weeks. Thus, those crew laborers he regularly employed were forced to look for work elsewhere.

By the time that Nashville's local housing market had recovered in spring of 2012, almost all of Al's original laborers had moved on to other jobs or left Nashville all together. All crew leaders lacked the sufficient number of laborers needed to handle the contract work available to them. Immediately, Juan, his brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins, and friends, who were in charge of plumbing crews resorted to their transnational social networks on which they had always depended. However, both local and national circumstances regarding immigration control were changing as new laws, policies, and tactics were implemented. Stricter enforcement along the U.S.-Mexican border made crossing much more risky. Long-time recurrent immigrants now had a harder time clandestinely crossing without the aid of coyotes, who because of the new risks raised their price of assistance (Roberts et al. 2010). To make matters worse, Metro Police in Nashville were, until recently, participating in the federal 287 (g) program, which made it easier for local law enforcement officers to perform immigration law enforcement functions on detained persons suspected to be residing in the United States without

documentation. These anti-immigrant developments factor into the decisions that recurrent and potential immigrants make about destinations and travel risks.

The impact these new policies have on the decision to return to the United States of recurrent immigrants was salient during this research. Two of the men from León with whom I kept in contact from my first interviews in 2006 now live in Guanajuato. Both are married with children and have steady work. One has insinuated that he would like to return for a brief period to Nashville to work. However, after taking into consideration the risk and the cost and benefits of trying to return, he is hesitant about making the trip. As he sees it, he has traveled between León and the United States multiple times in order to build a comfortable house for his family and buy an automobile. He now feels that if he were to be arrested at the border or after making it to Tennessee, the trauma of being detained and processed by immigration probably would not be worth it at this stage of his life.

The same challenges and risks dissuading the former immigrant above from returning to Nashville also impede the steady flow of immigrants from San José Iturbide. The reduction in labor demand following the collapse of the housing market coupled with the stringent laws and programs targeting undocumented immigrants has been a deterrent for many potential immigrants. Nevertheless, the idea of emigrating never fades. One man in San José Iturbide who had twice lived in the United States told me, “Even when you have a bad economy there [The United States], it is still better than here. Eventually, it will recover, and people will leave again for there.” Indeed, as soon as Juan and other crew leaders needed laborers anew, there was no shortage of young men from Cinco de Mayo and San José Iturbide willing to head the call. The looming problem, though, was how those without proper documentations could affordably

cross the border. The price of assistance provide by coyotes had risen as high as \$4,500 according to several former immigrants in San José Iturbide. Such an amount would require an undocumented immigrant to stay and work in the United States for a substantial period of time to justify the financial sacrifice. This alone has complicated the travel of men and women from San José Iturbide to Nashville, Atlanta, and all other destinations in the United States.

The response to this dilemma has been two-fold. Juan insists that crossing the border with the help of coyotes is still feasible. Working with close contacts in San José Iturbide, Juan has been able to locate coyotes who, according to him, safely transport persons from Guanajuato to Texas for a reasonable fee. He has successfully been able to bring several members of his extended family to Nashville and Atlanta over the past three years. But despite this success, the García s still need a pool of reliable laborers they can immediately call on when work arises. This has led them to look for other sources of workers already in the United States. In some cases, they contact others from San José Iturbide living in other cities such as Atlanta, Houston, Dallas, or as far away as Los Angeles. However, the most reasonable tactic is to look for willing laborers already living in Nashville. The García family is active in Nashville's Latino community in varies ways. Some members attend mass at Catholic churches that cater to Latino immigrants. Osberto and his wife are very active in their Alcohol Anonymous group. Juan and two of his brothers-in-law play for soccer teams on a local Hispanic league. And, Margarita is the proprietor of a Mexican restaurant that attracts both a Latino and non-Latino clientele. All of these activities create myriad associations with other individuals in the Nashville area. The García s have turned to these associations with other Latinos to look for potential workers. This

approach has enlarged their labor pool, as well as the number of other transnational social networks with whom they are involved.

Currently, the García family is employing or working in some capacity with other Latinos from the Mexican states of Hidalgo, the State of Mexico, the Federal District, Oaxaca, and Michoacán. In addition, Margarita now employs immigrants from Honduras and Colombia in her restaurant. Her Hondurans employees, she insisted, have multiple contacts with other Honduran immigrants looking for work. Therefore, she know that she can rely on them if she needs more laborers. Like her sons, Margarita demonstrates a very entrepreneurial spirit to make ends meet. As Margarita's children enter adulthood one by one and move out of her home, she rents the bedrooms they vacate either to her employees or those of her sons. This practice not only helps her pay her mortgage, but it also serves as another form of building loyalty among the García s and those immigrants who work with them. Also, by employing and opening up their homes to others outside their network of friends and family from Guanajuato, they can better assure that they will always have contacts to fall back on when looking for employees or even work opportunities.

Predicting the Longevity of Transnational Links between San José Iturbide and Nashville

This chapter elucidates the transnational strategies immigrants from Guanajuato use to facilitate their arrival to and survival in a network of destination communities in the United States. Within one generation, immigrants from San José Iturbide have established Nashville as a primary immigrant destination within their network. They have achieved this through the application of several tactics that enable them to obtain work contracts, recruit and maintain laborers, and competitively operate within a niche occupation. The transnational component of

their practices is essential to their success. Without social connections spanning between communities on both sides of the border potential immigrants would have a much more difficult time reaching a destination let alone finding steady work after arriving. Likewise, immigrant families, such as the García s, would have a harder time successfully expanding their businesses without reliable access of laborers.

Perhaps the biggest beneficiary from these transnational practices and social networks is the sending community itself. Other researchers who study transnational communities have demonstrated that income earned and remitted by immigrants not only vitally supports transnational families, but oftentimes it can collectively finance works that benefit the larger community (see, for example, Laudalt, Autler, and Baires 1999; Levitt 2001; Smith 2006). Visible public works serve as monuments to the immigrants behind projects as well as the receiving community they reside in, thus, reminding both current and future generations of the socioeconomic possibilities to be found in immigration.

In Cinco de Mayo and La Luz, improvements to both individual families and the larger community through transnational connections to immigrants in cities such as Nashville are on full display in the form of large new residences and newly paved roads. Older denizens of Cinco de Mayo remember that a mere few years ago there were only a handful of automobiles that traversed the earth-laden road leading into San José Iturbide. Now, cars and trucks speed down the paved roads and alleyways all hours of the day and through much of the night. A brief conversation during a serendipitous encounter with an elderly woman exemplifies the impact and impression remittance has recently had on the community. While giving her a ride one afternoon from the town center to her house in Cinco de Mayo, we chatted about the progressive changes

taking place in her community. After learning where I was from, the elderly women excitedly told me her son had lived in Nashville. He had first lived in Texas before moving to Atlanta. Juan later recruited him to work in Nashville. The money he had collected while abroad allowed her family to build a large compound-like residence. Furthermore, she associated all the infrastructure improvements in Cinco de Mayo with the young men and women who move to



Figure 9. New Homes along the paved streets of Cinco de Mayo.

Nashville. It is perspectives such as this that fuel the geographic imagination of potential immigrants in poor communities throughout Mexico and Latin America. The limited opportunities to better one's socioeconomic situation that are available to individuals in rural

communities entering adulthood make immigrant destinations like Nashville or Atlanta much more appealing. As long as migrant trailblazers, such as Juan, can guarantee jobs at a decent pay in these destinations, young men and women will be attracted to them—even if this means risking clandestinely crossing the U.S.-Mexican border.



Figure 10. Soccer stadium at the entrance of Cinco de Mayo.

One civic investment in Cinco de Mayo that definitely serves as a reminder of an immigrant's success in Nashville is a newly constructed soccer stadium that is situated between Cinco de Mayo and San José Iturbide. The complex's construction was funded entirely by Juan as a gift to the communities of Cinco de Mayo and La Luz. Almost nightly there are matches between local teams from San José Iturbide and surrounding communities. Teams from Cinco de Mayo and La Luz consist mainly of players from the communities, many of whom formerly lived and worked in Nashville and Atlanta. The stadium is the most coveted landmark in Cinco

de Mayo and has established Juan as the community's most prominent benefactor. What is more, it creates a tangible legacy for Juan while at the same time it ensures Nashville will remain a beckoning destination for future young immigrants.



Figure 11. Young boys in La Luz, all with family members in the U.S.

The endurances of transnational social networks—such as the ones linking San José Iturbide to Nashville, as well as to Atlanta—are contingent on the children of those first to arrive, like Juan, Osberto, and Ignacio. Levitt (2002) concludes that only some transnational immigrant groups will hold on to their ties to sending communities after the first generation. Even those who do sustain their connections to ancestral homes will do it differently than the generation before them. In most cases, they will be less engaged with the communities their parents or grandparent emigrated from. Although this is certainly probable, the second- and third-generation can continue to feel some level of attachment to where their families come from.

In fact, Levitt asserts that the children of first-generation immigrants sometimes actively participate in the political, social, and economic matters of home communities.



Figure 12. Team Iturbide in Nashville.

It is much too early to predict whether the second-generation of immigrants from San José Iturbide will maintain the kinds of transnational relationships in which their parents engage in. However, there are several practices and activities that suggest the U.S.-born children first-generation immigrants will feel some level of attachment and perhaps even responsibility to their ancestral roots. Several years ago, a few families with young children formed a children's soccer team named "Iturbide." Although open to anyone, many of the players are the children of parents from La Luz, Cinco de Mayo, and San José Iturbide. This forms a bond between these children through a mutual ancestral connection to Guanajuato. Juan and other men from San José Iturbide play on an adult team of players of first-generation immigrants. When asked if their

children were expected to play on the team when they get older, none of those asked said they were obligated, but one mother said, “all of them [children] have grown up together and are close. I think they will want to continue to play together. It is a family thing for us. If their brothers, cousins, or uncles are on the team, I think they will want to be on the team, too.”

A foreseeable connection that the U.S.-born children of immigrants from San José Iturbide will form with their ancestral home is through frequent trips and social networking sites. Many first-generation individuals with legal residential status travel yearly between the United States and Guanajuato, oftentimes bringing their children along. During the summer, for example, when school is not in session, parents sometimes take extended trips to visit their families in Mexico. These trips give their children a chance to intermingle with cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Through the accessibility of social media in both Mexico and the United States, the relationships formed during these trips are not short-lived but rather sustained through online social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram. Second-generation immigrants communicate with their counterparts by sending messages and “updates” on online social networking sites. The connectivity is affordable and constant by way of mobile phones in the United States. In San José Iturbide, adolescents without mobile devices, frequent internet cafes to check the Facebook status of their contacts or “friends” in the United States. These status updates contain social trends, such as music and clothing styles, that instantly transmit between Guanajuato and Nashville. Therefore, social media users are always current with what song or attire is fashionable in either community.

Perhaps most the tangible tie that U.S.-born children will have with San José Iturbide will be the property they inherit. Most of the first-generation immigrants that participated in this

study own either land or a house in and around San José Iturbide, regardless of whether or not they plan on returning Mexico. In some cases, they rent their houses to locals and in other cases they leave them vacant. Whatever the case, these properties financially and legally bind the owners to those communities, and many of those I spoke with are adamant about holding on to their real estate possessions. Likewise, they feel it is important for their children to have some property holdings in their home communities. If the children of these immigrants do in fact keep their inherited properties, they will be obligated to engage in some capacity in the home communities of their parents.

Ultimately, the role of Nashville and other nodal destinations, such as Atlanta, in the transnational social networks of individuals from San José Iturbide will evolve to fit both the economic forces that initiated migratory connection and future immigration policies. If the children of first-generation immigrants follow in the occupational footsteps of their parents they may indeed continue recruiting labor from Guanajuato (and other places, too). The feasibility of these practices inevitably depends on the economic outlook in receiving communities, as well as the details of national immigration policies between Mexico and the United States. Within the United States, however, national immigration policies are less important for already stateside immigrants living in different nodal destinations. Movement between Nashville, Atlanta, and Houston is common for both laborers and their families. Graciela, a widow of a laborer, relocated to Nashville from Atlanta in 2011 with her six U.S.-born children. The García family temporarily rented her a small apartment and financially supported her until she found full-time employment. Graciela confessed to me that she did not have documentation to reside in the United States, but she did not want to raise her children in Mexico. Instead, she relied on her

contacts in U.S. cities to find an alternative to returning. The fear of moving back to Mexico without being able to legally return to the United States influenced her decision to remain. Currently, she works with the wives of several labors cleaning private homes in the Nashville area.

Graciela's children will grow up with other second-generation immigrants from San José Iturbide. Although she wants her children—all of whom speak fluent English—to strive for any career they want to pursue, she knows they will always have the option to find a job through their social networks, whether that be as a plumber on one of the García family's crew, working in Margarita's restaurant, or even as a housecleaner. Juan, too, wants his teenage sons to continue their studies after graduating from high school. While he readily admits that there is money to be made in plumbing, he says he would never obligate his children to carry on his business. The same can be said for the other parents in the García s' extended family living in Nashville.

Such responses from interview participants bring into question the long-term future of the plumbing trade that has been so lucrative for the García family and the economic pillar supporting Nashville's position in the transnational social networks of immigrants from San José Iturbide. In the years to come, will Juan pass the control of his business on to a relative or to another immigrant family from San José Iturbide instead? Perhaps, an entrepreneur from another Mexican state or even country will take the reins, shifting the origin of where laborers come from. Will the number of nodes in the networks of Guanajuatenses continue to grow as other intrepid, young immigrants (male or female) set out to find their own receiving community to build their own enterprise with the help of immigrant labor? Recent trends, visible in the

García family's migratory stories, suggest that migrants will continue to spread out to new towns and cities, further adding nodal destinations and conjoining with the social networks of both other migrants and non-migrant alike.

Whatever the future of transnational migratory links between Guanajuato, Nashville, and Atlanta, the arrival of first generation of migrants in the 1990s has been an active part of Latinization of the American South. The transnational social networks of the García s' extended family is a telling example of how migrants establish and move to new destinations in the face of ever-changing immigration policies and the cyclical nature of economies. The following chapter investigates the transnational migratory strategies of a group of immigrants from Central America. As with immigrants from Guanajuato, these men and woman from Honduras and Nicaragua rely on transnational social networks to facilitate migration; however, spatial challenges in the form of geographic distance between home and host communities perhaps make transnational contacts along with the social capital that one accumulates more crucial to one's migratory success.

Endnotes

¹ The Spanish word "*empresario*" translates as "entrepreneur" or simply "businessman" in English. The label empresario was applied by the nascent Mexican government to the U.S. immigrants that were commissioned to settle land in the territory of Texas and recruit other "Anglo-Saxon" settlers. The most well-known empresario was Stephen Austin.

² Established the same year, The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 was the first immigrant quota system to be enforced for all nationalities. It was the forerunner to the National Quota Act of 1924. The intention of the act were to maintain the United States' cultural profile to that of Northern European Stock. The act reduced immigration to 357,000 a year and limited the number of immigrants from any one country. In 1924, the quota was lowered to below 170,000. Quotas for Mexicans, however, were not established to ensure a steady supply of inexpensive labor for southwestern states.

³ Smith (2006) points out in his seminal ethnographic work that transnational social networks linking New York City and Mexico have existed at least since the 1940s. He demonstrates that New York City was (and still is) the primary migrant destination for Mexicans from Ticuani, Puebla.

⁴ The city of Nashville and the Davidson County government merged in 1963 to form the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. Area denizens often refer to this governmental body simply as “Metro Nashville” or just “Metro.”

⁵ During my thesis fieldwork along Nolensville Pike, I observed how beneficial a working knowledge of Spanish was to small business owners trying to cater to a growing Hispanic clientele. This area of Nashville is home to a multitude of ethnic groups, and one can hear a variety of languages other than Spanish, such as Kurdish, Arabic, Hindi, and Lao just to name a few. Nevertheless, Spanish is the dominant non-English tongue in southeast Davidson County. I share the following anecdote to express my point. In the spring of 2006, I accompanied several Guanajuatense immigrants to a local store on a street adjacent to Nolensville Pike. This convenience store cashed work checks for those with proper identification. The storefront was adorned with advertisements for Hispanic products. Yet, as we entered, I heard what I identified as “Bollywood-like” music playing over the store speakers. Immediately I noticed the store owner. He was of Indian descent. He greeted me, however, in Spanish, with a strong South Asian accent before going on to conduct the money transaction for the Guanajuatense workers with whom I had arrived.

⁶ Juan requested that I not use the name of his company in this dissertation. I also decided not to use the name of Margarita’s restaurant or any other business or venture with whom the participants in these case studies are involved.

CHAPTER 5
NEW ORLEANS AS THE PRIMARY NODAL HUB IN
THE TRI-NATIONAL MIGRATION NETWORK OF PARAISANOS

The United States and Mexico are intrinsically linked through their geographic proximity and overlapping post-colonial histories, politics, and economies. Furthermore, both are large states in terms of their physical size, population, economies, and even culture. The sheer quantity of movement of people, commerce, and capital between Mexico and the United States leaves little reason to wonder why so much literature on U.S.-Mexican migratory patterns and trends exist. At \$18.5 billion GDP, the Honduran economy is just a fraction of the size of Mexico's (World Bank 2012). The small republic's population of 8 million spreads across an area of 112.5 km², more comparable to the state of Guanajuato (5.6 million and 30.6 km²) than the entire Republic of Mexico. What is more, Honduras does not share a contiguous border with the Western Hemisphere's most dynamic economy, and so it lacks the long history of mass migration that Mexico has with its northern neighbor. Consequently, literature on the migratory patterns of Hondurans is exiguous compared with that of Mexicans. Less scholarly attention to Honduran migration, however, does not mean that a significant history of movement between Honduras and the United States does not exist. Through commerce and recruitment, certain U.S. communities in the United States, such as New Orleans and New York, boast distinct historical links to Honduras and have long served as destinations for transnational Honduran migrants (England 2006; Sluyter 2008). Hondurans now rank as one of the ten largest Hispanic subgroups in the United States and, like Mexicans among other sub-groups, have in recent decades moved into non-traditional immigrant communities throughout the country (Motel and Patten 2012).

The case study in this chapter examines the contemporary migration and labor strategies of a group of transnational Central Americans. Most hail from the Honduran department of El Paraíso, while a few originate in the neighboring Nicaraguan department of Nuevo Segovia. Like Mexican migrants from Guanajuato, these Central American migrants rely on transnational social networks in order to travel to U.S. destinations and effectively achieve their objectives, economic or otherwise. However, the journey north to the United States is a much more precarious endeavor for undocumented immigrants from Central America. While Mexicans entering the United States without proper documentation face only one international border, Hondurans must cross three, and Nicaraguans four. Surprisingly, it is not the United States' southern border that presents the most perilous challenges for Central Americans heading north, but Mexico's southern border (Gorney 2008). Central Americans entering Mexico from Guatemala run the risks of extortion from border patrols, robbery, and assault from delinquents and discrimination from locals. Moreover, these risks do not abate once Central Americans move past the Guatemalan-Mexican border. They must still traverse the entire length of Mexico before arriving at the U.S. border. This trip, which can last from one to several weeks, can be the most strenuous part of the journey, and it often includes the dangerous task of "train-hopping" (i.e., traveling as a stowaway) to cross the country.

Once in the north of Mexico, undocumented Central Americans must clandestinely enter the United States and then find transportation to their final destination. For most Central Americans, especially first-time migrants, these obstacles are nearly impossible to overcome without the aid and support of contacts and coyotes. Thus, transnational social networks are an essential component of this form of travel. After arriving at their destinations, Central Americans

largely depend on their social networks to secure housing and employment in the same way that undocumented Mexicans and other Latino immigrants do. Like the networks of Guanajuatenses, their networks are always evolving to include other Latinos and non-Latinos, which in turn open up new employment and residential opportunities.

For this reason, transnational Hondurans from El Paraíso make an interesting case study to compare with that of transnational Mexicans from Guanajuato. Both groups are relatively new settlers in the American South, and individuals in each group rely on transnational social networks to make that settlement possible. These networks function through two media: word-of-mouth, as well as telecommunication technologies, like cellular phones, Facebook, Skype, etc. Furthermore, both groups occupy certain niche jobs in construction and manual labor. Those from Guanajuato work primarily in plumbing, while those from Honduras and Nicaragua are focused in construction and restoration, and they usually work as carpenters, roofers, and basic electricians.

Another similarity between these groups is that both deal with immigration problems stemming from unauthorized entries and lack of legal residential documentation. In the case of Guanajuatenses, almost half of participants did not have proper documentation. Meanwhile, all of the Honduran immigrants from El Paraíso who participated in this study were undocumented. As a result, both groups applied certain strategies to successfully migrate, evade detection, circumvent different types of legal restrictions (such as those concerning employment or vehicle registration), find housing, and utilize banks. These strategies and tactics are learned and then shared through social networks. The ever-changing nature of immigration policies at all levels of government require undocumented immigrants to adapt their strategies to the current

environment. Thus, social networks are crucial for the effective dissemination of information. Observing both groups simultaneously provides in-depth knowledge on how transnational social networks make contemporary immigration possible for those who must operate through informal channels.

The dissimilarities between these two immigrant groups also call attention to the validity of comparing and contrasting these case studies. Immigration to the United States from Guanajuato is a tradition in many communities. Likewise, Mexicans have a long history in the United States and are probably the most recognizable Latino group in the country, save Cubans in Miami or Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in the New York City Metropolitan Area. However, with the exception of a few historical Honduran immigrant destinations, first-generation Hondurans in the United States must negotiate their identity, space, and relationships with other groups in order to successfully navigate and adapt to new communities. Often, in receiving communities where Mexicans comprise the majority of Latinos, Honduran immigrants may find it advantageous to locate their identity in a larger Latino panethnicity as a means to ease their adjustment into host societies. This also enables them to augment their businesses, labor, and social networks.

Another notable difference between the Guanajuatenses and Paraisanos who participated in this research is that immigration to the United States is a comparatively new experience for many from El Paraíso. Several immigrants explained that their families and communities did not have a long tradition of migrating north to the United States. In fact, more than a few were the first members of their family actually to do so. Reasons behind El Paraíso's limited migratory history are at least partially a result of past land reforms and redistribution programs in Honduras

that will be discussed later. However, the emergence of new transnational links to the United States immediately raises questions about what impact they will have on communities in El Paraíso.

Equally interesting, as well as relevant to this research, is that even though New Orleans is a traditional immigrant destination for Hondurans, is that it is a new destination for immigrants from El Paraíso—at least on a significant scale. Interviews with participants suggest that small groups of family members began arriving in the 1990s and established themselves in the larger New Orleans Honduran community. Following Hurricane Katrina and the massive cleanup and reconstruction effort that ensued, Paraisanos in the Greater New Orleans Area recruited friends and families from El Paraíso to take advantage of the surplus of work opportunities. As a result, new transnational social networks developed and then expanded beyond New Orleans to other receiving communities where other Paraisanos or contacts reside.

Honduras' migratory connection to the United States is a twentieth century phenomenon born out of intimate neo-colonial ties with U.S. fruit companies (Schmalzbauer 2005). The Central American country's relationship with the United States later evolved into that of a strategic partner in the CIA's anti-communist policy of containment during the Cold War (Leonard 1986; Chasteen 2001). Honduras served as a launch pad not only for counter-insurgencies against leftist governments mainly in Nicaragua, but also in Guatemala and El Salvador (Barry 1991). El Paraíso's border with Nicaragua ensured that the department at some level would be involved in the operations and repercussions of the U.S.-backed Contras' offensive. During the 1980s, military assaults and counter-assaults persisted along the frontier between El Paraíso and Nicaragua. One participant in this study who now lives in New Orleans

remarked that he remembers lying awake at night as a child listening to the gun shots and explosions taking place near his family's coffee farm in El Naranjo.

The resulting socioeconomic instability that ensued in Nicaragua resulted in a stream of refugees and laborers crossing the Sierra de Dipilto into neighboring Honduran departments such as Olancho and El Paraíso. This resettlement, while in some cases only temporary, inevitably linked communities on both side of the border. Nicaraguan refugees found seasonal employment on the coffee fincas of small farmers in the mountains of El Paraíso. Others joined their families with Honduran families through marriage or offspring. These ties, which are a direct result of the U.S.-backed insurgency efforts of the 1980s, form a fundamental nodal component of transnational social networks connecting El Paraíso to New Orleans and newer destinations in the American South. However, to understand how these sending communities fit into the larger context of transnational migration between the United States and Honduras, a review of the lucrative banana trade, which was managed from company headquarters in New Orleans through much of the last century, is required.

New Orleans and the Banana Republic of Honduras

Geographically situated near the mouth of North America's largest river, New Orleans has long served as a major port that advantageously connects the United States' heartland to the rest of the world. Proximity and access to the Gulf of Mexico strategically place the Crescent City between the large consumption economy of the United States and the extraction economies of Latin America, which have historically been key purveyors of raw materials and commodities to the markets of their northern neighbor. For centuries, the city's wharfs stretching along the banks of the Mississippi have received cargo of foodstuffs and precious mahogany en route from

the coastal ports of Latin American nations (1987 Carpenter). Coffee, bananas, and sugar arriving in bulk to New Orleans gave rise to a variety of industries needed to transport, process, and sell these goods. The city early on earned the title “Gateway to the Americas” for its role in key hemispheric commodity chains, only to later lose it to other rivaling port cities along the United States’ southern coast. Nevertheless, both economic and social links endure between New Orleans and Latin America, especially with communities in Central America.

New Orleans’ function as a logistical depot for Latin American foodstuffs started with the arrival of green coffee from the Caribbean. Later, the city would receive coffee beans from Central and South America. However, the banana, rather than coffee, would define New Orleans’ relationship with Central America throughout the twentieth century. Unlike coffee, which has a relatively long shelf life and is thus easier to transport long distances, the banana fruit expires quickly and must reach the market shortly after harvest. Thus, the logistical timing of banana cargo from harvest to market was of paramount importance, especially before the era of refrigerated shipping vessels or “reefers.” As a result, commoditization of the banana required a system that took into account geographic distance, climate, an obedient workforce, and lax governmental regulations, all of which could be meticulously managed. These attributes were conveniently found just a short boat trip south of New Orleans in Central American states where weak national governments, tropical climate, and cheap, controllable labor provided perfect opportunities for the mass cultivation of bananas. Therefore, strict control of all facets of production and transportation as well as the manipulation and bribery of Central American governments became standard operational protocols of fruit companies based in New Orleans (see Chapman 2007).

Perhaps no other “American” fruit companies have been more distinguished for meddling in the economic and political affairs of Central American states than United Fruit Company and Standard Fruit and Steamship Company (Chapman 2007). These companies wielded extensive political and financial sway throughout the isthmus in countries where their rail and agriculture assets were located. Yet, their particularly uneven political leverage over the national affairs of Honduras set the small nation apart from neighboring states. The banana operations were run like corporate chiefdoms whose capital was not Tegucigalpa, but New Orleans. Company headquarters maintained a tight grip on all stages of the fruit’s production by controlling field laborers, dock workers, shipping crews, and most importantly, the Honduran government, through the financial backing of “friendly” politicians or, if need be, through outright coercion. Once a shipment arrived at a cargo or bulk port, like New Orleans, it was unloaded onto the dock and then reloaded into refrigerated rail cars to be transported onward to interior destinations.

The banana trade transformed the Caribbean coast of Honduras. Plantations carved up the nutrient-rich alluvial plains that spread out over the northern lowlands. Accordingly, banana purveyors based their operations along the coast and Sula Valley, building a network of railroads to connect cultivated lands with cargo ports in Puerto Cortes, Tela and Trujillo. Standard Fruit established offices in La Ceiba, and United Fruit’s management operations were focused in Trujillo. Consequently, the northern coast still serves as the economic engine for the Republic of Honduras. The country’s second city, San Pedro Sula, and the neighboring port of Puerto Cortes, are more globally connected through commerce than the interior and somewhat isolated national capital of Tegucigalpa. For this reason, Honduras’ northern coast has always shared a more

direct relationship (socially and economically) with New Orleans than other regions of the country.

Between the 1920s and late 1960s, during New Orleans' reign as the banana capital of the Western Hemisphere, a steady flow of Central and South Americans arrived in the Crescent City (Euraque 2004). Although this flow included immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Ecuador, Hondurans comprised the majority of newcomers, and most came from the banana-producing departments along the republic's Caribbean coast. Those who settled came from all socioeconomic backgrounds, and worked directly or indirectly for the fruit companies as merchants, sailors, managers, or laborers (Henao 1982; Chaney 2012). At their heights, Standard Fruit and United Fruit employed thousands of Central and South Americans in New Orleans. Most of these newcomers were transferred into different company positions in the city, giving them the opportunity to raise their families in New Orleans. Other Latin Americans working for the fruit companies were able to travel to Louisiana with relative ease by catching inexpensive passageway to New Orleans on company reefers. In addition, both companies offered educational programs to employees whose families resided in the banana enclaves, which allowed them to enroll their children in boarding schools in New Orleans.

Although the resettlement of Hondurans in New Orleans never quite amounted to the demographic deluge that characterizes the migratory history of Cubans in Miami or Puerto Ricans in New York, the slow and steady entry of Hondurans did experience periodic spikes. Political turmoil along with economic and climatic woes during the 1950s and 1960s encouraged many Hondurans to seek refuge in New Orleans (Euraque 2004). Gradually, the emerging Honduran community became visible in the cityscape, as immigrants residentially clustered in an

Uptown neighborhood known as the Irish Channel. Several city blocks of the Irish Channel took on the unofficial moniker *El Barrio Lempira* (the name of Honduras' indigenous national hero and currency) when the concentration of residents and ethnic businesses eventually reached a critical mass (Sluyter et al. 2014). While Hondurans constituted the majority in El Barrio Lempira, a growing number of Cubans fleeing the 1959 revolution, as well as a sizable Ecuadorian immigrant community, also settled alongside, creating a thriving heterogeneous Hispanic enclave (Henaó 1982).

It wasn't long after the formation of El Barrio Lempira that Honduran expatriates began to fan out into other neighborhoods and communities in the New Orleans area, first moving into Mid-City and then on to the West Bank and North Kenner in Jefferson Parish (Sluyter et al. 2014). Within a generation, the Hondurans had largely integrated into the larger host community (Donato and Hakinzadeh 2006). Nonetheless, their ethnic presences remained evident within the urban landscape as an array of restaurants, nightclubs, *tiendas* or *pulperias*, churches, and other "hotspots" frequented and/or owned by Hondurans still dot the metropolitan area (Sluyter 2008).

The city of New Orleans and its historical relationship to Honduras bears a unique legacy conceptualized in almost mythic proportions in the geographical imagination of Hondurans in both countries. The city's political and economic influences in Honduras, coupled with decades of multi-class migratory mobility between the Banana Coast and the Crescent City, have forged the common notion for Hondurans on both sides of the gulf that New Orleans is a transnational Honduran city. The impression that New Orleans is in fact a "*cuidad catracha*" is buoyed by claims that the city boasts the largest immigrant community of Hondurans in the United States, as well as being the third largest Honduran city in the world. Both claims are erroneous and are

not supported by census data (Sluyter et al. 2014). New York City Metropolitan Area has been home to the largest number of Honduran immigrants in the United States since the 1970s and currently boasts 97,864 reported persons of Honduran origin (U.S. Census 2010). Following New York in descending order by population size are the Honduran communities of Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. With 25,112 reported Hondurans, the metropolitan area of New Orleans ranks sixth on this list and, numerically, does not even break into the top twenty largest urban areas in Honduras by population (Flores and Palacio 2009). Nevertheless, hyperbolized assertions about New Orleans' Honduran community are regularly purported by not only Hondurans but also U.S. politicians, respected scholars, and employees of New Orleans' Honduran Consulate.¹ Yet, while such assertions are indeed extreme exaggerations, they nonetheless call attention to the transnational heritage of influence, importance, and sense of place New Orleans connotes in the minds of Hondurans that result from over a century of continuous engagement between the port city and the Banana Coast.

Regardless of the actual ranking of New Orleans' Honduran population as compared to those in other U.S. metropolitan areas, Hondurans are considered the primary and most visible Latin American nationality in the area by local Latinos and non-Latinos alike. In the wake of the 2005 storm, the massive cleanup and recovery effort attracted a multitude of Latino workers from both within and outside the United States (Sluyter 2008; Chaney 2012; Blue and Drever 2011; Gibson 2012). As the flood waters receded, researchers working directly with post-Katrina Latino laborers in New Orleans reported that Mexicans made up the largest nationality of Latino newcomers participating in the metropolitan area's reconstruction (Fletcher et al. 2006; Drever 2008). Certainly, the arrival of taco trucks in area parking lots and the reopening of the Mexican

Consulate in New Orleans reinforced this assertion. Some questioned whether New Orleans would emerge from Katrina as “the future San Antonio” (Campo-Flores 2005). This reaction was typified by then-mayor Ray Nagin’s gauchely remark, “How do I ensure that New Orleans is not overrun by Mexican workers?” (see Gorman 2010)

The irony, however, of any perception that the area’s Mexican population would suddenly eclipse all other Latin American nationalities (and most specifically the local Honduran community) is that persons of Mexican origin already comprised the largest Latino subgroup in Metropolitan New Orleans prior to Katrina. The 2000 U.S. Census enumerated 10,202 Mexicans in the seven-parish MSA. Hondurans constituted the second largest Latino subgroup with 8,112. Yet, this demographic reality was not reflected in New Orleans’ Latinos’ perception of their community. Post-Katrina Mexicans often commented that New Orleans was definitely more “Catracho” than Mexican. Moreover, in the end, the impressive influx of Mexicans to southeast Louisiana turned out to be mostly a temporary phenomenon. On the other hand, Hondurans who relocated to the city following the storm have settled in larger numbers. This is evident in the enumeration of Hondurans and Mexicans residing in the New Orleans MSA as reported by Census 2010. Despite the immediate surge of Mexicans after Katrina, seven years on, Hondurans once again comprise the largest Latin American nationality in the MSA with a count of over 25,000—around 4,000 more than the enumerated 20,729 persons claiming Mexican origin.

The permanence of post-Katrina Hondurans highlights more than just a historical or sentimental connection that causes Honduran immigrants to find New Orleans an attractive destination. It demonstrates the important role transnational social networks plays in relocation

and settlement. The reason that a larger number of post-Katrina Mexicans did not take up permanent residence in New Orleans had nothing to do with any clichéd narratives about the city being *Catracha*. Rather, this was a direct result of the dwindling job opportunities that came about as reconstruction efforts reached an end. This was especially true for undocumented laborers who made up at least half of the post-Katrina Latino workforce (Fletcher et al. 2006). The immediate reconstruction of New Orleans in the months after the storm had given way to a “rebuild above all else” recovery environment (Gordon 2010). Federal and state enforcement of employment eligibility verification were temporarily suspended, allowing contractors to hire undocumented immigrants without fear of penalties. Various conversations with post-Katrina Mexicans during my time at Oportunidades NOLA revealed that both Mexican-American and Anglo contractors recruited undocumented Mexicans in neighboring Texas to work in the cleanup. And so, with federal money appropriated for the recovery drying up and local immigration restrictions and policies becoming more stringent, many of those recruited Mexicans without legal documentation left for other U.S. cities or returned to Mexico. However, many post-Katrina Hondurans had an easier time finding ways to remain in the New Orleans area, although they technically faced the same employment and legal predicaments as their Mexican counterparts. Many Hondurans who arrived after Katrina were able to rely on the connections their family and friends had with members of the larger host society. These connections often provided them with social capital, access to employment and a support system.

The population of persons of Mexican origin may have surpassed that of Hondurans as reported by the 2000 census, but Mexicans never developed the enduring visible ethnic community that Hondurans have. Since the days when New Orleans stood at the pinnacle of a

banana empire, Hondurans from all socioeconomic backgrounds have traveled to the city.²¹ For decades, some of those coming to New Orleans have settled and done well integrating into the

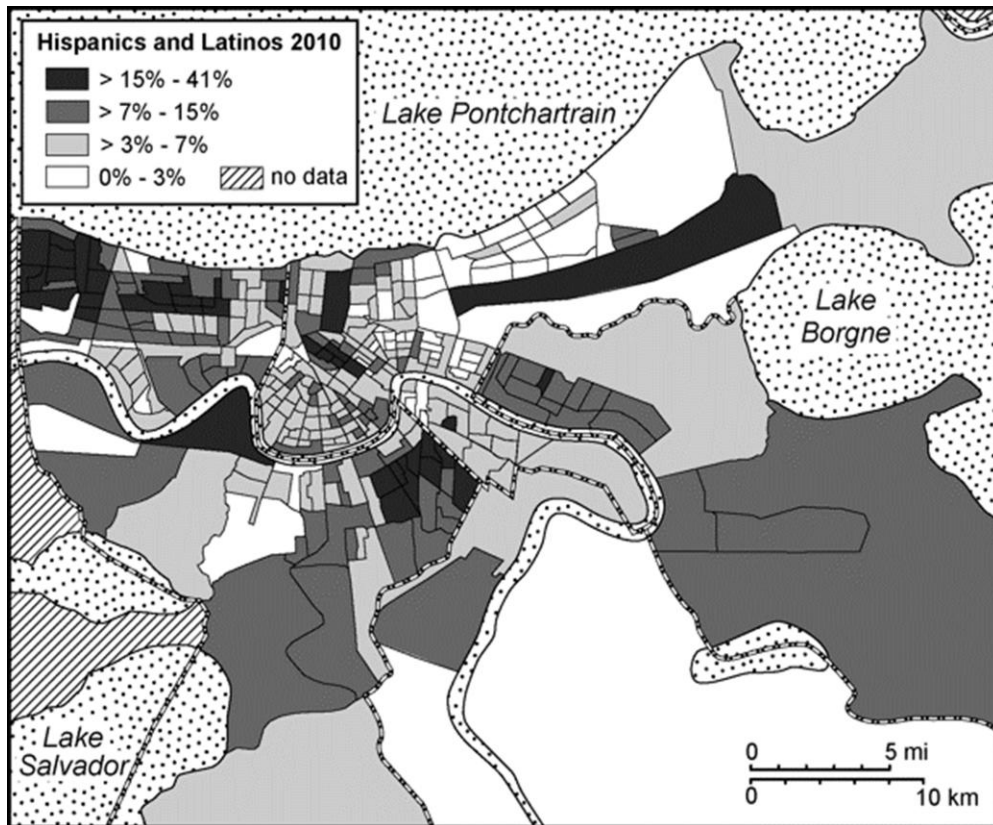


Figure 13. Map of residential distribution of Latinos in Metropolitan New Orleans. Map by Case Watkins and Andrew Sluyter.

local social order. On a stroll down Canal Street or Tulane Avenue, one can find law firms, restaurants, and non-profit organizations owned or managed by first- or second-generation Honduran immigrants. In the venerable French Quarter along The Big Easy’s most popular tourist thoroughfare, Bourbon Street, several clubs and businesses are owned and operated by individuals or families originally from Tela, San Pedro Sula, or Tegucigalpa.³

It would be disingenuous, however, to suggest that Mexicans in the metropolitan area have not engaged members of the larger New Orleans’ community: indeed, they have. Yet, the

inroads and associations that Hondurans have formed through over half a century of transactional migration have enabled their community to intertwine in the social, economic, and political fabric of New Orleans. The significance of this plays out in small, typically unnoticed ways. Nevertheless, in the lives of immigrants, especially those lacking legal documentation, established contacts are extremely valuable, if not crucial, in the search for work, housing, and other necessities in an unfamiliar society. The benefits are apparent in the migratory strategies of Hondurans and are highlighted in this chapter.

The Emerging Nodal Sending Community of El Paraíso

While there has been significant migration between the northern coast of Honduras and certain port cities in the United States like New Orleans and New York, emigration from other regions of the Central American country was less pronounced for most of last century. Though always poor compared to the citizens of the United States and even Mexico, Hondurans living in the interior have historically enjoyed more proprietorship of agricultural lands than citizens living in neighboring states. Early on, elite socioeconomic classes of coffee producers in countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador maintained strong relationships with local Honduran right-wing (and usually dictatorial) governments, thereby impeding the development of a large class of independent, small-farm coffee growers. In Honduras, paradoxically, rural towns in charge of *ejidales* and peasant farmers owning small family farms were able to sustain control of politics in their municipios. This local governmental empowerment coupled with the underdeveloped infrastructure in the mountainous regions of the country, obstructed a growing elite class from taking hold.⁴ Therefore, “liberal” national governments in the 1960s and 1970s were able to put into operation moderate agrarian reform that distributed land to peasants

(Euraque 1996). The United States' government did not object to such reforms because these reforms were seen as helping keep more extreme nationalist socialist movements at bay. Since that time, Honduras has become a major producer of coffee, much of which is cultivated and harvested by small farmers and cooperatives (Eakin, Tucker, and Castellanos 2006).

The access to land permitted by a more egalitarian agricultural system enabled many families of Honduras' lower socioeconomic classes to eke out a living, lessening the need to emigrate. Yet, land reform did encourage internal migration as men and women sought out opportunities in departments where land was more available. Reichmann (2011) points out in his work on the coffee community of La Quebrada that Hondurans (as well as other Central Americans) quickly moved to settle the now accessible territories, setting up small farms that adequately matched the geography and climate type of the area. Coffee, of course, was naturally suitable for the higher altitudes. Through improved transportation infrastructure, the coffee bean developed into a viable export crop for small farmers. The sudden development of small coffee cultivators in the latter half of the twentieth century propelled Honduras into a global coffee exporter that now rivals the coffee production of its regional neighbors both in terms of volume and quality.

Yet, the rise of coffee production through the toil of petty farmers is at least partially responsible for the current immigration trends between the United States and Honduras. The global coffee market is extremely volatile and susceptible to sudden price shifts, a bitter lesson that small coffee farmers in Honduras learned during the international coffee crisis in 1989. The coffee crisis followed the breakdown of the International Coffee Agreement—a treaty which had previously stabilized the internationally-traded value of the commodity. Another collapse in

global coffee prices occurred between 1999 and 2003 (Eakin, Tucker, and Castellanos 2006; Bacon et al. 2008). The periodic downturns in coffee prices, coupled with the economic and human devastation unleashed on Central America by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 have prompted a significant and clearly visible rise in the number of Hondurans emigrating to the United States and, to a lesser extent, to Spain. In the months following Hurricane Mitch, the number of Hondurans apprehended by U.S. border patrol had risen to levels never seen before, elucidating the fact that Hondurans have joined other Central Americans heading north overland through Mexico, hoping to cross clandestinely into the United States (Kugler and Yuksel 2008).

The wave of Honduran immigration at the close of the twentieth century varied geographically from patterns set early in the century. Instead of relocating en masse to past destinations such as New York City or New Orleans, this generation of *Catracho* migrants has moved into states that are traditionally seen either as Mexican destinations, or, in the case of Florida, Cuban enclaves (Kugler and Yuksel 2008). Certainly some did relocate to New Orleans; however, many immigrants with low human capital and hailing from the country's interior sought out destinations where simple, low-skill jobs in construction, restaurants, or landscaping were readily available. Consequently, the pre-Katrina economy of New Orleans did not offer in any abundance the growing housing or commercial construction sector that was so readily found in other Sunbelt metropolitan cities before the recession.

In the case of El Paraíso, emigration to the United States was not as common a practice as it was in the northern coastal departments of Honduras. Thus, transnational social connections to Honduran immigrant communities in the United States prior to the 1990s were much less developed when compared to those in cities such as San Pedro Sula or Tela. El Paraíso is a

mostly rural department in southern Honduras and much closer to the Pacific port of Chuleteca than the large, developed ports of Honduras' Caribbean coast. With a reported population of only 419,393, El Paraíso is demographically smaller than Jefferson Parish and not much larger than Orleans Parish (Flores and Palacio 2009). Danlí is the largest and most urbanized municipality, with 179,797 inhabitants, yet its population is spread throughout the area rather than centralized in its principal city of the same name. A developed agricultural base mainly buttressed by commercial crops has somewhat sheltered the department's communities from the massive unemployment which regularly troubles other areas of Honduras. In fact, El Paraíso's fertile valleys and temperate mountain slopes actually attracted immigrants last century, not only from other Latin American countries but also some of Palestinian origin.

The most notable export in El Paraíso is the cigar. The rich soils that blanket the department's Jamástran Valley receive the optimal amount of sun and rain for cultivating the coveted Cuban seed tobacco plant (García 1997). Tobacco leaves are dried in warehouses and then shipped to the city of Danlí to be rolled into quality cigars. The cigar industry is the largest employer in Danlí. Worthy of mention is the Plasencia Cigar Factory, known for manufacturing the world-renowned Rocky Patel Cigar. The factory's founder, Nester Plasencia (1949-1983), was a twice-immigrated Cuban, whose family fled Cuba following the 1959 revolution. After resettling in Nicaragua in 1965, Plasencia began cultivating tobacco. After his land was expropriated by the Sandinista government in 1979, Plasencia and his family joined other Nicaraguans who relocated to El Paraíso as refugees during the 1980s. Plasencia soon established a tobacco operation in Honduras. Later the post-Sandinista government would return his lands and homes to his family, but not before they were firmly established in Danlí (García

1997). Today the family operates tobacco farms in both the Jalapa Valley in Nicaragua and Jamástran Valley in El Paraíso. What makes the Plasencia family's story noteworthy is that it illustrates the social, political and economic ties that bind El Paraíso to northern Nicaragua.

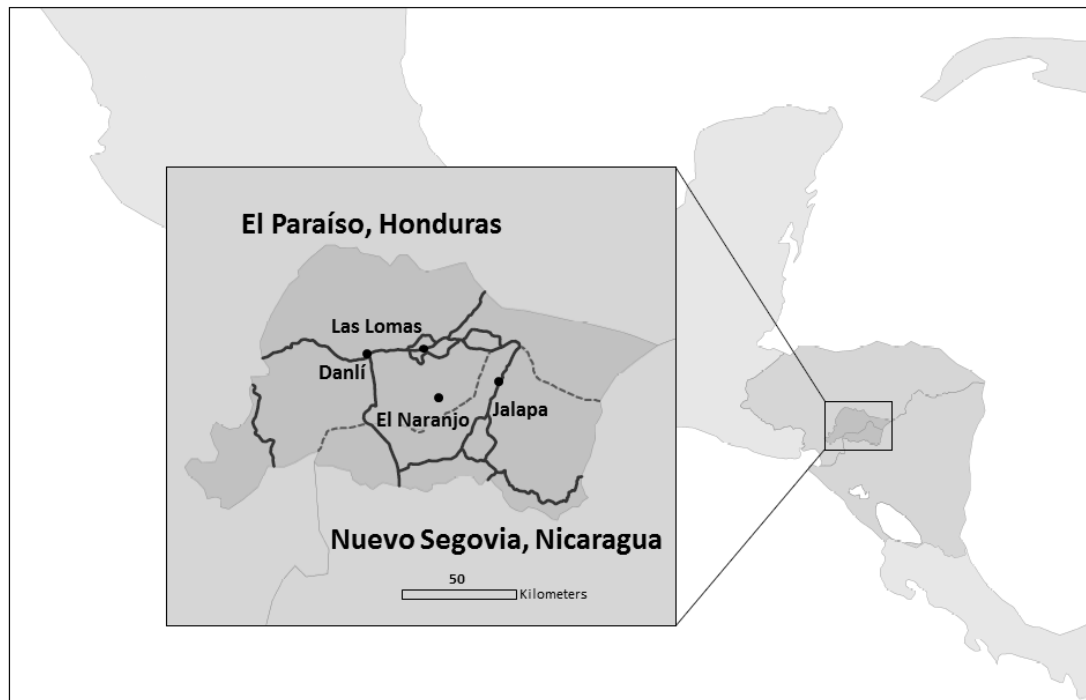


Figure 14. Location of El Paraíso, Honduras & Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua in Central America. Map by James Chaney & Hannah Moyer.

The most prominent purveyor of El Paraíso's other major export industry, former Honduran minister of industry and commerce, Oscar Kafati, is also from relatively recent immigrant stock. His company, Gabriel Kafati S.A., owns almost 3,000 acres in the department and is the principle coffee roaster in Honduras, known locally as El Indio (Luxner 2002). Kafati is one of the estimated 200,000 Hondurans of Palestinian decent currently residing in the country. At the turn of last century and during World War One, Kafati's grandfather, along with

thousands of other Palestinians, immigrated to Central America to escape Ottoman control (See Gonzalez 1993). First moving to Colombia, his grandfather decided to lay down roots in Honduras and from humble means, began a coffee roasting operation that his family still controls today. The Kafati family's current dominance in Central American coffee is in large measure a result of their involvement in all levels of production, from cultivation to market. This, of course, is not the reality for the majority of Honduras' coffee growers. Most farmers cultivate coffee plants on small plots of land that total just a few acres. Often, their beans are sold to intermediaries who then sell them to regional buyers (Eakin, Tucker, and Castellanos 2006). From there, the coffee is either purchased by companies in Honduras or exported to international markets, such as the United States. Therefore, many small coffee farmers are several times removed from the market their product is destined for, and in consequence receive only a fraction of the profit. This, in turn, keeps many coffee families locked in poverty and often unable to obtain the capital needed to improve or expand farms or to negotiate the price of their harvest. These farmers are also the most vulnerable to market fluctuations in the global economy.

Martín, one of my primary gatekeepers, explained that the only way to better his finca as well as his community was through immigration to the United States. His current finca is located in El Naranjo on the northern slopes of the Sierra de Dipilto. Although all the farmers on the mountain, according to Martín, are considered "poor, small farmers," El Naranjo and the nearby hamlet of Porvenir are located on prime coffee cultivation terrain. At over 1,000 meters altitude with an average rainfall less than 1,600 milliliters, the steep, canopied slopes of these uplands are favorable for producing some of the best Arabica coffee in Honduras (Decazy et.al.

2003). Martín's dream is to expand his current land holdings by purchasing several *manzanas*⁵ a little higher up the slope nearer to Porvenir. Occasionally, he mentions how his family once had much more land on the mountain, which was lost due to the poor decisions and alcoholism of his father. Therefore, in order to rebuild his family's holdings, he made the trip north to New Orleans to procure enough money to invest in his coffee enterprise.

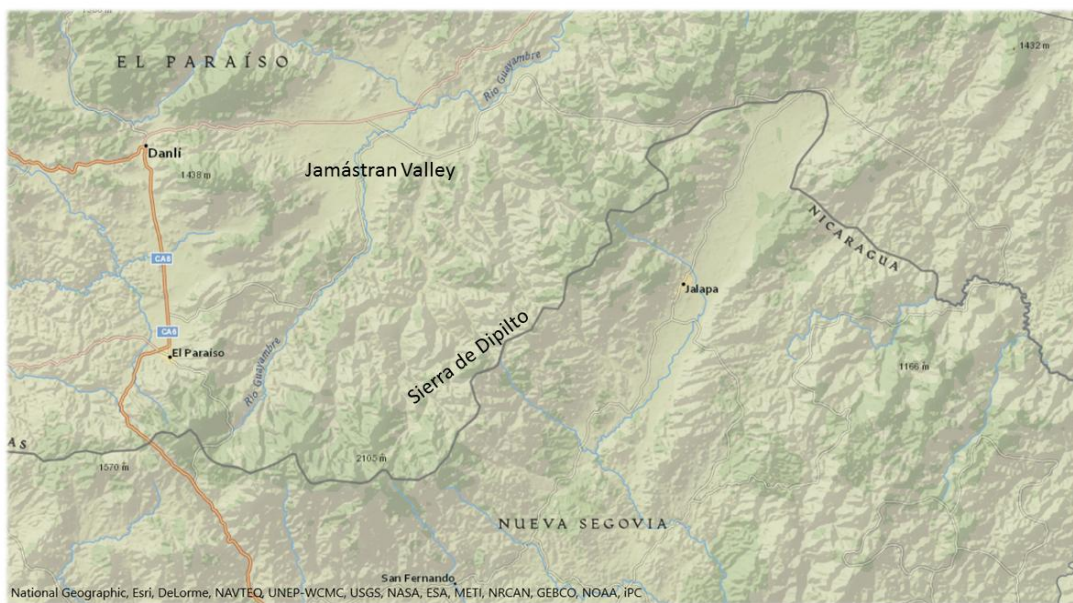


Figure 15. Terrain map depicting the Jamástran Valley & Sierra de Dipilto. (ArcGIS Basemap)

El Naranjo and Porvenir are just small rural settlements without sewage and electricity services. They are connected to larger population centers in the Municipality of Danlí by rudimentary dirt roads. Nevertheless, there is constant movement between these hamlets and larger towns, and residents of Porvenir and El Naranjo all have friends and families throughout the municipality and beyond as a result. Martín's desire to immigrate to the United States could only be realized through the aid of established contacts locally and in the United States. In 2007, however, when he was considering the trip north, Martín remarked that there were not many

dependable leads in his small community. Therefore, he relied on contacts in his social network that lived in another small settlement in the Jamástran Valley. This small community is located at the entrance of a corporate tobacco farm and facility belonging to Camacho Cigars.

Immigration to the United States from Las Lomas is much more established and consistent than any immigration stream from El Naranjo and Porvenir. Martín had lived in Las Lomas for a period of time as a carpenter, and he had also contracted young men from the town as temporary laborers during coffee harvest season. During this time, he made not only acquaintances and contacts but he also accumulated social capital with community members through his good will, strong work ethic, and temporary employment of young men on his coffee farm. Both his contacts and good reputation in Las Lomas facilitated his migration to New Orleans. Without these contacts and the reliable information they provided, his chances of finding a trustworthy coyote that could help him traverse Mexico and clandestinely enter the United States would have been much smaller. Likewise, once in the United States, he depended on contacts to move from his entry point across the United States to New Orleans.

What this generally demonstrates is that the sending nodes of the transnational social networks that migrants are embedded in are rarely situated in just one community. In contrast, these nodes spread out over multiple locations and are tied together through various social affiliations and relationships. As with the Mexican immigrations discussed in the previous chapter, these transnational connections can expand almost infinitely within a nation. Indeed, several of Martín's family members and many of his friends from El Naranjo and Porvenir live in Tegucigalpa, Choluteca, and San Pedro Sula. If they ever wish to relocate to the United States using undocumented channels, they too would most likely need the help of Martín's Las Lomas

contacts. Yet, these transnational networks are not truncated by national political boundaries. Through economic, family, and refugee migration, El Naranjo, Porvenir, Las Lomas, and other communities in Municipality of Danlí are linked to communities in the Nicaraguan department of Nueva Segovia and in particular the Municipality of Jalapa.



Figure 16. View of the Sierra de Dipilto from Las Lomas. El Naranjo is situated between the two distance peaks on the left.

In the United States, on the other hand, New Orleans is just one possible destination, but for many Hondurans it is a popular choice for the reason given above. Yet, even for those who do have plans to settle in other locations, New Orleans makes a good “first-arrival” community to stop in before moving on. Likewise, in some ways it serves as a safety net when circumstances become difficult in other receiving communities. Honduran immigrants may resettle in New Orleans if they lose their jobs in one location or if strict immigration policies are

enacted which make day-to-day life too uncomfortable. In the United States, New Orleans is certainly the central hub of activity for those embedded in these networks, but it is by no means the only physical node in the receiving country. Similarly, there is not just one sending community involved in these networks; rather, there are several, including some across the border in Nicaragua. The rest of this chapter explores how a particular transnational Honduran social network which spans the United States, Honduras, and Nicaragua functions to enable mobility (both physical and socioeconomic), job location, and more life opportunities.

When an Opportunity Arises

On Christmas day 2012, I sent a text message to Martín wishing him and his family a Merry Christmas and to let him know that his two sample varieties of Arabica coffee beans were on their way to the head office of Royal Coffee, a Fair Trade coffee importer in New Jersey. A representative from Royal had agreed in September of the same year to taste samples from El Naranjo and Porvenir. If the coffee met their standards, they would extend their upcoming tour to Honduras to include a visit to Martín's village to possibly negotiate a deal in which they could buy coffee directly from fincas in his community. This way, growers in El Naranjo and Porvenir would be able to bypass the middlemen who buy their coffee for low prices then sell it for a higher price to importers. Likewise, and just as important for Martín, coffee growers would know who was buying and roasting their beans. During my trip to El Naranjo, several coffee growers expressed to me that after harvesting their coffee during the months of December, January, and the first of February, many just take their the coffee to either the small town of Matazano located at the base of the mountain or further to the city of Danlí. After that, they are clueless as to what happens to their beans. Joel, a good friend of Martín who decided to stay in

Porvenir to grow coffee instead of emigrating to New Orleans, said that he felt detached from the larger coffee market and would like to know where his coffee beans go, all the way to the consumer's cup.



Figure 17. Martín's family's coffee finca in El Naranjo.

The concept of knowing which coffee shops and companies buy, roast, and sell a small grower's coffee, was an idea that Martín had shared with Joel several years ago. Martín arrived in New Orleans in 2007 with only the simple notion of making enough money to expand his farm and purchase a couple of pickup trucks that he, his family, and his friends could use on their

fincas. However, once in the United States, Martín became intrigued with how independent coffee shops advertised their daily coffee by listing the names of fincas growing the beans being used. The perceived intimacy between a coffee shop and coffee growers fascinated Martín. He conveyed to me one afternoon in New Orleans that he would love to see the name of "Finca Martínez del Naranjo" (the name he would use for his family farm) listed above coffee dispensers in cafes across the United States. Martín shared his ambition with Joel along with his brothers Elmer and David, all of whom agreed with pride that their coffee beans could and should be sold directly to coffee importers. As a result, Martín's migration plans now included not only working to make money in the United States, but also trying to make contacts with persons and companies involved in the coffee industry. As he sees it, he has a good opportunity to network while in the United States. Martín is in constant contact with Joel and others in El Naranjo and Porvenir. They discuss how the growing season is going as well as what is needed (i.e., equipment or money) to improve the harvest. Martín often sends money, but in 2012, he shipped a 2002 Toyota Tacoma 4X4 from New Orleans to Puerto Cortes. From there, one of his brothers drove it to El Naranjo where it could be used for next season's harvest. Martín's brothers and his friends, like Joel, send Martín coffee from El Naranjo and Porvenir (sometimes already ground and sometimes not). Martín uses the coffee as gifts to friends and contacts in the United States, but he also sends it to potential coffee buyers with the hope that one may take an interest in his small community.

My personal relationship with Martín and his dream to participate in a fair trade coffee enterprise developed out of reciprocity. I met Martín in 2008 while working at Oportunidades NOLA. He was a student in my English as a Second Language class, and one of several

Hondurans from El Paraíso. Already interested in immigrants from El Paraíso because of this research, I began forging a friendship with Martín with the intention of interviewing him and if possible connecting me to more immigrants from his community. In both cases, I was successful, and Martín became not only a key gatekeeper for my research but also a good friend. Shrewdly, Martín found ways to utilize me as a liaison in his quest to find an importer for his coffee. In 2009, Martín shared his idea with me. He wanted my opinion as well as my help. At the time, Martín's English was extremely limited. Moreover, he did not know how or where to begin searching for contacts and importers. He solicited me as a translator and researcher on the topic of U.S. coffee importers. Thus, I became involved in his social networks as well as the broader vision for his community of coffee growers. I drafted emails, made phone calls, and engaged with coffee importers on his behalf. According to Martín, having a native English speaker to help him promote his small finca is essential to achieving his goal.

I open the second section of this chapter with a brief description of my and Martín's relationship because it demonstrates perfectly the agency that an individual immigrant can wield through his or her social networks. While macro-economic and political forces at the global and even international level in Honduras directly and indirectly reverberate down to small coffee farms like Martín's, his economic situation and decision to migrate was, as he puts it, ultimately a result of the bad decisions of his alcoholic father. Because Martín lacks legal documentation in the United States, he is marginalized in the larger society. Nevertheless, he feels that it is within his power to change the course of not only his life, but also that of his farming community. One of the most important tools that he has to make his goal come about is the social relations that he forms and maintains. Krissman (2005) rightly points out in his critique of the migrant network

concept that immigrants are not merely confined to social networks originating from sending communities. Rather an immigrant can engage in multiple social networks while in a receiving community. Likewise, there are usually multiple actors involved in the social networks of immigrants who have no connection to sending communities other than an acquaintance with a member of that community. These actors in receiving communities can have significant influence in the lives and life strategies of individual migrants by giving them employment; helping them find where to live; helping them gain access to services in local communities; or in my case, negotiating on behalf of Martín's farm with importers in the United States.

My position in Martín's transnational social network gives a firsthand example of how Martín manages his associations. He sees it as being advantageous to include me in his network of friends and family that stretches back to his community in Honduras. Indeed, Martín sees the strategic potential in our relationship, as do those network actors living in El Naranjo and Porvenir. Christakis and Fowler (2009:31) assert that social networks "have value precisely because they help us achieve what we could not achieve on our own." Martín is fully aware of this in his endeavors in the United States. Without the connections and relationships he forged in Honduras, he knows that he mostly likely would never had been capable of making the trip to New Orleans, much less finding housing or steady employment.

Establishing a Beachhead: Tracing the Inception of Migration from Las Lomas to New Orleans

The particular transnational social network from El Paraíso which provides the participants as well as the foundation for this case study can be—according to several participants from Las Lomas—traced back to one young man named Santos, who, in 1992,

decided along with his brother to make the journey north to the United States. Santos and his brother, Roni, were, as one informant explained, "living in poverty and fed up with having nothing at all, no future." With no hope in sight for bettering their lives in Honduras, Santos and his brother set off for the United States. Two of the men who recited the story of Santos to me wanted to make clear that Santos had to travel the first time without the assistance of a coyote. Instead, Santos was capable of making the journey by himself. Presented this way, the story of Santos' initial journey takes on a somewhat quixotic air, especially when juxtaposed to the stories recounted by other key participants, which always highlighted importance of some sort of assistance (i.e., coyote, money, contacts). The story of Santos carries another important component: Santos was fortunate to find "amor" in the United States and marry a U.S. citizen named Sandra. Santos was able to gain his citizenship through this marriage. As a result, Santos was able to better his life, and he now lives happily in New Orleans.

Unfortunately, I was never able to contact Santos in New Orleans, nor members of his family in Las Lomas. Unlike San José Iturbide, Mexico, it is not uncommon for entire families to move into Las Lomas or leave for another town or city in Honduras. Thus, when I was in Las Lomas, I was told that none of Santos' immediate family was currently living in the area. Likewise, in New Orleans, none of those with whom I worked knew him personally or knew how to contact him. For this reason, I could never verify his story other than through secondhand accounts. Nevertheless, he was considered the catalyst for emigration from Las Lomas to New Orleans. *Empezó así con él* (it began like that with him), one former immigrant,

Diego, stated, "after Santos got established in New Orleans, he helped his brothers, cousins, and brother-in-laws immigrate to the city by lending them money to pay for coyotes, helping

them get jobs in New Orleans, or letting them stay with him until they found more permanent housing." Once close family members of Santos had made a home in New Orleans, it was not long before others from Las Lomas and other locations in El Paraíso began making their way north. Diego joked:

It's like a faucet, it started with a drop, but when Santos was already there, the faucet was turned all the way on. Almost everyone in Las Lomas is connected to each other one way or another. Maybe, one person's sister is married to a man whose brother lives in New Orleans or Miami. That person wants to move to the United States for a couple of years, so he calls his sister or brother-in-law to get in touch with the person living in the United States. Maybe that person can lend him a hand with the trip.



Figure 18. Entrance into Las Lomas.

During the course of my fieldwork, the elusiveness of Santos was frustrating. An interview or a simple conversation would have shed light on the initial stage of Las Lomas' connection to New Orleans, as well as how he and his brother actually traveled through Mexico and arrived to New Orleans. Nonetheless, having secondhand knowledge of the reported first person from Las Lomas to lay down roots in New Orleans and facilitate the immigrations of others to the Crescent City was foundational to this case study. It establishes the beginning of a timeline that allows for a clearer picture of the development of the two essential nodes in this transnational social network.

From this point, tracing the connections linking other emerging nodes and the persons whom operate through and between them makes more chronological sense. Also, as the quote above so perfectly illustrates, members of an immigrant community are well aware that successful immigration for those without the proper channels is dependent on social networks. For a location to become a permanent immigrant destination, a beachhead must be established, so to speak. Someone must be located there with access to employment opportunities, housing, social services and often financial capital to help pave the way for those emigrating. Finally, the success and positive chain of events following Santos' initially risky trek to the United States has a romantic quality that undoubtedly appeals to potential immigrants from Las Lomas. Certainly, young men and women in Las Lomas imagine the possibilities of making such a serious life-altering decision as emigrating to the United States when considering the potential socioeconomic gains they could make. Yet, it is the stories of current Hondurans living in the United States and the tangible fruits of their labor on display in communities throughout the department that stoke the fires of imaginations in young Paraisanos. These fruits include

recently constructed homes with luxuries such as air conditioning, name-brand clothing and, maybe most of all, 4X4 vehicles.

Transitive Relationships and Informal Patronages: Maintaining Social Networks between El Paraíso and New Orleans

A recurring expression in my interviews with Hondurans was “*echar una mano*” which translates as “lend a hand.” Different participants at different times used this particular idiom to express an understood social responsibility behind the reason that they engage in and rely on networks. Often, male participants would label non-familial acquaintances as “brothers” or “sisters.” Although it is not uncommon in Spanish (nor in English) to refer to friends as such, I attribute the commonality of this expression among many of the participants in this study to the prevalence of evangelical Christianity in El Paraíso. Paraisanos commonly referred to each other in such terms, especially to those who attended the same church. Evangelical faiths (belonging usually to Protestant denominations) are common throughout Honduras, and in Las Lomas, there are only two religious congregations: Evangelical and Catholic.

In the years since numbers of young men began leaving for the United States, the congregation of the Las Lomas evangelical church has grown. The reason is two-fold. First, money entering the community through remittances has been used to construct a new church building, complete with electricity and plumbing. Though humble by the standards of Protestant churches in the United States, this small structure is the most well-kept public building in the village. Most of the congregation's members have family in the United States, and the fact that enough funds could be collected from abroad to construct this house of faith for those left behind leads many to think that God's blessing is behind their success. This understandably attracts new

members. Secondly, the doctrine of many evangelical churches promotes the simple idea that through hard work and faith, one can overcome the adversities of poverty and better one's socioeconomic position. This notion is an important factor in pulling in new converts.

Paraisanos in Honduras, New Orleans, and Cookeville, TN frequently (but with much discretion) highlighted the differences of *evangelismo* and the Catholic faith, suggesting that Jesus Christ has enabled them to be and do more in their lives and their communities. Their evangelical faith also directs them to aid their Christian "brothers" and "sisters." For those brothers and sisters eking out meager earnings in Honduras, lending a hand usually means remitting money or aiding in the immigration of others to the United States. This, of course, does not mean that one should only help others who are part of one's church or even faith. However, within a church congregation that is transnationally connected to immigrants in the United States, social networks are much denser and more intertwined, facilitating more frequent communication with current information and trust. Those Paraisanos who attend an evangelical church, therefore, have an advantage in finding someone to help with their travel to the United States and secure employment once they have reached their destination.

Although a church congregation provides an excellent space to extend one's social contacts, one's reputation and previous relationships with others is even more important in finding someone to lend a hand with an unauthorized immigration. One's social capital with community members in both sending and receiving communities is, in fact, a potential immigrant's de facto résumé that is passed word-of-mouth through phone calls, informal face-to-face conversations, and more recently emails. As with participants from Guanajuato, a young man's work reputation is the essential factor in the decision-making process of an immigrant in

the United States when deciding whether to lend money to defray travel expenses or to provide employment. This consideration of work reputation extends to those already in the United States.

The importance of one's reputation as a form of social capital cannot be understated. In both formal and informal interviews as well as in focus groups, descriptions of persons as *buen trabajadores* (good workers) and being known for *trabajar duro* (working hard) was a recurring theme. On several occasions in New Orleans and Cookeville, I witnessed Paraisanos discussing the work ethic of their friends, family members, work colleagues, and acquaintances. These discussions took place in living rooms, bars, and even on the tailgate of trucks. These conversations were not for the purpose of gossip, but rather a form of vetting potential candidates for employment. For those immigrants from El Paraíso already economically established and often in need of contracted employees, these informal chats are the best way to recruit reliable, hard-working employees. In some cases, this need was for more permanent employees, while in other cases, the job was temporary or seasonal. This was usually the case for jobs in roofing, especially in locations where colder or harsher winters reduce the availability of contract work. This is especially true in Indiana and Ohio, but also in Tennessee. For example, Ned, an important gatekeeper in this study who lives Cookeville and heads a roofing crew, continuously keeps his ear to the ground in search of new workers he can recruit for the spring and summer months.

A noticeable difference between the recruiting strategies of established immigrants from Guanajuato and those from El Paraíso is the importance of a potential immigrant's or recruit's skill set or human capital. For the Guanajuatenses, good work ethic alone was usually enough to

hire someone. Yet for Paraisanos, a person's skills in certain niche occupations (e.g., carpentry, electricity, roofing) were extremely important, enough so that it could be the deciding factor in whether someone would be hired or not. Established Guanajuatense plumbers living in Nashville explained that they could train someone quickly and adequately if that person was a good worker. However, Axel, a Paraisano living in New Orleans who often recruits immigrants from El Paraíso and finances their trips through Mexico and across the U.S. border, explained to me that in the type of construction and renovation jobs that his crew works, some background or skill set in certain areas (particularly carpentry) is imperative if someone wants to work with him. In the case of Axel's crew, much—though not all—of their work is contracted by one U.S. private contractor from New Orleans with the purpose of either renovating older buildings or constructing new homes. In either case, Axel explains the speed and quality of his crews' work impacts pay. Therefore, efficiency is key and taking the time to train someone or hiring someone who is *haragon* (lazy) is a waste of time and money for everyone.

Furthermore, as mentioned by Axel and other Paraisanos living in New Orleans, the architecture and electrical wiring of older buildings in New Orleans is unique compared to other U.S. cities. As a result, having knowledge and experience with crafting wood and installing wiring is an extremely sought-after skill. Nevertheless, in a focus group, Axel made it clear that as a Christian, it was also his task on Earth to "lend a hand" to his brothers and sisters in Honduras. Accordingly, he would try to help persons who lacked the skill set his crew members required. What Axel meant by this, is that he would loan money to someone wanting to make the journey to the United States, or have someone pick them up in Texas and drive them to New

Orleans. In some situations, he provides shelter to the newly-arrived in his home until they can support themselves.

Axel occupies an indispensable role and position in El Paraíso's transnational social network. Like Jorge in the transnational social network reaching from Guanajuato to Nashville, Axel is well-established (financially and socially) in New Orleans and Las Lomas. In New Orleans, he organizes crews for subcontracting and maintains an excellent rapport with a small group of local, non-Latino contractors. Since Hurricane Katrina, Axel explains he has been blessed with almost limitless construction projects, many of which include the renovation projects along important thoroughfares in gentrifying neighborhoods, such as Freret Street. Many of these projects pay well, and among Paraisanos and their Latino acquaintances in New Orleans, obtaining employment on one of Axel's crews or with his contacts highly desirable. As a result, Axel has the power to ensure that a potential immigrant from El Paraíso, or even one already in the United States, can be financially successful.

Axel's reputation in Las Lomas is much like that of a contemporary Santos. His newly constructed home, complete with modern amenities, is a reminder to all in the small town that he is living *el sueño americano*—never mind the fact that he actually never has lived in this house. Unlike Santos, Axel's trips to the United States were only possible through the help of others. During a focus group, he shared the disastrous account of his first attempt to enter the United States by himself:

Axel: When I left my country on my first trip, I tried to come in 1997, but it was a failure, because I didn't have family [in the U.S.]; I tried to cross by myself. I didn't have friends or advice about how to actually do it. So, immigration caught me.

Me: Really, where? In Texas?

Axel: No, in Mexico.

Me: Ah ok, so near the border of Guatemala and Mexico?

Axel: No, deep inside Mexico, in Mexico City.

Me: So, in that year, you tried to immigrate without help...you wanted to do it by yourself?

Axel: Exactly, I tried to do it by myself. I was so disappointed and frustrated with myself. When they sent me back to Honduras, because that wasn't my goal. But, you're always going to be disappointed if you can't get here [The U.S.]. It's just you always need someone to *echarte una mano*; it's impossible without help. Also, another that can disappoint you is that there isn't always steady work once you do make it. Sometimes, you don't have work for weeks. I couldn't send money to my wife in Honduras for weeks. I mean, if you're here, you have bills and you have to pay rent.

After being deported to Honduras the first time he tried to emigrate, Axel tried again, this time relying on contacts already in the United States. This time he made the trip with a cousin. His brother and brother-in-law had arrived just months before, and although they did not have steady work, they were able to wire Axel some money, which he picked up at the Guatemala/Mexican border, and to give him advice on what routes (trains) to take to make it to the United States' border. Once Axel and his cousin arrived at a crossing point near Corpus Christi, Texas, they spent nine days walking through sparsely populated areas until reaching a place where Axel's brother could pick them up.

Axel's first time in the United States was spent in Houston, where he lived for four and a half years. Yet, he was never satisfied with his occupation as a roofer complaining that he could never earn more than \$11 an hour. Axel emphasized again that trying to pay his bills in the United States and keep food on his family's table in Honduras was a difficult task. He added that

every night in the United States he asked God to give him another job or another employer. Axel returned to Las Lomas for several months but explained that he still had an urge to return to the United States and try to make more money. Thus, he left Honduras for a third time in 2002, with New Orleans being his final destination.

According to Axel, New Orleans had recently emerged as a "safe" destination for immigrants from El Paraíso. When asked what he meant by "safe", Axel and other focus group participants answered by stressing that other traditional destinations, such as Houston, are more difficult for Honduran immigrants because, according to the focus group, it's a more of a Mexican city. In some instances, one focus group participant added, Mexicans in Houston can be hostile to Central Americans. Other participants, however, were quick to counter this assertion, saying that most Mexicans were good people and were in the same situation in the United States as other Latino immigrants. Nevertheless, the consensus reached in the focus group was that New Orleans was, indeed, more comfortable for newly-arrived immigrants from El Paraíso.

Axel arrived to New Orleans by way of his brother, who had moved to the city while Axel returned to Honduras. A couple of friends had recruited Gerson, Axel's brother, to New Orleans from El Paraíso. Once there, Gerson met and developed a good working relationship with a small family group of local contractors consisting of a father and his sons. One son in particular, Matthew, invested more time than other members of his family, utilizing Gerson and his network of friends in construction projects. Matthew confessed to me one night during a short informal conversation that Hondurans were, in his opinion, the most reliable workers he could hire in New Orleans. He followed this comment by saying that Hondurans were also

inexpensive to employ and that they never complained about their workload. Axel takes pride in Matthew's opinion of Honduran workers. Within a year, Axel had become a favorite worker of Matthew. Through this relationship, Axel built a rapport with Matthew and his contacts that propelled him to the position of organizing and heading construction crews. In turn, Axel holds a de facto subcontracting monopoly on hiring and recruiting Latino workers (most of whom do not have work visas) for Matthew and his contractor contacts in New Orleans. As a result, Paraisanos in both New Orleans and Honduras see Axel as a key contact in the United States.



Figure 19. Building along Freret Street being renovated by Axel's Crew (2009).

Axel assures me that his position is a serious responsibility, explaining that he must always have crews readily available for new or upcoming projects. If he does not have enough men for the job, he may lose it to another subcontractor. Axel conveyed to me a similar perspective held by subcontractors from Guanajuato in the previous chapter. The perceived sojourning nature of Latino men means that a crew leader can never assume that his workers are

committed to long-term work relationships. In both case studies, established immigrants who were in charge of crews or held other types of management positions complained that hiring undocumented workers could be frustrating. There was always a chance they might not show up for the next day of work. This uncertainty can be attributed to a simple change of heart, when an employee decides he or she wants to work for someone else or migrate to another city, or even to return to his or her country of origin. Of course, an undocumented immigrant may also be arrested and deported. In any of these situations, a notice of resignation is rare. Axel, therefore, must be able to find replacements at a moment's notice.

Just as potential immigrants and those already in the United States depend on their social networks to find employment, Axel relies on his extensive transnational social network to locate potential laborers. If he needs workers with little notice, he turns to Hondurans and sometimes Latinos of other nationalities in New Orleans with whom he has already worked. This, however, is not always feasible. As a result, he begins contacting any friends, family, or other acquaintances he has from El Paraíso living in the United States. "I have family and friends in Cookeville, and a lot of friends from Honduras in Mississippi, Austin, TX, and Houston," Axel states, "They call me when they need work, and sometimes I call them when I need workers." Also, Axel knows he can depend on the friends and families of the members of his work crews. If one of his carpenters has a cousin—regardless of where in the United States he may currently live—looking for work, Axel will consider hiring him, provided, of course, he is recommended as a diligent, experienced worker.

Any conversation about Alex's immigration experiences leads him to discuss his humble beginnings in Las Lomas and the poverty that many in his community continue to suffer. For

that reason, Axel says he feels as though it is his duty to help others still in El Paraíso. Axel offers aid in the form of recruitment. As mentioned above, if someone he knows and respects in El Paraíso is in need of work and/or wants to immigrate to New Orleans, Axel may help finance their trip and provide him with steady work once he arrives. However, Axel has lived most of his life in the United States since the late 1990s, and has lost direct contact with many in Las Lomas and other communities in El Paraíso. Axel's mother-in-law made known to me that many of the children in Las Lomas were just toddlers when Axel left for New Orleans. “Now,” she added, “they are young men and women and some of them want to emigrate.” Thus, to solicit Axel's help, they must use a third-person liaison. Before 2007, Emma, Axel's wife, lived in Las Lomas. She became a liaison between Axel in New Orleans and those wanting to emigrate from El Paraíso and even Jalapa, Nicaragua. After she left for New Orleans herself, her parents and sister assumed some of the responsibility of mediating communications for potential immigrants. In a focus group, Emma talked about her role as a liaison:

While Axel was here in New Orleans by himself, I would talk to people in Las Lomas, in the street or at church. I knew who wanted to come [emigrate]. Sometimes, someone's aunt would approach me to tell me her nephew from another village or Danlí wanted to go and if Axel or my brother Ned in Cookeville needed any workers. I used to talk to Axel everyday on the phone. I would mention who was looking for work. Now, my parents tell me or Ned if someone is trying to come.

Ned, as aforementioned, works in roofing and seasonally needs workers for his crews.

Cookeville, the small Tennessee town where he lives, is located on the Cumberland Plateau. At an elevation over 1,100 feet, Cookeville experiences cooler weather than other areas of the state, save the Appalachian Mountains to the east. As the economic hub for the surrounding area, the small city has a relatively strong, stable economy, which provides Ned ample work during most months. The region's cool winters, however, bring snow, ice, and cold rain regularly, reducing

the total number of workdays per year for roofers. As a result, work opportunities in December, January, and February are intermittent at best, before picking up again in March. For those immigrants living temporarily in the United States for whom the aim is only to earn as much money as possible in a short time, staying in Cookeville through the winter is not rational—at least financially. Therefore, Ned annually faces the problem of crew attrition by late fall as laborers he recruits throughout the year choose to move on to other locations with steady employment. To counter this, he tries to maintain contact with other Paraisanos in the United States as well as Latinos he has worked with in the past. Ned stays in touch with his sister, Emma, and her husband, Axel, in New Orleans. If work slows in New Orleans, Axel will send some of his laborers to Cookeville. Likewise, Axel sometimes provides work during the winter months for some of those on Ned's crew.

Like Axel, Ned sometimes recruits young men from El Paraíso, helping defray their travel expenses. Yet, he feels it is easier to recruit those already living here in the United States. During the recession, when most of the United States experienced a slowdown in construction, Ned received calls monthly from Paraisano men looking for work. Often, they also had friends they wanted to bring with them to work on a crew. For the newly-arrived, Ned provided temporary quarters. Behind his home, he set up a camper, complete with kitchen and bathroom. This provided comfortable temporary accommodations until the newly-arrived could find a more permanent home or relocate to another city. Ned is also a very religious man, and quite active in an evangelical church in Cookeville. Most of the congregation is Latino, and Ned always tries to encourage those working on his crew to attend church services and functions. Although Ned's faith obliges him to bring others into the fold, there is another, more subtle, motive. If his

laborers become involved in a church congregation, maybe even meet a partner, there is a greater chance that they will permanently settle in Cookeville.



Figure 20. Two Paraisanos in Cookeville during Thanksgiving 2011.

Ned, on occasion, is willing to travel to New Orleans if there is an abundance of work that pays well. After Katrina, Ned and his crew of young men from Honduras were contacted by Matthew to repair and rebuild roofs in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. After several months, Ned returned to Cookeville. However, Tomás, a young man who worked with Ned, told me during an interview in Las Lomas that he went with Ned, but reunited with some of his family from El Paraíso living in New Orleans and decided to stay there. Then, in 2008, he returned to Las Lomas. Tomás had actually traveled with Ned from Las Lomas to Tennessee in early 2005. Ned had returned to Las Lomas to visit family. Tomás and another man wanted to try their luck in the United States for a few years. Tomás saw immigration as the only way to earn enough

money to build a decent house for him and his family, and Ned offered him work in Tennessee. As a result, all three men left Las Lomas and crossed into the United States clandestinely.

Both New Orleans and Cookeville represent geographic nodes in the transnational social networks of the Paraisanos. Between these two nodes there is much movement of persons, information, and money. Both destinations offer work for undocumented immigrants and both are considered "safe" places for arriving immigrants. Cookeville is the more recent of the two nodal destinations to emerge. Ned is the first from Las Lomas to establish himself there. Ned relocated to Cookeville by way of Nashville, which lies just eighty miles to the east. Ned had first moved to Nashville to work in roofing and coincidentally lived in the same neighborhood as several members of the Guanajuatenses who participated in this study. In 2005, Ned traveled to Las Lomas to visit family later returning to Nashville. Through Anglo contacts, Ned discovered that there was need for experienced roofers in Cookeville, and he soon moved to the small city to take advantage of the undersupply of laborers. Ned has no plans of relocating to another city, provided he stays adequately employed. By 2010, Ned's wife, their son and her two daughters from a previous relationship had immigrated to Cookeville.

In El Paraíso, and particularly in Las Lomas, non-migrants, potential migrants, and former migrants form and commonly share concepts and ideas of both places. I was fascinated by the conversations about New Orleans and Tennessee that I had with persons who had never traveled to either place. In the geographic imagination of those I spoke with, New Orleans and Cookeville are two very distinct places. New Orleans is seen as a city with abundant work and opportunities, but a dirty, dangerous place, where an immigrant can easily lose his or her life. One former migrant in Las Lomas compared New Orleans to the Honduran capital

Tegucigalpa—a city nationally known for violence. He gave personal examples of being robbed at gunpoint in New Orleans, and the murder of a co-worker in the nearby town of Gretna. His negative experience in New Orleans is just one of many that is shared in Las Lomas.

Cookeville, on the other hand, lacks the plentitude of jobs that New Orleans is rumored to have. Nevertheless, it seen in the eyes of residents in El Paraíso as a "safe" and tranquil small city. Those who have been there talk about the natural beauty of the surrounding area. Due to Cookeville's geographic location near the edge of the Cumberland Plateau, there are a multitude of natural waterfalls and mountain vistas. Several of Tennessee's most popular state parks are located less than two hours from Cookeville, and these are extremely popular attractions for immigrants from El Paraíso.

These notions of scenic beauty and rural lifestyles found in Cookeville are strengthened by online social networking sites such as Facebook or communication programs like Skype. Younger children of immigrants and even some adults, such as Ned, frequently post photos of their new communities as well as updates about their day-to-day lives and routines. As a result, their friends and families in Honduras are now more capable than ever before to actually see where they live. Likewise, through Skype, those with accounts can talk daily to family in Cookeville or New Orleans, and, thus, stay up to date with the happenings of their relatives from afar, while keeping those in the United States current with affairs in El Paraíso and Jalapa. For Ned, however, Facebook offers a free way to maintain contact with potential or seasonal laborers via email. Since 2009, many of the younger men and women from El Paraíso and Jalapa, Nicaragua have opened Facebook accounts. If someone is looking for work or simply wishes to relocate to another city, a simple message to someone in New Orleans or to Ned in Cookeville is

an informal way of soliciting help or employment. Sometimes Ned sends emails to the men who have worked with him in the past to inquire if they currently have employment or are interested in working in Cookeville.

From Jalapa to El Paraíso to New Orleans

Touring his small carpentry shop in Jalapa, Marco showed me the tools and machinery he had bought with the money he earned while in New Orleans. For Marco, his time in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina was one of the most memorable experiences of his life. That night in his bedroom, Marco, his family, and I sat on his bed to watch a video that his friends had filmed of Marco renovating houses in the Uptown neighborhood of New Orleans. His wife made a comment in passing that she had seen the video many times since he had returned. Nonetheless, the video is a souvenir of his adventure to *El Norte*.

What makes Marco's immigration experience interesting in the broader terms of migration research is that he did not rely on migration networks that originated from his home community of Jalapa, or even his country Nicaragua. Instead, he relied on the contacts he made while living as an immigrant in Honduras. This is a stark contrast to the notion that migration networks are comprised only of persons from one sending community traveling to only one receiving community. The socioeconomic unrest in Nicaragua brought on by political instability and guerrilla warfare during the 1980s made it common for Nicaraguans from border towns, like Jalapa, to cross into Honduras to look for employment. Temporary seasonal work was usually available during the coffee harvest on mountain fincas. Even after Nicaragua stabilized politically in the 1990s, Marco explains, Honduran *cafeteros* were so accustomed to the seasonal

labor of Nicaraguans, that each year they continue to travel across the border to Jalapa to recruit temporary workers for the harvest. One season, Marco made the decision to go. Although a carpenter by trade, work opportunities in Jalapa were limited, so he left for El Naranjo and found work on Martín's finca. At the time, Martín was learning carpentry, and through their common interests, the two became good friends, maintaining contact after Marco returned to Jalapa at the end of the harvest.

The next year, Marco returned to El Paraíso. This time, however, he worked his trade as a carpenter on a Honduran military outpost by Las Lomas. Martín had recently been hired as a carpenter to build and repair wood structures (e.g., doors, bunks, tables) on the base. He called on Marco to come work with him as a partner. With Marco's help, Martín improved his carpentry skills. Soon after this, Marco and Martín opened a small civilian carpentry shop in Las Lomas while still performing contract work for the military base. Martín was already known in Las Lomas, because he traveled there yearly to recruit seasonal workers during the coffee harvest. This time, though, he was living and working in the community, and as a result, building relationships with the residents of Las Lomas in a different capacity. More importantly, both Martín and Marco developed a positive reputation in Las Lomas as hard workers and expert carpenters—a reputation that would later open doors for them to relocate to post-Katrina New Orleans.

Although Marco had briefly met Axel in Las Lomas before Hurricane Katrina, they had only considered themselves to be acquaintances. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, however, Axel was in urgent need of a skilled carpenter who could work long hours and would be willing to do so in less than sanitary conditions. From the end of September of 2005 onward,

Axel contacted potential laborers in Honduras willing to make the trip north to New Orleans. For unskilled workers, Axel could simply rely on a pool of young men whom he personally knew from Las Lomas. Yet, for workers of a particular trade such as carpentry, Axel had limited options. In these situations, Axel turned to friends and families for recommendations and even proxy recruiters. On several occasions, Marco was recommended to Axel; however, Marco had already returned to Nicaragua the previous summer. With no direct means to contact Marco, Axel asked his wife Emma to get in touch with him and make the proposal that he would loan him money to cross into to the United States and provide shelter upon arriving to New Orleans.

Coincidentally, Marco had already decided to go to the United States during the summer of 2005 with a small group of young men from Jalapa. Thus, when Emma called Marco's wife in Nicaragua, she informed her that Marco was temporarily living in Mexico working on a tomato farm outside the city of Querétaro. Marco had underestimated the cost of emigrating to the United States, and, after reaching Mexico, he had exhausted what funds he had at hand. Working as a farm laborer, he was trying to earn enough money to complete his journey to New Orleans. Therefore, when he learned that Axel would lend him money to hire a coyote at the Mexican-U.S. border, he immediately contacted Emma to get Axel's phone number in New Orleans. The next day, Axel and Marco made financial and transportation arrangements. Marco soon left for Mexico's northern border. Axel had instructed him to find a coyote through a local Catholic church that provides shelters to immigrants as these coyotes are considered more honest. Axel agreed to pay the coyote on Marco's arrival in Texas, where someone from his construction crew would be waiting for him.

The help that Axel provided Marco not only expedited but also ensured his arrival to New Orleans. In return, Marco was extremely grateful and tacitly obliged to work for Axel during his time in New Orleans, even after reimbursing him for the money lent. Marco also did not hesitate to recommend potential laborers to Axel from both Nicaragua and Honduras. When Martín decided to migrate, he contacted Marco to inquire about the work situation in New Orleans and how much he could potentially earn as a carpenter. Marco informed Axel that Martín also wanted to emigrate from El Paraíso and join a crew as a carpenter. In need of another skilled carpenter, Axel loaned Martín enough money to immigrate through Mexico and hire a coyote to lead him across the border. Emma served as the intermediary, receiving the appropriated money through cash transfer and taking it directly to Martín.

Both Marco and Martín's accounts exemplify the value of social capital. Their good reputation as skilled carpenters, along with their social relationships with persons who had family members in New Orleans, was instrumental in their ability to travel through Mexico and cross into the United States. Likewise, and just as important, their social capital was the means through which they secured employment before arriving to New Orleans.

Further examination of Marco and Martín's migration experience after their arrival to New Orleans gives us a more extensive perspective concerning the far-reaching threads woven into the social fabric of humanity. In both cases, their immigration success was communicated through their transnational social networks to friends and family in Central America and the United States. This, in turn, encouraged further interest in New Orleans as an immigrant destination. One example in particular perfectly illustrates this notion. Within a year of Martín's arrival, his mother in El Naranjo received a phone call from a female friend living in Jalapa. Her

friend's son, Paco, had recently arrived in Texas, but wanted to participate in the lucrative recovery still in progress in New Orleans. Thus, having heard that Martín was in Louisiana, she wanted Martín's mother to see if her son could work with Martín as well as live with him temporarily. Although Martín knew Paco's uncle, he had never met Paco. Nevertheless, at the behest of his mother, Martín contacted Paco, and arranged for him to work on Axel's crew as well as rent a room in his residence. This type of transaction was a very common component of the stories of several participants: Someone knew someone, who knew someone else. Therefore, it was frequently acknowledged in interviews and focus groups that maintaining communication, even if these consisted of just a short monthly phone call to friends and family abroad, is a worthwhile investment of time.

A Sojourner's Key to Mobility

"My father always taught us to respect everyone and cherish your friendships, because one never knows when you may need their help," Donaldo proudly told me during our interview in Metairie. This was just one revelation he shared with me while talking about how he was able to keep up a relatively comfortable life in the United States. Donaldo first arrived to New Orleans in May of 2003 at the age of 17. He had traveled from Las Lomas with his older sister and a cousin. His original destination was Miami; his sister was on her way to New Orleans to be with her husband. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Donaldo decided to stay in New Orleans. Donaldo has little formal education, but has been able to make a decent living as a roofer. Part of his success, however, is his willingness to move to where well-paying work is. Since this interview in August of 2010, Donaldo has lived and worked in Hopkinsville, KY, Cookeville, TN, Indianapolis, IN, Dayton, OH, and Saint Louis. MO.

Donaldo gains much of his work through subcontracting. Word-of-mouth is his principle means of locating job opportunities. Before and right after Katrina, he worked primarily in Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Bernard Parishes. However, after the recession, Donaldo explained that the scarcity of construction jobs in the area, coupled with the large number of post-Katrina Latino laborers willing to work for low wages, complicated his employment prospects. As a result, Donaldo set his sights on other destinations beyond Louisiana. Yet, as he assured me, he never makes a "blind move." In each location, he contacts someone he knows and works out important details, such as his working wage, a place to lodge, and even insurance options.

In December of 2010, Donaldo made a trip to Cookeville, TN. With Martín and another laborer from Honduras, I joined them on their way to eat dinner with Ned and his family. I knew that the trip had other motives besides a cordial visit with Ned. Donaldo, along with Martín, had traveled to Cookeville with the intention of discussing employment with Ned. After dinner, Donaldo and Martín sat with Ned in his living room and over coffee discussed working on Ned's roofing crew. Martín had met Ned in the United States through Axel and Emma. They had become friends, and, according to Emma, Ned knew Martín to be a hard worker and wanted him to move to Cookeville. Yet, although Donaldo grew up just down the street from the house of Ned's parents, Donaldo was much younger than Ned, and, thus, they had never been well acquainted. For that reason, Martín served as the primary reference for Donaldo and his work ethic. As a young boy, Donaldo seasonally worked on Martín's coffee finca. They had lost contact with each other after Donaldo emigrated to New Orleans, but in 2007 reconnected through mutual friends from El Paraíso. Now the former employer and employee had become good friends and equals, both willing to lend the other a hand.

After the informal meeting, Martín and Donaldo returned with me to Nashville to go to a popular salsa club in the city's Hispanic enclave. During the ride, both men discussed the pros and cons of moving to Cookeville to work with Ned. Although Martín wanted to leave New Orleans because he was ready for a "*vida mas tranquila*" or quieter life, he felt that he could make more money in New Orleans as a carpenter than as a roofer in Cookeville. Donaldo, on the other hand, was enticed by Ned's offer because it included free room and board. The following March, Donaldo moved to Cookeville and started working with Ned.

Donaldo's relocation to Cookeville, however, was just one phase of a larger plan. By staying in Ned's camper rent free, Donaldo was able to begin putting money aside to buy a large cargo or work van. By the fall of 2011, work in roofing slowed in Cookeville, and Donaldo briefly moved to Hopkinsville, KY, finding work through a Mexican friend he had made years before in New Orleans. By the spring of 2012, he had saved enough money to purchase a van. In May, Donaldo returned to New Orleans in his new vehicle with the idea of starting a new venture with his brothers, two of whom were living in St. Bernard Parish. Donaldo's idea was for him and his brothers to form a mobile roofing crew. Following his father's advice about never burning one's bridges, Donaldo had made and maintained friendships with an impressive number of Latino roofers and contractors from Central America and Mexico while living in New Orleans. Several of those contacts had moved on to other cities in the eastern United States. Through this network, he and his brothers would check the employment opportunities available in different states. If the wage were attractive, they would travel with their equipment to the site and stay as long as there was work or until a better offer presented itself.

Donaldo's venture has been reasonably profitable simply due to his willingness to relocate at a moment's notice. What is more, when cold weather comes to the interior of the United States, Donaldo and his brothers return to New Orleans and stay with family or friends until the following spring. Occasionally, they find work on a crew in southeast Louisiana, or find temporary work on another subcontractor's crew. In the meantime, Donaldo makes calls to his contacts in other states, taking note of potential work for the following year. He also maintains contact with some non-Latino contractors both inside and outside Louisiana. Although fluency is limited, he is the only one of his brothers (and sisters for that matter) who can converse in English. This skill places him in a position of authority among his siblings in the United States, despite the fact that he is the second-to-youngest. Donaldo feels responsible for the well-being of all his family here in the United States as well as in Honduras:

We have always worked as a family and helped each other out. If we don't, no one else will. I mean, when we were boys, all of us would go to work in the tobacco fields together or go cut coffee together. What we earn is ours, but we share it if someone needs it...is sick. I have to make sure we all make enough to pay bills and eat here, but we also have to send money to Honduras. My brother has a family there, my mother is always sick, and several of my cousins, nieces, and nephews need money to study. In Honduras, you can't make enough money cutting tobacco and coffee or working in the cigar factory. If you want nice things, you have to come here.

Donaldo carries a heavy weight of responsibility on his shoulders. Almost weekly, he or one of his siblings receives a call from a family member in El Paraíso needing financial help with something. If there is no money to be transferred from those in the United States, Donaldo and his brothers feel a sense of guilt. Sometimes, this guilt is initiated or provoked by family members in Honduras. For example, if an aunt, sister, or mother tells Donaldo or one of his siblings in the United States that they need money for an infirmity or any other type of urgent concern, but the family member in the United States is unable to send funds at the time, there is a

chance the lack of help will be a topic of conversation among family in El Paraíso. Eventually, news of their disappointment will reach those in New Orleans through word-of-mouth and then usually to the person who was petitioned for money. While I was staying with Donaldo's family in Las Lomas, his mother remarked several times that her sons in New Orleans often forget about their family in Honduras. She insinuated that they left for the United States for adventure instead of trying to better their family's economic situations. Although I attempted to assure her that helping his family in Honduras was Donaldo's first priority, I came to the conclusion later that her real intention was probably for me to relay an image of her misfortune to her children abroad.

Donaldo makes no secret of his enjoyment in traveling and exploring new cities in the United States. It is an "adventure" for him. Certainly, the same spirit of adventure commonly mentioned to me by young Mexican participants was conspicuously present in young Honduran men. And just as young, single Mexican participants with no family to support, young Paraisanos without children or spouses found sense of excitement in their semi-transient lifestyle. Martín's young family friend Narno epitomizes this behavior. He moves frequently, not only to find work, but also to have new experiences. Although I have never met Narno in person, I have spoken with him various times via Skype and over a mobile phone. In a two-year span (2010-2012), he had lived in four different states, moving ever so often with a group of roofers from El Paraíso and the Honduran state of Olancho. His family is originally from El Naranjo and they are close friends with Martín's family. When Narno was a child, his family moved to the department of Olancho to take over a coffee finca. It was not until Narno moved to the United States that he reconnected with Martín.

I conducted four interviews with Narno, each nearly coinciding with his arrival to a new destination. As a result, I was able to document his mobility and experiences in real time. At the time of this dissertation, Narno is 23 years old. He came to the United States when he was 19. If asked why he came, he will initially answer, "to earn money for myself and my family," followed by the common explanation of poverty and lack of gainful employment in Honduras. However, deeper into one of our conversations, Narno betrayed another motive similar to that of the Mexican participant Miguel: the search for thrills and excitement in the United States.

On several occasions, Narno remarked that he was a young man, and he wanted to take advantage of his time in *El Norte* to do things he could not do in Olancho. In most cases, these things were activities that young men of any origin would commonly want to indulge in, such as going to clubs, consuming alcohol with friends, or meeting others of the opposite sex. Narno, similar to Miguel in the previous chapter, explained that while one could partake in such activities in Honduras, it seemed much more exciting and, simply, more fun in the United States, citing the diversity of entertainment options. Moreover, he had always wanted to come to the United States. Also like Miguel, Narno has childhood memories of seeing immigrants return from the United States to his community wearing nice clothes or driving new vehicles. He too wants to replicate that lifestyle, and he plans to return home in a newly-bought Toyota Tacoma 4X4.

As a roofer, Narno experiences the same ephemeral work opportunities as Donaldo and Ned. As a result, he must be capable (and willing) to relocate to an area where work is plentiful. He and his group of friends, all in the same age range, possess only a few belongings so that they can travel quickly and lightly. Furthermore, they are in constant communication with friends and

acquaintances in large and small communities throughout the United States. Narno stated that he will go anywhere that pays well, but will always choose a larger city over a small town when possible as he sees larger urban areas much more "*divertidas*" or fun. Understandably, these considerations influence to which cities his group migrates. Neither Narno nor his friends speak much English and are, therefore, more reliant on jobs offered by Latino subcontractors. This, to some degree, limits the number of destinations and work opportunities available to Narno's group. To counter this, Narno and his friends always work to extend their social network of contacts to include other Latino nationalities such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, or Nicaraguans. These contacts can be made casually or on a job. In either case, Narno deems it necessary to maintain steady work.

Narno has weak ties to Las Lomas' social network. Martín is his only contact. For that reason, Narno has until recently operated in different transnational social networks with geographic nodes spanning through the Great Plains among cities like Kansas City and Oklahoma City. Narno has never been to Cookeville, although he is aware of Ned's need for laborers during the warmer months. During two different phone conversations with me, he inquired about life in Tennessee and what kind of entertainment options were found around Nashville. Likewise, until recently, Narno had never been to New Orleans. In December, however, he contacted Martín about traveling to New Orleans to work for a couple of months on Axel's crew before moving on to Miami, where he has several Nicaraguan friends whom he made while in Kansas. Martín agreed to get Narno onto a crew, and he drove to Oklahoma City to pick him up and transport him to New Orleans. Within a week, Narno decided to stay longer in Louisiana, probably for the rest of the year, working as a roofer. I asked him about his friends

from Olancho who are still in Oklahoma. He responded, "*¿Quién sabe? Si hay mucho trabajo aca [New Orleans], probablemente vienen a trabajar con nosotros*" (Who knows? If there is a lot of work in New Orleans. They will probably come here to work with us).⁶

New Orleans' Future as a Nodal Hub

New Orleans serves as an important geographic point in the relationships of all these network actors, regardless if they live there or not. As a destination, it maintains a central role in how immigrants who operate in these transnational social networks realize their migration strategies and goals. In some cases, it is only the first stop before moving on to other destinations (e.g. Cookeville, TN). In other cases, New Orleans is a contingency destination when the situation in other communities in the United States becomes difficult, both financially and politically. The metropolitan area contains, at least in the minds of Paraisanos, a critical mass of Hondurans from El Paraíso, which ensures a temporary (or even permanent) safety net for those who may urgently need to relocate from their current receiving community. During the course of this research, for example, the state of Arizona implemented the law SB 1070 (revised under HB 2162) in 2010. Essentially, the law states that police are required to determine the immigration status of persons arrested or detained when there is "reasonable suspicion." Although the law was revised to exclude "race" as a factor in an officer's determination, the law is unquestionably intended to target undocumented Latinos. After the passing of SB 1070, two Paraisanos living in Phoenix contacted participants in this study and temporarily relocated to New Orleans before moving on to South Carolina. In less precarious situations, such as Narno's, contacts in New Orleans can almost guarantee steady employment and residential accommodations.

It is impossible to predict how long New Orleans will maintain its prominent role in the migratory lives of Paraisanos. Nevertheless, there are certain factors suggesting that in the immediate to midterm future it will remain a principle destination. The most salient factor is the close relationship that Axel, among other Paraisanos, have forged with Matthew and other local non-Latino contractors. This relationship can be viewed as symbiotic in nature since each party provides something the other needs. Axel provides Matthew, and sometimes other local contractors, a seemingly endless supply of inexpensive and reliable labor. This allows Matthew to bid low on contract work as well as maintain a good reputation as a builder around New Orleans. Matthew, in turn, provides Axel and his crew a continuous flow of lucrative construction projects. As recently as December of 2012, Axel contently told me that he almost had too much work at the moment to handle, and he thought Matthew had projects lined up for the rest of the year. He will most certainly continue to recruit labor for his crews from both the United States and Central America. Furthermore, the income he had earned since our first interview in 2009 had enabled him to bring his entire family as well as a sister-in-law to New Orleans. With his children now in local schools, and both his wife's siblings in the United States, he has no reason to leave anytime soon.

The second factor is less evident but still significant. A number of non-profit organizations geared towards Latinos quickly materialized throughout metropolitan New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. As a result, the Paraisanos who arrived after the storm found community offering a host social, medical, and legal services for immigrants. The organization where I was employed was one such outfit, and many Hondurans from El Paraíso and other departments in Honduras utilized the services we provided, such as access to reputable law

firms; weekly health clinics; English as a Second Language classes; computer literacy courses; *Plaza Comunitaria* (an education program offered by the Mexican government); workshops on self and group empowerment; and last religious services through the Episcopal Church. These services are crucial for contemporary immigrants, especially those without legal documentation. Students of our program's English as Second Language classes were given identification cards with their photographs, date of birth, and explanation of their relationship with Oportunidades NOLA. To our initial surprise (and delight), these identification cards served Latinos in unanticipated ways. Undocumented immigrants were able to frequently substitute these cards for state-issued documentation and identification, like driver's licenses, United States visas, and Latin American passports. With these simple, non-official identification cards, many students were able to cash checks, open bank accounts, and enter drinking establishments. Likewise, police officers in both Orleans and Jefferson Parish sometimes accepted these cards as valid identification. From a broader perspective, these non-official identification cards serve as a tactical tool for undocumented immigrants in that it allows them to circumvent certain state-imposed obstacles and laws designed to hinder the daily routines of immigrants residing in U.S. communities without legal authorization.⁷

Ley (2008) points out that in the current neo-liberal era, non-governmental organizations and non-profits more and more are facilitating the services and activities that were once provided by the state. Organizations that offer multiple services to immigrants and their families have the capacity to foster a sense of community, where those who regularly engage in the activities provided begin to build strong relationships with each other regardless of their national origin. Before long, individuals accumulate social capital with immigrants from different sending

communities and consequently, extend their social networks to other groups. Donaldo is a perfect example of this practice. During the research stage of this dissertation, Donaldo, upon returning to New Orleans from another state, would sign up for ESL classes not to only better his English skills but also to make contacts for future work. The actors embedded in the transnational social networks of Paraisanos include both immigrants and their families from El Paraíso as well as persons from northern Nicaragua, Olancho, United States citizens in receiving communities, and to a lesser extent, other Latinos of different nationalities. Actors play different roles at different times in these networks. Those who are emigrating rely on those who have already established themselves in a destination. Oftentimes, those already established rely on their relationships with native employers or citizens for work opportunities, as well as access to social services. Those living in sending communities are more than just family or community members receiving remittance from those in the United States. They pass information back and forth between persons in receiving and sending communities. They help keep those in the United States up to date on happenings in sending communities and sometimes aid in the emigration of men and women leaving their home communities. Certainly, this validates Johnson-Webb's (2002) and Krissman's (2005) shared claim that viewing the transnational connections as relationships solely between members just from a sending community truncates the extensive, diverse branches of transnational social networks that weave through both home and host societies of Latino immigrants.

ENDNOTES

¹ Interviews conducted on different dates with past and present consulate employees produced a range of different estimates on number of Hondurans in the New Orleans area. For example, in one conversation that took place in the summer of 2008 a consular employee stated that there were approximately 80,000 Hondurans in and around the

New Orleans area. However, he admitted that there was no official count or attempt to conduct one. Another meeting with consulate employees in February of 2010 resulted in a lower estimate. When asked how many Hondurans the consulate believed to be living in the general area, an official estimated around 50,000. However, when asked which areas that number included, she replied that it was an estimate for the entire state of Louisiana and parts of southern Mississippi, in other words, the consular jurisdiction. An in-depth interview with an ex-employee of the consulate revealed that before Hurricane Katrina officials believed that the number of Hondurans in southeast Louisiana was actually shrinking based on a decline in demand for passports and that there was even talk of closing the New Orleans consulate. The in-flux of Latinos after Katrina, however, reversed any consideration to shut down the consulate as the number of Honduran passport requests increased tenfold, from 50 a month to around 500. She also clarified that the consulate did not maintain an official number, but that it had been commonplace for employees of the consulate to unofficially speculate that the number of Hondurans, or of people of Honduran ancestry was higher than 100,000. She acknowledged that consulate affiliates sometimes shared these anecdotal figures with others, such as New Orleans community leaders and media outlets.

² In 2010 Honduran President Porfirio Lobo met with Mayor Mitchell Landrieu and leaders of the New Orleans' universities to establish a collaborative relationship for improving public health and education in Honduras. President Lobo, whose daughter was attending the University of New Orleans at the time, stated that his goal was to send at least 50 students per year to study in the city's universities.

³ One summer, during my time in New Orleans, I frequented one bar in particular on Bourbon Street. A close friend of mine from Spain was working there part-time. She did not speak English well and had taken that job because the owner was Honduran and employed local Latinos. Most of the female servers were second-generation Honduran immigrants. Among the staff, Spanish the common tongue.

⁴ For a detailed description on the socioeconomic structure of rural coffee farmers in Honduras and twentieth century landforms, see Williams (1994).

⁵ In Central America and some South American countries, like Argentina, the word "manzana" is used to denote a unit of surface area, often for agriculture purposes. The actual size of a manzana varies country by country. In Honduras, it is equivalent to 4046.86 square meters or in the imperial system 1.72 acres (World Weight and Measurements 1966).

⁶ I discovered after writing the draft of this dissertation Narno had relocated to New Orleans in 2013 for three months before returning to Kansas in May of that year.

⁷ Scott (1985) identifies various forms of invisible resistance that the subaltern use against hegemonic forces in his book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance*. Scott argues that scholars often overlook the day-to-day subtle practices of passive resistance by subordinate people, instead focusing on events such as uprisings or reactive social movements. Scott aims to bring attention to simple, personal forms of resistance that can be carried out by individuals. His focus is on rural peasants and enslaved groups, but his concept is applicable to immigrants (especially undocumented) that must undermine certain governmental laws and policies meant to restrict them in order to successfully carry out their migration goals.

CHAPTER 6

COMPARISON OF & DISCUSSIONS ON THE TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKS OF GUANAJUATENSES & PARAISANOS

In the two preceding chapters, I provide two case studies based on empirical social research. These case studies elucidate the similar strategies and tactics two separate transnational immigrant groups apply through the medium of social networks to facilitate international mobility. Much of the data collected are derived from the personal stories of individual migrants as well as non-migrants still residing in sending communities. Each participant's story or anecdote by itself does not give us a clear understanding about the intricate role transnational social networks play in migratory processes. However, when we begin weaving together each participant's account about their personal migration experiences or their knowledge about the experiences of others, a socially-networked structure held together by dyadic relationships emerges. These interpersonal bonds serve as the primary conduit to transmit or pass along information (as well as tangible objects) not only between two or more persons in close proximity, but also between persons or groups of persons separated by great distance. Once revealed, these social linkages can be traced between and among individuals and the locations they inhabit. In doing so, we are able to map networks of social interactions whether they be dense, sparse, local, or geographically far apart.

The analytical purpose of illustrating the transnational social networks of Latino immigrants is to demonstrate the social processes behind contemporary international human mobility from a micro-level perspective. I do this while simultaneously attempting to keep the macro-level causalities of international migration present in the background of my analysis. Indeed, from a macro-level perspective, economic causations are factors motivating international

migration. In both case studies, participants often said they risked the trip north to the United States for financial opportunities. Likewise, national policies towards immigrants also contribute to the ebbs and flows of international migration. Macro-level approaches to migration scholarship, however, do not provide a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon because they tend to ignore the role agency plays in an individual's decision-making process. To truly understand how immigrants adapt to, resist, and passively challenge macro-level structural forces, it is necessary to focus on the interpersonal relationships, histories, communities of origin, and the desires and opinions of individual agents.

Certainly, each case study in this work can stand by itself as an example of an immigrant group utilizing and relying on transnational social relationships to be successful in their migration endeavors. But after placing these studies side-by-side socioeconomic migratory patterns shared by both groups become apparent and more valid arguments can be made about the essential function of transnational social networks. This type of comparative analysis, according to Pickvance (1995:36), attempts to make sense of two or more observations and datasets through the use of one or more explanatory models. Ward (2010) argues for comparative approaches in urban geography as a method to understand contemporary cities by juxtaposing the histories, development, and global linkages of two or more urban areas. There is no reason to think that such an approach would not be beneficial in other research areas of the discipline. Comparisons definitely provide a very practical and effective vantage ground for observing how human spatial phenomena geographically play out under similar or different circumstances. Hence, this chapter compares the migratory practices, habits, and strategies illustrated in chapters three and four that both groups apply and rely on.

Networks and Nodes

The Panethnic labels “Latino” and “Hispanic” so commonly used in the United States obscure the distinct migratory histories, patterns, and geographic manifestations of Latin American immigrants groups of different nationalities and ethnicities. Yet, juxtaposing the migratory backgrounds of Mexican and Honduran immigration to the United States reveals macro-scalar distinctions. Mexico migration to the United States developed after the Mexican-American War and proliferated greatly by the end of the nineteenth century. The engine behind it was push-pull economic factors. The internal migration of U.S. citizens moving into the sparsely-populated American Southwest sparked a need for inexpensive labor to operate mining, ranching, and agriculture operations. This labor was conveniently found in neighboring Mexico—especially during and after the national reforms of Porfirio Díaz (Cardoso 1980; Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). The expansion of railroads into both the southwestern United States and central Mexico effectively linked certain sending and receiving communities into migratory circuits that are still evident today (Arreola 2007). Those railroad networks laid the foundation (metaphorically and literally) for Mexican migrant networks. Recruited immigrants traversed north to destinations either through authorized labor programs or simply by clandestinely crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. With the exception of periods of economic downturns in the United States jobs were relatively easy to come by for those laborers regardless of how they arrived.

As a result of these circular migration patterns culminating for over a century, a multitude of U.S. communities across the western United States are considered traditional Mexican immigrant destinations. These reception communities range from small towns, such as Hollister,

California, where immigrants work in agriculture to large metropolitan areas—like Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Houston—which historically have offered an array of low-skill job opportunities.

The historical migratory relationship between Honduran sending communities and U.S. receiving communities is similar to that of Mexico in that it was originally economic in nature. Although stable compared to other Central American countries, Honduras has long suffered as one most underdeveloped countries in the Western Hemisphere. Abject poverty spurred internal migration in the first half of last century. Entire families were on the move in search of employment, no matter how meager. Towns along the northern coast became prominent migrant destinations as foreign fruit companies extensively permeated the republic's tropical alluvial plains in order to commercially grow bananas for markets in the United States (Hamilton and Stolz Chinchilla 1991; Chapman 2007). External migration was also fueled by *compañías bananaras*, or at least it was initially. Therefore, immigration routes during the twentieth century follow the shipping and administrative links between Honduran coastal communities and major ports in the United States along the eastern seaboard.

Honduran immigrants of twentieth century can be divided into different ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic categories. For example, educated *Ladino* immigrants of the Honduran middle- and upper-classes worked, vacationed, and studied in the United States, often in New Orleans. On the lower end of Honduras' socioeconomic spectrum, there were a substantial number Afro-Hispanic men—and to a lesser extent women—of Garifuna ethnicity who had left their rural native villages to work for or around multinational fruit companies in port cities and plantations in Central America only to immigrate later to the United States either through way of

the fruit companies or enlistment in Merchant Marines during the 1940s (England 2006). The National Maritime Union headquarters in New York City typically required that applicants and employees travel the city for various administrative reasons. Many Garifuna consequently set up residency in The Bronx and Spanish Harlem. By laying down roots with legal residency papers in hand, these Garifuna established a new destination that all but ensured a steady stream of future Garifuna immigrants from Honduras (Chaney 2012). Civil wars and instability in neighboring countries also motivated emigration in interior border departments. Waves of Honduran immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s left for eastern metropolitan areas, such as Washington, D.C. Lastly, devastation brought on by Hurricane Mitch in 1998 spurred further exodus at the close of last century (Kugler and Yuksel 2008). Many Hondurans followed previous routes to cities like Miami, such as rural immigrants from Olancho (Endo et al. 2010).

It is pertinent here to mention emigration from Nicaragua to certain communities in the United States. Coincidentally—though not always for the same reasons—the settlement patterns of Nicaraguans historically overlapped those of Hondurans. Both Miami and New Orleans, for example, were and are home to relatively sizable migrant populations from Nicaragua (Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla 1991; Sluyter et al. 2014). Political crisis in the second half of last century, particularly during the Sandinista era, was a major emigration motivator. While a macro-scale comparison on Honduran and Nicaraguan immigration histories may suggest different pretexts as to why these two groups happened to settle in many of the same U.S. receiving communities, this work demonstrates that when examined on a micro-scale, sometimes corresponding circumstances and associations underlying these Central Americans' immigration motives and strategies do exist. As discussed in the previous chapter, for instance, Nicaraguans fleeing their

home communities during the Contra War took refuge in Honduras and many formed transnational relationships with Hondurans that now expand into the United States. None of the Nicaraguans who participated in research came to New Orleans by way of the city's existing expatriate community of Nicaraguans. Instead, these Nicaraguans moved to Louisiana because of their Honduran contacts.

When compared visually, the historical migratory trajectories of Mexicans and Hondurans are geographically discernible. Major destinations for Mexican immigrants were traditionally located in the western and southwestern United States. Hondurans, on the other hand, tended to immigrate to ports and coastal communities east of the Mississippi River. Of course, regional reception communities were never exclusive to the national origins of either of these two immigrant groups. For example, a steady flow of Mexican immigrants to New York City—notably from Oaxaca—has existed since the 1940s, and both Los Angeles and Houston are now home to substantial number of Honduran immigrants (Smith 2006; U.S. Census 2010). Nevertheless, certain immigrant reception cities are generally viewed and understood as being the primary immigrant destinations of particular Latino subgroups. And even when a multinational Latino population exists in a metropolitan area, maybe even co-residing in an immigrant enclave it is common that one nationality will emerge predominant and shape the character of the entire Latino community.

The shift in Latin American migratory trajectories in the United States during the final decades of the twentieth century rendered older general concepts about where an immigrant of a particular nationality will most likely move much less applicable. Traditional destinations that were for so long the terminus for Latinos tracking north are now being passed over for new

Table 1.

<i>Antecedental Patterns and Trends in Immigration</i>	<i>Guanajuato Migrant Group</i>	<i>El Paraíso & Nueva Segovia Migrant Group</i>
<i>Historical Association between Country of Origin and the United States</i>	Central Mexican States have a long circular migratory history with southwestern states and California. Both men and women from San José Iturbide have participated in this continual migration for decades.	Immigration from Honduras appears in the 20 th century. Sending communities are primarily located along Honduras’ northern coast. El Paraíso and Nueva Segovia are not directly connected to these former networks. Destinations are limited to certain cities, particularly ports.
<i>Push/Pull Macroeconomic Factors behind Movement</i>	Agriculture, mining, and rail Industry sought low-wage labor. War, unfavorable land reforms, limited economic opportunities compelled large numbers of rural peasants to emigrate.	The banana industry initially established migratory networks between certain Central American regions and U.S. ports. Immigrants to the U.S. came from all racial and social classes. New Orleans emerged a popular destination, as did New York.
<i>Geographic and Transportation links between Sending and Receiving Communities</i>	Movement between Mexico and the U.S. was terrestrial, first on foot and then later for some by rail. Compared to now, the U.S.-Mexican border was relatively porous.	Long distances and several national borders separate Honduras and Nicaragua from the U.S. Sea travel facilitated movement between Central America and the U.S.

immigrant reception destinations throughout the country but most conspicuously in states like Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Georgia. Although Mexicans often make up the majority of these Latino newcomers due to the sheer size of Mexico's populace and adjacency to the United States, most southern metropolitan areas are home to a demographic composite of Latin American immigrants. Therefore, none of these new immigrant reception cities are characterized

as *only* a “Mexican” destination or “Central American” destination by Latino immigrants—at least not yet.

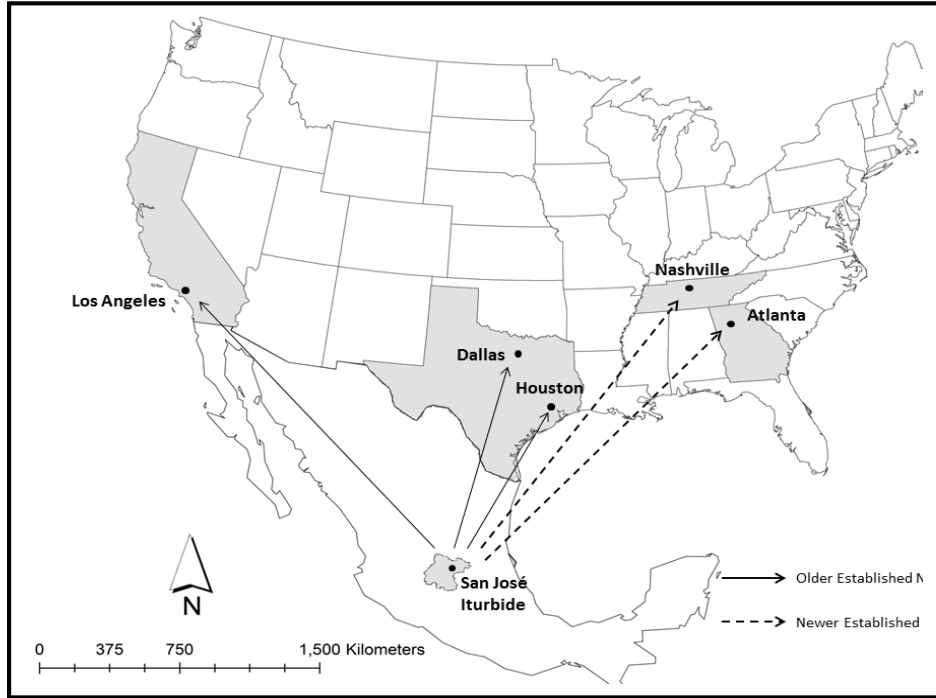


Figure 21. Nodal map of Guanajuatense immigrant destinations. Map by James Chaney.

In Nashville, Mexicans make up the majority of the city's Hispanic community and local non-Hispanic residents jokingly refer to the Nolensville Pike corridor as “Little Mexico” because of the concentration of Latino businesses, Mexican restaurants, and signage in Spanish. However, the current perspective among Latino residents is that, although Mexicans immigrants were initially responsible for developing city's Hispanic cultural landscape, the Latino community is transforming into cultural mosaic of Latin Americans of different nationalities, such as Hondurans, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, and Colombians just to name a few. This is a perception epitomized in the gastronomic and recreational choices of local Hispanics. Mexicans, for example, regularly patronize Central American restaurants in the city serving Salvadoran

pupusas, Peruvian *ceviche*, or Honduran *baleadas*, and, they seek nightly entertainment at salsa clubs spinning out Caribbean rhythms.

Interviews for this research indicate that many of these new emerging destinations equally attract Latino immigrants from different origins. Conversations with some participants about their migration histories show that new Southern destinations appeal to both Hondurans and Mexicans. For example, Ned, a Honduran participant, had relocated to Nashville for a period of time and actually lived relatively close to several of the Guanajuatenses who participated in this study. Ned still regularly drives to Nashville from Cookeville for various reasons, such as meeting with his accountant, purchasing certain ethnic food products, or recreational activities with his family.

In comparison, New Orleans is often considered a traditional destination for Hondurans, although other groups from Latin America have a history of settling in the city. Interestingly, though, it was Mexican laborers who caught the attention of news media, local politicians, and denizens as the typical Latino immigrant relocating to the area after Katrina. Then-mayor Nagin's statement about laborers from Mexico overrunning the Crescent City insinuated that Mexicans were practically uncommon in New Orleans prior to the storm. The irony, of course, is that according to the Census 2000, Mexicans were the larger Hispanic subgroup in the area. Equally ironic is the assumption that the regional clean-up effort following the Hurricane spurred an influx of mainly Mexican migrants. Interviews with Paraisanos reveal that the work opportunities created by post-Katrina clean-up and reconstruction projects were the primary catalyst behind new migration trends from communities in El Paraíso. Unlike the sending

communities along Honduras' northern coast, El Paraíso lacks a strong historical migratory connection to Louisiana. Now, however, the city is a primary nodal destination in many transnational social networks of Paraisano immigrants, as well as some Nicaragua.

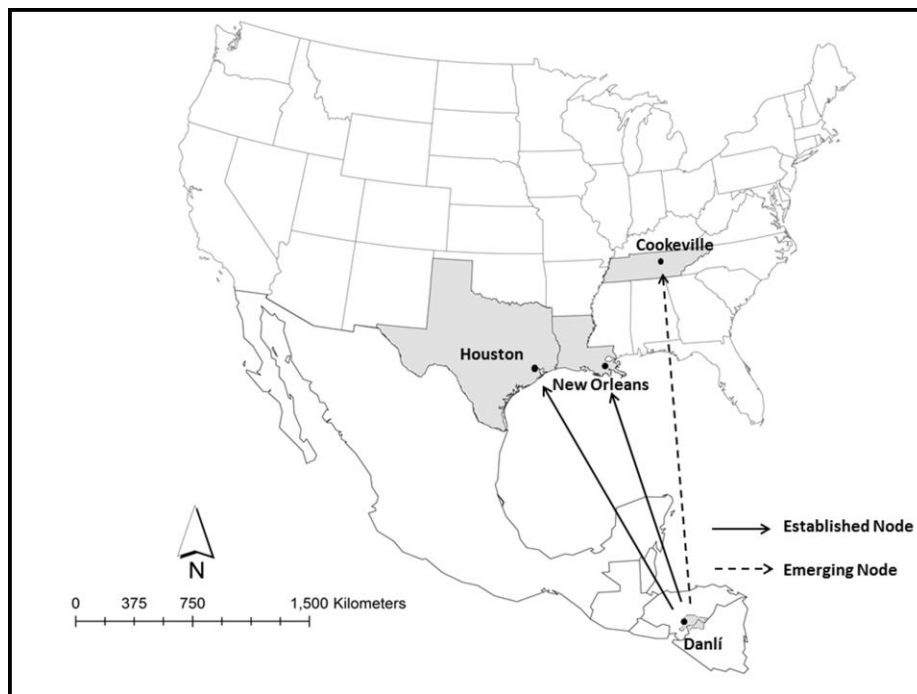


Figure 22. Nodal map of Paraisano immigrant destinations. Map by James Chaney.

Although I label both Nashville and New Orleans as nodes in this dissertation, I also refer to New Orleans as a “hub.” Several Honduran participants conveyed that they periodically migrate to other locations in the United States. Donaldo, for instance, frequently travels north to other states in the eastern United States in search of work opportunities in roofing. When seasonal weather begins to change during autumn months, he returns to New Orleans. The city serves as his base of operations in his semi-nomadic lifestyle. During the research phase of my study with Guanajuatenses, participants seemed much more sedentary in that although they sometimes moved between established nodes; their work permitted them to settle in one location for extended periods of time. After the research phase, Juan began getting contracts on large

projects in Mississippi that required him to send laborers to work sites located there on a weekly basis. It is, of course, impossible to predict the future and duration of Juan's contractual work in Mississippi, but his company's continual presence there could eventually develop into a more permanent settlement or even a new node directly linked to Nashville.

Latino Immigrant Trailblazers

An essential component of both case studies was my ability to observe, meet, and converse with Latino immigrants who first arrived to new communities in the American South and were responsible for bringing friends and family to those communities. Without these individuals, the establishment of new nodes in their transnational social networks would be a much slower process. These individuals are active agents who adapt quickly to changing economic circumstance at different scales. Just as important, they know how to circumnavigate structural forces imposed from above mainly by governments. These immigrants are flexible, adaptive, and extremely mobile when necessary. Some are seasoned sojourners who have accumulated skills needed for surviving as undocumented immigrants in the United States. Others have made their home in one destination and have set up an impressive transnationally-networked system of recruiting immigrants. The personal story of each immigrant whom one could label as a trailblazer is different. This is because the particular circumstances each immigrant faces will shape his or her experiences and strategies to manage those experiences. Yet, there are similarities, too. All immigrants depended on their transnational social networks to be mobile, find employment, locate housing, recruit labor, adjust to new communities, transmit information, and maintain contact with friends and family in sending communities.

The migration story of Juan (from Guanajuato) could serve as the most descriptive and complete exemplar of a Latino immigrant pioneer who arrived to and established a new destination for future immigrants from his (or her) place of origin. Juan traveled to the American South by way of Atlanta after becoming disgruntled in California. After working in Atlanta, Juan took another risk and relocated to Nashville with no real support. Juan went door-to-door to different local plumbing companies looking for contract work. Once he had established himself, he recruited more men from San José Iturbide to work with him on crews. Some of these men came directly from San José Iturbide while others were already in the United States. Since the turn of the century, Juan has been extremely successful in building a lucrative contracting company.

Juan's success has enabled him not only to bring his wife and family to Nashville, but also has enabled many of those working on his crew to bring over their families, too. Over the last two decades, Nashville has solidified as a transnational immigrant community directly linked to San José Iturbide and in particular the satellite communities of Cinco de Mayo and La Luz. Those who migrate to Nashville adjust in their new community with the help of those already established in the city. Reliance on their social networks is fundamental. Non-migrants in San José Iturbide benefit, too, from the support given through remittance and goods shipped (i.e., clothes, computers, automobiles) to them from friends and family abroad. Juan himself is considered a patron of the community not only for providing job opportunities for so many, but also for his tangible gift of a soccer complex open to the entire community. Juan's story is compelling, and undoubtedly it will be passed along in Cinco de Mayo and La Luz for years to come.

In comparison, Ned is working on establishing a permanent nodal destination in Cookeville, TN. For several years, he has recruited Hondurans from El Paraíso among others to work on his roofing crews. However, many of these laborers are temporary and leave near the end of autumn each year as the workload for roofing companies slow down—sometimes returning to New Orleans. As a result, Ned must annually look for potential workers to fill his crews and complete contract work. Without steady roofing work, Ned sometimes has a difficult time convincing laborers to relocate to Cookeville. Undermanned roofing crews paradoxically make it difficult to complete contractual work as well as obtain new contracts. This, in turn, puts Ned in a dilemma. He must maintain full crews to be a competitive and reliable roofing subcontractor in order to win roofing bids, but he must also be able to promise steady work to the laborers he recruits. Such a predicament keeps Ned busy looking for potential laborers. Nevertheless, Cookeville is now recognized among other Paraisano immigrants as destination that seasonally offers decent jobs. The community's allure though, is not just employment opportunities but also the conceptualization that those from Las Lomas and other communities in El Paraíso have of Cookeville being a tranquil town surrounded by picturesque rural landscapes.

In regards to essential network actors in New Orleans, Axel is certainly not the first Honduran or even Paraisano to arrive to New Orleans, but he is a central figure in the current transnational social networks that link New Orleans to Las Lomas and El Naranjo. He is also directly networked with his brother-in-law, Ned, in Cookeville. Axel actively recruits individuals from El Paraíso. Like Juan, he sometimes loans them money to hire coyotes and helps them find housing in New Orleans. Also similar to Juan in Nashville, Axel maintains good

relationships with local contractors in New Orleans, which enables him to keep a constant flow of contact work for himself and his crews.

Axel and Juan have developed reputations in their home communities as triumphant immigrants who have overcome challenges to realize the “American dream.” More importantly they are transnational agents recognized by members of their respective communities as individuals who can help other be successful in their immigration endeavors. Both men are in constant contact with their friends and family in their communities of origin and a host of immigrant destination cities in the United States. If they need more laborers, they simply have to put out the word. However, the prominence they hold within their social networks ensures that they always have a long queue of potential laborers waiting for the opportunity to work for them.

Although he has not been nearly as successful nor established himself in one specific place, I feel it is pertinent to include Donaldo. He arrived to New Orleans at the young age of 17. Since arriving, he has networked both with other Latinos and non-Latinos in order to acquire employment. His trade is roofing, and, in recent years, he has organized a mobile roofing crew consisting mainly of family members. Donaldo along with his crew travel to different states in the search of contact work. He utilizes the contacts he has made and strategizes to continue expanding his network.

Structural forces begat by local, state, and federal levels of government in the form of regulations on “foreign” workers and entry into the United States compel immigrants such as the ones in this study to manage their employment pursuits and situations in a very informal but efficient manner. None of the participants in this study who employ immigrant labor (documented or not) require their laborers to fill out tax forms, employment applications, or turn

in medical records for insurance purposes. Nor do they have human resource departments handling the hiring or termination of their employees. Instead, they manage their business affairs through personal relationships. One's résumé is his or her reputation among friends, family members, and colleagues. Employment is sought not through internet websites or newspapers but through informal social networks. It is a system based almost entirely on social capital. Those immigrants in positions of power, such as Axel and Juan, choose whom they will help arrive to their location and if (and in what capacity) they will employ them. This power dynamic is rarely wielded in a malicious manner, but it does inevitably create hierarchal relationship among immigrants. Though they would never mention nor even admit it, Axel and Juan sit at the top of their respective hierarchies because of their abundance of contractual work and extensive repertoire of local contacts and contractors.

I focus here mainly on Axel and Juan because their situations are similar and because they are well-established in nodal destinations. Though no one could give me a set figure, both have been responsible for bringing substantial numbers of immigrants to the United States from their home communities. Axel and his wife estimated that, over the years, somewhere around 40 or 50 persons have immigrated to New Orleans with some level of their help or promise of employment. Juan, on the other hand, has possibly been directly and indirectly responsible for the relocation of over 100 individuals from Guanajuato to Tennessee during his tenure in Nashville according to the estimates of family members and friends. This total would include persons from San José Iturbide as well as León.

Table 2.

<i>Development and Patterns of Transnational Social Networks (TSNs)</i>	<i>Guanajuato Migrant Group</i>	<i>El Paraíso & Nueva Segovia Migrant Group</i>
<i>Individuals who pioneered new immigrant destinations</i>	Migrants from San José Iturbide historically followed established routes to older destinations. After disappointment, Juan travels to Atlanta before independently settling in Nashville.	Santos and his brother migrate to the U.S. without the aid of social networks. Axel is the trailblazer behind the current network. Axel first goes to Houston before arriving in New Orleans. Later Ned, settles in Cookeville, TN.
<i>Forming and Maintaining New Nodes in Transnational Social Networks</i>	Nashville’s growing economy allows Juan, the central network actor, to recruited male friends and family to work for him. Later female family and friends arrive, settle, and have children. TSN expands to include migrants from León. Nashville node linked to Atlanta, Houston, and Dallas.	Post-Katrina construction enables Axel to recruit men from Honduras & Mexico. Ned, recruits from El Paraíso and also U.S. destinations. Female friends and family arrive, settle, have children. New Orleans is a hub. Cookeville is a secondary node. Both linked to other cities, like Houston.
<i>Niche Employment</i>	Contractual plumbing for male migrants. Female migrants often work as housecleaners in private homes; However, The García family wants to expand their restaurant venture.	Male migrants are employed in various construction-oriented jobs—mainly carpentry, electrical and roofing. Female migrants usually find jobs in area hotels as housekeepers. Others take care of children in their homes.
<i>Future Plans and Ambitions</i>	García Family members plan to remain in Atlanta and Nashville permanently, as do several non-family members of their TSN. Other non-family TSN members wish to return to Mexico with earnings.	Central network actors, Axel and Ned, wish to permanently settle in the U.S. Other TSN members plan to return to Central America. Many allocate earnings for land purchases or business endeavors.
<i>Mobility and Migration Strategies</i>	International and domestic movement relies on TSNs. Most TSN members move to and between U.S. nodes. California is no longer a primary destination for TSN members.	International and domestic movement relies on TSNs. Some are transient; most undocumented. Their movement is less restricted to established destinations, seasonally venture to other states.

Based on the number of Guanajuatenses I have met through the Garcías, I would not hesitate to believe this estimation is conservative. Of course, not all those who immigrate to these destinations stay. Many members of both these groups are transient and move on to other locations for whatever reason, or they simply return to their homes. Yet, a considerable number choose to plant roots and stay. Their children, oftentimes born in the United States, attend local schools and speak fluent English. Many adults, like Margarita, buy homes and some start their own businesses like Margarita. As a result, these immigrants are now part of social fabric of their communities. As they integrate into their host societies, they alter them both demographically and culturally, further diversifying the ethnic character of their new homes.

Maintenance of Transnational Social Networks

For immigrants to truly be transnational, members of both a sending and receiving community must be involved in frequent cross-border engagements. These engagements can include but are not limited to continual communication, sending remittance, the exchange of products between locations (e.g., clothes, technology, automobiles, foodstuff,), participation in local affairs (i.e., engaging in politics, organizing civic functions, financing construction for projects, or investing in property), and travel between locations. Members of both groups participate in these practices. Moreover, while more restrictive immigration laws and tighter border security may reduce the amount of travel options for individuals without proper documentation, these immigrants are still active in their native countries remotely. A principle argument of this dissertation is that transnational social networks rarely consist solely of one sending and one receiving community. Rather there are usually several sending and receiving communities connected by interpersonal relationships. Therefore, information, money, goods,

and people move between these various nodal locations. In this dissertation, I argue that research on contemporary human mobility and transnational social networks should be approached from this perspective.

The recent advancements in communication technologies have been fundamental in the maintenance of constant intercommunication between immigrants and their contacts located in separate nodes. As these technologies evolve, new forms of casual correspondence and information dissemination emerge giving migrants and non-migrants multiple means to stay in touch. *Ciro* from San José Iturbide joked about how he used to communicate with his wife in the mid-1990s, recalling that in his Atlanta apartment he shared with several other immigrants there was only one landline phone, which everyone took turns using. Each person also had a beeper. At the time, he said everyone was proud to carry one. Although not as convenient as cellular devices, at the time beepers put *Ciro* in easy reach of friends and family in Mexico and other locations in the United States. Each person's beeper number could be passed around to contacts in other cities in the United States.

Most of the Hondurans, on the other hand, who participated into this study arrived after cellular devices were readily available. Since the turn of the century, prepaid mobile services have been obtainable without signing a contract or going through a credit check, allowing those without proper documentation to easily purchase cellular phones. Some companies offer plans that include international calls. Such plans are understandably popular among Latino immigrants. All participants in this study living in the United States own a cellular phone. Communication via text messages is just as popular as actual phone calls. Text messages serve as simple means to parlay short bits of news or information. The trend towards smart phones

that are capable of sending pictures and even video calls give those who are technologically savvy the ability to communicate with a more personal touch. Parents in Nashville proudly send pictures of their newborn children or their sons and daughters playing soccer to friends and family in Houston, Atlanta, Mexico.

A fitting example of how recent technological advancement in communication media enables families to stay in touch is twelve-year-old Eric's weekly chats with his biological Guanajuatense father who lives in Houston. Eric lives in Nashville with his mother, Clementina, who is now married with children to Osberto. Last year, Eric's biological father bought him an iPhone that supports the video call application FaceTime so that they can see each other while talking during their weekly Sunday phone call.

In Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua, prepaid mobile services are common. Most participants in each of these countries I spoke with depended on their cellular phones instead of landlines. In fact, in El Naranjo and Porvenir, Honduras cellular service was the first phone technology ever available. In the past, limited access to communication devices (i.e., internet and landline phones) further isolated El Naranjo and Porvenir from community members located not only abroad, but also located in other areas of Honduras. Therefore, the construction of cellular towers in the mountains capable of transmitting digital signals has, in a sense, opened these communities to the world. The arrival of fourth generation cellular service to El Paraíso will eventually enable communities in the Sierra de Dipilto to access the internet much more quickly and securely, ensuring they have more regular contact with friends and relatives in other communities in Honduras, Nicaragua, and the United States.

Transnational linkages between sending and receiving communities include other interactions besides communication. Actual movement of goods and people are common when possible. Since 2008, several members of the García family have obtained residency status in the United States and are able to travel freely between Nashville and Guanajuato. As a result, those family members with documentation frequently travel to Mexico with their children who have United States citizenship. Trips to San José Iturbide, however, serve to not only visit family and familiarize US-born children with Mexico, but these also serve as a means to transport goods. Those Guanajuatenses who have visas act as couriers, transporting products between the United States and Mexico. Products sent to Mexico include but are not limited to name brand clothing, laptop computers, tablets (e.g., iPads), and jewelry. Although many of these products can be purchased in Mexico, they are more affordable in the United States. Moreover, those in the United States are in a much better economic situation to purchase such products, and which often send them as gifts. On return trips from Guanajuato, travelers always bear certain foodstuffs, such as a plant known only as *té* used to make an herbal tea and is impossible to come by in Nashville. Likewise, gifts for grandchildren, nieces, nephews born in the United States are sent to Nashville and Atlanta via those friends and family who can readily cross the border. On my trip to Guanajuato in 2012, I, too, served as a courier. I transported MP3 players and a laptop computer from Nashville to a family in San José Iturbide and returned with *té* and infant clothing for a newborn grandchild in Nashville.

The international movement of Paraisanos and Nueva Segovianos between Central American and the United States is much less frequent due to their residential legal status. All adult participants from El Paraíso and Jalapa living in the United States were undocumented, so

they were unable to easily travel back to Central America. This is especially true now, as security measures along the U.S-Mexican border have recently been reinforced with additional border patrol agents and usage of sophisticated surveillance technologies. Clandestine entry into the United States is much more difficult and expensive if immigrants request the assistance of coyotes. Therefore, participants rely more on international parcel service agencies among other transportation means, like informal couriers, to transport things between Central America and the United States.

Nashville, Cookeville, and New Orleans all have small business that offer licensed international shipping services. Yet, most participants disclosed that they did not completely trust officially licensed international shippers, stating that their services are unreliable and that parcels containing valuable merchandise (e.g., electronics or shoes) sometimes never arrive to their destinations. Instead, when possible, Paraisanos in New Orleans utilize the informal services of an older naturalized Honduran woman who lives in New Orleans. As an informal courier, she makes the trip first via commercial airlines to Honduras, then by automobile to El Paraíso several times a year. She has made a small business out of transporting merchandise to El Paraíso and other departments in Honduras for undocumented Hondurans in New Orleans. Likewise, she brings parcels back to New Orleans from friends and families in sending communities in Honduras for a reasonable rate. Martín exclusively uses her services to transport coffee beans from his finca.

Next to remittance, probably the most coveted item sent to sending communities from the U.S. in both case studies is an automobile. The most common type of vehicle sent to either Honduras or Mexico was a 4X4 truck. However, the make and model varied due to preference

and import restrictions. In Mexico, for instance, automobiles imported permanently must be at least eight-years-old or older, while in Honduras a vehicle's model year cannot exceed ten years from the date it enters the country. Likewise, geography and distance influence how automobiles are transported.

During the research phase of this dissertation, I observed Mexican participants driving the automobiles they wanted to transport to Mexico. If the owner of the vehicle did not have authorized legal status, and, thus could not pass through customs, then he or she would transfer ownership of the vehicle's title to a family member holding legal residency. This person would be the driver who crossed the border and drove the car or truck to its destination. Sometimes, automobiles would be given as a gift to family members, or just left at an immigrant's home for others to use. Occasionally, vehicles were sold to someone else in the community. Both the cars and trucks sent to Mexico were always U.S. brands (i.e., Ford, GM, or Dodge). Although mechanics in San José Iturbide were reportedly more familiar with working on U.S. brands, I was told on several occasions that Ford F-150s, Chevrolet Silverados and Dodge Rams were the preferred makes and models in Guanajuato because these types of trucks fit the *estilo vaquero* (cowboy style). Although on some occasions these trucks were used for work purposes, they mostly were desired as a status symbol.

The Hondurans who participated in this research had to deal with more complicated circumstances to ship vehicles to El Paraíso. Their vehicles were mainly sent with the purpose of being used for work. Toyota Tacomas and Nissan Frontiers were the 4X4s of choice because they were considered more reliable and fuel-efficient. Also, mechanical parts for these brands

are much easier to come by and less expensive in El Paraíso than, say, parts for Ford or GM automobiles.

Table 3.

<i>Transnational Practices and Activities</i>	<i>Guanajuato Migrant Group</i>	<i>El Paraíso & Nueva Segovia Migrant Group</i>
<i>Communication between Nodes TSN Members</i>	Landline telephones used before affordable cellular and internet services. Now, cellular packages in the U.S. include free international calls. Most TSN members have cellular devices. Internet-based applications facilitate instant, continuous communication.	Cellular service is the principle form of communication between the Honduras, Nicaragua, and the U.S. Facebook is popular among younger TSN and some network actors, like Ned. Internet-based services are limited in TSN as many in Central America lack access.
<i>Movement between international nodes</i>	Documented TSN members frequently visit San José Iturbide via ground and air transportation. Undocumented TSN members clandestinely cross the U.S.-Mexican border occasionally, but are less recurrently than before due to stricter border patrol policies. Coyotes are central to clandestine crossings.	Movement between sending and receiving communities is much less common due to lack of travel documentation, border patrol enforcement, and distance/multiple national borders. Coyotes are central to clandestine crossings into the U.S. Movement between Nicaragua and Honduras is less restricted.
<i>Transportation of Goods between International Nodes</i>	Ease of movement with documentation enables TSN members to transport items between Mexico and the U.S. Smaller items (e.g., clothes, computers, and foodstuffs) are transported via commercial air travel. Vehicles, are driven between nodes.	Lack of documentation require TSN members to use other shipping means. Immigrants in New Orleans hire the services of Hondurans with travel documentation to transport small items between nodes. Vehicles sent via authorized intermediaries via seaports.

Martín, for example, already has basic knowledge about how to do routine repairs and maintenance on Toyotas. The problem, of course, for undocumented Honduran immigrants, like Martín, is that transporting a U.S.-bought vehicle back to their home country is not as simple as driving it across the U.S. border. Instead, automobiles usually must be shipped as freight to Puerto Cortes, a major port city in Honduras just north of San Pedro Sula.

To export a personal automobile, shipping companies require that the owner provide a valid title of the automobile, as well as legal documentation of residency in the United States or a current travel visa and passport. The company handling the transportation must have a destination agent authorized by the Honduran government to accept international shipments. Such requirements obviously place bureaucratic hurdles in front of undocumented Paraisanos who want to send vehicles they have purchased in the United States back to Honduras. To circumnavigate these legal obstacles Paraisanos in New Orleans buy vehicles in the neighboring state of Mississippi where purchasing and registering a vehicle is less complicated for undocumented immigrants. When he or she is ready to ship the vehicle to Honduras, the owner returns to Mississippi. In the port city of Biloxi, Axel, Martín and a few other Paraisanos have an informal working relationship with Central American employees who manage a shipping company with service to Honduras. These contacts help undocumented immigrants with the legal paper work requested by both U.S. and Honduran bureaucracies. However, undocumented immigrants must bring either a U.S. citizen or an individual with authorization to be in the United States to whom the owner can sign over the title of the vehicle. Afterwards, the vehicle can be shipped as freight to Puerto Cortes, where usually a friend or family member is waiting to pick up the vehicle and drive it to El Paraíso.



Figure 23. Martín's Toyota Tacoma sitting in front of his home in El Naranjo. Photo by his brother Elmer.

The most difficult part of this process, according to those Paraisano participants I spoke with on the matter, is finding a U.S. citizen or legal resident who will take part in the transaction. Both Martín and Axel have built strong relationships with several U.S. citizens living in New Orleans. Some of these individuals are willing to help when needed. Paraisanos who have not cultivated these kinds of friendships rely on those in their social networks who have. Again, this highlights the important role Axel (and to a lesser extent Martín) has in the community of Paraisanos in New Orleans.

Suggestions for Future Research Using Similar Methodological Approaches

The circumstances, methods, and obstacles pertaining to any two migrant groups or for that matter any two individuals' migratory experiences are never completely the same. For that reason, the outcomes of mobile individuals and groups vary. Some individuals experience social and economic success by integrating into a host society. Others simply accumulating sufficient

financial capital to return home and realize his or her aspirations. Geographically speaking, where exactly immigrants relocate and in some cases, establish a destination for other immigrants, can also be attributed to various factors. The two Latino immigrant groups under study in this work come from different places, have dissimilar historical migratory ties to the United States, and each individual immigrant in either group has his or her own distinctive plan for the future. Such circumstantial variance among immigrant groups and even individuals validates the need for in-depth, descriptive research in migration studies. Yet, a comparison of these case studies also brings to light similarities in how migrants successfully move from one location to another, whether it be across international borders or simply from one place to another inside the host nation-state.

I have asserted in several places in this dissertation that transnational social networks are a tool that we can use to trace the social ties and associations that bind humans to one another. They are conceptualized by the researcher to illustrate various connections between groups of people. The transnational social networks I identify are not static, rigid entities that cannot be reconceptualized or reorganized; rather, they are malleable abstractions that can be recast to elucidate other types of linkages between individuals. What this means is that the networks identified in this research can be expanded to include new nodes and associations by altering the criteria of examination.

Further research on either group, therefore, could be pursued. In Nashville, San José Iturbide's soccer team plays in leagues made up primarily of Hispanic immigrants. Players of different teams inevitably intermingle, sometimes forming friendships and work associations based on similarities and comparable heritage and immigration circumstances. Likewise, The

Alcohol Anonymous group in which Osberto and his wife Clementina are involved presents another web of social contacts that could be explored. Osberto invites other AA members and their families to parties and holiday gatherings of the García family. Furthermore, Osberto, Clementina, and their children travel with members of their AA group to other cities in the United States to attend formal social events with other Hispanic AA groups. Both Clementina and Osberto now have friends and acquaintances in a network of cities across the United States. In either one of these social spaces, whether it be an amateur sport league or support group for recovering alcoholics, strong ties form between individuals that can open up future opportunities capable of altering one's life.

A deeper look at the transnational social networks and migratory patterns based in El Paraíso open up an array of different international connections. My research has focused mainly on undocumented immigrants from rural, humble communities. However, as I mentioned in chapter five, El Paraíso is a major tobacco and cigar producer. Several of the leading entrepreneurs are of immigrant stock themselves. As a result, multiple socioeconomic links exist between El Paraíso and other international locations, such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and Miami. Furthermore, a look at newer, informal transnational connections reveal that the United States is not the only recipient country for Paraisano immigrants.

For example, Spain is also a popular destination. During my fieldwork in Honduras, I conducted an informal study with two local sociologists who worked at La Universidad Católica del Honduras in Danlí. We administered over 100 questionnaires concerning the immigration histories of the families of university students, and we held three large focus groups. Many students had family or had before even emigrated themselves to the United States; however,

many also had family or had traveled to Spain. Several had family living in both the United States and Spain; thus, forming a transnational family linkages that overlap the Atlantic Basin. These students viewed the United States as an immigrant destination where one could find more stable employment opportunity, but they viewed Spain in a more romantic, popular light.

Geographical imaginations are the guiding factor behind such perceptions. How these notions play out vis-à-vis the actual economic situation and immigration regulations of either destination country is a fascinating matter that is ripe for research. Indeed, several respondents acknowledged that relatives were suffering under Spain's persistent economic crisis, with some even returning to Honduras. Therefore, questions arise on how this economic crisis influences both the emigration trajectory of Paraisanos, as well as the geographical imaginations of potential immigrants considering which international destinations are desirable. More germane to this research, though, are questions about how current opportunities and hardships are transmitted through these transnational and transhemispheric social networks.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

The comprehensive comparison of the transnational migratory practices and strategies of Mexican and Honduran immigrants in this research clearly displays how essential social networks are to human spatial movement, maintenance of long-distance relationships, and successfully achieving the objectives that motivate immigration in the first place. The bureaucratic and legal challenges that these groups face at different levels of governmental policies and regulations require each group's members to rely on and utilize informal tactics to be mobile and productive. Associations in the form of friendships, families, and simple acquaintances that originate in one community are transnationally reconfigured through the social networks of immigrants to facilitate mobility. Actors like Axel, Ned, and Juan are central to the functionality of these networks. Based in destination communities, they can provide the means, when needed, for immigrants to relocate. Further, they can provide employment to immigrants lacking legal documentations. Occasionally, an immigrant with an entrepreneurial spirit will take a risk by moving to a new town or city, and attempt to set up their business based on subcontracting. If successful, he or she may be in a position to begin recruiting laborers to his or her location; thus, establishing a new destination for immigrants in his or her social networks.

Once a destination is established, information, money, products, and people begin to circulate, not only between that particular receiving community and the original sending community, but also to other socially-linked immigrant destinations. These communities form a network of nodal geographic locations that can be traced and analyzed. Each physical node identified extends the circulating space of flow between and among other nodal points in a network. This is advantageous to all those involved in a socially-networked system. Migrant

laborers are given more options for relocation and settlement, as well as for opportunities to find employment. Those who employ migrants, whether they are immigrants themselves or native to the receiving community, gain access to more laborers through the extension of contacts provided by a transnational social network. Sending communities, on the other hand, inevitably reap some of the benefits created by the success of immigrants when they prosper abroad.

This dissertation has argued that applying a conceptual framework constructed around transnational social networks to research migration patterns and strategies with an emphasis on individual actors is an expedient tool for comprehending and explaining contemporary human mobility and movement. In contrast, research projects seeking to understand migrant mobility by focusing on just one destination, and concerned principally with structural reasons behind immigration, can truncate the experiences and choices of those immigrants under study. Human beings, in general, are extremely resourceful creatures. Participants in this work all utilize innovative tactics to circumnavigate a host of imposed-from-above restrictions and regulations that can impede movement at both the international and national scale. Many participants have lived in multiple places in the United States. Some could even be considered transient in that they periodically move from one location to another. Therefore, by centering on both the personal stories of individuals, their multiple associations in places of origins and destinations, and methods behind their mobility, we uncover insightful explanations on why and how particular groups of people move or relocate to certain areas.

My research interest is the expansion of Latino immigration in the American South. Much scholarly attention of the past two decades has been given to this topic, the bulk of which looks at the macro-scale economic reasons behind the phenomenon as well as the impact it has

had on host societies. Less attention, as I argue in this work, has been given to the actual day-to-day mechanics behind this demographic event. That is, the tactics individuals and groups apply that enable them to be mobile, such as communication technologies, social capital, or formal and informal associations. This dissertation does so by treating each migrant as an actor who is capable of wielding agency through his or her web of social contacts. By tracing contacts, observing transnational interactions and interpersonal associations, and tracking the movements of migrants, the informal techniques and practices embedded in the social networks of immigrant groups become apparent.

An indispensable component, however, to this approach to human mobility is the inclusion of a geographical perspective. Spatial and scalar differences do play a role in shaping past as well as present migratory patterns—even during an era of accelerated globalization and transnational connections. Historical migratory ties between New Orleans and Honduras are based on the geography of both locations. The tropical terrain of northern Honduras provided bananas for U.S. consumers through shipments directly to the commercial port of New Orleans located near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Likewise, traditional immigrant destinations of Mexicans in the southwestern United States materialized as a result of U.S. entrepreneurs recruiting the most accessible and inexpensive foreign labor found in northern and central Mexico. Today, Mexico's proximity to the United States has enabled an almost constant flow of undocumented immigrants across the border. Although stricter border control has made unauthorized crossing more difficult, Mexicans still are at an advantage compared to Hondurans, who must cover much more distance as well as cross multiple national borders to reach the United States. For Hondurans the trip north is arduous, and failure is a perpetual risk while in

transit. The cost of hiring coyotes has risen due to more rigorous border surveillance. Therefore, it is now even more necessary than before to rely on social contacts to finance the trip just to the U.S.-Mexican border.

The matter of border control underscores another important factor in international migration that is often deemphasized in contemporary scholarly work based on a conceptual transnationalism framework (see Vertovec 2007; Samers 2010). Supranational (e.g., European Union), national, state, and local bodies of government can and do affect migratory patterns. Although I argue that actors cleverly maneuver around or adapt to the restrictions and regulations mandated by national and local governments, any comprehensive research on migration should not deemphasize the significance of national borders or the governmental policies pertaining to immigration in either sending or receiving communities. This is because the strategies and tactics that actors create, pass along, and apply are tailored specifically for those imposed-from-above regulations they encounter in the places they come from, the places they pass through, and to the places they arrive. For this reason, scholarly attention to “place” is critical if researchers wish to analyze and contrast the migratory patterns and outcomes of more than one group and/or location.

Castle and Miller (2009:54) proclaim that 21st century migration cannot be fully understood except through the context of globalization, stating that, “globalization drives migration and changes its directions and forms. On the other hand, migration is an intrinsic part of globalization and is itself a major force reshaping communities and societies.” Their assertion is that globalization is an inescapable world process of social transformation. Contemporary migration, though, is not a result of this globalized social transformation, but a key part of it.

Globalization manifests through various flows and networks at different spatial levels.

Transnational migrants, both those sought after for their human or financial capital and those low-skill individuals so often marginalized or excluded, transfer cultural values, religious beliefs, new ideas, political opinions and ways of life between nodes. These transnational exchanges shape those same external forces, which initially led them to migrate in the first place (Vertovec 2007).

Certainly, past migrants maintained long-distance social linkages to places of origin. Similarly, these connections influenced migration flows and patterns. So, why does international migration occurring during this current stage of globalization warrant the description of transformative? Landolt (2001) best explains this by pointing to the matter of degree to which these social networks function. The intensity, velocity, and sheer extensiveness of contemporary social networks far outweigh those of the past. Technological advancements have compressed our conceptualizations of time and space. The accumulation, as Portes (2003) asserts, of numerous migrating individuals and their collective short-term, everyday actions and practices within transnational communities brings about modes of transformation (political, economic, and social) not just in immigration destinations and places of origins but entire regions.

Contemporary research on international migration and its transformative effects is an interdisciplinary topic of interest. Sociology, cultural studies, history, anthropology, economics, and psychology are examples of other academic fields that analytically engage population movements. Each one contributes to the greater understanding of human mobility and collectively generates a comprehensive understanding of human migration. Nevertheless, migration is fundamentally a spatial undertaking with geographical significance. Just as an

individual is transformed during and after relocating, oftentimes so are the locations from which he or she originates as well as those where he or she settles. Whether these transformations are subtle or far-reaching, they are a natural part and result of the human experience. This research reaffirms the analytical strengths and benefits the discipline of geography offers migration scholarship through its methodology and inquiries into where, why and how migrants arrive to a location. Answers to such questions are best understood when an analysis includes a spatial component. The application of transnational social networks as formulated in this dissertation is a fitting methodology for research endeavors concerned with transnational migration, changing geographies, and demographic transformation during an era of accelerated globalization.

SPANISH GLOSSARY

Buena Onda: A colloquial expression in Mexico and parts of Central America loosely interpreted as “good guy” or “good person.”

Cafetero: A person involved in the production of coffee cultivation.

Catracho: A colloquial term for someone from Honduras.

Chicarrón: dish made of fried pork rinds.

Colonia: A housing development comparable to a neighborhood in subdivision.

Coyote: A colloquial term for someone hired by autonomous migrants to help them cross a national border.

Ejidal(es): Common farm land usually administrated by a community or township in Honduras.

Evangelismo: Evangelicalism in English. The practice of worshiping or relaying information about the Christian Gospels.

Finca: Farm or ranch located in a rural area.

Gordita: A small Mexican cake made from corn and stuffed with cheese or meats.

Gringo: A colloquial expression in Latin America for North Americans.

Guanajuatense: Demonym for a person from Guanajuato

Inmigrante: Immigrant

Muchacho: An adolescent or young male.

Municipios: Municipality in English. In Mexico, a municipio is an administrative entity or subdivision similar to a county or parish in the United States.

Paraisano: Demonym for a person from El Paraíso.

Quinceañeras: A the celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday in parts of Latin America and elsewhere in communities of people from Latin America.

Rancharía: A small rural community comprised of dwellings.

Trabajador: A worker or employee.

Vivienda: A household or residence.

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