THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON THE LIVES OF WOMEN LEFT BEHIND IN PUEBLA, MEXICO

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the women of Puebla, Mexico, and all families that are impacted by migration.

Está dedicado a las mujeres de Puebla, Mexico, y todas las familias que están impactando por la migración.
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ABSTRACT

Background: Mexican migration to the United States has become a pressing concern subject to widespread debate. Border and migration policies have complicated family lives in rural Mexico, leaving some family members to migrate north while others are left behind. As the husbands of women in communities near Puebla, Mexico migrate to the US, they are increasingly given the unfamiliar role of becoming the head of their household. There has not been much research that examines the unique pressures that this role brings. This project examined the challenges and coping strategies women face in this situation during health emergencies, and the role of social media in maintaining strong family ties across international borders. This research calls upon the narratives of women struggling to survive on their own while also attempting to maintain the standards required of marianismo in Mexican society. The research is based on a small number of semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted in rural areas of Puebla, Mexico about demography, migration, social media Health emergencies; and other challenges and Coping Strategies. Results portrayed a nuanced view of women’s struggle between family and work life that suggested the beginnings of change in women’s role in traditional, rural Mexican society. Women who could afford to stay at home often had a negative perception of women who needed to work, and vice versa. Women found work and social support to be helpful coping mechanisms. Common challenges were relationship maintenance, single parenting, health emergencies, and coping with feelings of abandonment. Social media often added to these feelings of abandonment.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Mexican migration to the United States has become a pressing concern subject to widespread debate. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States militarized its international border with Mexico in attempts to strengthen security and prevent undocumented individuals from entering the country. However, migrants, most of them Mexicans citizens, continued to migrate to the United States, with or without receiving legal permission. Who were these migrants, and where are they coming from? What circumstances lead them to leave their families and communities behind to cross an increasingly dangerous border? What happens to the family members are left behind?

The stories of the women left behind in Mexico after their husbands migrate to the United States are seldom heard. While their husbands create new lives and take new jobs in unfamiliar cities, women become the heads of their household for the first time, take on new responsibilities, and adapt to the challenges of being a single parent. They socialize without their husbands, they work and earn their own money, and sometimes, they migrate themselves. The impact of male migration to the United States on women left in Mexico is changing the threads of rural Mexican society, and these changes are only beginning to be explored.

The initial goal of this research was to explore the resilience and coping strategies developed by women living in Puebla, Mexico who became the heads of household
after their husbands migrated to the United States. A critical piece of the project was
designed to examine how separated families manage health emergencies on both sides
of the border. In this context, I examined whether social media was used to communi-
cate between family members, and if so, the degree to which it was helpful. The key
questions of the research were as follows:

• Has male migration from Mexico to the United States impacted the lives
  of women left behind? If so, in what ways have women’s lives been
  changed and how have they coped with the challenge?

• Has the advent of social media helped women overcome challenges of
  separation, sense of isolation, and poverty, especially in times of family
  health crisis?

• How does this challenge reinforce or transform the cultural ideals of mari-
anismo/machismo as they are played out in the context of rural Mexican
  communities?

This project would not have been possible without the collaboration of students
and faculty from Universidad de las Americas - Puebla (UDLAP), and this partnership
was a major strength for the study. Meeting with students and faculty after the inter-
views to ensure a clear understanding of the responses by the participants was critical
in gaining providing accurate responses. Having these connections and conversations
contributed greatly to the overall quality of the project.

Research Questions
The purpose of this project was in part to gain an understanding of how women are impacted by male migration to the United States in the rural communities of Tecamachalco and Santa Clara Ocoyucan. Past research suggests that male migration impacts drastically the lives of rural women, adding a burden of work within and outside of the home (Kanaiapuni, 2000; Davis et al, 2002; Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2006; Wilkinson et. al, 2009). Male migration has also been known to impact the overall well-being of the families left behind in a number of ways, including challenges with economics, health, education, parenting and child development (Heymann et. al, 2009; “Osorno Velasquez, 2015; Salgado de Snyder, 1993; Silver, 2006). Knowing how male migration can negatively impact rural women in Mexico, a goal of studying both the challenges and the coping strategies of the women in these difficult situations was to explore not only the health of the family unit, but also the resilience and capabilities of the women themselves who adapt and thrive in these challenging situations.

Given that health emergencies are inevitable and difficult experiences for many people, the research aimed to study this challenge specifically to understand how the women in the study dealt with them without a key member of their family there to aid them in their crisis. Healthcare in rural Mexico, especially in emergency situations, can be difficult to access due to the remote nature of the towns in which the villagers live, and the cost of buses, medications, and other associated care can be problematic for those without many resources. The research aimed to understand how women reacted to health emergencies in their family, what hardships they encountered when trying to
deal with them, and how they made it through them without their husbands. The importance of understanding how women dealt with health emergencies under these circumstances can ensure that the women were able to receive adequate care in their time of need, and if they were unable, to help inform policy that will ensure adequate care in the future. It is also important to understand how migration policy in the United States affects Mexican families who have a family member living in the United States during these difficult moments. The fear and hardship of crossing the border leaves many emigrants of Mexico to miss funerals of loved ones and births of their own children. Gaining an empathic perspective of these issues is an important step in changing the existing harsh migration policies.

Social media is an emerging topic in the social science literature, as it is a relatively new phenomenon that has helped to unite and reunite people far and wide for purposes as enormous as organizing revolutionary movements in North Africa to motives as simple as keeping in touch with old classmates. Social media plays an important role in migration in multiple aspects. To begin with, it allows families to maintain communication with each other across various platforms. It also allows for the exchanging of cultural ideas and values across countries, and creates a space for people to connect who may not otherwise have the opportunity (Marino, 2015). Social media includes sharing photographs and important moments in the lives of its users. Social media is a grand exporter of culture, and could contribute to the several pull factors that inform a person's decision to migrate to the United States (Marchand & Meza, 2010).
This research aimed to explore the use of social media in the context of family unification and how it impacts family relationships over an international border. Understanding social media in the context of migration is important in understanding how relationships evolve in our digital world, and in understanding how it can be used as a tool to strengthen relationships under the conditions of the current migration policy as it affects families between the United States and Mexico.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MEXICAN MIGRATION

This section will provide an overview of the literature important in contextualizing this project. To understand the context of this research, it is important to first under-
stand the history behind Mexican migration to the United States and the factors that have contributed to an influx in migration of rural and semi-rural Mexicans to the United States in the past twenty years. Secondly, understanding the impact of family separation due to migration in Mexican families, and the importance of familismo in Mexican society, is critical to understanding the need for research in this area. A basic understanding of the Mexican healthcare system and the governmental anti-poverty program Oportunidades is essential in exploring the topic of health emergencies in Tecamachalco and Santa Clara, given their interconnectivity. The history of the emergence of social media and its contributions to communications across borders is also critical for understanding the reasons for and the results of this research. Lastly, understanding this research requires an understanding of the theoretical concepts of gender roles and ideology central to Mexican culture- the threads of which are changing as a result of migration.

**Location of the Research - Puebla**

*Figure 1: Puebla, Mexico is the region highlighted in green in Central Mexico.*
Puebla, Mexico is a state located in the central highlands of Mexico between the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Norte Oriental mountain ranges. The state of Puebla is diverse in population and in ecosystems, as it is home to five different indigenous groups—the Nahuas, the Totonacs, the Mixtecs, the Popolocas, and the Otomi, who mostly live in the mountainous terrain to the north and the south of the state. It is estimated that over 500,000 of 5.78 million inhabitants still speak an indigenous language. The diversity of the state of Puebla extends to its topography, which ranges from corn fields, to volcanoes, to mountains, and to partial rainforest. This prominent Mexican state con-
tains a large city also by the name of Puebla. The city of Puebla is known for its industrious economy.

The city of Puebla was founded in 1531 and is the site of many historic battles, most notably the Battle of Puebla, an important moment in the history of Mexico including the Mexican War of Independence. The city is tremendously rich in culture, from its well-known cuisine specialties such as *mole poblano* and *chiles en nogada* to its exquisite Spanish and French colonial architecture. Puebla is the birthplace of Talavera pottery, a very popular kind of tile used for different purposes, from decoration to kitchen utensils. Puebla city enjoys a temperate climate year round, and is located near an active volcano in the neighboring town of Cholula. Due to its rich culture and history, UNESCO named Puebla a World Heritage Site in 1987. The city of Puebla has an estimated population of 5.78 million that is constantly in flux due to the high levels of migration in and out of the city. These immigrants include both Mexicans leaving and returning from the city and its neighboring towns, and Central American immigrants who move in transit through the city.

The region of Puebla is an area that is particularly well known for its emigration to the United States, as it is estimated that immigrants from this region make up nearly 6% of all Mexican immigrants (Massey, Rugh, & Pren 2008). Immigration from Puebla presents an interesting case, as 85% of all emigrants from this region migrate to New York City, one of the most geographically distant areas in the United States (Massey, Rugh, & Pren 2008; Lee, 2008). The state of Puebla is part of a pattern of “accelerated
migration”, a term coined by research professor Leigh Binford, that describes the rapid outflow of migrants from Mexico to the United States (2003). The history of migration to New York City from Puebla I began in the 1980s, as a result of an economic downturn in Mexico and a boom in available jobs in the United States (Massey, Rugh, & Pren 2008). Due to family ties and networking among villagers, most emigrants of Puebla still migrate to New York City and its surrounding areas.

The coming sections will provide an overview of the literature on historical migration patterns from Mexico to the United States, health care in Mexico, social media use in Mexico, and migration and gender before relating directly to my research.

**Structural Forces and Migration**

It would be impossible to discuss the impact of migration on communities surrounding the city of Puebla, Mexico without first understanding the historical context of migration from Mexico to the United States. There are currently 12 million Mexicans living in the United States, and 89% of them living separated from family members who are still in Mexico (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie 2004). The pattern of migration from Mexico to the United States has persisted for decades. The western states of California, Nevada, Utah, Texas, and parts of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming were considered Mexican territory until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848, when Mexico lost this territory to the United States. Many Mexicans continued to live on this territory after the treaty was signed. During the Mexican Revolution from
1910-1920, many Mexicans migrated to the United States to avoid turmoil at home. The first Mexican immigrants required to apply for permission to enter the country migrated in 1919. Economic insecurity is a leading push factor for Mexicans to enter the United States. Up until the 1930s, Mexican immigrants provided a much needed labor force to the agricultural sector of the United States. Obtaining this permission was generally not a troublesome process, as Mexican migrants and the United States agricultural labor sector considered their relationship to be mutually beneficial (Golash-Boza, 2010; Mines et. al, 1982; Garcia, 1981).

During World War II, the much larger Bracero program was created to allow permission for seasonal agricultural workers from Mexico to legally enter the United States to help with labor shortages. The Bracero program brought over 4.6 million Mexican immigrants to the United States from 1942-1964, many of whom were from the state of Puebla (Lee, 2008). The program closed in 1964 after many abuses were reported and political leaders decided not to renew it. Although the program officially ended, the need for labor did not dissolve. The 1950s also marked the initiation of “Operation Wetback”, which involved the first mass deportation of undocumented Mexican workers by U.S. authorities (Golash-Boza, 2010; Mines et. al, 1982; Garcia, 1981; Astor, 2009; Hernandez, 2006).

The next large influx of Mexican immigrants to the United States came after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was passed. This act allowed for permanent residency to be granted based on family connections rather than based on national ori-
gin, allowing for many Mexicans to reunite with families and permanently settle in the United States. The act granted 170,000 visas per year. This momentous act was intended to build on the skill set of immigrants and begin to abolish the racially biased migration and visa granting policies long upheld by the United States government. Until the 1970s, approximately 80% of Mexican immigrants were permitted on temporary status, but after this act was passed afterwards, only 40% came for temporary work while the rest permanently settled. This process of permanent settlement was further encouraged by the Immigration Reform & Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which granted amnesty to undocumented Mexicans and allowed for more Mexicans to apply to be with family in the United States and permanently settle (Golash-Boza, 2010; Mines et. al, 1982; Garcia & Garcia, 1981; Hernandez, 2006). IRCA in particular led many poblanos to migrate to the United States (Garcia Campos, 2009).

NAFTA, or the North American Free Trade Agreement, is the trade agreement designed and implemented between the countries in North America which came into effect in January, 1994. This trade agreement is a direct result of neoliberal policy, which successfully removed governmental tax regulations from the trade market while increasing the role of private corporations in the trade of goods and services across countries, specifically between the United States, Canada, and Mexico (Sobarzo, 1994). The goal of this trade agreement was to promote trade and financial gain in all three of these countries. However, NAFTA received a large sum of criticism before its implementation, and is now continuing to receive the same criticism (Carlsen, 2013), as it is not, in fact,
as beneficial for all as it was thought it would be before its initiation over two decades ago (Sobarzo, 1994). The main beneficiaries of NAFTA, as a result of its deregulatory policies, have been major corporations, especially in the agriculture and apparel industries that originate in the United States (Singh, 2011). Opponents of NAFTA predicted the consequences outside of the trade benefits, and predicted from its conception that NAFTA had the potential to harm Mexico in a multiple capacities (Johnson, 1994). Environmental groups worried about the governmental deregulation of environmental standards, fearing that the pressures to create a mass production of goods in order to meet trade demands would harm the environment (Johnson, 1994).

The economic hardship of the Mexican people, most notably in the agricultural sector, has resulted in the most recent era of increased migration to the United States, at unprecedented numbers (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2004; Lee, 2008; Rivera & Whiteford, 2008). After the implementation of NAFTA in 1994, 46.1% of farm workers in Mexico were earning less than the minimum wage. Between 1994 and 1999, although crop production increased 5%, the price of these crops decreased by a stunning 25% (Rivera & Whiteford, 2008). The first five years of NAFTA were only the beginning of what continues to contribute to a decline in Mexico’s economy. The impact of NAFTA on rural Mexican livelihood created the next major surge of migration from Mexico to the United States, as farmers could no longer sell their crops. Santa Clara and Tecamachalco are direct examples of how the repercussions of NAFTA influenced migration to the United States, evident by the abandoned farms and land plots that farm-
ers can no longer afford to grow their crops on, and the outflow of migrants that has steadily increased since 2002 ("Meza", 2015; Rivera, Whiteford & Chavez, 2008).

**Significance of Family Separation and Familismo in Mexican Culture and Its Impacts on Mental Health**

The importance of family in Mexican culture is prominent and cannot be overstated. Extended families tend to live close to each other in proximity and maintain strong communication. This concept is referred to in Spanish as *familismo*, and refers to "the strong identification and attachment of Hispanic persons with their nuclear and extended families" (Morris et. al, 2012). *Familismo* has been credited as providing the Mexican community a protective factor against adversity, including youth drug use, obtaining higher levels of education, and to leading happier and more productive lives (Ayon et. al, 2010; Slack, Martinez, Whiteford & Peiffer, 2013). As the family unit is so important to Mexican families, the impact of family separation on Mexican individuals and their families as a whole is of dire concern.

Family separation is difficult for both family members in Mexico and in the United States. Most of the research that has been done on family separation in regards to Mexican immigration has focused solely on the family members who have migrated to the United States. The stresses that immigrants face as a result of migration affect the mental health and interpersonal bonding of immigrant families in several ways. In addi-
tion to the stress of coming to terms with the economic and political factors that encouraged them to leave their host community, they also encounter adaptation stress - many will experience difficulties understanding and adapting to their new environment and feeling accepted within it (Henderson & Bailey, 2013). Challenges with adaptation stress include learning a new language, understanding new cultural ideals, and adjusting to the various differences in everyday life that range from learning how to use unfamiliar transportation systems to knowing what behaviors and attitudes are accepted and appropriate in their new environment (Henderson & Bailey, 2013). The stresses they face are amplified by the fear of deportation and undocumented status - not only do undocumented immigrants have to adapt to their new and unfamiliar environment, but they also have to worry about being asked about their status for something as minor as a traffic violation, and they face the chronic stress of wondering if their families will return from school or work, as well as planning for what would happen if someone in their family were to face deportation (National Immigration Forum, 2013). The family unit in this situation is constantly vulnerable to splitting, and the stress of breaking up a family by means of detention and deportation adds significant psychological trauma to an already stressed unit (Falicoy, 2005).

Research shows that the children of families separated as a result of deportation are more likely to suffer mental health challenges and behavioral issues than those who are in families that stay together (Cavazos-Rehg et. al, 2007). Many other studies show that the detention and deportation of immigrant family members, especially for those in
mixed-status families, defined as a family unit in which one or more persons have undocumented status while one or more persons have legal status (Yoshikawa, 2011), has severe consequences for the members of that family (Allen et. al, 2013; Brabeck and Xu, 2010). These consequences include socio-psychological trauma, defined as hardships that impact an individual’s emotional well-being and relationships with other humans, which are amplified by a feeling of abandonment when children and parents are separated (Brabeck and Xu, 2010). When family members lose their social support and children lose their role models, children’s themselves emotional well-being, academic performance, and social relationships are all likely to suffer tremendously (Brabeck and Xu, 2010). The overall result of these outcomes are that these situations will create a generation of poorly adjusted children and adults who will be less likely to lead successful lives.

While most of the research on this topic focuses on subjects post-migration who now live in the United States, there have been key studies that have examined the lives of family members left in Mexico. One study out of the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill studied how family separation impacts the emotional well-being of the family members who have been left behind in Mexico. Using the Mexican Family Life Survey, the researcher discovered that spouses and children of immigrants showed significant emotional distress, including more symptoms of depression and loneliness. The researcher also found that wives and mothers of migrants left behind were the most likely to suffer from these negative emotional consequences (Silver, 2006). One other study
conducted in 1993 found that the wives of immigrants left in Mexico agreed with their husbands’ decision to migrate, but suffered from the stress of taking on new obligations and responsibilities without their husbands (Salgado de Snyder, 1993). Still, the research on this population is limited, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of what is happening to families left behind on the Mexican side of the border.

Family separation is further convoluted not only by the policies that complicate ‘legal’ migration to the United States, but also by the difficulties that migrants face when making the journey across the international border. Extreme weather and topographical conditions, as well as widespread and serious violence on the border, makes the process of migration a harrowing experience that many migrants do not wish to repeat. Repeating the journey can not only result in negative health consequences for the migrant, but can also result in a loss of important belongings and documents at the hands of gangs, bandits, and the United States Border Patrol (Slack, Martinez, Lee, and Whiteford, 2016). All of these dangers and inconveniences add to the reasons why families are separated for extended periods of time.

The impact of family separation on the families in Tecamachalco and Santa Clara was evident in the strained relationship between wives and their husbands, mothers and their children, fathers and their children left behind, and grandparents, parents, and grandchildren alike. There were no family members who remained unaffected by the trauma involved with losing at least one family member to a life on the other side of an international border which could not be easily crossed due to dangerous terrain, the
threat of detention, and outdated and unjust immigration policies. The fabric of Mexican society as a whole, including a strong sense of community, and healthy family bonds, are strained under the context of migration.

**Key Points of the Accessibility to Health Care and Mental Health Services in Rural Mexico**

The health emergencies that were cited in the interviews with the women from rural Mexico were broad, ranging from birth to death, to the emergence of the burden of chronic illnesses, to broken bones, and everything in between. It is difficult to find literature that summarizes all aspects of all of these healthcare issues during health emergencies, and the literature available on this topic is also limited. This section focuses on the accessibility of general healthcare to rural women in Mexico, as well as the access to mental health care available to Mexicans, especially in rural areas. Both of these areas are important to understand in the context of this study. The availability of and ease of accessing healthcare in trying times is important to understanding the struggles and coping mechanisms of women left behind in Mexico while their husbands are in the United States, in parallel to the women who were interviewed for this research.

The Mexican health care system delivers health care through social security institutes (which cover about half of the population), the Ministry of Health and other government programs, and private practice institutions (Barber, 2007). In accordance with
the law, all “formal-sector, salaried employees” are required to enroll in social security-funded healthcare programs, yet around 21-28% of these employees also have purchased private practice health insurance. This number likely speaks to the quality of care that is received through social security healthcare. A few studies have attempted to tackle the challenges of accessing healthcare for rural and semi-rural Mexican women. All studies all provided results that demonstrated a disparity in the quality and frequency of care between rural and urban women in Mexico, and between those living in poverty and those who have access to quality healthcare. Two studies focusing on the prenatal care of Mexican women found that poverty predicted poor quality health care, with indigenous women suffering the most as a result of poverty (Barber, 2007; Barber, 2009). The same study found that women with poorer health outcomes related to prenatal healthcare were also more likely to be associated with using public facilities as opposed to private facilities (Barber, 2007).

The Mexican government initiated the Oportunidades program, the principal anti-poverty program in the country, in part to combat the disparities in care between the rich and the poor of Mexico. Oportunidades is a cash transfer program that provides families with cash in exchange for regular attendance of children in school and regular visits to the health clinic. One of the goals of Oportunidades is to provide higher quality prenatal health care for rural, low-income women, and the program resulted in better prenatal health care for women who know about the program and are empowered to utilize it (Barber & Gertler, 2009). This program shows promise for eliminating some of the
disparities in quality access to health care for certain health care needs, and one study showed that simply increasing awareness and enrollment in Oportunidades could improve the efficacy of the program for certain health concerns (Leroy et. al, 2009). While this is good news for low-income, rural women in Mexico for certain medical conditions, no data shows how effective cash transfer program like Oportunidades are for health emergencies, and no systems are currently in place for receiving top quality care during a health emergency. During my time in Puebla, I met with a man who had studied HIV infection and health care use of Mexican women living in Oaxaca. He provided a deeper understanding of the perceptions of health care providers in rural Mexico and the challenges that women face in terms of access to care. He explained that women often perceived the health care system to be difficult to navigate. He also explained that rural women often perceive the quality of care available at rural health posts to be inadequate (“Campos Garcia”, 2015).

Many rural health clinics in Mexico are staffed by recently graduated medical students who must spend a year working in this setting to earn their profession license (“Campos Garcia”, 2015). While this requirement was intended to bolster the primary care availability in rural areas, this decision has been met with various unintended consequences. Given that confianza is incredibly important to Mexicans dealing with health issues (Estrada, 2015), rotating new and young physicians in and out of rural communities for a year at a time is difficult for both the patients and the physicians. The physicians are often overwhelmed by the lack of mentorship and resources available to them,
and are unlikely to stay for longer than their assigned year, which makes it impossible to establish a relationship with the patients. The patients are also affected by the lack of relationship with their provider, and also by the provider's inexperience, which makes it difficult for them to trust the rural health care providers, and more likely to seek alternative sources of care (Estrada, 2015; “Campos Garcia”, 2015).

Often times, alternative care can refer to an elder in the community who practices more traditional or folk medicine. Women also may make a trip to a city with hospitals that they perceive to have a higher quality of care. For low-income, rural women, a trip to the nearest city can be a large expense on top of seeing a different provider than the government-sponsored medical student. Medications are also not kept at rural health clinics, and depending on the condition, the patient is likely to be sent to a larger hospital to receive adequate care after the initial appointment. This process causes financial inconveniences and a burden on the health care seeker’s time. The challenges and perceptions of quality care by rural women should not be overlooked, especially when understanding the stress of health emergencies on women who are alone in heading their households.

When asking key informants and community members about the mental health care system of Mexico, I was often met with a chuckle and the response “No existe” - it does not exist. Mental health issues and ailments are still strongly stigmatized in Mexico, as in many parts of the world. The lack of services available for mental health is notable. According to the Pan American Health Organization, only 30% of primary health
care facilities in Mexico have “evaluation and treatment protocols in place for key mental health conditions” (PAHO, 2012). It is also notable that 50% of Mexico’s mental health care recipients are treated at the tertiary level in hospitals (PAHO, 2012).

While community-based mental health work has become a priority for Mexico, the model has not been substantially developed at this point in time. One study by the World Health Organization that aimed to determine the gap in treatment between those who need treatment for mental health conditions and those who receive treatment for the conditions found that in Mexico City, the treatment gap for major depression was 73.5%, while in rural Mexico, the treatment gap was 66.3% (WHO, 2008). However, while most other countries in this study had data representing other mental health conditions, Mexico only listed “Major depression” and “Dysthymia”, further proving that the data collection and awareness of mental health conditions in Mexico is currently insufficient. Another study in 2007 found that there was no known data on the lifetime prevalence of psychiatric disorders in Mexico (Medina-Mora et. al, 2007). There are no known studies on the prevalence of anxiety in Mexican sending communities, either, which is important in understanding the stress and treatment options for women adapting to the stress of heading their household for the first time after their husbands migrate.

The Emergence of Social Media in Mexico and its Relevance to Migration

Tecamachalco and Santa Clara, despite their relative remote locations and low-resource economies, have citizens that actively participate in various forms of social
media platforms and communications. The newness of the ease of access to these communication systems, even in remote areas of the world, opens a world of inquisition as to how these modes of communication impact societies, communities, families, and individuals, especially in the context of migration. Before the explosion in the usage and accessibility of social media platforms in 2009, literature on Mexican usage of social media in the context of family communications and migration was scarce, as the Internet was just beginning to expand its global usage (World Bank, 2014). The use of social media as a facilitator for migration from Mexico to the United States has become a burgeoning field of research over the past decade since the widespread emergence of social media platforms. Gaining notoriety as an effective tool for promoting social change since the Arab Spring movements in 2010 and 2011, technology on the internet in the form of social media has been known to keep populations connected across borders and contribute to a new, well-connected global community (Marchand & Meza, 2010). Social media as a tool for migration in Mexico started to receive publications and emerge as a field in 2009. It has not been well studied in Mexico, although it has been gaining momentum as an emerging topic in the literature.

One scholar has identified the internet as a “space of togetherness”, which is important in maintaining connection across borders. The researcher argues that social media and other online modes of communications such as Skype and WhatsApp is critical in adapting to new communities by enabling the user to maintain their identity by staying connected to their home country and social networks across borders. Having a
place to connect with old friends and family, speak and receive information in the mi-
grant’s native language, and participate in debates are important to the migrant’s sense
of belonging, identity, and culture. Social media creates a sense of identity for migrants
who move to “hostile receiving countries” (Marino, 2015). This research highlights the
benefits of social media and its positive role in migration.

While few articles exist on the topic of the role that social networks and the Inter-
net play in aiding migrants who have let their home community (Diminiscus & Loveluck,
2014; Marino, 2015; Marchand & Meza, 2010), I was unable to locate literature on this
topic from the perspective of family members left in the migrant’s country of origin.
There is also no literature available on the impact the Internet and social media may
have on the family unit that is separated by international borders. This lack of informa-
tion is troubling, as our ever-evolving interconnected world is certainly connecting mi-
grants to their families through the Internet and social networks. Understanding the role
that it plays in family separation across borders could lead to helpful outcomes if family
members are able to connect. For this reason, I found it important to understand the
role that social media plays in keeping families connected in relation to Mexican migra-
tion to the United States.

The modes of social media and communications that I chose to focus on are
Facebook, Skype, and WhatsApp, while the rest are filed under “Other”. Facebook is a
popular social networking site that is used for everything from photo sharing, to private
messages, to public personal updates. Skype is a video-calling application for smart
phones and computers that allows users to video chat or make calls to cell phones and landlines. WhatsApp is an application for smartphones that enables users to send each other private text messages, send voice recordings, and make phone calls across international borders without more than the first time cost of downloading the app for $0.99 USD. This low-cost option is very popular for international communications. All other modes of social media and communications are filed under “other” in this research. These methods of communications have an impact on individuals, families, communities, and societies, and the lack of research on this topic demonstrates the possibilities for better understanding the impacts of globalized economies and communications.

Gender and Migration in Mexico

This research took an unexpected turn, and the emerging themes of motherhood, gender roles, marital dynamics, and the way they are being impacted by male migration away from Mexico became topics too prominent to ignore in the analysis of the interviews. Males are more frequently leaving their wives behind, leaving them to become head of the household. Women are also working in formal and informal markets. Many women are also beginning to migrate and create new opportunities for themselves in the United States (Kanaiapuni, 2000; Davis et al, 2002; Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2006; Wilkerson et. al, 2009). It is important to understand these gender roles and relationship dynamics to appreciate how migration is causing these gender dynamics to
slowly change overtime, as analyzing these themes under the sense of gender can provide a better sense of understand to the lives impacted by the phenomenon of migration (Osorno Valesquez, 2006; Mahler, 2009; Heymann, 2009; “Osorno Velasquez”, 2015). The complexities of traditional gender roles and migration are changing as a result of migration, and this research explores how it is doing so and to what degree it is changing in the communities of Tecamachalco and Santa Clara. This research focused solely on women in these communities to better understand their engendered experience of migration in their households and communities.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND FRAMEWORK

Introduction to the Methodology of the Project

Why This Project, and Why Puebla?

Since beginning my studies at the University of Arizona with many interests in many topics, I narrowed my focus of study to Mexican migration to the United States. This topic combined many of my interests in Latin American culture, Spanish language, issues of migration, and family separation, and enabled me to study the intersection of these topics. The topic of family separation has always been close to my heart due to my own experiences of living in a household that unexpectedly became headed by a single mother who had to find a delicate balance between working, raising children, and finding the finances to ensure our family’s survival. This experience, along with my own
experiences of growing up for the past decade after being abandoned by my father, and working through the many emotional and practical challenges this left in my life, has always made me feel particularly close to the issue of family separation. Hearing about family separation induced by migration and economic and political circumstances, where fathers actually leave their families for good reason, and do not necessarily even want to leave their family members behind, has always left me with a deep curiosity to learn about the lives of those who are affected by this issue and are enduring unjust suffering, and who will continue to face these life-altering challenges with no end in sight.

When the opportunity arose to attempt my first field research experience in Puebla, Mexico, on these topics due to a close tie with my faculty advisor in Latin American Studies and a faculty member at the Universidad de Las Americas - Puebla, I eagerly applied for a Tinker Field Research Grant to gain a new experience that would complement my studies and give me the opportunity to try fieldwork firsthand for the first time. It was my first time in Mexico, aside from a previous experience as a tourist, and I went under the promise that I would be “provide(d) with the institutional support need(ed) to complete (my) research including any letters of recommendation that (I) need(ed) to work in migrant communities or with organizations in Puebla” from a well-known, highly respected, and well-established research professor at UDLAP. With this promise, I felt confident that I would be able to accomplish my research goals and receive the guidance necessary to successfully live and conduct research in Puebla during the extremely short time that I was able to be there due to financial constraints.
Prior to departing for Puebla, I planned my fieldwork but soon learned that I would be conducting the field research, outside of the city, in particular in rural villages. While my connections at UDLAP were helpful, suddenly learning that I was compelled to change my plans created a logistical and research challenge. I had already spent money for an affordable hostel in the city center and I did not have the time and funding necessary to continually transfer back and forth between these separate locations. Secondly, my research focus necessarily had to be altered.

Upon arrival in Puebla, I spent the first week meeting with various professors from both the United States and Mexico who were working on issues of migration, including the distinguished Dr. Michael Agar. I also met students of the professor who offered to provide institutional support, and a few of these students were working on issues related to migration. Although the process seemed to be off to a slow start, this is what I had been prepared for based on my experience in the Peace Corps (in Guyana), where the community-based participatory research that is so revered in public health methodology clearly states that it takes time to get into a community, build trust, and work towards learning about the complexities of a community before jumping in and conducting research. Although I was nervous about having time to complete a sufficient amount of interviews for the project, I believed that, based on everything I had learned in classes and past experiences, and based on the connections I was slowly but surely making, I was on the right path to conducting the interviews I had set out to complete.
The second week in the field was spent recruiting participants with the help of students from UDLAP. One student in particular provided me with a plethora of support, and invited me into the community that he grew up in, and was an expert on, to interview women who met the criteria for my study that he personally knew. He recruited the women ahead of time, and after speaking with them, agreed to meet on the following Sunday, which happened to be the last Sunday in which I was in the field. Another student also brought me to a town she had done a project in to recruit women for the study during the second week that I was there, but again, the women were very busy and asked that we return the following Saturday for an interview when they had a moment of free time in their schedule. One woman was not home when we returned, again cutting down the number of interviews I was counting on conducting. Another woman who we planned to interview no longer lived in the community.

The third week was reserved for interviews, which were scheduled for the weekend by the request of the women being interviewed. Although an unfortunate time constraint left me without the ability to meet with these women again to clarify details, this was understandably the only days in which the women were willing to make time to meet with the team outside of their otherwise busy lives. Out of respect for the participants, who this project was intended to give a voice to, this single day of interviews was the best that could have been accomplished under the constraints of this project. The faculty member from UDLAP helped conduct some of the interviews, and it was a team effort in completing all of the interviews in one day. The responses from the participants
were clarified by the PhD student, who served as a key informant to the community and met with me in Puebla before leaving the field to ensure clarity and correctness in the recording of responses.

During all of the weeks of the field research experience, I met with as many people as would speak to me. As time pressed on, I was filled with stress about completing that project and time and again I was disappointed to be left with so many dead ends that I had been sure would lead to interviews. Another student who I was introduced to by the professor at UDLAP, who worked at a call center for returned migrants, had promised me time and again that we could conduct interviews at the call center, which was located in the city of Puebla. I spent days following up with her, and I truly expected that this opportunity would work out and lead me to many more interviews, but unfortunately, as often happens in field research based on what I have heard from methods classes I have taken, things did not go according to plan and the opportunity for these interviews, much to my dismay, fell through.

*

*What was I doing the rest of the time I was there?*

Between interviews and meeting with students, my days were filled with gathering information about Puebla. I spent my days attempting to learn more about Puebla and migration from key informants that one student connected me to, out of the kindness of his own heart, after seeing the panicked desperation in my eyes and taking pity on me when I was not finding anyone to interview, despite all of the methods classes I
had taken that had allegedly prepared me for my unpredictable time in the field. In the time when I was there, I met with three key informants who were willing to share specific information about migration from central Mexico, whose work and whose information from the interviews have been included throughout this work. One was the PhD student who helped to connect me to the town where I conducted the most interviews. During my second week, a week after I met him, he took time out of his own busy life to bring me on an informative half-day tour of the city of Puebla and explained to me from a critical perspective the history of the city and its significance in Mexico. He then connected me to his colleagues who he thought would help my research perspective. One was a feminist researcher who discussed the feminization of migration, although not directly related to the towns in which I conducted interviews. Another was a man who had done research in Oaxaca about women who contracted HIV from partners who had migrated to the United States, who had helpful information about the healthcare systems in Mexico and the barriers to rural women in utilizing care. The PhD student also sent me several reading materials that, although they were not necessarily relevant to my particular project, helped give me a better understanding of where I had come to do research and what you can learn from a town based off of its architecture.

I was initially reluctant to put these informal interviews into the thesis report because they were not part of the project that I had sent in to be approved by the IRB, which I had learned in my methods classes was an organization extremely important to the ethics of a project and the protection of humanity during research. I have since
been corrected by members of the committee that the IRB is merely a bureaucratic formality, and my ethical concerns of including them were a mark of my obvious naivety as a student researcher. As such, they are now included in the project, with the exception of certain sensitive information that, although it would make the analysis of the interviews stronger and a document for the department to have more pride for, could jeopardize the trust and relationships that I built, and more importantly, put certain communities at risk should the information fall into the wrong hands.

PROJECT LIMITATIONS

Logistical Limitations

The distance and cost of traveling to and from these towns outside of Puebla, which was not accounted for in my budget, and the limited time I had in the community left me with few options for conducting more interviews. Another obstacle is the fact that these rural towns are not on the tourist path. There are no accommodations within a young student traveler’s budget in these rural towns where foreigners stick out like a sore thumb. I also paid for my accommodations in Puebla ahead of time, thinking that they would be in an ideal location for this project. Given that this was my first time in Mexico since learning the Spanish language, the language barrier also provided difficulties while conducting interviews and gathering information.

In my methods classes, I learned that field research is a slow process that depends upon trust built up over a period of time, and having meaningful connections with-
in a community to help establish this trust. Being an outsider in a large city that I had never been to before, and other smaller towns to which I had also never visited, I was depending heavily on community connections to complete these very personal interviews within the three weeks I was barely able to afford with limited funding from the Tinker Grant and even more limited funding from my own personal bank account comprised of student loans with high interest rates. Unfortunately, the process was still slow despite the connections that I was graciously given, and I did the best with the circumstances I was presented with.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS & APPROACH**

This exploratory study used in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews to capture the experiences of the wives of migrants living in the rural towns of Tecamachalco and Santa Clara Ocoyucan in the state of Puebla, Mexico. This research was accomplished through qualitative interviews with Mexican women who were currently living, or had previously lived, in Mexico while their husband had migrated to the United States for work. The research took place in June and July of 2015 in the rural towns of Tecamachalco and Santa Clara Ocoyucan. I chose to focus specifically on Puebla due to the distance between rural villagers and their spouses who move to one of the furthest geographic locations of the United States. The geographic distance interested me because I was curious to see if it added extra strain to the relationships of the partici-
pants. I hypothesized that health emergencies and social media use would provide interesting results in this population due to the extended length of time that most husbands and wives spend away from each other.

1. Exploratory approach: Given the lack of literature on the topic, the purpose of this research was to remain exploratory and open. This approach was designed to enable me to search for patterns and themes in a topic that exists without clearly defined problems or previous conversation.

2. Qualitative approach: The purpose of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of women in these situations. In order to truly understand and gain knowledge of the stories of the women and the complexities involved in living in these circumstances, I designed a qualitative interview questionnaire that covered the topics of interest sorted into subsections into a cohesive document. The questionnaire was designed for one-on-one interviews with each of the women.

3. Semi-structured approach: The qualitative nature of the interview was designed with the purpose of exploring these topics in-depth. As such, the interview questionnaire was semi-structured to allow for flexibility in discussing each of the de-
sired topics. The collaborative nature of the interviews inherently changed the questions that were asked in the field during the course of the interviews.

The questionnaire was adapted in the field to better suit the needs of the research project during the interview process.

I. Specific Aims

A. **Specific Aim #1: Gather demographic information about each of the women in the interview.**

   Given the importance of understanding the context of the lives of the women interviewed, women were asked a series of questions ranging from basic demographic information to information about their family members, where they lived, and other information that helped to understand their narratives. This information served as an introduction for the women, and allowed them time to settle in to the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Home town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Length of time in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Number and relationship of people in household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Specific Aim #2: Migration Information

While initially migration questions were scheduled for the end of the interview due to the potential sensitivity of the topic, migration questions were moved to the beginning of the interview, as migrant family members are a fact of life in Mexico and not a controversial topic as they are in the United States. The women were asked a series of questions regarding their husbands’ migration, hardships they faced, the length of time spent away from their husbands, and what difficult situations they have encountered without their husbands there.

C. Specific Aim #3: Understand the Role of Social Media in Maintaining Familial Communications Across the Border

The women were asked a series of questions about their access to telephones, computers, internet connections, and social networking tools. The women
who had access to these items were asked a series of questions about the frequency of their social media use and the extent to which they felt it impacted their relationships and family dynamics.

D. Specific Aim #4: Health Emergency Questions

Women were asked conceptual questions regarding their definitions of health, healthy relationships, and inner strength. The women were then asked a series of questions about difficult moments that they encountered with health emergencies while their husbands were in the United States, the challenges they faced during these moments, and how they overcame them.

F. Specific Aim #5: Emerging theme: Changing Gender Roles & Conflicting Modern and Traditional Values

As previously mentioned, the emerging theme of motherhood was a topic that continued to surface in conversation with the women being interviewed. The differences in narratives between the women who worked and the women who did not work carried key differences that require analysis and discussion. The women continually brought up this important theme that may be representative of changing gender roles across rural Mexico. This change would have dramatic implications for this traditional society.
Institution Review Board Approval

This research received approval by the Institution Review Board (IRB) Committee at the University of Arizona in May 2015. This project was considered exempt. More information can be found in the appendix of the paper.

Recruitment

I. Eligibility criteria:

All women who lived in rural towns surrounding Puebla City, Mexico, who had at one point in time lived in Mexico while their husband migrated to and lived in the United States were eligible to participate in the study.

II. Meeting with collaborators from UDLAP

When I arrived to Puebla, I met with a professor of Anthropology at Universidad de Las Americas - Puebla (UDLAP). UDLAP is a prestigious private higher education institution located in Cholula, a town directly to the west of Puebla City. The professor is a distinguished researcher on Mexican migration (Lee, 2008; Lee, 2014; Lee, Slack, Martinez, and Whiteford 2016) introduced me to key students who were working on thesis projects that addressed similar themes such as migration, migratory stress, and social media in the context of migration from Mexico. Her students introduced me to the women in the towns in which we
conducted interviews.

III. Recruiting participants

*Tecamachalco*

A doctoral student collaborator used connections in his hometown of Tecamachalco to ask women if they would be willing to participate in the study. We set a date for the interviews, and traveled to the town to conduct the interviews at the student's uncle's house. Due to the constraints of space and time, the participants were interviewed in a group setting, to which they all consented.

*Santa Clara*

A student collaborator brought me to Santa Clara and knocked on the doors of women whom she had interviewed with for her own thesis project in the past. Two of three women were home and agreed to be interviewed at a later date. On the agreed upon date, I returned to the women's homes, and only one of the women was home for an interview. Due to the time constraints of the project, this was the only woman who was interviewed from Santa Clara.

*Consent*
All participants were consented to participate in the study per the protocol required by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Arizona as specified by the permissions granted to this project.

Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide with a mix of open and closed questions was created for this project. The guide was reviewed by a thesis advisor, approved by the University of Arizona IRB, and translated from English into Spanish by a native Spanish speaker.

Data Collection Process

In Tecamachalco, a professor from UDLAP and a student collaborator were present at the time of the interview and participated in the interview process. The professor was an experienced interviewer and led some of the interviews. Women participants were seated in a group interview setting and individually responded to interview questions, lasting from thirty minutes to an hour per person. Diligent notes were taken on the interview guide, as the women did not consent to being voice recorded as was originally planned.
In Santa Clara, the female participant was interviewed one-on-one, with the interview lasting about an hour and a half. The interview was recorded after receiving consent from the participant, and notes were taken simultaneously.

All interviews were conducted in Spanish.

**Data Entry and Database**

An Excel document was created with a row for each question and sorted by column to account for each participants’ responses. The night of and the day after the interviews took place, all of the responses were recorded in the Excel document according to document notes. Clarifying questions were asked to a student collaborator when there was uncertainty about a particular response to ensure accuracy of the results.

**Data Analysis**

Responses from each of the interview participants were written down during the interview process, and then placed into an Excel document separated by each participant. Responses were sorted by theme. Responses were triangulated by a native Spanish-speaker who also knew the participants being interviewed.
CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY SITE

Tecamachalco

The municipality of Tecamachalco, located approximately one hour and a half outside of downtown Puebla, was home to five out of six women whom I interviewed. Tecamachalco is a mestiza municipality of just over 75,000 inhabitants in total, but is divided into smaller communities. Inside of the municipality, the capital city by the same name is a hub of both industry and housing. The community of San Mateo Tlaixpan, where the interviews were conducted, and where all the participants lived, is a community of 10,000 inhabitants, nestled between the mountains of the Sierra Norte and the cornfield plains. The population consists of more women that men (52% to 48%), and
the population is very young. Approximately 40% of the population is under the age of 18, and only 6% of the population is elderly (INEGI, 2010; Meza, 2013). San Mateo consists of several highly divisive neighborhoods, differing in both socioeconomic status and ethnic background. While many households (5,274) have electricity, running pipe water must be purchased, which leaves the households with less income to go without. Approximately 340 households have dirt floors and 450 consist of a single room (INEGI, 2010). Due to the disparity in neighborhoods with these utilities, the municipality of Tecamachalco is considered an area of high need by the Mexican government, and over 6,700 of the 10,000 inhabitants were enrolled in the governmental anti-poverty cash transfer program Oportunidades in 2010 (INEGI, 2010; Meza 2013). As a result of this high-need classification, the municipality has also received support from the government in the past years to pave roads, add running water to households, supply electricity and internet access, and assist more children in attending school. At the time of the 2010 census, 64% of children were enrolled in school in the municipality (INEGI, 2010; Meza 2013).

The economy of Tecamachalco consist primarily of agriculture and construction, as well as many small business that operate under an informal market. In the formal sector, the majority of the workers are employed by GRUNMA, a leading producer of corn flour, and BACHOCO, a poultry production company. The majority of workers in these industries are men. Men also frequently work in construction teams, traveling upon contract to different areas of Mexico to add their construction specialty to various
buildings (ie: marble floors to hotels). These jobs tend to be higher paying jobs with wages of approximately 2,000 pesos per week, and as part of the formal sector, they come with the benefits of health insurance provided by the government (Meza, 2013; Meza 2016). While construction is a job frequently taken on by the men of lower socio-economic status, those of higher socio-economic status in the municipality work as cheese and milk producers on their personal farms.

The majority of working women have employment in the informal market. Many women sell items such as shoes and clothing out of small shops, or out of their homes. Other women work in the informal market work in local greenhouses and fields growing and harvesting tomatoes, and cleaning other fruits and vegetables before they are brought to be sold in stores. This line of work pays very little- women will earn around 200 pesos per day for six to eight hours of work, and as an informal job, women have very few workplace rights. The industry is very hazardous to women's health, as this line of work puts women into daily contact with harmful chemical fertilizers. Although women are given gloves and masks to help protect them from the chemicals, the safety equipment provided is inadequate for the strength of the chemicals they are working with, and the gloves they are provided break down after a single day’s work. Women are reluctant to purchase their own gloves, as they cost 100 pesos for a pair that will likely only last a few days. As a result of these deficiencies in safety equipment, women are increasingly left facing respiratory problems, issues with their eyes and vision, and dermatological issues on the skin of their hands.
There is one rural health post located in Tecamachalco with one doctor and one nurse. The health care providers at the clinic are recent graduates from medical school who will rotate out of the health center after completing a year in the rural village. Only formal sector employees have health coverage that permits them to utilize services available at the health center. Additionally, anyone covered by Oportunidades is entitled to utilize services offered at the health center. The rest of the population that is not covered by private health insurance, worker’s health insurance, or insurance provided by Oportunidades, do not have access to local healthcare.

The economy of Tecamachalco began to plummet in 1994 and 1995 shortly after the implementation of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), which deeply impacted its farmers’ abilities to earn money from their crops. In 2001, water conflicts also became particularly problematic for local farmers, as water became a privatized entity that was no longer affordable to all of the town’s citizens, also impacting crop growth and plot maintenance. The first major wave of emigration from Tecamachalco to the United States occurred from 2002-2003, and this pattern of migration has continued ever since. Researchers have noted that Puebla, a major sending community of migrants to the United States, is experiencing “accelerated migration”, a pattern of migration that results from a rapid increase in migration from a sending community (Binford, 2003). The migration out of Tecamachalco to the United States provides an example of this phenomenon.
In Tecamachalco, five women were interviewed about their experiences with their family members’ migration. One woman was interviewed in Santa Clara. Each of the five women had a spouse that had lived in the United States for several years. Some of their husbands still lived abroad, while some had returned. However, the husbands who had returned no longer lived with their wives, and they were no longer married. The women interviewed have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. In Santa Clara, a woman named Yvonne was participated in the interview process. The women used social media to varying degrees. The women also all had experiences with various health emergencies, as outlined in the table below. All women were between 35 and 45 years old.
As previously stated, the interviews were conducted in a single day due to the time constraints of the project and the women who were very busy with household tasks and other obligations. Because I was based in Puebla city and needed to commute to the interviews, along with the other students and faculty involved in the project, arranging interviews was complicated and follow-up interviews to clarify details was impossible. Nonetheless, I am grateful for the time the women and the collaborators were willing to lend to the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Relatives in Town</th>
<th>Time Separated from Husband</th>
<th>Work/Alternate Income</th>
<th>Health Emergency</th>
<th>Cell Phone</th>
<th>Social Media Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Sells pastries from house; has worked in US</td>
<td>Death of parents</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Sells jewelry from home</td>
<td>Death of parents; injured daughter</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Years; now deceased</td>
<td>Sells food at schools, in streets</td>
<td>Death of parents</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Hardware store</td>
<td>Sick child</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabela</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Sells clothing from home</td>
<td>Sick children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Months</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>In-law diagnosed with chronic illness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FELICIA

Felicia was the youngest of three brothers and one sister in her mid-thirties. She has three children and her husband is living in Chicago. Felicia’s story was unique in that she was the only one of the women interviewed who had migrated to the United States herself. In fact, Felicia met her husband when she came to the United States with a false visa and was working in a restaurant in New York City in 2002. Her husband was also working in New York City, but was originally from Mexico City. She briefly returned to Mexico in 2005 and got married to her husband.

Felicia and her husband returned to Mexico together later in 2005, and remained there until 2009. During this time, the couple had their first two children, who were born with U.S. citizenship. Felicia moved back to Mexico briefly in 2009, where she gave birth to her third child, who is a citizen of Mexico. Her husband has returned to Mexico twice since the two of they met, including for one full year where he remained in Tecamachalco. After 2009, their children moved to Mexico and lived with Felicia’s mother between 2009 and 2014 while Felicia and her husband both lived in Chicago.

After the death of her mother, Felicia moved back to Tecamachalco while her husband remained in Chicago. Currently, she is hoping to move the whole family to Chicago, but due to the complex situation of her mixed-status family in terms of docu-
mentation in the United States, she is not sure how to go about this process. While two of her children have U.S. citizenship, the youngest does not, and neither does she or her husband. The children with U.S. citizenship cannot fly unaccompanied to the United States, and technically do not have a guardian in the U.S. under U.S. law due to the complications with the documentation of the children’s father. Felicia has walked across the border before, but is hesitant to do so with young children.

Challenges & Coping Strategies

Felicia was a self-described fearless and independent individual. She currently works as a pastry chef in Mexico and makes well-known cakes and pastries for special events in surrounding communities. However, when she was in the United States, she worked as a cook in various restaurants, and in Chicago, she worked at Macy’s earning $14 per hour—the highest wage she had ever earned for work. She would work at Macy’s by day and work in a restaurant by night, and was highly motivated to earn money in the United States. She enjoyed her job, and found it difficult to cope with the low wages she garnered in Mexico. She also found it difficult to raise her children on her own, especially after her mother (their caretaker for several years) passed away. It was difficult for her that her children were not as familiar with her presence after her ab-
sence in Chicago. She also mentioned that she missed her husband, and struggled to live in Mexico without her husband.

Felicia found that working in Mexico as a pastry chef helped her to cope with her complicated family situation. Having the autonomy and independence of making her own money, and spending and distributing it as she wished, was very important to her; the pride she felt for her ability to earn income was evident. Felicia also cherished her tight-knit extended family relationships in Tecamachalco, and acknowledging these relationships helped her to cope with her situation in Mexico. Lastly, her hopes to return to the United States and to reunite her family in a land where she could once again find high-paying work motivated her to continue moving forward.

Health Emergency

Felicia’s most notable family health emergency was the passing of her mother while her husband was over the border. This time in her life was very difficult, because not only did she lose her mother, but her children lost their caretaker for the past several years. She had made the decision ahead of time to cross the border when she knew that her mother was ill, and returned home in time to spend time with her during the final stages of her life. She relied on support from her other family members to get through this difficult time. All of her brothers were able to return from the U.S. for the funeral, which eased the difficulty of this event.
Social Media & Communications

Felicia’s family did not have a computer in their home. However, Felicia, her husband, and her children were all well-connected by cellular phone with applications for social media such as Facebook, Skype, and WhatsApp. Felicia had an account on all of these applications and used these as well as her cell phone to keep in good communication with her husband, as well as her children when she had been in the United States. Felicia believed social media had been helpful in maintaining communications with her family, and did not cite any negative effects of social media.

CLAUDIA

Claudia was in many ways the polar opposite of her younger sister, Felicia. She described herself as a fearful homebody, and repeatedly explained that she did not have the courage to leave her life in Mexico behind as her sister did. She described herself as very different from her sister, as well- Claudia was soft-spoken and quiet in comparison to her outgoing and assertive younger sister. Claudia lived at home with her teenage daughter. She had three children, and her two sons were married and lived outside of the community in another nearby rural town.

Claudia’s husband had been living in the United States for the past sixteen years to earn money for the family and their home, since he could no longer find work at reasonable wages Mexico. In that amount of time, he only came back to Tecamachalco once, four years prior to the interview, for a period of nearly six months. He worked in construction in Chicago, and had been faithful in sending remittances to support Claudia
and their children. However, Claudia described her relationship with her husband as strained. She seemed to be at odds with herself and her feelings towards her husband—many times, she would begin a sentence with, “He is my husband and I love him, but…” and end it with a variety of practical reasons for keeping their relationship together. In contrast, she would also express feelings of abandonment, explaining that neither she nor her children needed her husband in their lives, and that they were all uninterested in hearing about his life in the United States. This strained relationship extended to her children, who she said would not speak on the phone to their father when he called. Claudia also mentioned that she knew her husband was in a relationship with someone else in the United States, but as long as he continued to send remittances, he was still fulfilling his duties to Claudia and her children as a husband and father.

Challenges & Coping Strategies

Claudia mentioned several times that her challenges involved feeling lonely and being afraid while living alone. However, her brothers and sisters lived in the same town, and she felt that the united quality of her family provided her with emotional and practical support. Claudia mentioned that her relationship with her children was strained due to the added stress of parenting without her husband, but she also found her children to be a major source of strength and livelihood. She repeatedly stated, “Vivo por mis hijos,” or “I live for my children”, and talked about how she could never
leave Mexico because everything she did was solely for her children’s benefit. Claudia believed that migrating to the U.S. would mean that she abandoned her children, and feared this would not make her appear to be a good mother.

Claudia described her work as a vendor of silver and gold jewelry as an important part of her livelihood. This work enabled her to feel purposeful, keep social, and stay busy. The silver and the gold she received was sent back to her by her husband from the United States, and she continues to sell it to community members, friends, and family from her home.

Health Emergency

Claudia experienced several health emergencies in the sixteen year gap in which she lived in Tecamachalco without her husband. While she also dealt with the death of her mother, she did not cite this as the most difficult moment that she experienced in terms of health. The first health emergency that Claudia spoke of was an automobile accident that her daughter had as a teenager. Her daughter was in the car with her boyfriend one day, and he was driving her home when he took a turn quickly and crashed the car into a tree. Her daughter was badly injured, and Claudia began to cry as she recounted the story of finding out about this accident. Her daughter was brought to a hospital and was in a back brace for several months. Claudia had many emotions tied to this story, and mentioned feeling helpless for her daughter during this injury. She immediately called her husband by cell phone to tell him the news, and said that her
family in the community truly helped her and her daughter to recover from the trauma of this incident.

Social Media & Communications

Claudia had a personal computer in her home. She was connected to her husband on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype. However, she preferred to speak with him either by Skype, cell phone, or WhatsApp. She mentioned that she still spoke to her husband three or four times per day to catch up on news with each other. They were well connected despite the distance between them and the many strains on their relationship. However, Claudia mentioned that she does not like to see her husband on Facebook. She mentioned having strong feelings of jealousy by seeing pictures of her husband and his life in the United States without her. She also mentioned that these feelings run deeper into feelings of abandonment. She reported that nothing he could tell her in their communications would mean anything to her unless he returned to Mexico to speak with her in person, and even then, she was not sure that things could ever be the same. Claudia found that Facebook was more hurtful than helpful in her relationship with her husband.

MARIANA
Mariana described herself as tough, and her personality hardened, in comparison to the other women at the interview. Mariana was not the kind of person to sugarcoat her experiences, and she provided straight forward and blunt answers to the questions she was asked during the interview. Mariana stated more than once that “life has always been very hard”. Mariana got married early in her life, and had four children, two of whom lived outside of the community. Her husband lived in the United States for six years before he briefly returned to Mexico, but when he returned, he went to a different city in Mexico and lived with a different woman. When he left again for the United States, he died of complications of diabetes, and Mariana was tasked with the burden of returning his body to Mexico, as they were still legally married.

Mariana lived at home with her sixteen-year-old son and her teenage daughter, and she had no other family living near her community. She had four brothers, all of whom migrated to the United States several years ago and lived and worked in Miami, Florida. Her husband had also lived in Miami working in construction, but he never sent her remittances, and he also emotionally withdrew from the relationship and abandoned Mariana and her children. Mariana stated that this negatively affected her so severely that for many months she suffered greatly, and had a difficult time performing daily tasks such as getting out of bed, cleaning the house, and providing for her children. Not only did this abandonment cause her to suffer, but she worried that her children suffered as well. She believed that her children suffered from this situation because they were
abandoned by their father, and were also not being cared for by their mother, due to her depression.

**Challenges & Coping Strategies**

Mariana had a very difficult time emotionally after her husband migrated to the United States. She expected him to continue to fulfill the role of her husband, to keep in touch with her, and to send her remittances, only to be abandoned by him. After he stopped sending the little money he had sent at first, she became depressed and anxious and was unsure of how to care for her children. Her brothers had all left for the United States, and her parents died shortly after, which left her with no family or friends in her community that she could rely on for support. She had never worked before and she did not have any skill that she considered to be a valuable skill for work, since she had only attended some elementary school before leaving school altogether. Mariana did not know what she would do to survive, but after a few months, she overcame her struggle.

Mariana’s first step to regaining her livelihood was to figure out how to make an income for herself and her children. She determined that selling food would be the best source of work for her to earn money. She began by selling food at a nearby elementary school, making school lunches, and also began vending various food items in the street. She struggled with feelings of guilt for leaving her children alone for many hours in the day and evening while she worked, but she knew that needed to work to keep
them alive and healthy. Not only did working help her and her children survive, it also gave her a sense of purpose that eased her depression and helped her to reclaim her life that became disrupted after her husband left. Her youngest daughter also sold food in the street with her to help give their family a higher income.

Health Emergency

Mariana’s most notable experience with health emergencies was the death of her parents. They both died shortly after her four brothers migrated to the United States, and none of them were able to return for the funeral, due to their legal status in the United States and the difficulty of crossing and the international border and re-entering after the funeral. She was left to arrange the funerals alone, which was time-intensive, expensive, and emotionally taxing. Mariana stated that no one came back for their funerals several times, making it clear that this situation was very troubling to her. She felt abandoned by her family during this difficult time, and has continued to feel abandoned ever since.

Social Media & Communications

Mariana communicated only with cell phone. She did not have a computer, and she did not use any forms of social media. She did not have much contact with her children who live outside of the community, nor with her family that lived in Miami. Mariana could only communicate by cell phone with her family about the death of her par-
ents, and after their funerals, she barely kept in contact with her brothers. Due to her social isolation, social media and other forms of communication were not central to Mariana’s life.

**GABRIELA**

Gabriela was thirty-five years old and separated from her husband who permanently returned from several stints in the United States four years ago. She came to the interview with her sister, mother, and niece, and shed many tears during the interview while explaining her relationship with her husband and the challenges that she faced after his migration. Her husband originally moved to the United States to work in construction around New York City, but he now works in construction back in Mexico. Gabriela lives with her two children and has been separated from her husband for a year and a half. Gabriela’s mother and sister live in Tecamachalco as well, and she sees them every day. She also still maintains a close relationship with her husband’s family, who still live in Tecamachalco. The support of her family and her husband’s helps her to raise her children without her husband, as he now lives in a different Mexican state with another woman and is raising another family.

Gabriela used to earn income by selling food, and now works in a hardware store where she has been selling home improvement items for the past four years. She began working after her husband became resentful of sending her remittances, becoming
angry and claiming that she was spending all of his money. When her husband returned from the United States four years ago, their relationship became even more strained. They were constantly at odds about everything, and her husband was notably more argumentative and unhappy in their relationship together. Eventually, he left to work in another Mexican state, and ended up meeting someone else and separating from Gabriela.

**Challenges & Coping Strategies**

Gabriela faced many challenges while her husband was gone. She frequently dealt with feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as stress raising her children. She also had to handle several health emergencies to be discussed in the next section. However, she cited the most difficult challenge as her husband’s return. She said that when he returned, he became a different person, and that his time in the United States had drastically changed him. She continually repeated, “I don’t know if they’re more liberal over there or what, but it changed him,” referring to relationships in the United States. When asked to clarify what she meant by “more liberal”, she explained that she was worried her husband had cheated on her while he was gone, and that was the reason that he became resentful of the relationship.
To cope with these challenges, Gabriela stated that remaining close with her family, including her mother, sister, and children, and her husband’s family, particularly her sister-in-law, was very helpful in getting her through trying times. She also stated that working to make her own income was tremendously helpful in her life. It relieved a lot of her stress to be able to make her own money and not have to ask her husband for money, since he was become so irritable when she requested remittances. Gabriela was adamant that working in the *ferreteria* was very helpful to her life, socially and to be able to gain control over her own life.

**Health Emergency**

Gabriela dealt with several health emergencies in the absence of her husband. To begin with, her husband migrated away just as she found out that she was pregnant with her second child, who was born very sick. The illness of her newborn son was very emotionally difficult for her to cope with and to remember. She relied on support from her family members in the community while she waited to see whether the newborn would survive or not. This event was particularly difficult, because Gabriela had a very difficult time finding a doctor that she could trust to give her son the top quality medical care that he needed. This process was difficult for her because there is no way to look up a doctor in a phone book who specializes in this kind of medicine, and one must actually physically search for a doctor that will be able to aid int his particular kind of prob-
lem. Many of the issues previously mentioned about the Mexican healthcare system can be placed in context with Gabriela’s situation. Eventually, her son regained his health, but the initial weeks of his life caused Gabriela much distress, and it was difficult to navigate the complicated healthcare channels alone.

Social Media & Communications

Gabriela did not even have a cell phone when her husband initially migrated to the United States. She used to call her husband one time every week for about two hours on the community phone. Gabriela did not enjoy using the community phone for her communications with her husband, because it was located outside and anyone in the community could overhear her conversations at any time. Nonetheless, it was the only way that she could keep in touch with him, so she continued to use this method for several years. Eventually, she had enough money for a cell phone, but the money for that purchase did not come easily or quickly. Now that Gabriela earns her own money, she was able to save enough to purchase a computer for her personal use. She no longer has contact with her husband.

ISABELA

Isabela represents the very essence of Mexican motherhood. She is quiet and delicate, and speaks very softly when responding to questions. She repeatedly brings
her children into conversation, and defines them as her inner strength. Isabela lives alone with her three children, who are 8, 10, and 15 years old. Her husband migrated to the United States ten years ago to work in construction up and down the East Coast, though he began working primarily in Connecticut. She has uncles and cousins who also live and work in the United States around North Carolina who sometimes spend time with her husband while he is in their area. Although Isabela stated that her husband has not once returned to Tecamachalco, outside sources stated that he had returned about three times, in three year intervals.

Isabela maintains that her relationship with her husband has been perfect and their support for each other is unwavering. He speaks with her on the phone every day and has good relationships with his children, who he disciplines on the phone whenever necessary. Isabela works from her home, running a little store with clothes to sell that her husband has sent back from the United States.

**Challenges & Coping Strategies**

Isabela mentioned two difficulties that affected her the most, the first being feelings of loneliness and isolation, and the second being the stress that ensues when her children are sick or misbehaving. However, Isabela appeared to be coping well with these challenges. She accredited this to her close relationship with her husband and their constant communication and trust in each other. She seemed very satisfied in her
relationship, and very much in love with her children. When asked what advice she
would give to other people in her situation during stressful times, she simply answered
“Look for help, because you can’t do it alone”. Her husband’s family members were
very helpful in assisting her with raising her children and performing daily chores and
tasks. She said she was very close to her husband’s family, and between seeing them
and speaking with her husband consistently, she was very happy and at peace with her
life even though she sometimes felt alone.

Health Emergency

Isabela’s most stressful health emergency occurred when all three of children
we’re sick with a terrible flu at the same time. She was very stressed out and was not
sure how to handle the situation. She mentioned that it was very difficult to find a doctor
within or even nearby to the community that could assist her and her children. She had
to take several buses and go to several different towns until she finally went to a nearby
town and was able to find medicine for her children. Although she was able to leave her
children at home with her mother-in-law, it is important to note that many people may
not have this option.

Social Media & Communications

Isabela has a personal computer and stated that she uses all kinds of social me-
dia and communications to maintain contact with her husband. She is on Skype, Face-
book, WhatsApp, and has a cell phone. She enjoys video chatting with her husband, but will often simply message him on Facebook throughout the course of the day. She said that for her, talking on the phone was the most important method of communication with her husband and everything else was a bonus. For example, while she enjoyed seeing pictures of her husband on Facebook and seeing what his life was like in the United States, she did not think that it made an impact on their relationship in a positive or negative way- it was simply one more way to communicate and stay close. However, it is also important to note that for her children, Facebook, photo sharing, and video chatting seemed to positively impact the children’s relationship with their father. Isabela was the first participant to mention that communications and social media also helped her husband to keep his spirits high during difficult times. She noted that he often felt isolated and alone given the travel involved with his construction job, and that whenever he felt down, they would talk on Facebook or on Skype until he was feeling better. She also mentioned that the children still maintained a high level of respect for their father, and he would discipline them on Skype or the phone if they misbehaved, and his children took his discipline to heart. Isabela felt that maintaining strong communications with her husband was beneficial not only for her and their relationship, but also for him, and additionally, for their children.

YVONNE*
Yvonne was the sole participant from Santa Clara. Her husband had recently returned from the United States and the two were living together with their four children in a three-room house with a dirt floor. Yvonne’s husband had migrated to the United States to make money, but after about eight months, he returned to Santa Clara due to issues of jealousy from being away from his wife. Yvonne noted that her husband’s lack of trust in her was the cause of several problems within her household, even while he was in the United States, and they intensified after he returned.

Yvonne’s relationships with her husband and children were notably strained. She was not permitted by her husband to leave the house for the interview, the request for which he met with skepticism and visible worry. Yvonne’s husband works out of his house, running a bicycle repair shop. She noted that he heard working outside the house because he did not like to leave her alone of the day. Yvonne wanted to work by selling food out of the house, but her husband did not like permitting her to speak with other people in the town, so she was not allowed to work at all. Yvonne spent most of the day with her children, who were between four years old and eleven years old, and she did not have any other family or friends in the community. Yvonne left school before finishing elementary school. The only time she spent outside of the house was at church.

Challenges & Coping Strategies
For Yvonne, her husband being in the United States was like a breath of fresh air. However, she still remained stressed by her relationships with her children. Constantly overwhelmed by her four children and unsure how to cope with the stress of parenting, Yvonne said that she was still unsure of how to cope, and was generally very stressed. She exhibited certain negative coping strategies, such as yelling at her children, but also expressed that she did not want to yell at them—she just occasionally felt very overwhelmed and it would happen without her control. Yvonne noted that this behavior only became worse when her husband returned from the United States.

Yvonne’s oldest daughter, who is eleven years old, is becoming old enough to pick up on the unhealthy and controlling relationship between her mother and father, and continually suggests that Yvonne leave and find a better life. However, Yvonne says that she could never leave her children. Yvonne also tried to cope by getting advice from the people in her church, the only social outlet that she has, but she was only told that she must stop making her husband upset in order to rectify the situation and live more peacefully. She was the only participant interviewed who stated that she regularly went to church. Yvonne feels that she has no way to cope, and expressed a general hopelessness for the future.

Health Emergency

While Yvonne’s husband was gone, her mother-in-law was diagnosed with diabetes. Yvonne was tasked with accompanying her to all of her initial appointments,
which she said placed a tremendous burden on her financially and by the time-consuming nature of navigating the healthcare system. Not only was it difficult to leave Santa Clara, a town high on a hill, away from other towns, where public buses come infrequently, but it was also difficult to find a good doctor. Secondly, it was difficult to find and afford the correct prescription medications, which were not kept at the health center she attended. This stress added to Yvonne’s already high level of stress, and she felt she had no support while dealing with this issue.

Social Media & Communications

Yvonne communicated with her husband by cell phone and on Facebook from an internet source at a public computer in the community. However, she felt that Facebook caused many misunderstandings in her relationship with her husband. She could not add a new friend or post a photo without being interrogated by her husband, and she also felt jealous of her husband’s photos and new friendships. She preferred to communicate with her husband only by cell phone, but still felt that their communication suffered as a result of his absence.

*Yvonne was interviewed in Santa Clara.*

**Some of the information received from the women conflicted with responses received from the community key informant. Therefore, there was misinformation at some level that could have been a result of any of the different factors highlighted in the section on project limitations. Although these conflicts were not plentiful, where this conflicting information occurred, I elected to only write about information received directly from the women as I understood it to exist.
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS

Overall Themes

The way that each of the women viewed the impact of their husbands’ migration on their personal lives and their families’ lives varied greatly, depending on each woman’s situation. Their coping strategies, health emergencies, and social media usage varied greatly, as did their individual life circumstances. The ability to work in the formal or informal market also positively impacted the women who were able to do so. The women were faced with the challenge of balancing work in the home and earning alternative sources of income.

Challenges

All of the women experienced their own specific challenges, but there were many common themes among the issues that the women struggled with the most. All of them, to some degree, cited the difficulties of maintaining a long distance relationship with their husbands. Whether being unable to comfort their loved one, or more commonly,
having difficulty maintaining a healthy relationship with so much distance and time between each other, the women all experienced difficulties in this regard. What impact does the reality of these complicated marriages have on marital and family relationships in Mexico? Mariana was very open about how this issue negatively impacted her life and her children’s lives, explaining that not only did she suffer emotionally by the abandonment of her spouse, but her children suffered from not only losing their father and living with a depressed mother. Abandonment in the family causes suffering and long-lasting trauma that impacts children and adults for the duration of their lives (Black, 2010). The negative impacts of abandonment should be further researched in the context of migration and the families living in rural Mexico to protect the well-being of children and adults alike who frequently deal with this issue.

Another important aspect to consider about children in situations where they are living without one or both parents is what impact this is having on children growing up in single-parent households, or, as in the case of Felicia’s family, without both parents. As the literature states, growing up in a single-parent household poses many challenges for the healthy emotional development of children, adolescents, and young adults (Dornbusch et al, 1985). Children in these situations are often more vulnerable to using drugs and performing poorly in school, as well as dropping out of school before receiving a diploma (Dornbusch et al, 1985; Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Amato, 2000). Given that young boys are growing up without their fathers, it is important to consider who they are looking up to as role models in society, and what impact the lack of father fig-
will have on these boys in Mexican society. Many young men in Mexico, once they become old enough, have followed the pattern of migrating to the United States, and in Tecamachalco and Santa Clara, this path has become somewhat of an expectation. This “culture of migration” has previously been noted in the literature (Kandel & Massey, 2002). Future research could focus on what will happen to Mexican societies if young men continue to leave in such drastically high numbers.

All of the women interviewed also stated that they suffered hardship in dealing with the isolation and loneliness that they so frequently felt after their husbands had migrated. The women not only spoke of loneliness from the absence of their husbands, but a general sense of loneliness pertaining to the entire community. Unfortunately, the shift away from community togetherness in Mexican society has been noted in the literature and felt across many communities (Amith, 2005). Even back porches, private and out of the neighbors’ eyes, are built in place of a front porch (Meza, 2013). These changes all impact the way that neighbors and community members interact with each other. It is important to question which aspects of migration are contributing to this breakdown in the sense of community across rural Mexico. It could be that the American ideal of privacy is being culturally exported and negatively impacting and isolating Mexican communities (Meza, 2013). Could it also be that men are the social glue of these communities? Why are women not communicating with each other? The causes and solutions to the lack of communication and camaraderie between isolated women
should be the topic of future research, as isolation and loneliness are highly detrimental to human health (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2003).

**Coping Strategies**

The women in these communities had a variety of coping mechanisms. Among the most common coping strategies were working, having strong social networks, and faith in a religion.

Spending time with social networks within the community was the most commonly cited coping mechanism in the interviews. Particular, having family members in the community was cited as most helpful. Support networks in general were very helpful to the women, and those who struggled the most were the ones that did not have many social ties. This finding is consistent with the literature, as it is well known that social isolation is detrimental to human health, while positive family relationships and friendships contribute positively to human health (House, Landis, & Emberson, 1988). Having family within the community made a notable difference to how the women coped, not only due to the social benefits of human connection, but also because family members contributed many different kinds of support financially and logistically. The next most common coping mechanism utilized by the women was work. All of the women cited working as a useful, positive coping mechanism. Women found working to be helpful
for a variety of reasons. Felicia in particular enjoyed working in the formal market in the United States. Faith was a somewhat commonly cited coping mechanism, although it was usually mentioned without much elaboration. Having a faith and believing in a higher power were mentioned, but only Yvonne mentioned that she regularly attended church. Yvonne did not gain the support she hoped for when she asked the church to help with her difficult home life. Instead, she was told to conform to the role of a “good woman”, and to “stop angering her husband”. The other women would mention that they were Catholic, and that they put their trust in God, but only Yvonne went in to more detail than that. Given Mexico’s traditional society and widespread Catholicism, the lack of conversation around religion was surprising. Perhaps the women did not find that religion was particularly helpful in this context, but more research could be done to assess the role of faith in these situations.

**Health Emergencies**

All of the women interviewed dealt with health emergencies ranging in severity and frequency. However, one commonality between all of these situations was clear—health emergencies are important moments, and they are difficult to cope with alone. Not only are health emergencies emotionally strenuous, but they also create a financial and logistical burden— especially in the Mexican health care system, which they described as confusing to navigate.
Perhaps the most difficult health emergency to navigate due to the broken migration system is the death of a family member. When family members are separated and cannot easily cross over the international border for the funeral and safely return to the United States, all family members suffer. Missing the funeral of a family member is not only difficult for the family member who never has the chance to formally say goodbye to their loved one who passed away, but it also adds stress to their family members in Mexico who must organize the funeral and grieve alone.

In relation to other health emergencies, such as a car accident, the discovery of a chronic illness in a loved one, or a flu-like illness running through the family, the women stated that they were overwhelmed by navigating the health care system to find help for their family members. Women were hesitant to go to rural health centers staffed with medical students, who frequently rotate and were often very young. The women preferred to either see a trusted elder folk healer, or travel to a hospital in a city to receive what they perceived to be higher quality care. Medications are only kept in stock at hospitals, which adds to the women’s desire to attend a hospital in place of a health center. More research should be done to evaluate the difficulties of accessing health care for rural women.

Given the high levels of emotional duress that communities, families, and individuals endure as a result of migration and family separation, more research should be done to evaluate how the Mexican health care system could benefit from incorporating mental health into their care systems. While stigma regarding mental health in Mexico is
high, research should assess whether mental health could be addressed in culturally relevant and appropriate manners. It has been found in the literature that Mexicans prefer talk therapy to medications, which is beneficial information going forward while creating services regarding these topics (Lewis-Fernández et. al, 2005). The health of these communities is impacted by migration physically, socially, and emotionally. There should be research to better understand what steps can be taken to reduce the negative impact of migration on these individuals.

**Social Media**

Some of the women did not have any accounts on social media, or did not use any of them to communicate with their husbands. However, all except one of the women kept in contact with their husbands for the duration of their absence. Women who reported maintaining the relationship to receive remittances communicated with their husbands as much as those who did not receive remittances. Communications thus play an important part in the lives of the men who migrate and the women who communicate with them from Mexico.

Some women used social media and communications to maintain the appearance of a strong and loving relationship, regardless of whether or not they perceived their relationship to be strong and loving. For example, Claudia’s relationship with her husband upheld the appearance of a committed, loving relationship to the outside eye. However, Claudia shared that her husband was in another relationship in the United
States. At first, she reported that this did not bother her because he continued to send remittances, which she said made him a supportive spouse. She and her husband promoted their relationship on Facebook, left each other loving public messages, and changed their WhatsApp status to publicly display their love for each other.

Behind the scenes, Claudia was conflicted about her relationship, and harbored feelings of hurt, resentment, and abandonment. I also learned that Claudia’s husband had been married to another woman and had a different family, but left her for Claudia. He completely abandoned that family financially and emotionally once he met Claudia. It did not make sense to me that someone who had already abandoned one family altogether would continue to care for Claudia and her children across the border when he was in a relationship with someone new. When I asked a collaborating student why Claudia’s husband would continue to send her remittances if he was happy with someone else in the United States, the source mentioned that it was likely because the husband wanted a fall back plan in case he got deported- he feared loneliness and rejection from his community. Claudia needed to receive his remittances to survive, so it made sense for her to stay in the relationship as well. Their public displays of love for each other on social media likely were created to keep rumors at bay in order for their family to maintain their status in society if Claudia’s husband did return.

The decisions that Claudia and her husband intentionally made to give their relationship a strong social media presence were all very complex, difficult, and complicated decisions. Social media not only influences the way that husbands and wives commu-
nicate to each other, but also how couples communicate their relationship to their friends, family, and communities. In this way, social media is impacting relationships in unprecedented ways. Despite the publicity of social media and the lack of privacy often associated with its usage, Mexican families are using social media to project an image of their family that protects their privacy, and protects them from the scrutiny of the rumor mill so common in rural communities.

Social media impacted the women and their relationships in various ways. For some women, it contributed to jealousy, while for other women, it was no more than another method of keeping in touch. Some women stated that they enjoyed being able to show photos of their husband to their children. Others said that their children were disinterested in communicating with their fathers, or would only grow envious upon seeing pictures of their men in the United States. Some of the women also stated that they did not like to connect with their husbands on social media due to the feeling of jealousy that would surface as a result of seeing a new Facebook friendship, or pictures of their spouse wearing nice clothing and standing in a park that looked unlike any park that could be found in Mexico. Lastly, in Yvonne’s case, social media negatively impacted her life in Mexico—her husband grew so jealous of her life in Santa Clara without him that he felt the need to return to Mexico and became even more controlling than before.

Women and their husbands have many methods of communicating across the international border. However, the modes of communication are only vehicles that transmit information. The deeper impact social media has on relationships cannot be
examined without first examining the health of the relationship before, during, and after migration. The impact of distance on relationships extends deeper than communication systems—good communication and healthy relationships themselves must be prioritized over having more modes of communication in order to effectively keep families connected, which will likely be increasingly challenging with more as more time and distance passes between family members. Further research could be conducted in rural Mexico to better understand the impact of social media on family relations in the context of migration. With a deeper understanding of how social media impacts separated families, family members could better appreciate the positive aspects of social media, and prepare for the potential negative consequences that result from its usage.

Despite the immediacy of communication offered by forms of social media like Facebook, the women preferred to use cell phones to connect with their spouses—often multiple times per day. All of the women preferred communicating by cell phone to relay important information. The only mode of communication that the women truly did not prefer to utilize was the community phone, due to the lack of privacy involved with its usage. The importance of cell phones as they facilitate the communications of families separated by migration is noteworthy. Cell phone usage is still a relatively new global phenomenon, and its usage has rapidly grown over the past twenty years in Mexico. After Telmex became the first privatized mobile cell phone carrier in the mid-90’s, Mexican ownership of cell phones sharply increased to 1 phone per 100 people, to 38 per 100 in 2005, and has exceeded 96 per 100 people since 2014 (World Bank, 2014).
contrast, since 2014, Mexico had only 44 Internet users per 100 people (as opposed to 85 per 100 people in the United States). More research should analyze the discrepancy in the usage between these communications systems, and whether merely access issues prevent more families from utilizing social media, as well as which other factors are at play. The propensity to utilize cell phones over other forms of communication has been shown in other Latin American communities to be due in part by illiteracy of correspondents (Mahler, 2001). The possibility of this barrier to written communication, even in the form of social media, could be considered in future research.

**Alternative Income and Motherhood**

An unanticipated finding of the research was the extent to which all women spoke in depth about their children- often time more so than their husbands. Debates among the women revolved around their varying perceptions of the delicate and difficult balance of working outside of the home and having the time to complete household tasks for the family, especially regarding the needs of their children. For example, Claudia, whose husband sent her regular remittances, said that she found her sister Felicia’s behavior highly irresponsible because she went to the United States to work and left her children behind. To Claudia, this act made Felicia appear to be selfish, and she no longer fulfilled the role of the ideal woman under the terms of mariánismo. However, Felicia believed that Claudia’s decision to remain at home and not migrate for work made her irresponsible. Felicia thought Claudia was setting a bad example for her chil-
Mariana was quick to support Felicia’s perspective, as she also needed to spend time away from her children in order to earn an income outside of the home. Even Yvonne, who wanted to work but could not due to the constraints of her marital relationship, would not consider leaving her abusive relationship and unhealthy home life behind because she could not abandon her children. Above all else, she cited her children as the reason that she could not leave.

The participants all faced challenges and judgments while attempting to balance the need to earn an income and the need to adequately care for their children. The women were able to accomplish each of these goals despite the overwhelming odds against them and the many challenges and pressures they faced in balancing these goals. These challenges could be worth examining in further research to better understand how women delicately balance their work at home with work in the community, and the pressures that all women face in this regard.
CONCLUSION

Migration to the United States is changing the fabric of Mexican society in countless ways. The impact of migration on Mexican families is complex and profound. It requires thoughtful discussion as governments work to create policies that address this tremendous change in society. The role of women in Mexican society is changing in multiple ways as discussed in the thesis. Health emergencies are common and difficult experiences for women and their family members. Social media is being used in complex capacities and holds various implications for families separated as a result of migration. A striking finding of the research was that children left behind with their mothers did not use the social media to stay in touch with their fathers in the United States. There are several possible explanations for this, but the most viable is that the children felt abandoned by fathers and seemed to resent the prolonged absences, making contact by social media unrewarding. Health care in Mexico is described by women as complicated and confusing to navigate. Rural women face additional difficulties in accessing high quality health care, due to financial and logistical constraints. Mental health services hardly exist in Mexico, although Mexican women frequently live through traumatic and stressful situations. The Mexican cultural ideals of marianismo and machismo are being challenged by the impact of migration, but the consequences play out differently depending on the woman, the reliability of the remittances, and their family networks.
**Strengths & Limitations of the Project**

Because I had limited time to carry out the study, the number of women I interviewed was limited and I could not follow-up for a second or third interview with some key participants. Being unable to record the interviews may have also affected the research. The impromptu group interview-style setting of the project may have changed the way that women responded to the questions. While some of the women may have been less honest due to the intimidating nature of the interview, others may have been more honest in order to clear the air and quiet the rumor mill that is so common in rural Mexico. Nevertheless, I am grateful to the women who welcomed me into their homes and shared their lives with me.

My research experience raised many new research questions and issues. If I had the time and resources, I would carry out research with families living on both sides of the border, not just in the village. In the process I would focus on the bi-territorial households which transcend the border and study the social media use in the United States as well as in Mexico. This research would include women living in the United States- not just the men, but even more importantly, the children in the United States, living away from their mothers and home community. The children, whether in Mexico or the United States, are the victims of the immigration system and rural Mexican poverty. Given the time, I would also like to continue to examine the changing gender roles of women in rural Mexico, and more deeply examine the ways that migration impacts these changes.
Lastly, given the opportunity, I would be interested in exploring the impact of novel mental health services on rural communities that are impacted by migration in these ways.

FINAL NOTES

It is important to use the knowledge generated by research to inform immigration policy and improve health care and infrastructure. Protecting women and children placed in vulnerable positions as a result of harsh migration policies must be a priority of research and advocacy.
APPENDICES

ITEM 1: SPANISH INTERVIEW GUIDE

INFORMACIÓN DEMOGRÁFICA

1. ¿CUÁNTOS AÑOS TIENES?

2. ¿CUÁL ES SU OCUPACIÓN?

3. ¿CUÁL ES EL ÚLTIMO GRADO QUE TERMINÓ EN LA ESCUELA?

4. ¿LEE? ¿ESCRIBES?

5. ¿SIEMPRE VIVIÓ AQUÍ? (SI NO ES "AQUÍ", PASE A LA P6, DE LO CONTRARIO PASE A Q7)

6. CUANDO TE MUDASTE AQUÍ Y POR QUÉ?

7. ¿QUIÉN VIVE EN SU HOGAR?

8. ¿QUÉ EDAD TIENEN LAS OTRAS PERSONAS EN SU HOGAR?

9. ¿DÓNDE VIVE SU FAMILIA EN ESTA COMUNIDAD? (SI "NO", VAYA A Q10)

10. ¿DÓNDE VIVEN ELLOS?

11. ¿CUÁNTO TIEMPO HAN VIVIDO ALLÍ?

12. ¿CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA SE VUELVEN A ESTA COMUNIDAD?

INFORMACIÓN DE MIGRACIÓN

13. ¿CUÁL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA EMIGRÓ A LOS EE.UU.?

14. ¿POR CUÁNTO TIEMPO UD. HA VIVIDO SIN SU MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA QUE HA EMIGRADO A LOS EE.UU.?
15. ¿CUÁNDO ESTE MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA DECIDIÓ EMIGRAR A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS?

16. ¿CUÁNDO ES LA ÚLTIMA VEZ QUE VIO A ESTA PERSONA?

17. ¿CUÁNTOS AÑOS TENIA CUANDO (LO/LA) EMIGRÓ?

18. ¿ALGUNO OTRO MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA O AMIGOS CERCANOS EMIGRÓN CON ESTA PERSONA?

19. ¿QUÉ ES LO QUE HACE(N) PARA EL TRABAJO EN LOS EEUU?

20. ¿CON QUÉ FRECUENCIA SE VUELVE(N)?

21. ¿COMO FUE LA VIDA AQUÍ DELANTE EL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA SE MUDÓ?

21 A. ¿QUÉ DIFICULTADES TUVIERON QUE ENFRENTAR?

21 B. ¿QUÉ APOYO TENÍA USTED ALLÍ? (PROD: LO QUE HIZO LAS COSAS MÁS FÁCILES?)

22. ¿POR QUÉ SU FAMILIA DECIDIERON EMIGRAR A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS?

23. ¿HABÍA ALGO QUE LOS HIZO REACIÓS A MIGRAR A LOS EE.UU.? (EN CASO AFIRMATIVO), ¿QUÉ ERA? (SI NO, Q 24)

24. DESDE QUE SU MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA EMIGRÓ A LOS EE.UU., ¿CÓMO HA CAMBIADO TU VIDA AQUÍ?

MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN Y LAS COMUNICACIONES SOCIALES

25. ¿TIENE UN TELÉFONO?

26. ¿HAY ALGUIEN CERCANO DE USTED QUIEN TIENE UN TELÉFONO QUE SE PUEDE UTILIZAR?

27. ¿CUANTO LEJOS ESTÁ EL ACCESO A INTERNET MÁS CERCANO DE SU CASA?
28. ¿UD. SE USA CUALQUIER TIPO DE MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN SOCIAL? (DAR EJEMPLOS, SI ES NECESARIO)

29. ¿SUS AMIGOS CERCANOS Y LA FAMILIA EN LOS EE.UU. SE USAN LOS MEDIOS SOCIALES?

30. ¿CÓMO SE COMUNICA CON SUS FAMILIARES QUE VIVEN FUERA DE LA COMUNIDAD?

31. ¿UTILIZÓ LAS REDES SOCIALES PARA COMUNICARSE CON UN MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA MIENTRAS QUE ÉL / ELLA ESTABA EN CAMINO A LOS EE.UU.?

32. ¿CÓMO TE COMUNICAS CON ELLOS MIENTRAS QUE SE MIGRARON?

33. ¿UD. CREA QUE LAS REDES SOCIALES TE HA AYUDADO A HACER FREnte A UN PROBLEMA? (EN CASO AFIRMATIVO) ¿CÓMO ES ESO?

PREGUNTAS DE SALUD

34. CUANDO USTED TIENE UN PROBLEMA DE SALUD O DE EMERGENCIA, ¿A QUIÉN LLAMA?

35. ¿CÓMO SE DEFINE LA BUENA SALUD?

36. ¿CÓMO SE DEFINE LA MALA SALUD?

37. ¿CÓMO CREE QUE SU COMUNIDAD DEFINE LA BUENA SALUD? MALA SALUD?

38. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS CUALIDADES DE UNA RELACIÓN SANA?

39. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS CUALIDADES DE UNA RELACIÓN ENFERMIZA?

40. ¿CÓMO SE DEFINE LA FUERZA INTERIOR?

41. ¿CÓMO DESCRIBIRÍA LA GENTE EN SU COMUNIDAD QUE USTED CREE QUE TIENEN LA FUERZA INTERIOR?
42. ¿HA HABIDO ALGUNA EXPERIENCIA EN PARTICULAR QUE HA SIDO DIFÍCIL PORQUE USTED NO PUDO ESTAR CON SU FAMILIA?

43. CUANDO USTED O UN MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA HA EXPERIMENTADO UNA EMERGENCIA DE SALUD, ¿CÓMO SE COMUNIQUE CON SU QUERIDO?

43B. ¿FUE DIFÍCIL PONERSE EN CONTACTO CON ELLO(S)?

44. DIME LA HISTORIA DE ESTE EMERGENCIA- SALUD:

44A) ¿QUÉ PASÓ?

44B) ¿CÓMO SUCEDIÓ?

44C) ¿CÓMO USTED Y SU TRATO FAMILIAR CON ESTA EMERGENCIA DE SALUD?

45. SI SURGE OTRA EMERGENCIA DE SALUD, ¿QUÉ MEDIDAS TOMARÍA USTED PARA ESTAR EN CONTACTO CON SU FAMILIAR?

46. ¿CÓMO SERÍA SU FAMILIAR LE HARÁ SABER SI HABÍA QUE HABER OTRA EMERGENCIA DE SALUD?

47. ¿QUÉ CREES QUE ES PARTICULARMENTE DIFÍCIL DE HACER FRENTE A EMERGENCIAS DE SALUD CUANDO SU FAMILIAR SE ENCUENTRA FUERA DEL PAÍS?

PREGUNTAS DE RESISTENCIA

48. ¿QUÉ CONSEJO LE DARÍA A UN AMIGO CERCANO QUE TUVO QUE LIDIAR CON UNA EMERGENCIA DE SALUD, MIENTRAS QUE SU MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA SE ENCONTRABA FUERA DEL PAÍS?

48B. Y SI EL MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA FUERA DEL PAÍS ERA EL QUE TENÍA LA EMERGENCIA?

49. ¿QUÉ CONSEJO LE DARÍA A UN AMIGO CERCANO EN LA POSICIÓN QUE TENÍA UN MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA QUE IBA A EMIGRAR A LOS EE.UU., POR LO QUE SU RELACIÓN PODRÍA MANTENERSE FUERTE?
50. ¿CUÁLES SON ALGUNAS COSAS ACERCA DE LA VIDA SIN EL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA QUE LE ADVIERTAN AMIGOS CERCANOS ACERCA DE QUE TIENEN MIEMBROS DE LA FAMILIA QUE PLANEAN EMIGRAR A LOS EE.UU.?

51. ¿CÓMO DESCRIBES A OTRAS PERSONAS EN SU SITUACIÓN QUE VIVEN BIEN AQUÍ A PESAR DE LOS MUCHOS PROBLEMAS QUE ENFRENTAN?

51B. ¿PUEDES PENSAR EN UNA PERSONA EN PARTICULAR QUE USTED PIENSA QUE SE OCUPA DE ESTA SITUACIÓN ASÍ?

51C. ¿CÓMO SE TRATAN DE MANERA DIFERENTE QUE OTROS HACEN?

52. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS COSAS MÁS DIFÍCILES ACERCA DE VIVIR AL MARGEN DE SU FAMILIAR?

53. ¿QUÉ CREES QUE ES LO MÁS DIFÍCIL PARA EL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA QUE VIVE EN LOS EE.UU. SIN TI?

54. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS COSAS QUE LE AYUDAN A HACER FREnte A LOS DESAFÍOS DE LA VIDA SIN SU MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA?

55. ¿CUÁLES SON LAS COSAS QUE AYUDAN A SU MIEMBRO DE LA FAMILIA QUE VIVE LEJOS DE TI?

56. PIENSA EN UN EJEMPLO DE UN MOMENTO EN QUE EL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA EN LOS EE.UU. PASÓ POR UN MOMENTO DIFÍCIL DESPUÉS DE MIGRAR, Y QUE NO PODÍA ESTAR ALLÍ.

A) ¿QUÉ FUE ESO?

B) ¿QUÉ FUE DIFÍCIL AL RESPECTO?

C) ¿QUÉ AYUDÓ A USTED YA SU FAMILIA A OBTENER A TRAVÉS DE ÉL?

57. ¿QUÉ HACES CUANDO TE ENFRENTAS A DIFICULTADES EN SU VIDA?

58. LO QUE ES DIFERENTE EN LA FORMA EN QUE SE ENFRENTA DIFICULTADES AHORA, EN LUGAR DE CÓMO LOS ENFRENTAN, MIENTRAS QUE EL MIEMBRO DE SU FAMILIA TODAVÍA VIVÍA AQUÍ?
59. ¿QUÉ HACES, Y OTROS QUE CONOCES HACER PARA MANTENERSE SANO Y BIEN EN LOS MOMENTOS DIFÍCILES?

60. ¿QUÉ TE MANTIENE Y SU FAMILIAR MOTIVADO A CONTINUAR TRATANDO DE VIVIR BIEN A PESAR DE LOS DESAFÍOS QUE ENFRENTE?

61. ¿PUEDES COMPARTIR CONMIGO TU HISTORIA FAVORITA SOBRE CÓMO HA LOGRADO SUPERAR UN RETO QUE HA ENFRENTADO?

62. ¿HAY ALGO MÁS QUE LE GUSTARÍA COMPARTIR ACERCA DE SUS EXPERIENCIAS?

MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU TIEMPO.

ITEM 2: ENGLISH INTERVIEW GUIDE

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. How old are you?

2. What is your occupation?

3. What is the last grade you finished in school?
4. Do you read? Do you write?

5. Where did you grow up? (If not “here”, go to Q6; otherwise skip to Q7)

6. When did you move here and why?

7. Who lives in your household?

8. How old are the other people in your household?

9. Where does your family live in this community? (If “No”, go to Q10)

10. Where do they live?

11. How long have they lived there?

12. How often do they come back to this community?

**MIGRATION INFORMATION**

13. Which family member of yours migrated to the US?

14. For how long have you lived without your family member who has migrated to the US?

15. When did your family member decide to immigrate to the United States?

16. When is the last time you saw this person?

17. How old were they when they migrated?
18. Did any other of your family members or close friends migrate with them?

19. What do they do for work?

20. How often do they come back?

21. What was life like for you here before your family member moved?
   21 a. What hardships did you face?
   21 b. What support did you have there? (Prod: What made things easier?)

22. Why did your family member decide to immigrate to the United States?

23. Was there anything that made them hesitant to migrate to the US?
   (If yes), what was it? (If no, Q 24)

24. Since your family member migrated to the US, how has your life here changed?

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

25. Do you have a phone? (If no, Q21. If yes, Q23).

26. Is there someone nearby whose phone you can use?

27. Where is the nearest internet access that you connect to?

28. Are you on any kind of social media? (Give examples, if necessary)
29. Are your close friends and family in the US on social media?

30. How do you communicate with your family members who live outside of the community?

31. Did you use social media to communicate with your family member while he/she was en route to the US? If no, Q28.

32. How did you communicate with them while they migrated?

33. Has social media ever helped you to deal with a problem? (If yes) How so? (If no, Q30)

**HEALTH QUESTIONS**

34. When you have a health issue or emergency, who do you call?

35. How do you define good health?

36. How do you define poor health?

37. How do you think your community defines good health? Bad health?

38. What are the qualities of a healthy relationship?

39. What are the qualities of an unhealthy relationship?

40. How do you define inner strength?
41. How would you describe people in your community who you think have inner strength?

42. Have there been any experiences in particular that have been difficult because you were unable to be with your family member?

43. When you or your family member experienced a health emergency, how did you contact your loved one?
   43B. Was it difficult to contact them?

44. Tell me the story of this health emergency-
    44A) what happened?
    44B) How did it happen?
    44C) how did you and your family member deal with this health emergency?

45. If another health emergency arose, what steps would you take to contact your family member and let them know?

46. How would your family member let you know if there were to be another health emergency?

47. What do you think is particularly difficult about dealing with health emergencies when your family member is out of the country?

RESILIENCE QUESTIONS

48. What advice would you give to a close friend who had to deal with a health emergency while their family member was out of the country?
   48B. And if the family member out of the country was the one with the emergency?

49. What advice would you give to a close friend in your position who had a family member who was going to migrate to the US, so that their re-
50. What are some things about living without your family member that would you warn close friends about who have family members that plan to migrate to the US?

51. How do you describe other people in your situation who live well here despite the many problems they face?
   51b. Can you think of a particular person who you think deals with this situation well?
   51c. How do they deal with it differently than others do?

52. What are the most challenging things about living apart from your family member?

53. What do you think is the most challenging thing for your family member living in the US without you?

54. What are things that help you to face the challenges of living without your family member?

55. What are things that help your family member to live away from you?

56. Think of an example of a time when your family member in the US went through a difficult time after you migrated, and you could not be there.
   A) What was that like?
   B) What was difficult about it?
   C) What helped you and your family to get through it?

57. What do you do when you face difficulties in your life?
58. What is different about the way you face difficulties now, rather than how you faced them while your family member still lived here?

59. What do you do, and others you know do to keep healthy and well during difficult times?

60. What keeps you and your family member motivated to continue trying to live well despite the challenges you face?

61. Can you share with me your favorite story about how you have managed to overcome a challenge that you have faced?

62. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences?

Thank you very much for your time.
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