When The Ties Don't Bind:
Gendered Social Networks Among Latino Immigrants in East Boston

An honors thesis for the Department of Latin American Studies

Lauren E. Godles

Tufts University 2012

ABSTRACT

Using ethnographic observations and twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten men and ten women from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador, in this thesis I examine the ways in which social networks shape the processes of migration, initial settlement, and social-psychological and economic development of low-wage Latino immigrants in East Boston. Ultimately, I demonstrate that social networks are essential to both male and female immigrants during the initial settlement process for finding jobs and places to live. Later on, social networks have both benefits and drawbacks for all immigrants, but men and women react to the drawbacks differently. The men I interviewed intentionally isolated themselves and retained only *amistades* (acquaintances), while the women chose to seek and maintain intimate ties with *amigos* (friends).

In this study, men often perceived a downward shift in status upon arrival due to gender norms that challenged their hegemonic dominance (*machismo*), while women described feeling more independent in this country. When confronted by cultural norms that conflicted with their own in the host society, men and women employed divergent strategies to maintain their self-esteem and independence. Overall, women expressed a commitment to staying in this country while men relied on the vague notion that they would soon return home. Women's commitments to staying in this country and establishing roots here facilitated their formations of social networks, while men's commitment to the "myth of return" made them unwilling to invest financially or emotionally in this country. Ultimately, while trusting relationships with *amigos* were not essential to everyday survival, they provided healthy outlets for dealing with traumas that were common to the wage-labor migration experience in Boston.

TABLE OF CONTENTS   **Page Number**

I. INTRODUCTION

While killing time between interviews, I am about to walk into a store to run some errands when a man calls out from behind me, "Perdón, perdón." I turn around to see a young Latino man, maybe thirty years old, with a young daughter who is entertaining herself by slipping in and out of two white columns outside the store. The man asks me, "Perdón, usted habla español?" Thinking that perhaps he needs directions, I answer in Spanish, "Of course. Do you need help with something?" He then becomes bashful and looks down as he mutters, "Look, miss, I was wondering if maybe you had some money to give me so that my family could eat today? We just arrived here…I'm Sebastian[1] and this is my daughter Cristina, and my wife is just using the bathroom with my other daughter…" Incredibly moved, but also not feeling comfortable handing over a wad of cash, I smile, nod my head and ask if he would like me to buy him something from a restaurant nearby. We walk into the closest restaurant, and at the register he says bashfully, "*Me da pena* [I feel ashamed] but would it be alright to get one meal… or maybe two? So that the whole family can eat?" I meet his wife and his adorable other daughter, and seeing their hopeful faces, I realize there is no way I could say no. While the husband and I order and pay at the register, the wife chats with a Latino family eating in the restaurant to see if they know anything about potential jobs or places to live in Boston.

The scene I witnessed that day represents only a tiny piece of the complex transition that is the contemporary experience of labor migration. Reaching out to others, asking for food, money, transportation, or a place to stay, is essential to the survival of low-wage immigrants everywhere, and specifically in East Boston, where I conducted my research. In cases such as this one, the ability to connect with other members of the community, or at least with people who

---

[1] All names of people and stores in this study have been changed in order to protect the privacy of participants.

1

speak the same language, can initially mean the difference between success and failure in an unfamiliar city. In this thesis, I trace how gender shapes when and how migrants in East Boston utilize social networks, as seen briefly in this small interaction. Whereas the husband sought out material goods for the family (money and food), the wife attended to the children and engaged in discussion with others in order to acquire information. However, irrespective of gender, social networks, whether they are among men or women; family members, friends, or even complete strangers, are an integral part of arriving at, settling into, and surviving in the new immigrant destination.

In this thesis, I seek to answer the questions: "How do social networks shape the processes of migration, initial settlement, and social-psychological and economic adaptation for Colombian, Dominican, and El Salvadoran low-wage immigrants in East Boston?" and "What impact does gender have on these social networks and their outcomes?" Using extensive field notes from participant observation, as well as twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews with low-wage earning migrants, I outline the ways in which these immigrants approach social networks differently, mainly divided along lines of gender.

In the next chapter, I outline my site selection and the methodology of my study. I explain how I strategically selected East Boston as the location for my study, due to its high concentration of Latino immigrants. I then outline the ways in which I gained entrée into the Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran communities there and recruited participants for my study. Lastly, I give an overview of the interview process.

In the subsequent chapter, I summarize the existing literature on social networks in the context of immigration. There is a general divide between quantitative and qualitative studies, which I explain briefly, but I then focus on the existing qualitative literature, which is most

closely in line with the parameters of my study. While there is a wealth of information available with regards to social networks and immigration, it is disparate and hard to synthesize. Within the chapter, I explain several different models of migration and settlement patterns, as suggested by a wide array of sociologists. I also point out the gaps that exist in the current literature and the ways in which my research question has not been answered previously, specifically with regard to distinct, gendered strategies for using—or not using—social networks to navigate the receiving society.

After the literature review, I delve into three chapters addressing my findings, the first of which deals with the role of the *amistad* (acquaintance) for both male and female immigrants. The *amistad* is a loose, flexible tie that is primarily functional in nature. *Amistades* frequently use their connections to acquire tangible benefits from each other, but do not provide unconditional support as might an *amigo*, or true friend. Since a relationship with an *amistad* requires little in the way of reciprocation, respondents in this study saw the *amistad* as a low-risk and overwhelmingly positive asset. Ultimately I conclude that the *amistad* is essential to all immigrants, regardless of gender, for initiating the migration and finding a job and a place to live in the host society.

In the second chapter concerning my findings, I examine the more complex relationships between *amigos* (friends), distinguishing them from *amistades*. Unlike the *amistad*, a relationship with an *amigo* necessitates mutual, unconditional support. I show how, due to the level of elevated trust in this type of relationship, having *amigos* can greatly alleviate the intense stresses that come with being an immigrant. However, the same elevated levels of trust make *amigos* vulnerable to betrayals. In general, my female respondents were more likely than men to foster relationships with *amigos* despite experiences with and the potential for betrayals.

In the final chapter on my findings, I examine the ways in which the gendered approaches to *amigos* represent strategies on the part of the immigrants to maintain levels of self-esteem in the receiving society. While men in this study often perceived a downward shift in status upon arrival, due to gender norms that challenge their hegemonic dominance (*machismo*), women described feeling more independent in this country. These polarized reactions led women to be more likely than men to embrace American society, accept the likely permanence of their stay here, and establish relationships with *amigos*. Participants who established and acknowledged their ties here were more likely to perceive less social distance between themselves and the American mainstream, including American institutions.

In sum, I find that social networks are more nuanced than the literature, which most often describes them as exclusively positive, suggests. While my research supports the idea that a loose social network is necessary for initial survival and economic welfare, I find the concept of the social networks to be more complicated when it comes to the social-psychological well-being of the immigrants in my study. I conclude that men and women differ sharply in their attitudes towards the receiving community and their commitment to staying in the country, which in turn affects their willingness to form strong ties. While trusting relationships may not be essential to everyday survival, *amigos* can provide healthy outlets for dealing with traumas that frequently occur for wage-labor migrants from Latin America.

II. METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Boston is a particularly interesting place for the study of Latino populations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 14.4% of Boston residents are of of Hispanic or Latino descent, compared with only 6.8% state-wide (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). Within the city, this minority population is particularly concentrated in East and South Boston (Domínguez 2011; Hardy-Fanta 1993). The current literature confirms that Boston is a key site for studies of Latinos because it is a city where ethnicity has always played a key role in political and social life. For example, the Irish have dominated Boston city politics, especially in the position of mayor (Hardy-Fanta 1993: 11). However, increasing Latino and black influxes are beginning to alter these dynamics. Additionally, Boston provides an interesting site for research on Latinos because, while Mexicans are the largest sub-group of Latinos in the U.S., they do not have a substantial presence in Boston. The conspicuous absence of Mexicans in Boston is advantageous to the researcher in that it affords the opportunity to study a multi-ethnic Latino community, which is less common in existing research (Hardy-Fanta 1993: 6).

My study is based entirely in East Boston, centered on an area I call Jefferson Circle. During the early to late afternoon, when I conducted my observations and interviews, Jefferson Circle is populated by a diverse collection of mostly working-class people. The area has a large concentration of Latinos, and Spanish is frequently heard on the streets. In fact Spanish is so pervasive here that even the Indian cashier at the restaurant Subway speaks Spanish with customers. As he explained to me: "You just have to around here." In the neighborhood, there are also sizeable populations of Asians, blacks, whites, Arabs, and Brazilians (for the purpose of this study I distinguish Brazilians from Latinos, based on the language distinction). The working-class nature of the neighborhood is evident based on the types of stores, the occupations of the

people, their clothing and other material items, and the types of advertising seen in the area. There is a noticeable lack of high-end stores here, compared to more affluent parts of Boston, such as Newbury Street or Harvard Square. There are few well-known national chain stores other than those of chains such as Walgreen's, Burger King, Payless, and Dunkin Donuts that can be found in many working-class neighborhoods. More expensive stores like Whole Foods or Barnes & Noble are notably absent. Most of the shops are convenience stores that are independently run. Additionally, many of the people walking around wear t-shirts and baseball caps, stained clothing, and working shoes, which are often worn and/or covered in paint. Lastly, many of the stores have large signs outside the windows advertising that they accept WIC (a federal supplemental food program for low-income Women, Infants, and Children). One thing I observed that contradicted this working-class image was the presence of expensive technology; mostly manifest in people's public use of Smart phones and stores' displays of flat screen TVs.

I began this study by conducting intense observation sessions, lasting a little more than two hours each. These observations helped me to familiarize myself with the area and the types of people whom I would be interviewing. I spent nine hours in such formal observation sessions, strategically placing myself for extended periods of time with a notebook and pen in restaurants, convenience stores, and barber/beauty shops and writing down everything I saw. I also spent approximately another thirty hours conducting more informal observations, during which I visited my key informants and explored the area, but took notes only on what seemed like significant events. The three spaces in which I spent the most time—the restaurant, the convenience store, and the barber shop—allowed me to observe members of the Latino working class going about their daily routines. Additionally, since almost everyone there works long hours for up to seven days per week, my time spent conducting observations allowed me to see

people in the places where they spent the most time. The environments in these businesses were almost always relaxed, with customers talking over numerous beers during lunch and slinging their feet up on chairs and benches. Workers also frequently interrupted their business to answer cell phone calls or chat with friends who stopped by the stores. People were very friendly, and I gained access to key contacts within my first two observation sessions.

My only connection to East Boston prior to this study was through an internship at a Latino-advocacy non-profit, located in a different part of the city. Due to the remoteness of this connection, I met my key contacts and interviewees randomly, through a few lucky instances of community members "taking me under their wing." These key contacts helped me to conduct snowball sampling, with various points of entry. I found these points of entry during my observations, in which I would strike up conversations (in Spanish) with storeowners, restaurant workers, and hair stylists, with the hope that my project would spark their interest. I made my first two important connections when I happened to walk into a convenience store that I call "El Rincón" ("The Corner"), which had opened for business only a few days prior. I initiated conversation with the two women behind the counter, asking them if they carried a specific product. They were happy to tell me all about their new business and only after about ten minutes did they inquire as to where I was from. Due to the fact that I am bilingual, but speak Spanish with an unusual accent, people were often curious about my heritage. It was only when I told them that my family is American that they asked what I was doing in East Boston. I explained that I was a student studying Latinos and the Boston immigration experience, and they told me about their lives as immigrants from Colombia. Luckily for me, they were open about their experiences and eager to share. These two women were Rosa and Laura, who became two of my interview respondents. The store also served as my "home base" throughout the course of

the project. Every time I arrived in East Boston, my first stop was a visit to El Rincón. Over the course of a few weeks, I had already met Rosa's husband, oldest daughter, and best friend, as well as other friends of both her and Laura. One of their friends is Manuela, who became one of my respondents. At her suggestion, Rosa's husband, Pablo, also came in for an interview, while Laura connected me to two Dominican hair stylists— Paula and María, at the salon where she used to work.

I formed my second set of key connections at a Dominican barber shop I call "El Talento," which is located a few blocks away from the convenience store El Rincón. While completing my internship at the Latino-based non-profit, I had often come to distribute flyers on the main streets around Jefferson Circle, and I remembered that a particular Dominican barber had always been especially chatty with one of my co-workers and me, flirting inoffensively and inquiring as to the nature of the program we were advertising. I walked into the barbershop and approached the owner, and after explaining somewhat awkwardly that all I wanted to do was "watch them," I spent about two hours observing the barbers at work and getting to know them. Carlos was the first barber to initiate contact, asking me outright what I was doing there, and the other barbers slowly gained interest and listened carefully to my responses to Carlos' questions. By the end of my first observation session, one of the owner's brothers, Saúl, had invited me out to lunch, and Carlos had invited me multiple times to travel to the Dominican Republic with him. Carlos and two other barbers from the shop—Fernando and Yeison, became some of my first interviewees.

Through my connections to the barbers, I found many more male interviewees who were either clients or friends of clients. Saúl, who took me out to lunch, and Rodrigo, the owner, who didn't want to do an interview, often jokingly tried to pawn off their customers onto me instead.

Though I was disappointed they wouldn't let me interview them personally, these barbers led me to their clients—Óscar, Gerardo, and Juan—and, through a friend of another client, Gabriel. I found the majority of my other participants—Silvia, Miguel, Alejandro, Melisa, and Camila—in restaurants, often with the help of the servers and cashiers who worked there. Melisa led me to the beauty salon where my final female Dominican interviewee, Jazmín, worked, and I met my last female Salvadoran participant, Lucía, when I walked into her bookstore. In total, I interviewed ten men and ten women: seven Colombians, seven Dominicans, and six El Salvadorans. (See *Appendix A* for a complete list of interview respondents). My original goal was to interview at least six (three male and three female) people from each country of origin. I interviewed one additional Colombian woman and one additional Dominican man because the other three respondents in those demographics were all connected and knew each other. Melisa and Gabriel served as outside points of entry in this snowball sample.

At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed a consent form, in Spanish, with the participant. Only I, the researcher, and not the respondents, signed the consent form, in order to protect the identity of any potentially undocumented immigrants. Both the participant and I retained a signed copy of the consent form, which included my contact information, in case s/he had any further questions. Each semi-structured interview was conducted in Spanish (with the exception of Juan and Silvia, who spoke in English), audio-recorded, and later transcribed and analyzed. The interviews covered a wide range of topics, from migration history to the settlement process to current life in Boston (See *Appendix B* for a complete interview guide). The only question I avoided asking directly was the respondent's legal status, due to the sensitive nature of the subject and the University's Institutional Review Board's regulations against doing so. However, all respondents told me, unsolicited, their legal statuses. All quotes from participants

in this thesis have been translated from Spanish into English, unless otherwise specified. Participants were compensated $10.00 in cash at the start of the interview, but four of the men refused the money.

Though my respondents came from three national-origin groups with distinct backgrounds, the small scale of this study does not allow for statistically significant comparisons. Since I interviewed only seven Colombians and Dominicans and six El Salvadorans, differences between them cannot be generalized. However, what was interesting in the findings is that despite different motivating political and social factors at play in each country, the participants' responses to interview questions did not distinctly vary by national origin. In fact their takes on the labor migratory process were surprisingly similar. Moreover, they frequently referred to themselves interchangeably as members of their national origin groups (Colombians, Dominicans, and El Salvadorans) and as Latinos in general, often beginning sentences with "in *our* countries" or "most of *us* Latinos." While throughout the course of this thesis, I acknowledge that it is important not to generalize about the three populations and to distinguish between these groups when appropriate, I sometimes refer to all the respondents as Latinos, emphasizing their gender based differences—which proved essential to my analysis—over the less significant differences arising from the respondents' national origins.

In the next chapter I examine and synthesize contemporary literature on immigration and social networks. The literature review grounds this thesis in an academic framework and provides a specifically sociological context for my concentration in this thesis. Though there is a large body of quantitative data on migration that can be useful sociologists, I focus mainly on qualitative studies that seek to trace the mechanisms and processes behind wage labor migration

and the formation of social networks. I also point out the gaps that exist in the current literature and the ways in which my research question has not been answered, specifically with regard to the differing strategies employed by male and female Latino immigrants for using—or not using—social networks to navigate the receiving society.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study builds off previous sociological work on social networks, based on the context of immigrants moving from developing to developed nations. This chapter of the thesis serves to ground the project within an academic framework, as well to give a brief overview of the existing, relevant literature. In today's vernacular, social networks often refer to impersonal interactions on Facebook or other social media web sites. However, in a sociological context, social networks are defined as sets of relations that are held together by social ties between individuals[2] and generally reflect more personal interactions. Social networks are an important concentration for sociologists because they can exist at the individual or group level. Moreover, they can also be converted into valuable assets known as social capital. Social capital can be defined simply as resources derived from social networks, which are based on norms of reciprocity. These resources are thought to help individuals enter or gain power in other pre-existing social networks.[3]

Social networks of Latinos, in particular, merit careful consideration—not only because Latinos have an increasingly large influence on life in the United States (political, industrial, cultural, etc.), but also because as an ethnic group, they display characteristics distinct from others. Domínguez and Lubitow (2008) signal that "there are [important] differences in the way that Euro-Americans, Afro-Americans, and Latin Americans negotiate social networks and utilization of services" (420). For example, Latinos rely more more heavily on their families for social support than other minority groups, such as African-Americans (*Ibid.*). Moreover, Latino immigrants who maintain their native culture during the settlement period in the U.S. experience lower rates of chronic disease and neigborhood violence, as well as higher levels of perceived

---

[2] Introduction to Sociology, Professor Helen Marrow. Tufts University, October 10, 2011.
[3] Introduction to Sociology, Professor Helen Marrow. Tufts University, October 17, 2011.

social support, than non-Latino whites in the U.S. (Almeida et al 2009; Domínguez 2011; Menjívar 2002). Therefore, it is imperative to consider the mechanisms that operate within the low-wage Latin American immigrant community and that foster these documented positive outcomes.

In order to track migration and settlement patterns effectively, many migration scholars have relied on quantitative measures—used to predict patterns of migration, numbers of documented and undocumented migrants, the likelihood of apprehension at the border, average numbers of international moves, and other over-arching trends. The U.S. Census Bureau and Immigration and Naturalization Service are two notable government agencies that have employed quantitative measures relating to immigration. Arguably the most exemplary sociological quantitative study has been the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), which employs the "ethnosurvey" in eighty-one different Mexican communities and amasses an incredible amount of quantitative data (see Durand and Massey 2006). While these quantitative measures are extremely important, they lack the depth of qualitative research, which can further explore the mechanisms and processes that shape decisions about migration.

Within the qualitative field, contemporary immigration scholars have proposed distinct models to explain how social networks shape the processes of migration and settlement. Here I review several of these models as they relate to my study. The first has been proposed by Vilna Bashi (2007), who studies West Indian immigrants, and crafted the "hub-and-spoke" model. This model explains the role of social networks during the pre- and post-migration periods. Her model can be pictured as "a wheel… in which several spokes are connected to one hub" (*Ibid.*). The role of the hub is filled by one veteran migrant, who reaches out to friends and relatives in the place of origin (spokes) and helps them move, in succession, to New York or London. This

model contradicts the traditional "image of the dyadic chain," in which one migrant brings another, and that migrant in turn brings another, and so on and so forth (6). During the settlement process, the agency attributed to this hub does not end, but rather the hub maintains close contact with the migrant, frequently offering him or her a (temporarily) free place to stay and a connection to employment.

Cecilia Menjívar (2002) focuses on the role of social networks during the post-migration settlement process. She relies on the image of "patchworking"—an idea coined originally by Nazli Kibria in 1993. According to Menjívar, the patchwork model is employed by Guatemalan women in Los Angeles in order to secure healthcare for themselves and their families, despite monetary and cultural barriers. Menjívar argues that the patchwork model is important for representing a resource-poor community because it expresses the life-saving processes of "merging of different resources, such as information, services, and education" (448). In the metaphor of a patchwork quilt, each contributor (immigrant) donates pieces of different sizes to the project, but no one individual has enough material to create an entire quilt. In the case of Menjívar's specific investigation, which employed participant observation and 26 in-depth interviews, members of the community contribute medical advice or even a small dose of prescription medicine if the woman in need cannot afford it. Additionally, women regularly get shipments of medicine from kin in Guatemala and even get "transnational 'consultations'" from relatives at home, whom they trust more than U.S. doctors (455). However, in this model, no one woman contributed to the system more often than she benefitted from it. In such a poor community, no "hub" figures, like those in Bashi's study, existed.

Like Menjívar, Silvia Domínguez (2011) proposes a model to map social networks during the post-migration period. She frames the networks of Latinas in Boston public housing

through a model she calls the "Social Flow." This Flow involves five key components, which are 1) Self-Propelling Agents (SPAs), individuals who have the capacity to boost their own social status 2) Cognitive Frames, which can be positive (mobility producing) or negative (leading to stagnation or downward mobility) 3) Networks, which provide support and leverage 4) Bridges, individuals who open up opportunities across ethnicities and social classes and 5) Efficient Populations, which have enough SPAs to sustain the flow of upward social mobility for the entire group. Additionally, "Interventions" may be required to re-start the Flow in the case of trauma, such as domestic or neighborhood violence (41). The SPAs in this model are similar to the "hubs" in Bashi's work, in that their initiative in the migration process affects social mobility for the entire community. In this way, Domínguez's model also differs from that of Menjívar, in which no one immigrant is recognized as having more power than another. Domínguez's model is also more complex than the two models described above because it captures the psychological as well as the physical and monetary resources needed to sustain a community. However, unlike Bashi's model, it does not track the mechanisms that sparked the original migration.

Regardless of the specific model, a theme that is consistent throughout this literature is the profound positive impact of kinship ties both domestically and internationally. The emphasis on international relationships has become so important in the age of globalization that "…a substantial body of scholarship has mushroomed around [these relationships] under the somewhat faddish name of *transnationalism*" (Alba and Nee 1999: 6). Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) elaborate by conceding that "although the numbers of migrants who engage in regular transnational practices may be fairly small, those who engage in occasional, informal transnational activities, including social, cultural, and religious practices, in response to elections, economic downturns, life-cycle events, and climatic disasters are much greater" (132).

These transnational ties, both regular and occasional, play an important role in a number of studies relevant to immigrant social networks. Jones-Correa (1998b) suggests that Latin American men maintain ties to the homeland specifically to avoid the loss of status that is associated with immigrating to the United States. Similarly, Domínguez and Lubitow (2008) demonstrate that "the maintenance of culture of origin and immigrant status help to ward off identification with marginalized populations living in high-poverty neighborhoods" (421).

The pre- and post- migration network models described above operate under the assumption that social networks are vital to international migrations and settlement processes. However, theories of social networks and the nature of their consequences have shifted over time. Transnational social networks, linking migrants to friends and family in the sending countries, were once considered detrimental, since they were assumed to impede assimilation. Alba and Nee (1999) explain that in the old ideology, theoretically, "…past a certain point, attachment to the ethnic group would hinder minority individuals from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by American society, which require individualistic mobility, not ethnic loyalty" (5). Today, this ideology has been undermined, both because "individualistic mobility" is not always possible and because assimilation is not always the goal. Many contemporary scholars argue that social networks—not individual efforts—are necessary for survival in American society today, and in particular within the Latino immigrant community (Domínguez 2011; Hardy-Fanta 1993). Their reasoning is consistent with the work of Robert Putnam (2000), who lists "mutual support, cooperation, trust, [and] institutional effectiveness" as only some of the benefits found in well-connected communities (22). Moreover, social networks today are increasingly important in today's global economy, since many developing countries rely on remittances from the United States (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007: 133).

Though the reasoning behind the old ideology of detrimental social networks may have been flawed, it is still important to consider any possible negative effects of these ties. A critical paper by Portes and Landolt entitled "The Downside of Social Capital" (1996) explains that today, tight-knit communities inherently cause the exclusion of outsiders, restrict individualism and business initiative, and, in the case of marginalized communities, pressure individuals toward downward mobilization, such as joining a gang or a mafia. Similarly, Mark Granovetter contends that "strong ties…lead to overall fragmentation" by excluding outsiders (1973: 1378). Portes and Landolt also point out that, "If social capital is a resource available through social networks, the resources that some individuals claim come at the expense of others" (19). The acquisition of a resource from within a social network can be as much a loss as it is a gain. Domínguez and Lubitow (2008) illustrate this reality in a transnational context, explaining that Latina immigrants in this country often "[feel] obliged to send money to their families back home monthly," sometimes at the expense of their well-being in the United States (427). However, overall, these authors found that the social networks—specifically transnational ties— are positive because they "are subsidizing an array of policy-based interventions that are not being provided to immigrants and minorities living in disadvantaged neighborhoods" (429). Despite occasional mentions of negative aspects of social networks in other studies, only Portes and Landolt offer a comprehensive overview of how and why contemporary social networks can be detrimental to the individual and society as a whole.

Also conspicuously absent from the existing qualitative literature is a comparative analysis of immigrant social networks by gender. Though quantitative studies such as the Mexican Migration Project focus on men as the actual migrants, most qualitative, process-tracing studies focus only or almost only on women as agents of social networks. This focus is mostly

17

due to the women's traditional roles as the care-givers (Menjívar 2002) or child-rearers (Domínguez and Lubitow 2008; Almeida et al 2009; Domínguez 2011). In the case of Hardy-Fanta (1993), the author studies women because "[they] focus on *participation* rather than on power, on connecting people to other people to achieve change" (13, author's own emphasis). Unlike men, who wanted to focus on the act of voting and on obtaining specific political positions, women navigated the political world through a complex web of social networks, which enabled the author to study social networks through political processes.

Bashi (2007), Jones-Correa (1998b), and Menjívar (2000) are examples of contemporary qualitative researchers who do not restrict their samples by gender, but they are in the minority. Bashi identifies the "hub" figures—those considered as having agency in the immigration process—as both male and female. She notes that the hubs frequently work as nursing administrators (a stereotypically female position), construction foremen (stereotypically male), or "other higher-ups in the organizations where they [work]" (ambiguous/ gender neutral) (83). It is important to consider that Bashi is the only one of these authors studying West Indian migrants and not Latinos, but this does not entirely explain the discrepancy in methodology. Among the studies reviewed here, only Jones-Correa focuses on immigrant Latinos and includes both men and women. He finds that "women [are] more likely to shift their orientation toward the United States" and consequently participate in activities centered on the receiving country, especially politics (1998b: 335). However, his study is limited to the borough of Queens, New York, where he conducted research two decades ago (from 1991-92), and over-represents the Colombian and Ecuadorian first-generation populations. An earlier work by Cecilia Menjívar entitled *Fragmented Ties* (2000) does discuss differences in male and female social networks, but her population sample is limited to El Salvadorans—mostly refugees of the Civil War in El Salvador

(1980-1992)—who settled in San Francisco. Her participants were greatly limited in their abilities to convert social networks into social capital due to the resource-poor nature of their community. Moreover, they were targets of discriminatory immigration policies and suffered from limited employment opportunities—two obstacles that were fortunately not predominant among my respondents.

A ground-breaking, interdisciplinary book entitled *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys* (Eds. Noguera et al 2012) includes numerous studies that explore aspects of masculinity and seek to explain why many Latinos are disengaged from American society. Their disengagement, especially as they grow beyond adolescence, leads not only to weaker social ties, but also to unwillingness to admit their emotional attachment to other boys/men. Though the book does not deal with the migratory process itself, the studies look at the physical and socio-psychological health of these men and boys and seek to explain the effects of internalized gender expectations on social networks. The book is important because it not only deals with the migrants themselves, but also the subsequent generations who are born here and raised with a bi-cultural identity.

In sum, though there is ample existing research on social networks in general, and of Latino immigrants in particular, this literature portrays an overly positive picture of social networks. Previous studies do not pay enough attention to the fact that investment in social relationships requires deep trust in others, and this trust inherently carries with it risks for betrayal and resultant traumas. While these studies succeed in creating qualitative models of immigrant social networks, they do not pay sufficient attention to the potentially negative consequences of such networks. Moreover, the literature does not adequately distinguish the differences in social networks that exist between men and women. Though there is a wealth of

information on the topic of immigration, it is largely disparate and offers few clear conclusions about gender differences. Building on the Boston-based research of Hardy-Fanta (1993), Domínguez and Lubitow (2008), and Domínguez (2011), as well as social network theorists in other areas (Jones-Correa 1998b; Putnam 2000; Menjívar 2002), this thesis traces some of the mechanisms and processes that lead to gendered differences in social networks and social capital among Latino immigrants in East Boston.

The next chapter of this thesis is the first of three chapters explaining my findings, and it delves into the role of the *amistad*, or acquaintance, for Latino immigrants in East Boston. Overall I conclude that the *amistad* is a loose connection that aids both men and women in initiating migration and securing housing and jobs during the initial settlement period. Due to the loose bond that sustains the relationship, an *amistad* is seen as a functional tie that allows the migrant access to opportunities without the need for long-term, emotional investment.

IV. THE *AMISTAD*: A CONNECTION TO OPPORTUNITY

For the new Latino immigrants in my East Boston sample, the migration and initial settlement was always facilitated by a contact in the receiving city. This contact serves an important function, since the period immediately after arriving is often the most strenuous and challenging period for the migrant. Though the host contact was sometimes a parent who had previously lived in the United States, for the majority of respondents, it was a more distant contact, such as an aunt or a friend from the home country. As opposed to a close confidant or an intimate friend, the migrant often regarded this contact as an *amistad*, or acquaintance. A relationship with an *amistad* can be conceived of, in basic terms, as a utilitarian tie in which a friend acts as a means to an end. This chapter explains the ways in which the *amistad* is essential during the early stages of the migration and settlement processes, especially with regards to planning and initiating the migration, finding a place to stay, and a finding a first job.

Planning the Migration

The stages of migration are extremely complex, and for this reason Bashi writes that "migration is best studied as a process rather than an event" (2007: 16). Here I trace some of the motivations and mechanisms that lead to the initial migration. In general, all respondents in this study, no matter what the country of origin, cited economic and social problems as the reasons for migration. According to Laura, due to a combination of these factors, in Colombia "everyone wants to come [to the U.S.]." In Latin America today, salaries are significantly lower than salaries in the United States, which renders workers unable to support their families. Moreover, worries about "delinquency, attacks, and robberies," as Fernando explained it, explicitly helped trigger migration for respondents from each country of origin. Interestingly, of the respondents who independently made the decision to migrate (as opposed to parents making decisions for

them), the majority cited not an individualistic goal, but rather the goal of helping his or her family *salir adelante* (get ahead), as the primary reason for coming to the United States.

None of the respondents found the logistics of preparing to move to be particularly daunting. When I asked about the initial process, no one said that the difficulty of amassing paperwork or contacting the correct people was a deterrent to coming here. On average, the process took only a few months, even for those who were not fortunate enough to have a relative in the United States who could help apply for them legally. Gerardo received his visa purely by luck when he accompanied his grandparents to their tourist visa appointments in the embassy in Bogotá. While he was there, they also gave him a visa, even though he only went to help his grandparents through the process. He said some people, including his mother, sometimes apply for visas *por si acaso* (just in case). Similarly, Melisa was surprised at how easily she was granted a visa. She says she got "very lucky." For Paula, "everything turned out the opposite" of what she expected because she thought the people in the embassy would give her a hard time. The two exceptions to this trend were María, who had to wait in the Dominican Republic for five years while her husband petitioned for her to come, and Camila, who had to amass $10,000 to pay the *coyote* (immigrant smuggler) to take her across the border. Considering the pervasiveness of difficult stories such as those of María and Camila in today's media, it was surprising that for the rest of the respondents, the logistics and preparations for the journey were relatively uncomplicated.

Despite the comparative ease of arranging the logistics of the migration, the process was extremely taxing emotionally and often involved the deception of loved ones. For example, Óscar, a quiet and reserved man, admitted that he cried along with his family when he had to leave. Moreover, he withheld his plans from his mother for fear that she would become too sad.

She did not find out he was planning to move until he had already left the country. Similarly, Camila didn't share her intentions with any friends because she was so nervous that she couldn't sleep or relax. Meanwhile Rosa, while confident in her decision, was underage when she decided to migrate, and so she arranged the move with only the help of her boyfriend. She kept her intentions from her friends and parents and even had "fake parents" sign the papers she needed. Laura also had to hide her intentions because her boyfriend in Colombia didn't want her to leave. In order to appease him, she said she would only stay for two years. She admitted, though, that she always knew it was a lie. Lastly, Gerardo was devastated when he arrived home late one night and his father announced that he would be boarding a plane to Boston the next morning. He did not even have time to say good-bye to the friends he had just spent the night with, because he had to pack all his things. For the first year he was here he was unhappy, because he missed his friends and "his people" and wanted to enroll in the University in Colombia. While logistics did not deter respondents from making the journey, balancing the emotional consequences of leaving was difficult for everyone. For many respondents, leaving the home country caused ruptures with their strong ties (both inside and outside the family) that would not be immediately—or ever— replaced in Boston. In the rest of this chapter, I explain how respondents relied on *amistades* when they arrived to facilitate their physical and economic adjustment to this country, but *amistades* did not provide the emotional support inherent to a relationship between *amigos*.

Using Social Ties to Initiate Migration

Social ties played an instrumental role in facilitating the migration. In Menjívar's study of El Salvadoran refugees, she found that "the overwhelming majority of [the] immigrants had *contacts* in the United States…who served as catalysts for migration" (2000: 233). Similarly, my respondents all had some contact in the United States who either suggested or facilitated the

23

migration. Bashi contends that the pivotal role of the contact abroad implies that "…potential migrants have a lot less agency in choosing their destinations than we might think" (Bashi 2007: 5). Among my respondents, this finding was partially true. For some, the location of the host was certainly the principal reason for choosing the initial destination. For example, Miguel drew on a connection he had with a friend from El Salvador who had come to Boston many years before. Similarly, María came to Boston because of her husband, whose mother lived here and sent for him as a dependent. María's purpose in coming to the United States, in addition to "getting ahead," was to be reunited with her husband, so she never had any intention of moving anywhere else.

As seen above, the initial key contact or "hub" pre-determined the migratory destination for the respondents within the United States. However, the influence of this contact on the migrant's choice of destination was often temporary. Several respondents were unhappy in their original locations and initiated contacts elsewhere in order to change their situation. For example, for Fernando, Carlos, and Gabriel, the contacts were one or both of their parents, who sent for them from New York. However, they were generally unhappy with their family situations. Consequently, each of them eventually made their way to Boston, calling on weaker contacts who could help them settle here and find work. Similarly, for Laura, her recently immigrated aunt in North Carolina suggested she come to live with her. However, once there, the lack of public transportation caused Laura to feel isolated and dependent on those with cars. Therefore, when a friend offered to host Laura in Boston, she was so excited that it took her only a week to make all the arrangements and leave North Carolina for good. As seen through these examples, despite a general lack of power regarding the initial migratory destination, my

research showed that a number of migrants would eventually take the initiative to change locations if they felt discontented socially (no one reported moving due to financial insecurity).

The Initial Reception and First Connections

Housing and job stability were often made possible, especially in the initial settlement period, by some kind of distant connection—such as the brother-in-law of Óscar's brother-in-law or Carlos' cousin in Boston, who found the men jobs. Laura also found one of her previous jobs by speaking to the owner of the store, who was the boyfriend of her friend's mother. These types of connections can be qualified as *amistades* (acquaintances). For both men and women, *amistades* play a significant role for the Latino immigrant to Boston by providing connections to opportunities that contribute to stabilization. Mark Granovetter labels relationships such as the ones between *amistades* as instrumental "weak ties", which he claims are "indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities" (1973: 1378). Consistent with his findings, *amistades* in this study proved to be essential during the migration and settlement process for both male and female respondents.

No matter what the relation of the contact in the host country to the migrant—whether it is a parent or an *amistad*—that key contact is expected to take in the new migrant upon his or her arrival. The term used by all participants in Spanish was "me recibió"—literally, s/he received me. For the purpose of this analysis, I refer to this action as "taking in" or "hosting" an immigrant. Taking someone in can mean anything from performing the basic function of providing a temporary place to live and can extend beyond this action to lending money, introducing the migrant to friends and family, and/or finding the migrant a job. However, taking someone in is not seen as a purely altruistic function. Sometimes, such as in the case of Fernando's brother, it is in the interest of the host to help the new immigrant find economic

stability so that he can pay back the money borrowed from the host lent to cover the migration costs.

Another method of finding a place to stay, though less stable, can be seen in the example of the Salvadoran family for whom I bought dinner[4]. This method relies on the kindness of strangers in the community. Unlike the contacts described above, those who play host to strangers do provide shelter altruistically, often as a way of showing solidarity with the Latino immigrant community. Based on a common experience, they feel that they can give back since they have "made it" in this country. Gerardo, whose aunt used to invite new immigrants off the street and into her home, explains that these types of hosts are "people who help because they want to. [They are] people who know the suffering of others." Though none of my interview respondents were forced to rely on this option, Sebastian (who I met on the street when he asked me for money) and his family were staying with strangers who took them in when they arrived from Arizona three weeks prior. As Sebastian explained to me, when they arrived they were stranded in the rain and he asked a Latino couple for advice on where they could go. Seeing that the family had nothing, the couple offered up a space in their home. Alejandro, a respondent who I met about a week later, informed me that when his father had immigrated, and he had found a temporary home in this same manner. He explained that these safe-houses have a name: *posadas*, which literally means "inns," or more informally, places to stay. *Posadas* represent the open, trusting nature of Latino immigrants in East Boston towards vulnerable recent immigrants, based solely on the fact that they share a similar background and a common language. The only members of the community who I heard of or encountered that did not have a safe place to sleep was a group of homeless El Salvadorans who, according to Alejandro, had taken to "vices," such

---

[4] See *Introduction,* page 1.

as alcoholism. Even so, Alejandro was on his way to bring them food—something he and a few others did frequently to help them survive.

Similar to the pre-migration process, for my respondents the logistics of finding a place to live were not overly difficult. Nevertheless, the emotional transition to life in a new city was challenging. Most respondents reported feeling isolated, lonely, and sad at the beginning. Isolation stemmed from knowing a small number of people (often only the person or people who had taken the respondent in), limited access to or knowledge of transportation, and a language barrier, as none of the respondents spoke English when they arrived. Moreover, the respondents were dependent on their hosts and the few people they knew in Boston, because they could not navigate the city alone. For Rosa, though she had access to Boston's comprehensive public transportation, she was afraid of taking the train and getting lost. To her, everything in the new city looked "very much the same," so she limited herself to walking in the few blocks around her apartment unless she was with someone who could show her the way. Óscar echoed these sentiments of isolation, commenting that especially when a person cannot speak English, it is difficult to even make small talk with people in the area. He says, "at the beginning one always feels alone, not having friends… only the people who take you in." Similarly, Carlos was unhappy about the transition, but the fact that his parents were already living in the United States made him more resigned to the idea. I asked him if he was upset about being here, and he responded, "What can I tell you? I didn't like it, but I always knew I would come to work…"

In contrast to the general feelings of isolation and discomfort experienced by those respondents mentioned above, Fernando and Gabriel more had traumatic experiences upon their arrival, due to unexpected negative receptions from their fathers. In Menjívar's study of Salvadorans in San Francisco, she found that "the clash between expectations and reality [had]

shaken many who expressed disappointment at the reception they received from their families"

(2000: 128). In my investigation, Fernando was shocked when his father, who had sent for him

and was supposed to take him in, refused to do so.[5] He had anticipated having a strong bond with

his father, one that would ensure him a welcoming home and unconditional support. However,

despite father's painful rejection, he always had a place to stay. On the day he arrived, one of his

brothers in New York picked him up and brought him to his sister's apartment, where he stayed

temporarily. When his sister's boyfriend asked him to move out, he was able to move in with his

brother.

Similar to the story of Fernando, though Gabriel's father received him in New York, he

was distant and unkind towards Gabriel. In fact, when Gabriel requested financial help from his

father to supplement his small income from working at the shoe store, the situation gravely

deteriorated—so much so that Gabriel decided to move out. He initiated contact with a man who

had been close with his mother's family in Santo Domingo and was living in Boston. This man

gave him a job as a barber and helped him to move into a house shared by several other barbers

who worked at the same shop. Though the living situation was not ideal, Gabriel was able to

initiate a change to limit the negative effects of his father's treatment towards him.

Using Connections to Find Jobs

Once secure in their housing situations, regardless of legal status, respondents were able

to procure jobs quickly and with little effort. Respondents found the jobs through their hosts or

arbitrary contacts in the community. For example, Camila distinctly remembers arriving in

Boston on a Sunday and starting work the following day, on Monday. Rosa associated this ease

in finding employment with being young, attractive women. This was her explanation:

---

3 Refer to page 36 for a full description of this event.

"…For a young woman, there is always work. If you look good [physically]… you're going to be part of—mostly of the bars because they are always looking for women who look good, that are friendly, so if you come into a place and a man sees a woman and he'll give her work in another bar and that's how it starts. And then so that they're competitive, a pretty woman calls another, [saying] they want another girl, so unfortunately that's how it is in this country. And if you don't look good, you have to look for work in something totally different…like cleaning" (Rosa Interview, November 1, 2011).

In this explanation, Rosa makes it clear that not is only physical attractiveness an advantage for women in finding a job, but also knowing other physically attractive women can help a *Latina* to be recruited for a highly visible position, such as working in a bar.

For men, stereotypes also worked in their favor when trying to find classically "male" positions, especially those that involve physical labor. For example, within four days of arriving, the brother-in-law of Óscar's brother-in-law had contracted him to shovel snow for his cleaning business. Similarly, Miguel was recruited to clean office buildings by a manager who had simply seen him around the apartment building where they both lived. The manager assumed, correctly, that Miguel would be interested in such a position. As Alejandro explained to me in English, "It is just assumed that Spanish people are gonna do the dirty work. Do you ever see American people cleaning toilets?" He expressed remorsefully though that Latinos need the money so they are always willing to take on this "dirty work." Though my respondents, male and female, did not have trouble finding jobs, the work was not always meaningful or satisfying.

The *amistad* most frequently contributed to the immigrant's stability by helping him or her find jobs or places to stay, in addition to essential material goods, such as food and money. A connection to an *amistad* was almost always positive, resulting in the bridging of a gap that the migrant could not necessarily achieve independently. Interestingly, respondents never distinguished their friends in terms of relatives or non-relatives, but they made important distinctions between *amistades* and *amigos* (friends). A relationship with an *amistad* was not

only helpful to the immigrant, but it was non-threatening, because it required little in the way of reciprocation. Domínguez and Lubitow (2008), referring to an earlier study by Briggs, designate the type of support provided by *amistades* as "instrumental help" and cite examples of such help as giving "rides, small emergency loans, and temporary housing when needed" (421). However, the *amistad* is not expected to provide these services freely, nor is it the obligation of the *amistad* to be a constant support. Gabriel explained the *amistad* as "the person that is always around [except] in the bad moments. They are there for something; or because they have some interest in being with you." Similarly, when asked to describe his relationship with his co-workers, he explained that they were *amistades*, not *amigos*, because "*amigos*, for [him], was too strong of a word." Gabriel reserved the word *amigo* for only the most supportive people in his life. However, in general, as long as respondents knew that a contact was only an *amistad* and did not expect more out of this person, the conditional and sporadic support s/he provided was seen as positive, especially since it required only minimal reciprocation.

Relationships between *amistades* were particularly strong among co-nationals. For example, both Carlos and Fernando had an easy time entering the Dominican barbershops simply because they were Dominican and shared similar backgrounds with the men already working there. Similarly, the various jobs Rosa acquired in bars and restaurants were all found through other Colombians. Lastly, the homeless Salvadoran men were being fed semi-regularly by members of the community, as well as, according to Alejandro, occasionally being given leftover food from Salvadoran restaurants.

People were also more likely to receive instrumental help and access to opportunities from within their own ethnic groups. For example, Carlos suggested that it was particularly easy to get a job in New York because he had the "Dominican tradition of styling hair," and there are

many Dominicans there. María, a female Dominican hairstylist, also reported finding her job because the salon needed someone who knew how to cut "Dominican hair." Similarly, a Colombian friend of Rosa's came into the store and told us that she had gotten a job cooking Colombian food at a restaurant. She explained that they had fired the women who had her job previously because she was El Salvadoran and couldn't make the Colombian food as well as an actual Colombian. While Carlos, María, and Rosa's friend were all qualified for their jobs, they were explicitly hired due to their nationality. Regardless of gender, *amistades*—particularly co-national ones—facilitated the transition from Latin America to Boston by providing instrumental help during housing and job searches.

Overall, relationships with *amistades* were critical to initiating and carrying out the migration, akin to the role of weak ties as described in the sociological literature. During the beginning of the settlement process, *amistades* could also help dissatisfied migrants relocate, as seen in the cases of Carlos, Fernando, Gabriel, and Laura. The *amistad* also frequently helped the migrant acquire his or her first job in this country. A relationship with an *amistad* often provided bridges to opportunity without the need to make a large commitment to that individual in return. Due to the low-risk nature of such a relationship, respondents in this study saw the *amistad* as an overwhelmingly positive asset.

In the next chapter, I trace the relationships of *amigos*, which could be seen either as important supports or risky connections. Due to the deeper level of commitment required by an *amigo*, this type of relationship was not seen as exclusively positive by my respondents. Overall, women were more likely than men to maintain *amigos* in spite of experiences with and the potential for betrayals by these intimate ties.

V. THE *AMIGO*: IMPORTANT SUPPORT OR RISKY CONNECTION

When described by the participants, each one said that an *amigo*, unlike an *amistad*, provides unconditional support. Óscar emphasizes that someone can't be considered his *amigo* just because they converse often —an *amigo* is someone "que esté en todo" (who is there throughout everything). In addition to the types of instrumental help that an *amistad* can supply, the *amigo* attends to the social-psychological health of his or her friend. Moreover, unlike the flexible, non-reciprocal nature of the connection between *amistades*, the bond between *amigos* necessitates reciprocity, obligations, and potential costs, adding layers of complexity to this type of relationship. Due to the level of elevated trust between *amigos*, such a relationship can greatly alleviate the intense stresses that come with being an immigrant. However, the same elevated levels of trust and high levels of investment make *amigos* vulnerable to potential financial and emotional betrayals. Overall, women perceived *amigos* to be much more positive connections than did the men and persisted in forming these intimate bonds despite the potential for betrayal.

Gendered Perspectives on Amigos

During the interviews, women from all three countries of origin told me about their *amigos*, whom they described as having a positive influence in their lives. Rosa, who describes herself as "muy amiguera" (very friendly), often has friends stop by the convenience store, and I had the pleasure of meeting several of them during my informal observations. Rosa also has an older friend, whom I did not meet, who she says has been "like [her] mother in this country," and she often baby-sits her children. Silvia expressed the opinion that it is particularly important for immigrants to have friends in this country, stating in English that: "Especially when you know that you come from another country and you feel alone, it's really nice to know you have friends that'll be there for you."

Rosa, Laura, Melisa, and Paula are lucky have incredibly supportive husbands, whom they also describe as true friends. I met Rosa's husband, Pablo, several times, and observed him interacting with Rosa's oldest daughter, who has a different father. Pablo treats her as his own daughter, and Rosa says he is more of a father to her daughter than her biological father. Laura's husband is a faithful, dependable man who doesn't drink. Though they are not legally married, Laura refers to him as her husband, and she says that his relatives, who live mostly in Boston, treat her like another member of the family. Laura met him in Boston and says that since she does not have close family of her own in this country, her relationship with him and his family help her to feel more at home.

Though some of the women had small networks of friends, they clearly expressed their desires to have friends and potentially expand these networks. Camila, whose contact with people outside the family has been limited by a controlling ex-husband and a recent, painful series of operations, said that she would certainly like to have more friends. She explained simply: "It's a beautiful thing [to have *amigos*], because sometimes you need someone to talk to." Moreover, Manuela saw herself as part of a community here in Boston, even though she exhibited characteristics that indicated social isolation. For example, when I spoke to her in November, her mother had just passed away, and she was devastated. Manuela said it was the first year she had felt no motivation to hang up even one Christmas decoration. She also didn't know if she would celebrate with anyone, even her brothers, because they might have to work (though she hadn't checked). However, despite signs of a lack of social support in the wake of her mother's death, Manuela does not report feeling isolated. She says that she feels socially supported here and has a diverse network of friends, including Colombians and Salvadorans. Both Camila and Manuela, regardless of the actual depth of their social networks, acknowledged

the importance of having *amigos* and perceived them to be worth the costs and obligations that came along with such a relationship.

What was surprising about the interviews is that many men—unlike the female respondents—told me bluntly that they do not have any *amigos*. Carlos was my first male interview respondent, so when he told me that "here I don't have any friends" I was incredulous, and I pressed the issue. I tried to re-phrase the question, by asking with whom he liked to go out. However, he informed me that he prefers to go out alone. I pried a bit deeper, asking why, and he informed me that he doesn't like to get involved in other people's problems. He explains, "it's not good to go making friends with lots of people because you don't know who's who here." He repeats twice that he has many *amistades*, but very few *amigos*. In fact, at the end of this part of the interview, he tells me his only *amigos* are his father and mother "because they are friends; those are real friends." He does not have a wife or significant other.

Based on the literature, which suggests a tight-knit Latino immigrant community, I was tempted to dismiss Carlos' case as an anomaly, reasoning that there must be some exceptional factor causing Carlos to maintain such distance from others. However, the pattern was replicated with my next two male respondents, Fernando and Óscar, who offered similar insights. Fernando told me honestly, "I had friends in Santo Domingo but here I've never had *amigos*. I've had nothing more than fellow workmates, nothing more… nothing more." Though Óscar was friendly and even insisted on treating me to a smoothie at McDonald's, where we did the interview, he too described himself as someone who has "always preferred to maintain a good amount of distance" from others, even in El Salvador. He cautioned that, "you always have to maintain certain limits with friends… because sometimes they can betray you." When I pressed the issue with Óscar, he said he once had a good friend from work, but he hasn't seen or spoken

to him in a long time, and the friend doesn't know Óscar is in the United States. Moreover, though he speaks to his wife in El Salvador at least two or three times per week, Óscar never mentioned his wife as someone he considers a friend.

Though not all the men were as strongly distrustful of those around them, many reported intentionally limiting close contact with others. For example, unlike Camila, Pablo confessed that he is not interested in expanding his networks. He told me bluntly that though he has a few close confidants, he doesn't like to have "a lot of friends." Similarly, when Miguel's father died, it was incredibly painful for him because he could not go back to El Salvador for the funeral. However, when I asked him if he reached out to anyone in this country for support, he surprisingly answered: "No. No. It was something… [Here] you endure it, you live it alone, and you solve it alone." Unlike the women in this study, Pablo and Miguel not only had limited numbers of friends, but they also did not attempt to reach out further.

Betrayals, Violence, and Traumas

The reasons for mistrusting others became clearer as I heard many stories of betrayals by *amigos*, both male and female. A high number of respondents provided clear examples of betrayals, one more dispiriting than the next. Rosa was in two unfortunate situations when two serious boyfriends abandoned her, each leaving to go back to Colombia. The first of these boyfriends was the man who brought her to Boston originally. After only three months of living here together, Rosa, who had given up everything for him, was forced to begin life on her own. She explains that in the beginning she didn't know anyone except friends of her (ex) boyfriend. She didn't even have the means to acquire furniture or a bed for her apartment. Though she managed to find a job and slowly build up her life here, she became pregnant by her next boyfriend at the age of 19, and when her daughter was three, the father abandoned them to move

back to Colombia. However, Rosa quickly rebounded, using her savings and connections at work to create a life in Boston of which she feels proud.

Laura also recounted two stories of betrayal by *amigas*, each related to her efforts to bring her brother to the United States. In her first attempt, she paid a friend who was an American citizen to travel to Colombia and "marry" her brother so that he could come here legally. The friend made two visits to Colombia in order to execute this process, and Laura paid her $3,000 to cover travel expenses and lost income from missed days at work. However, instead of helping Laura reunite with her brother, the friend ran off with the money, and Laura never heard from her again. In another attempt to send for her brother, Laura offered to host her brother's girlfriend, who would then work together with Laura to save enough money to bring over the brother. Since Laura grew up with all brothers, her brother's girlfriend was "like a sister" to her, and she was happy to take her in. However, when it became clear that the brother would not be able to come, the girlfriend began dating a man she met on the Internet, and subsequently moved to another city to live with him. Thus, in trying to bring her brother, Laura lost $3,000, a friend, and a sister figure. However, Laura accepted the loss, and did not let it interfere with her formation of future relationships. Though she admits that it was "terrible", she told me "*Me tocó aceptar…*" ("It fell on me to accept it"), and laughed at the unfortunate nature of the situation.

Unlike the cases of Rosa and Laura, Fernando's story of betrayal had long-term negative consequences. As recounted above, Fernando's father sent for him from New York, where he had been living for approximately five years before Fernando arrived. Fernando expected his father to treat him as an *amigo* and hoped that he would support him unconditionally. (It is important to recall here that respondents described both relatives and non-relatives as *amistades*

36

and *amigos*.) However, when Fernando finally made it to New York, he was devastated when his father refused to take him in. Though he was able to stay with his sister temporarily, her boyfriend kicked him out shortly after his arrival. He then briefly stayed with his brother, but once he could afford it, he moved out and lived alone for five years. He described the experience in this way: "I lived in a [rented] room, it was a heavy time. I never had an apartment. [Just] my loneliness and me." His father's rejection hit him hard, and Fernando openly admitted that he drank alcohol every night to be able to fall asleep. He described those years as a period of suffering, in which he was severely depressed.

Like Fernando, Gabriel was deeply affected by his father's treatment of him upon his arrival. Gabriel opted to sleep on a cot in the un-insulated kitchen of a group house in Boston rather than stay with his father. His "family problem," as he described the situation with his father, also interfered with his relationships with others, as he became "more rebellious" and stopped listening to his friends' advice. Unfortunately, his bad luck with relationships did not stop at his father. Two years after moving to Boston, Gabriel gave $600 to someone he considered "a very good friend" to arrange a car rental for him. When Gabriel went to pick up the car, he discovered that the payment had never been made. Much to his dismay, Gabriel's friend had run off with the money. Gabriel emphasized that he was sad not about losing a week's earnings (a financial betrayal), but rather about the loss of his friendship (an emotional betrayal). Gabriel says if his friend had just asked him for financial help, he would have given him the money. Reflecting on the situation, Gabriel lamented: "I've had friends… that aren't [real] friends. They are *amistades* because they break your heart." When Gabriel realized that his friend, who he had perceived to be an *amigo*, was using him for money, he mentally downgraded him to the status of an *amistad* because he knew he could no longer trust him for emotional

37

support.

Since he has been in the United States for a little under a year, most of the relationships Óscar described to me were with people from El Salvador. I first became aware of the extremely high levels of suspicion and mistrust among Óscar's peers during a conversation about keeping in touch with friends. Óscar explained that, while he talked to his family every three days or so, he didn't talk to friends because he didn't have their phone numbers. When I suggested that he have his wife or another family member in El Salvador go ask directly for their numbers, he told me the idea had never occurred to him. Thinking about it, though, he said, "it's embarrassing, and if your family goes around saying 'give me your telephone number' sometimes you also don't know how someone is going to react, how they will react…" I gained a deeper understanding of the pervasive sense of suspicion Óscar described when he told me about a "tremendous" place he lived in eight years ago. "There," he said uncertainly, "between friends… they do bad things to each other. No, no, no I can't explain any better because… more or less… between friends they betray each other, between the same friends they kill each other or things like that." This led him to declare pessimistically "no hay *amigos*" (there are no true friends). This depressing conclusion guided Óscar's interactions with those around him, and though he was outwardly friendly, he did not seek out the company of others.

Consistent with Óscar's grim outlook on the ability to trust others, Menjívar (2000) explains that in El Salvador, especially during the Civil War (1980-1992), "the climate of suspicion…posed potentially detrimental effects for relationships with friends, neighbors, and co-workers, as people avoided associating with those who might have been labeled collaborators or sympathizers—even if they were friends or family" (52). Even though my Salvadoran respondents were very young during the official Civil War period, the legacy of violence there is

so strong that it continues to permeate relationships of all kinds today. Miguel explained to me that over there, "you can't let them see that you dress well or have a car because they will want to kill you and take everything from you." Similarly, Silvia described the dangerous nature of her father's job when he used to work as a fare collector on the buses in El Salvador. She explained in English that: "The busses over there, they're more scary. They're really, like you can go on a bus [and] you can get like, even killed or anything… My dad couldn't really get that much money because he would always get robbed at night when he was finishing." Many respondents from El Salvador arrived in this country heavily influenced by the violence and mistrust that defined their pre-migratory experiences. While this pre-migratory experience does not explain the gendered difference between my Salvadoran respondents, since men and women cited instances of violence in their home country, it provides a traumatizing context for the migration that may explain some of the roots of mistrust. Similarly, in Colombia, since World War II and especially in more recent decades, "violence… has progressively invaded all spheres of public and private life" (Sánchez G. 2001: 1). Though the examples of violence cited by the Salvadoran respondents were the most extreme, study participants from Colombia and the Dominican Republic also cited gangs, delinquency, and theft as reasons for fleeing their respective countries—or as reasons not to return.

As demonstrated by the aforementioned examples, trauma can result from financial and emotional betrayals by friends or family members, as well as arbitrary violence that is often present in the sending countries. Domínguez (2011) writes that trauma, caused by abuse and/or violence, "sabotages social positioning" and prevents migrants from becoming upwardly mobile (153). While not all the participants experienced such severe traumas, these negative events undoubtedly shaped the ways in which they interacted with others upon arriving in the United

States.

Gendered Responses to Betrayals

The context and severity of the betrayals were important in shaping the ways immigrants

would later construct their networks, though the outcomes differed sharply along lines of gender.

However, in analyzing these contexts, it is important to note that in the examples above, both

women and men were victims and agents of betrayal. The evidence negates the overly simplistic

assumption that women are more trusting simply because they treat each other better or are more

nurturing. The importance of these unfortunately abundant episodes lies not in the acts

themselves, but rather in the *reactions* to the betrayals. Among my respondents, the men and

women reacted differently. The women largely recovered from the betrayals and continued

making new *amigas,* as well as forming healthy, trusting relationships with their significant

others. Meanwhile, the men had many *amistades*, but they withdrew from the types of reciprocal,

trusting relations the women described. This gendered discrepancy may be caused by the

women's elevated likelihood of committing to life in Boston, while the men cling to a "myth of

return" which relieves them of the psychological need to maintain demanding relationships as

amigos (see Chapter 6).

As described above, the men and women in this study had very different internal

expectations of friendship. However, the differences did not end there. The gender of

respondents largely determined their outward approach towards people in their networks as well.

Women openly expressed their intentions of becoming *amigas* while men touted their

commitment to maintaining the less demanding roles of *amistades*. The two examples below

help illustrate the stark contrast between women and men's expectations of each other as friends:

> "Rosa's friend walks into the store and Rosa gives her characteristic screech and comes
> out from behind the counter to give her a big hug. She asks her friend if she is still

40

married and the friend says she's been divorced five years. Rosa can't believe it (she shrieks, "Where have I been?!"). But despite clear lack of contact, she is still very enthusiastic about seeing her. This is quite the opposite of the men [in the barber shop], they don't have any illusions about having friends" (Field Notes, November 1, 2011).

"Two days after Carlos' interview, I interview Fernando [in the barbershop]. After Fernando's interview, Carlos calls me over to where the two of them are working and asks me "What did I tell you about friends yesterday? Tell him [Fernando]." I answer hesitantly "…That you don't have any?" and he says, "Right! Lots of *amistades* [acquaintances] but not *amigos* [friends]." He seems proud of this fact, doesn't try to deny it, and not embarrassed that he told me in his interview that he's not friends with the other barbers, including Fernando, who is standing right next to him. Fernando agrees" (Field Notes, November 3, 2011).

In the first example, the way Rosa speaks to her friend indicates her desire to reach out and share personal details, even though they have clearly been out of touch. In the second example, Carlos publicly expresses his perceived lack of a deep relationship with the other barbers—people with whom he spends twelve hours per day, seven days per week. Though in this instance he may have been posturing for my benefit, his self-reported behavior suggests that he blatantly rejects attempts at friendship even when I am not present. For example, in a conversation with Carlos and Fernando in January, Carlos told me that he had spent Christmas alone in his apartment. When I jokingly asked Fernando why he hadn't invited Carlos over, he told me that he had invited Carlos for Christmas dinner, but that Carlos had declined, opting to spend the holiday alone.

In addition to successfully conveying intentions of maintaining friendships, the female respondents were also more effective than the men in diversifying their friends—an ability that requires trust in at least several different people. When I asked Melisa who she would go to if she had a problem, she answered, "it depends on the problem." Through this statement, she expressed that she knows she can rely on different friends for different problems. Conversely, several of the men related that they rely exclusively on their mothers, some of whom are still

41

living in their native countries. Not only is the distance between them problematic, but holding friends to these unrealistic "mom standards" makes networks smaller because no one can live up to the mother who loves her child unconditionally. Carlos and Gabriel told me that their mothers were their best friends, and Gabriel proudly rolled up his sleeve to show me that he had tattooed his mother's name on his arm. Juan experienced a problem when he privileged his relationship with his mother over his girlfriend. His priorities caused his girlfriend to break up with him because she could tell he would "rather take care of [his] family." In this way, strong ties to families and particularly sons' ties to their mothers can inhibit the formation of lasting relationships in this country because none of those relationships can live up to the "mom standard."

The contrast between men and women's expectations of friendship serves as a striking paradox whose causes have yet to be fully explained. In the next section, I outline the some of the mechanisms behind women's propensity for ties to *amigos* despite experiences of betrayals. Overall, I conclude that women are more content with the environment in Boston, due to increased opportunities for economic and social independence. Consequently, they are more willing to commit to a full life here in the United States, instead of clinging to cultural norms from the sending countries, which place them at the bottom of the social hierarchy here. Part of this commitment involves establishing firm ties to *amigos* in this country. In contrast, male labor migrants may find their social status lowered due to gender scripts in this country that, unlike in the sending countries, do not privilege men as dominant providers and protectors of women. In reaction to this lowered status, men may negate or withdraw from social networks here, in order to maintain a sense of self that is consistent with who they were in their countries of origin.

VI. BALANCING THE NEW AND THE OLD: MAINTAINING A SENSE OF SELF

International migration requires an enormous shift for low-income labor migrants, including my interview respondents. Unfamiliar language, food, culture, weather, and people are only some of the obstacles that face them. In the context of uncertainty, each tries to maintain a sense of independence and self-worth in order to balance the old life with the new. In this study, both men and women saw the opportunity to come to this country as the chance to *salir adelante*, or get ahead. However, female and male migrants reacted very differently to the challenges of living in Boston. Though they were working toward similar goals, they interacted in distinct ways with those around them—especially with regard to their *amigos* and *amistades*. To a large extent, these social strategies can be seen as coping mechanisms. Whether these strategies are rooted in trust or fear, they represent important efforts on the part of the migrants to preserve a strong sense of self and locate themselves within the receiving society. Women's commitments to staying in these country and establishing roots here facilitated their formations of social networks, while men's commitment to the "myth of return" made them unwilling to invest financially or emotionally in this country.

Polarized Perceptions of America

In an analysis of psychosocial dynamics of Latino immigrants, Richard Ainslie writes that: "the mere *fact* of living in America begins to alter one's understanding of oneself and of others almost immediately upon one's arrival" (2002: 289). This shift in perception means that for low-wage migrants, every decision must be purposeful, as they can no longer rely on their habits and traditions to guide their actions. Rather they are faced with a completely unfamiliar set of circumstances, such as low social class, discrimination, and sometimes illegality. With this consideration in mind, it is important to carefully think about the ways in which the respondents

43

psychologically and emotionally process the fabled "Land of Opportunity." While both men and women commented on increased economic opportunities as well as physical safety available to them here, opinions on the general nature of life in the United States and its psychosocial effects shaped the willingness of men and women to commit to social networks. While women experienced increased levels of independence upon their arrival, men felt constrained by social norms in Boston, which rendered them less likely to reach out to others around them, for fear of establishing roots in a place that made them less independent.

The descriptor used most often to describe Boston by both male and female respondents was *tranquilo* (calm). While many cited instances of delinquency and violence at home, in comparison they found Boston to be safe and stable, both physically and economically. In her study of Latinos in the rural American south, Marrow (2011) concludes that "regional contexts [exert] discernible economic and noneconomic effects on Hispanic newcomers' experiences…" (28). Therefore, my respondents' perceptions of Boston as *tranquilo,* both physically and economically, were important for shaping their adaptation to the new city. Respondents described Boston as easy to navigate, mostly due to the comprehensive bus and train systems, and very safe. When asked about instances of crime in the neighborhood, respondents described them as "very rare" and did not seem concerned about their reoccurrence. Both men and women also agreed that the economic opportunities in this country were far greater than those in their home countries. Gabriel explained to me that "in this country you can work for one year or five years and achieve what, in our countries, you might not achieve in ten or twenty years." In his explanation, Gabriel refers not only to his native country, but rather to all the Latin American nations when he says "our countries." The consensus among all the respondents was that there

are far more economic opportunities here than at home, even if they are not always easy to acquire.

Both men and women described Boston as measured and regulated compared to their communities at home—a factor that contributed to personal safety and comfort, but also limited certain freedoms. Both Camila and María talked about missing the open air and the farms, and María specifically lamented that here the children cannot simply eat their lunch under the trees. Paula also elaborated on this theme, explaining how the laws are much more stringent here. She cited the example of drivers' licenses, and explained how in both the United States and in the Dominican Republic, the licenses are mandatory, but at home the requirement is more relaxed. She explained that in contrast to the system in the D.R., here a license is an absolute "obligation" for driving or buying a car. Carlos was in agreement, nostalgically commenting that at home you can drink alcohol outside, and no one—the police or otherwise, will bother you. He says that because of this, "over there you feel you have freedom for all that kind of stuff."

Despite the similar perceptions of respondents described above, the male respondents seemed to chafe at these new regulations, while the women were more committed to adjusting to the new lifestyle, despite its challenges. The women almost universally expressed happiness about the environment in Boston, which is one factor that could play a role in why they are more open to forming social ties and social networks. A commonly expressed sentiment among the women was: "I've always liked Boston, I don't even know why." Many women also described this country as specifically contributing to their comfort and feelings of stability. Jazmín described life here as "more comfortable than over there [in the Dominican Republic]." She elaborated by saying, "Here they don't shut off the water; there they shut off the water. Here the lights don't go out; there the lights go out." Many of the women, like Jazmín, had positive

visceral reactions that led them to feel good about life in Boston, even early on in their

settlement. In general, the women adapted more quickly and smoothly than did the men.

One exception to this general pattern was María, a 30 year-old Dominican hairstylist. She

felt profoundly affected by the environment in Boston, especially the cold. In fact she was so

jarred by the change in climate that she told me that the family often eats at home instead of

going out because it is "too cold to go outside." She also finds the lifestyle to be "very

measured" and says people get sick here from "nerves" because they are always rushing to be on

time. She also thinks that the more stringent rules lead youth here to be more aggressive and get

in trouble with the police. Still, overall, the women perceived Boston as being a generally

positive environment.

Most of the men shared the opposite feelings about the environment in this country from

the women. Though often unable to give specific examples, they frequently made blanket

statements such as "I miss everything from home" or "Nothing here is better." The most specific

and frequent critique of this country was the individualistic nature of American culture. Several

respondents explained the prevalent individualism they had witnessed and used it to explain

some of the troublesome behavior of friends and family who acted harshly towards them.

According to Menjívar (2000), "Often contemporary immigrants originate in social

environments where close-knit, enduring ties of mutual assistance are the norm" (240). However,

in this country, individualistic behaviors were at odds with the cultural norm of such enduring

ties. Concordantly, Carlos told me that: "[Here] what you don't know you have to learn… The

custom here is not the same as in my country. Here you have to take [more] responsibility."

Meanwhile, he explained that if he were my father and we were living in the Dominican

Republic, he would give me everything he could and would never make me go out to work and

support myself. This comparison illustrates Carlos' expectations of gender and familial roles, both of which are challenged by the prevailing individualistic attitudes in the United States.

In addition to Carlos, many other men concluded that the culture of this country was at fault for familial tensions and a lack of mutual support. According to Alejandro, "this country makes families disintegrate." Fernando and Gabriel both illustrated this statement through the abrupt schisms they experienced with their fathers upon arriving to this country. Pablo also lamented the lack of family ties, explaining that: "It's true that in Colombia there might by poverty but at least there is more *calor familiar* (familial warmth). Because one arrives here and starts to lose that, because everyone [here] is focused on money, money, money." Though Pablo showed an interest in forming social connections, he explained that there is less possibility for them here due to an intense focus on monetary gains. Miguel also discussed the lack of support he felt in this country as opposed to at home in El Salvador. He said, emotionally:

> "Wow, it's really difficult because here, here, here in the United States each person, each person learns to make his life alone. Or rather, here one has to be independent. Here you earn, work, and a person grows up with that idea. It's very rare to find support… there are very few people you find who give you that support, who you can tell, 'I don't have work, can you help me?'" (Miguel Interview, December 8, 2011).

While these instances of "culture shock" alone cannot account for the majority of men's heightened senses of suspicion and mistrust, they do reflect important gender differences that play out upon arrival in this country. Namely, the men reported feeling negatively affected by the individualistic culture in the United States, as well as the "measured" and regulated nature of life here. Meanwhile, though women perceived the city in similar ways, for most of them the opportunities available in Boston outweighed the negative differences between their countries of origin and this one. In the rest of this chapter, I explain how gender scripts in the United States that conflict with those in the countries of origin boost women's independence while lowering

47

the men's. Due to these gendered differences, women are more likely to look past the cold and

sometimes unfriendly nature of the city in order to reap the benefits that Boston has to offer. In

contrast, men suffer from a decrease in social status upon their arrival, and consequentially

withdraw from relationships with *amigos* here, in order to disassociate themselves from an

environment that does not consider them to be dominant figures in society.

Machismo and the Struggle for Dominance

One mechanism that may affect the gendered differences in social trust is a perceived loss

of status for Latino men upon arriving in the United States. Their sense of *machismo*, or the

"hegemonic form of Latino masculinity," is challenged during the transition to a new community

(Valenzuela and Olivares Pasilla 2012: 84). Not only did the men in my sample perform low-

wage labor, but they also did so in the context of a new society in which they fell close to the

bottom on a scale of prestige—especially for those who were undocumented. Both Jones-Correa

(1998b) and Menjívar (2000) suggest that men feel that their status as dominant societal figures

is challenged in the United States by women's success and independence, especially because in

Latin American, women are traditionally dependent on men. Walter and his colleagues posit

even more dramatic consequences, stating that "masculinity… is often thrown into crisis by labor

migration under the kinds of coercive conditions prevailing in the United States…" (2004: 1161).

The type of social downgrade described in this statement can prove to be equally traumatizing as

the instances of betrayal recounted in the previous chapter and greatly affect self-esteem.

It is important to note that not all the men in this study adhered to a universal standard of

masculinity, but there are structural forces in play that encourage men from this particular area of

the world to act as the provider and ultimate authority within the family. While the respondents

all came from diverse backgrounds, the majority shared similar feelings about gender roles and

an adherence to patriarchal norms. Machismo is often suggested to be rooted in the patriarchal colonial system that prevailed in Spanish America for centuries. However, scholars have not come to a consensus on its specific origins. Gutman writes that, etymologically, its roots have been traced back to such diverse sources as Latin, Portuguese, and English, brought by the "Yankee gringo invaders" in the early 20th century (1996: 223). As such, though my male respondents originated in three different countries, the idea of machismo is relevant to them all, based on their shared colonial heritage. Respondents often spoke about Latino men in general, without referencing national origins, and commented on their tendencies to adhere to hyper-masculine scripts, relative to men in other ethnic groups. Paula provided the opinion that while any man would probably resist childcare because it is "women's work," a Latino man is least likely of all to do it.

In my research, the differences in my gender expectations and those of my male participants became apparent early on, when I offered compensation for participation in the study. It was telling that four of the men refused to accept the $10.00, and several others only accepted upon my insistence that they use it to buy Christmas presents for people in their families. In contrast, not one woman hesitated to take the money. Fernando justified his actions by explaining that: "The man always has to give to the woman. The women never give to the men." The other men expressed similar sentiments, despite my best efforts to explain that the University would reimburse me and that I was not using my own money. However, despite my explanation, over half the men told me they felt uncomfortable "taking" from a woman.

The idea of the man as the ultimate provider contributes to a phenomenon called "responsible machismo," coined by Walter et al (2004). Responsible machismo heralds the man who provides unconditionally for his family, but it is different from hegemonic masculinity in

49

that "it does not necessitate the aggression and insolence present [there]" (Valenzuela and Olivares Pasillas 2012: 86). However, it still privileges the idea of the man as a protector of the women in his family and the ultimate decision-maker when it comes to family matters. Men who ascribe to these ideals "consider themselves to be 'men of honor', courageous, stoic and generous for the welfare of their families and the dignity of their nation" (Walter et al 2004: 1162). The notion of "responsible machismo" can affect mixed-gender social networks because it implies an unequal relationship between men and women, in which the men must provide for the women and the women must rely exclusively on their support.

An example of responsible machismo can be seen in the case of Juan, and tensions in his family over his mother working. He admitted that before his parents got divorced, his mother wanted to work—but his father wouldn't let her. With regards to his father's position on the issue, he explained in English, "he's like one of those… you know, you could say we're um, you know, *machistas*." Though Juan's father wouldn't allow his wife to work, during the time of this conflict, he allowed Juan to work on small construction jobs, even though he was only in middle school. Menjívar clarifies two of the reasons that women's employment, along with its consequential economic freedom, are problematic within the *machista* framework. She suggests that female employment here, in the U.S., "poses a double threat to the men; it undermines the men's social role as the breadwinner and lends more authority to women to make their own decisions" (2000: 171). It is possible that Juan's father, like the men in Menjívar's book, felt his wife's employment could undermine him. Ultimately, his disagreements with his wife over gender roles in this country contributed to their divorce, and tellingly, after their separation, Juan's father moved back to Colombia and his wife started working. Juan's parents are emblematic of a larger trend in which many separations and divorces occur after migration to the

United States (Jones-Correa 1998a: 174). Camila, a divorcee herself, suggested that it is because "[men] can't boss around women like they can in their countries... I've seen lots of examples like that. People here who were bossed around by men over there and here they become independent and don't need the men anymore." Once in the United States, the pillars of responsible machismo are much more likely to be challenged and lead to conflicts over issues of independence for men and women, stripping men of the power they once took for granted.

In addition to responsible machismo, expectations of the economic success of immigrant Latino men are so high that any deviance from the ideal prototype may cause a decline in self-esteem. Walter and his colleagues suggest that among Latino men, there exists a "sense of patriarchal accomplishment at generating income for the family" that, when challenged, can lead to feelings of demoralization (2004: 1164). Menjívar (2000) also writes about the negative social-psychological effects that occur when women intentionally or unintentionally challenge men's economic dominance. She reports that in her study of Salvadorans, "women tended to find work more easily than men did... But the fact that the women were able to find work when the men could not posed serious problems; it represented a situation at odds with expectations of men's and women's financial contributions" (165). Jones-Correa (1998) goes as far as to suggest that even if men can find jobs, "the initial downward mobility shared by most male immigrants is traumatic" (331). However, Jones-Correa refers mostly to professional men who are forced to downgrade to low-wage jobs upon arrival. In contrast, most of the men in my study found jobs here that were equivalent to those they had at home— as was the case, for example, with the Dominican barbers. Moreover, men who worked on rural farms in their home countries, such as Óscar and Manuela's husband, found jobs here that offered higher and more consistent wages. Nevertheless, Domínguez (2011) points out that in those rural settings, the men's success in

labor could earn them a "full sense of manhood," while in post-industrial Boston, where their physical labor is not needed, they can experience a downward shift in their estimation of self-worth (174). Due to cultural and economic factors that challenge men's supremacy and self-esteem, men may become less likely to form social ties here because they cannot occupy the same position of superiority to which they were accustomed in their home countries.

Expectations of hyper-masculine behavior among Latino men can lead to a decline in physical, as well as mental, health. One of the clearest manifestations of the men's social-psychological unhappiness in this country was the abuse of alcohol. Not only did one respondent, Fernando, unhappily confess to me that he used to drink every day in order to fall asleep, but several of the women complained about men who never drank in their home countries but came here and became *borrachos*, or drunks. Within the first two minutes of my interview with Manuela, a soft-spoken 39 year-old from Colombia, she bluntly told me: "I never had children with my husband. He's a drunk." She explained that while he never drank in Colombia or in New Jersey, which is where they first lived in this country. However, when he got to Boston, which has a large Colombian population, he began to drink every day. She believes that this habit developed from a combination of the pressure from the other men around him and his shame at not being able to have children. Manuela says he would have been better off in New Jersey, where they were more isolated but free from the influences of rowdy people. Valenzuela and Olivares Pasillas (2012) examine the influence of the ideals of machismo on immigrant men from various national origin groups and conclude that: "Dissonance in men's negotiation between *ideal* masculinity and actual masculinity can foster feelings of inadequacy and failure, particularly among Latino males, whose patriarchal roles as providers are a highly valued part of cultural tradition" (85). The abuse of alcohol by numerous men in the community represented a

detrimental strategy for dealing with feelings of inadequacy. Instead of reaching out to *amigos*

for support, the men isolated themselves and dealt with the challenges of their immigrant

experience through self-destructive means.

In this investigation, there were a few men who did not isolate themselves and instead

maintained more open and trusting relationships than their counterparts. However, in this case,

the exceptions prove the rule. The men who proved to be most socially connected in this country

were the men who did not seek to achieve unrealistic, hyper-masculine ideals—though they did

occasionally allude to normative definitions of masculinity. The two men who diverged most

from the macho norms described above were Pablo, a 51 year-old Colombian restaurant-owner,

and Juan, a 23 year-old Colombian server/bartender, who had both lived the majority of their

lives in the United States. Juan, for example, referred to himself as a "cool nerd" and described

his love of computers (as opposed to his physical prowess). Meanwhile Pablo, who stopped

studying at age 11, spoke openly about his lack of education and how it prevented him from

getting a better job, acknowledging his shortcomings. Neither Juan nor Pablo seemed eager to

impress me or show off their masculinity in the way that some of the other respondents,

particularly those at the barbershop, did.

A telling contrast can be found in the testimonies of Pablo and Yeison, a 22 year-old

Dominican barber who seemed to emulate the hyper-masculine ideals typical of *machismo*.

Pablo told me that when he first came to this country, he had to share a cot with his two brothers

in his father's small apartment until they could save up enough to buy something bigger. When

they had the necessary funds, all four men moved together into a larger apartment. On the other

hand, Yeison, who came to this country only four months ago, made it his priority to live alone

and distance himself from his brothers. When I asked him why he chose to live far away from his

brothers, he looked surprised and explained: "Obviously, because, because think about it, they're men and I'm a man—you have to be alone. I don't like being with a man." With Pablo in mind, I asked if the issue would be sharing a bed, and Yeison responded uncomfortably, "No, a bed can't be [shared] by two men." He also told me that his favorite part of this country was "the women," though he later confessed he hasn't met any yet.

Yeison's statements, in contrast to those of Pablo, reveal a need to present himself as a strong, heterosexual, masculine figure. In a study by Way et. al (2012), researchers interviewed Latino boys in high schools and found that "the boys' need not to be perceived as gay or girlish consumed their interviews in late adolescence and prevented them from maintaining the very friendships they valued dearly" (265). Similarly, Yeison's ideas of men and personal boundaries inhibited him from sharing space with the only people he knew in Boston. Moreover, the added cost of living alone meant that he had not yet been able to begin sending money to his family back in the Dominican Republic. According to the trends analyzed by Way et. al, it is not surprising that while Pablo maintains close relationships with his wife, members of his family, and a number of friends, Yeison reports having no *amigos*. His only contacts are the people, both the employees and the customers, in the barbershop where he works. Moreover, instead of seeking out company, during his free time Yeison sleeps or watches TV alone in his apartment.

Despite his isolation and recent separation from friends and family at home, Yeison maintains a stoic exterior. For example, he relates that his friends at home were very sad to see him go, but when I asked him if he was sad, he quickly responded "no, me no," as if to distinguish himself from his emotional friends. Yeison's stoicism regarding his life-altering move is consistent with the theory that "[men's] stoical attitudes help mask the emotional and psychological suffering associated with meager sustainability and missing significant moments

in their remote family's growth and development" (Valenzuela and Olivares Pasilla 2012: 85). On the other hand, Yeison was not stoic when I asked him about the difficulties of migrating. Instead, he glorified his struggle saying: "[one of the hardest things] is the fight you have to take on being hungry on the journey and everything." The hunger he referred to was the hunger he felt during his three-hour plane ride, on which he didn't have any snacks. Though many other documented respondents expressed gratitude for the relative ease of their journeys, compared to those who came illegally, Yeison made no mention of his relative luck. However, based on the frequent mention of the dangers of crossing the border on foot, it is reasonable to assume that Yeison knew his journey had been easier than most, though he still described it as burdensome. It is not my intent to belittle Yeison's experience, but merely to point that he uses the word *lucha* (fight) to describe a few hours of hunger when typically, in the context of immigration, the *lucha* refers to the struggle to cross the border—a process that can involve weeks without food.

In the difficult context of low-wage labor migration, not only was machismo detrimental to social networks on an individual level, as seen in the case of Yeison, but it also caused fights and betrayals between men within the Latino community. This type of outward competition led Juan, the Colombian server/bartender, to declare that: "[Latino men] are selfish—no they are. Basically they're all just selfish and they just want to step on you and when they have the chance to step on you, they'll do it." He claims that a Latino manager, even a Colombian one, would scream at him for doing something wrong at work, instead of explaining how to do it correctly. When I inquired as to why, Juan answered simply, "Because he thinks he's better than me." Juan's analysis is both blunt and honest, but I propose to take it a step further. Not only would the manager in this situation yell because he thinks he is superior, but he also wants Juan to think he is superior, as a vestige of his struggle for social dominance. Valenzuela and Olivares Pasilla

write that, contrary to what one might think:

> "Machismo… is less concerned with establishing power relations between men and women (oppression and subordination of women are assumed within this social construct), and is instead fixated on a need to establish power relations among men to prove utmost strength and dominance of one over the other" (2012: 84).

Under structural conditions of labor migration, low class status, and sometimes undocumented status, such struggles for dominance can take on heightened salience.

This type of struggle for dominance played out for Juan in the workplace. When Juan began working at Au Bon Pain during his summer vacation from school, he started immediately as a cashier because he spoke excellent English and was paid $12.00 or $13.00 per hour. However, his non English-speaking co-workers were paid less, since they worked in the back, preparing food. Juan informed me that these employees pretended to strike up an innocent conversation with him, asking if he was in school and if he was planning to return to school. He answered yes, and the next day the manager fired him, saying that they wanted someone who could make a long-term commitment to the job. In order to re-assert themselves as dominant in the work place, Juan's co-workers "told on him" to the boss and with the express purpose of getting him fired.

In the most extreme cases, machismo can lead to brutal confrontations. Domínguez writes that Latino men, in particular, "are socialized to use violence to gain respect and demonstrate power and control" (154). Unfortunately, during the period in which I was conducting interviews, Pablo's son (from an earlier marriage) was murdered by a close friend. The exact details were unclear, because the fight happened late at night when few people were around, but community members were well aware of the incident and reported that the two young men fought outside a bar and one killed the other with a screwdriver. Though respondents reported that such violent incidents were very rare in the community, the murder affected everyone

deeply, both because Pablo's son was only 20 years old, and because he was killed by a "muy buen *amigo*" (very good friend). Though this event is not typical of East Boston and its residents, it is one tragic manifestation of the dangers of mistrust within social networks, especially in the context of the *machista* culture, which privileges hyper-masculinity and the fight for dominance.

Under structural conditions that can reduce male labor migrants' self-esteem, these men may isolate themselves in order to avoid coming to terms with their lowered social status. They also may mistrust others' intentions towards them, based on the types of power struggles seen in the case of Juan, and even engage in self-destructive behaviors, as seen in the case of Fernando. Shifting gender scripts, which diminish male laborers' autonomy in this country, leave men less willing to form and acknowledge social ties in this country. A commitment to *amigos* here suggests a commitment to Boston, which men may try to negate in order to preserve their self-esteem. In contrast, the women in this study gained unprecedented independence upon moving to Boston and consequentially embraced their new surroundings. In the next section, I explain how women reacted very differently than the men to the challenges they faced as labor migrants.

Independent Women

Among my female respondents, almost every one achieved higher levels of independence in Boston than they had in their respective sending countries. Their experiences are consistent with the findings that women commonly exhibit strong ties to the home and the family in Latin America, effectively relegating them to the domestic sphere. Though this tendency is not true of all Latinas, Espinoza (2010) describes a prevailing culture of *familismo*, in which a woman is expected to privilege the family over herself as an individual. The *familismo* culture can include "high levels of familial household responsibilities, expectations of spending time with family over friends, sibling caretaking, doing household chores, and language/cultural brokering" for

women (321-322). This strong sense of loyalty to kin with shared heritage can help Latinas to feel positive about their complex, bicultural identities once living in the United States. Moreover, feelings of belonging can be beneficial in several spheres, including academic performance (Espinoza 2010) and physical health (Menjívar 2002). However, these intense obligations also necessarily interfere with others outside the home. In the countries of origin, even before marriage, it can be difficult for Latina girls and young women to form rich social networks because they feel obligated to respect the family above their own social needs. Therefore, once they are married or have been married (as was the case for all but two of my female respondents, with Silvia and Jazmín being the exceptions), they may find it exceedingly difficult to create independent lives outside the home, based on the gender expectations with which they were raised in their native countries. However, simply being in the United States, women "might adapt their own expectations to the more egalitarian—or less patriarchal—relationships that they perceive among American couples" (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005: 897). In this country, the women I interviewed reported feeling more independent, both in their relationships within the family and in their interactions with American society as a whole.

Within the context of the family, women gained increased personal freedoms via the influence of the progressive gender norms of this country, relative to Latin America. For example, Jazmín confessed that her mother didn't allow her to go out in the Dominican Republic or when they first moved to Miami, even though Jazmín was already 23 years old at the time. Her mother's restrictions limited the number of friends Jazmín could have before she migrated. She explains that her mother is "very, very strict" and wouldn't even let her go out to the street corner alone. However, she reports that now that she is here, her mom has changed. She has loosened up and lets Jazmín be more independent. Jazmín says that now that she can work and

58

support herself, as well as go out without her mother's disapproval, she feels happier and freer. She is also able to maintain social ties more easily, since she can come and go as she pleases from her house.

Though unlike Jazmín, Lucía and Manuela were already married, they also became more independent in this country because they kicked out their husbands and consequentially gained more freedom. As described in the section above, Manuela's husband starting drinking heavily when he came to Boston, and she got fed up with him. She described her dismissal of him with confidence and seemingly no regret. Manuela told me that she said to him: "Ciao. Get out of here! I don't want to see you anymore in my way. I want to be independent." Similarly, Lucía, though she had a child with her ex-husband, decided to leave him, though she did not specify the reasons. However, she says that she feels more independent now and that "this country has helped me with a lot of things." In *Between Two Nations*, Jones-Correa explains that conflicts regarding the gendered division of power in relationships can be exacerbated by new cultural norms and that consequently, many women become new heads of households in the United States, as a function of separation or divorce (1998a: 174). Thus, Manuela and Lucía mirror the broader trend of immigrant Latina women in the United States gaining independence that is unprecedented back home.

In the most extreme case of liberation, Camila used the exceptional confidence and independence that she gained from coming here to extricate herself from a dangerous situation involving her husband. In El Salvador, her husband was controlling and abusive. Not only did he beat her until her whole body was bruised, but he didn't let her talk to anyone or maintain outside friendships. He moved to Boston a few years before Camila did, and when she arrived he was living with another woman. However, one night Camila returned late from work, and he

59

surprised her in her home and physically abused her. After that traumatic incident, Camila finally gained the confidence to tell him never to come near her again. With regard to cutting herself off from him, she emphasized to me that, "over there [in El Salvador], I couldn't do it. I didn't feel capable of doing that. But once I was here, I felt the strength to say no because one can't continue living this way. [And] it all ended." Though Camila was the most isolated of any of the women I spoke to, especially due to an accident that has left her unable to work, she still views herself as a liberated woman in light of her success in asserting herself to her ex-husband. She reported that in this country, women are more independent, and only with the empowerment she gained here did she muster the necessary courage to defend herself.

Outside of the family, my female respondents also acquired increased independence and self-sufficiency when they became familiar with American society—both through employment and through interactions with American institutions. Though many of the women I spoke to did not work outside the home in their countries of origin, all of them had jobs in Boston (although, as described above, Camila is currently unable to work). The patterns I found among my female respondents are consistent with overarching trends, which indicate that women are two or three times as likely to work in cities in the United States than in their countries of origin (Jones-Correa 1998: 170). Whereas in the native countries, women are typically expected to stay home while the men go to work, here they may encounter significantly more freedom, due to contrasting perceptions about "appropriate" roles for women. Lucía explained to me that even the mere process of acquiring a job was empowering and taught her a great deal. She says that when she arrived here she was very timid, but ever since the day she had to go into a restaurant and ask for a job, she learned "to be open to talking, meeting people, and forgetting about [her] fear." Her statement confirms that not only did she become more independent through the

60

process of finding employment, but she also valued her newfound ability to meet people and talk with them as an important skill.

My female respondents were also more likely than the males to have interactions with American institutions. In sociology, an institution is defined as "a group of social positions, connected by social relations, that perform a social role." Examples of institutions include the legal system, the labor market, the government, and even language itself.[6] Institutions are intricately related to social networks, because they are based on social relations that are organized to perform a function. In the context of immigration, institutions also serve as important representations of American systems and ways of life. A willingness to seek the advice of American doctors, for example, instead of calling home for a "transnational 'consultation,'" represents faith in the American health care system (Menjívar 2000: 455).

Women in this study interacted with institutions both out of necessity and out of desire. Unlike men, women often gain exposure to American institutions as a byproduct of their involvement with their children (Jones-Correa 1998b: 327), including their management of daycare, doctor's visits, or governmental programs such as WIC. For example, both Rosa and Laura were familiar with the YMCA because their children attend daycare there, and the women consistently drop them off in the morning and pick them up after work. The women also actively sought out institutional support more frequently than the men. For example, many of the women enrolled in English classes offered by schools or language centers. Not only did their enrollment in these classes signal their comfort in placing themselves in a context in which they were unknowledgeable, but it also reflected upon their commitment to integrate into, or at least interact with, the English-speaking mainstream. Like learning English, the development of social

---

[6] Introduction to Sociology, Professor Helen Marrow. Tufts University, October 5, 2011.

networks is rooted in a commitment to the surrounding community, and increased interactions with local agencies, businesses, and organizations can facilitate feelings of investment in the host society while simultaneously deepening social ties.

Not only were women were more likely than men to interact with local institutions, but once they had had such interactions, they generally perceived the institutions as positive. Part of the reason for their enthusiastic reactions to the institutions stemmed from the fact that they did not always have access to such institutions in their home countries. Lucía explained to me that in El Salvador, "it's not like in this country where there are organizations to help people… [here you are] more supported by society." As a result of the fact that women are more entwined in daily life here than men, they can become aware of the benefits available to them through institutions and are more likely to utilize their services—further deepening their connections in Boston.

The majority of women in this study actively sought the support of others. They even reached out beyond their networks of *amistades* and *amigos* to people closely associated with American institutions. I was surprised to learn that some even rely on the police, who are usually seen as threatening figures for undocumented workers. Manuela and Lucía both cited instances in which the police were helpful in mediating problems within the community. Not only did these women perceive the police to be important in mainstream society, but they also trusted them to serve as arbiters of internal conflicts. Manuela told me one day that she was very upset because an *amiga* she had known since she lived in Colombia had owed her $7,000 since 2004. Her friend refused to pay her back, despite the fact that she had signed a receipt confirming the transaction. Manuela told me that one of her boss' relatives is a police officer, and she confessed that she had recently given him the friend's information so that he could go to her house and

force her to pay. Though both Manuela and her friend are undocumented, Manuela did not seem concerned. She said that the policeman wouldn't give her a hard time because she was working on getting her papers in order—indicating her faith (whether justified or not) in the American system of law enforcement.

Lucía also told me a story of police involvement in which her friend called the police to take her husband away, because he started drinking heavily, spending all their money, and even physically abusing her. Even though Lucía's friend was undocumented, as was her husband, she was so scared of what her husband might do to her that she called the police—something Lucía doesn't think she could have done if she were in El Salvador. As a result of the police involvement, the husband was eventually deported, but Lucía's friend was able to stay in the country. The women described in these two examples were both undocumented in the past, leaving them vulnerable to the police. However, they all exhibited confidence that the police were there to help people and keep them safe. This confidence signals that they feel socially accepted in Boston—regardless of their legal status—both by the Americans around them and their institutions.

In sum, the female respondents in this study achieved unprecedented levels of independence in Boston, relative to their social positions in their home countries. Progressive gender norms in this country allowed them to leave the confines of the home, seek employment, and support themselves financially. Though their newfound independence sometimes led to conflict in their relationships with men, overall they reported feeling content with the opportunities they encountered here. Moreover, they frequently had interactions with American institutions, signaling at least some comfort in the new society. Women in this study greatly

benefited from egalitarian gender norms in this country, and these benefits increased their willingness to commit to the new environment and form social ties within it.

Coming and Going: Divergent Strategies for Managing Gender Expectations

Thus far, this chapter has explained the shift in the self-concept that accompanies migration from Latin America to Boston, where the gender scripts differ significantly. Almost as soon as immigrants arrive, they are confronted with social experiences that challenge expectations about the dominance of independent males over dependent women—an assumption inherent to *machismo*. This section explains the divergent strategies employed by men and women to maintain their self-esteem and independence when confronted by cultural norms that conflict with their own in the host society. Overall, women expressed a commitment to staying in this country and establishing ties here, while men relied on the vague notion that they would soon return home, absolving them of the need to foster ties to *amigos* in Boston.

Across the globe, the majority of immigrants indicate that they will one day return home to their native countries, but many of them will actually stay. In general, it is difficult to track rates of return, because "a 'move' is socially constructed" (Durand and Massey 2006: 2). For example, there are no universal definitions of how long a person must stay in one place in order to qualify as a "migrant" as opposed to a "tourist," or for how long a person must return to his or her country of origin to be qualified as a returned migrant. However, despite difficulties in defining migration, Jones-Correa cites several insightful studies in which recent migrants who declared an intent to complete a short turn abroad were still present in the receiving country five years later (1998a: 95). These findings parallel the experiences of my respondents, who often indicated their intent to return, but with vague timetables for when they would do so. Jones-Correa calls this phenomenon "the myth of return," in which migrants who have been here for as

long as twenty years still insist they will go home soon (1998a: 98). The myth of return is especially relevant to the post-1965 era of immigration in America, in which the U.S. side of the border has become heavily policed and dangerous. As such, migrants are more likely to stay here longer or even permanently, often bringing family members over to join them, rather than risk the elevated consequences of a second attempt to enter the country (Massey et al 2002).

The male respondents in my study were far more likely to say they would return home soon, if at all, than the females. Females, largely due to increased opportunities for independence in this country, mostly indicated they would like to stay permanently or for a significant period of time. These divergent responses represent the two principal strategies I encountered during my study for processing new—and more egalitarian—cultural norms. Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo confirm that among their respondents, who were also Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran, it was also common for "men [to] desire to return home in order to regain the status and privileges that their migration [had] challenged" (2005: 897). For the majority of men in my study, the myth of return allowed them to cling to their identity in the home country, in which they occupied a more privileged social space in society. It also allowed them to justify a lack of *amigos* here, because they did not accept Boston as their home.

Although my male respondents expressed interest in returning home, they gave no indication of having any concrete plans to do so. The following excerpt from my interview with Carlos illustrates this point:

> *Lauren*: You said that you'd like to return permanently to your country—do you have a goal that you'd like to achieve before you do that?
> *Carlos*: It's just that I couldn't tell you that, I'm here like this but, it's just that you never know, you never know tomorrow— what you might find tomorrow, it could be that you're working well and when tomorrow comes and you don't… that's why I don't know, life is like that, work is like that, you can't predict what's going to happen. (November 1, 2011).

In this excerpt, Carlos makes it clear that his idea of returning home is vague at best, with no sense of a specific target he would like to reach before he leaves. His imprecise and ambiguous language in this quote shows that the myth of return represents more of a strategy for the maintenance of one's identity than an actual, concrete plan for returning home.

To some extent, Carlos' strategy of clinging to ties at home while avoiding them in Boston is successful, because he altogether avoids the conflict between his culture and what he perceives to be the culture of the United States. This facilitates his trips home, during which he says he doesn't feel like an outsider at all. He reported that his identity has not changed as a result of living here, so when he visits the Dominican Republic, approximately twice a year, he feels he is "in [his] country with [his] people." However, Carlos' almost complete identification with his home country means that he is alienated from the mainstream population in Boston. In other words, his unwillingness to form and acknowledge social ties here increases his "social distance" from those who do identify with Boston and consider it, in some way, to be home. Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) label this strategy "reactive transnationalism," in which immigrants focus on interactions with kin in the home country "as a reaction to a negative experience of incorporation" (899). This strategy allows the male immigrant to maintain a positive sense of self, especially through the prestige he gains at home by sending remittances. However, the strategy also permits and sustains a lack of familiarity with the United States and the dominant culture, which can lead to general frustration and the distaste for America described by several male respondents. Their strong resistance to incorporating themselves, even in small ways, to the community in Boston reinforced their initial perceptions of America as a cold place that discourages cooperative relationships. Once respondents had cemented their

image of the country as an unfriendly place, they internalized these negative standards and consequently disengaged from strong relationships with *amigos*.

Unlike the men, the women demonstrated their willingness to engage socially with people and places in their new home. Consequently, they were more successful in discovering the opportunities this country has to offer. Silvia Domínguez (2011) posits that "cultural frames based on opportunity and resources" are one of the crucial elements of an upwardly mobile population (19). In other words, a positive outlook on the host society and a perception of opportunities for advancement can facilitate favorable social and economic outcomes. Simply put, optimism can make a difference, as many of my women respondents seemed to understand. They expressed a commitment to optimism in spite of the difficulties of international migration. For example, when I asked Jazmín if it was hard to be here, far away from her country, she responded simply, "No, because if you like it—it's not that hard because I like it [here]. So that makes things not as hard." Jazmín's overall positive attitude toward life in this country helped her to remain hopeful about her experiences here, despite the fact that she works two jobs and has to wake up at 1:45 a.m. to arrive for her early shift at the airport. Similarly, Melisa was so committed to remaining positive here that she looks unfavorably upon those who embrace other strategies. She says knows people who think this country is *maluco* (a mean place) and she believes that they should "do us all a favor and leave," because they bring everyone down.

Not only did the majority of the women seem emotionally invested in Boston, but they also, unlike most of the men, started to invest financially here. Jones-Correa explains that generally, "while men hold to the maxim that 'five dollars spent here means five more years before returning home,' women may begin spending savings in this country," especially because they enjoy the independence afforded to them here (1998a: 172). In addition to delaying a

possible return home, men may also avoid spending money here in order to be able to send more money back, which allows them to maintain their image as the primary provider of the family. Walter et al (2004) write that this role "develops exaggerated importance for [male] day laborers because of the hardships and danger they undergo in order to fulfill that masculine script" (1163). Women, on the other hand, may experience less pressure to provide for their families at home and thus feel more comfortable spending money here. Financial investment in this country further signaled the women's commitment to adjusting to Boston as their new home; the same commitment that led them to be open to forming social networks.

In the case of Lucía, spending some of what she had earned here was important for avoiding the frustrations that men encountered upon conducting such self-sacrificial lifestyles. In her interview, she told me:

> "Men… fight to make money quickly. So they come here, put in a lot of effort, and they get frustrated quickly. They get frustrated. And because of that they feel the desire to go home, well, because they say 'living here doesn't make sense because it's not like in my country,' so they don't enjoy it [here]. So they get frustrated and they get tired quickly. They don't even enjoy [being with] their children or their families. But the women, no, even though we work hard in our jobs, we take a break" (Lucía Interview, January 24, 2012).

Unlike the many of the men in this study, Lucía wants to travel within the U.S. and is willing to expend the resources and the time to do so. She says specifically that she wants to take her son to Disney World. About this trip she says, "You spend a lot of money but you enjoy. As my sister says, it's not worth it to always be saving and not enjoy." Conversely, Yeison, who had been here for four months when I interviewed him, had yet to explore the area at all. He had not been to downtown Boston or even the Aquarium (which is a major Boston attraction, located only one train stop away). Behavior like Yeison's suggests a different level of investment in the reality of the moment from the women, who willingly admitted their desires to explore this country further

and even spend some of their hard-earned wages. In acknowledging the need and desire to establish roots in Boston, women like Lucía open themselves further to the opportunities this country can offer while the men, in refusing to do so, perpetuate their identity as outsiders in this country.

In conclusion, the men and women in my study all had to process new cultural norms, especially with regard to gender and women's independence, upon arriving in this country. However, men who found their status decreased here in comparison with home strategically clung to hopes of returning home, while women embraced their newfound independence and made more firm commitments to staying in the United States. Both strategies represent the ways in which respondents sought to maintain or even boost their self-esteem in light of shifting gender scripts in this country. However, only those men and women who succeeded in re-adjusting their expectations of gender norms were able to open themselves up to the community and form strong social networks in Boston. The next section concludes why these social networks are necessary for both men and women as a defense against the traumas and betrayals common to the wage labor migrants' experience.

Social Networks: A Defense Against Trauma and Betrayal

In the previous section, I established that my male respondents shared an unwillingness to admit that they were putting down roots in this country. However, since they were able to maintain themselves economically without engaging in close ties here, the question remains of why social networks are important for them. In this final section, I explain how prevalent traumas and betrayals in the wage-labor migrant's experience necessitate social networks to mitigate potentially dangerous reactions to these events. Social networks may not be necessary in

day-to-day life, since men were able to find housing, jobs, and entertainment without *amigos*, but in the case of trauma, *amigos* provide important opportunities to process events in a healthy way.

The men in this study, due to their self-inflicted isolation, lacked healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with traumas. As described in earlier chapters, instead of seeking comfort from his friends or family members, Fernando resorted to heavy drinking when he felt lonely in this country. Similarly, Alejandro fell to "vices" that landed him on the street for several weeks. Lastly, when Gabriel's friend stole money from him, he internalized the problem instead of outwardly reacting in any way—seeking neither retribution nor reconciliation. He simply cut off all contact with the friend and shut himself off. Juan and Gerardo also experienced instances of discrimination in the workplace and shared them with me. However, interestingly enough, they were exceptional men who did have strong ties to *amigos*. Consequently, they were both able to brush off the people who betrayed them as anomalies and not as representations of Americans as a whole.

Unlike the respondents described above, other men simply denied having any problems in this country. When I would ask them about the last time they had a problem or had to rely on someone for help, they would respond in brief, insubstantial phrases such as "I didn't." However, these answers seemed inconsistent with the high, self-reported levels of mistrust they felt towards others. Following this logic, I tried to press the issue with some of the men. When I interviewed Carlos, I asked him exactly what type of problem he anticipated having if he engaged more openly with his *amistades*. He responded briefly, "I don't know. Imagine, [just] things." His brusqueness on the subject implied that either his suspicions were not based on events in his past or that he had an unwillingness to share them with me. Based on the prevalence of reported trauma, violence, and betrayals in my interviews, as well as in the literature, the latter

merits serious consideration. Due to expectations for men to appear strong in front of women, as discussed in previous sections, it may be that the male respondents were unwilling to admit to me that they were having problems in this country. However, it is impossible to find out given my capabilities as a female researcher. In any event, even if they have not experienced problems that they believe require social support, their position as low-wage, minority, Spanish-speaking, and sometimes undocumented immigrants can lower self-esteem and leave them vulnerable to future instances of trauma.

Despite the passive stoicism most of the men showed me when I asked them about needing help, there are undeniably negative consequences for not dealing with traumas. The obstacles faced by these immigrants can be painfully challenging for men and women alike. However, while women may reach out to *amigos* for support, men do not create such social outlets. Moreover, research suggests that: "racism and discrimination, which reduce opportunities, make minority and immigrant males more vulnerable to resorting to the utilization of power and control over women" (Domínguez 2011: 154). As demonstrated by the cases of the two abusive husbands (both those of Camila and the friend of Lucía), the danger of this sort of behavior is real and present today in Boston. Moreover, when men cling to their old expectations of gendered behavior through the "myth of return," they are able to justify such injurious actions. Gutman points out to his readers that though "there are many different notions of macho… the one element that is most commonly a part of these definitions is that of wife beating" (1996: 237). Adhering to such ideals of masculinity not only leads to isolation, but also much more serious problems that can negatively affect women. As *machismo* is challenged and Latina women gain independence in this country, the men who cannot or will not change along with them are increasingly left behind, perpetuating the cycle of loneliness and isolation. However, it

is also important to remember that men who act out in such violent ways are not usually aggressive chauvinists—they are typically the products of unfavorable structural forces that cause them to employ detrimental coping strategies.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that challenges to hegemonic masculinity that emerge after the migration to this country can result in a perceived downward shift in status for males, while it can lead female immigrants to feel more independent. Consequently, not only do the men view this country more negatively than women, but they are also less likely to engage with *amigos* or American institutions, possibly due to their perceived "social distance" from a mainstream that negates their inherent dominance. It is in the interest of the entire community to adopt better coping strategies in the face of discrimination to prevent declines in self-esteem and potentially violent behavior. It is similarly important to interact with American institutions and non-immigrants in the community to reduce social distance and adjust expectations of what the "Land of Opportunity" has to offer. The ability to rely on social networks and institutions in the host society for support is important not only for the happiness of individuals, but also for preventing violence and abuse. Due to the fact that the immigrant experience is challenging and renders migrants vulnerable, it is often accompanied by betrayals, trauma, and discrimination, which left unsettled, can lead to problems that extend beyond the individual and negatively affect the entire community.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Seven months ago, I began this study with the intent to examine the effects of employment status, the amount of time since the initial migration, and gender on social networks of Latino immigrants from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador who were living in East Boston. However, as is the case with any qualitative research, my research question morphed significantly as I began to conduct observations and interviews. Studying the effects of employment status proved to be methodologically challenging, since I met most of my contacts in their workplaces and thus, nineteen out of twenty were employed. Moreover, my respondents reported that the majority of the people they knew also had jobs, so they could not refer me to unemployed contacts that I could potentially interview. With regard to the time since the initial migration, this factor proved to be an unreliable predictor of social networks and general happiness in this country. Most of the men had been here for over five years (with Óscar and Yeison being the exceptions), and their levels of social incorporation varied tremendously. While Gerardo had lived here consistently for eleven years and had a large network of *amigos*, Carlos had been here for almost as long (eight years) and maintained that he had no *amigos*. Similarly, Alejandro has lived here for over fifteen years and he was one of the most mistrustful people I met over the course of my research.

While employment status and time since the initial migration proved to be impractical and unreliable variables affecting social networks, gender emerged as an interesting, complex factor that greatly affected these networks among my participants. My final research questions became: "How do social networks shape the processes of migration, initial settlement, and social-psychological and economic adaptation for Colombian, Dominican, and Salvadoran low-wage immigrants in East Boston" and "How do these social networks differ with regard to

73

gender?" In order to address these questions, I outlined the many ways in which men and women both relied on *amistades,* in order to secure housing and employment. Since these ties were seen as non-binding and required little investment, male and female immigrants frequently used these connections to help them settle into their homes in East Boston. However, unlike the women, the men generally avoided relationships with *amigos* and intentionally isolated themselves to avoid getting too attached to people who might betray them. This tendency was augmented by the fact that men experienced a downward shift in prestige and independence upon their arrival in this country, and these two factors almost immediately began to color their perceptions of the United States as a cold, unwelcoming place. Therefore, from the outset, they were suspicious and mistrustful of those around them and unwilling to form close ties with *amigos* in this country.

This thesis is important because, while I address the drawbacks of social networks, and especially relationships with *amigos*, I ultimately conclude that the positives outweigh the negatives. However, this study intentionally avoids normative judgments about the importance of social ties or the nature of one's relationships with others. In the thesis, I make it clear that there is nothing inherently wrong with having few or no *amigos*, as was the case for the majority of male respondents. Only insofar as the absence of *amigos* damages the social-psychological well-being of the immigrant and triggers animosity toward those around him does this lack of intimate relationships become problematic. Unfortunately, a multitude of factors—including low wages, hostile attitudes towards immigrants, language barriers, and sometimes a lack of documentation—make all immigrants vulnerable to depression and lowered self-esteem. When this depression cannot be managed through social support, immigrants, and especially men, are more likely to engage in detrimental behavior such as alcoholism or even violence. Ultimately I conclude that social networks are necessary to prevent these types of conduct.

Implications and Future Areas of Study

Immigration and social networks are broad topics, and it is essential to study them together in order to gain understanding of a growing population that is quickly changing the face of the United States. In this section, I propose several different research methods to be used in future investigations, as well as related topics that merit further study. Such continued research is necessary to expand the breadth of knowledge within these fascinating and highly relevant fields of study.

In future studies, more extended periods of contact with the participants, beyond the interviews and initial notes, could be helpful to the researcher in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the subjects' lives here. More time with the participants could also allow the researcher to attain higher levels of trust with the participants, because as seen in this study, this particular population has issues with trust that are deeply ingrained. A study more longitudinal in nature could result in longer, more open interviews, especially from the most mistrustful of the men. For example, Yeison's interview lasted only twenty-eight minutes, while Juan's lasted over an hour (partially due to the fact that we conducted the interview over lunch, and partially due to the fact that he was eager to share). Had I been able to spend more time with Yeison, especially away from his all-male co-workers, he might have felt more comfortable sharing more intimate answers with me.

Though I was able to obtain personal information from all types of participants, constraints of time and practicality made it impossible for me, as a lone researcher, to spend adequate amounts of time with each participant. Regardless of their gender, any follow-up would be greatly facilitated by having research assistants who could conduct, transcribe, and analyze more interviews and field observations. There is a tremendously diverse population of

immigrants in East Boston, and one researcher cannot possibly study all the factors at play within the community.

In corollary studies to this one, it would also be interesting to have a male researcher conduct interviews with the men and see if the responses varied significantly from the ones I received. Though male participants may have their own set of concerns about sharing their stories with a man, a male sociologist would presumably not be hampered by gender differences perceived between the researcher and the participant. Rodrigo, the owner of the barbershop, presents a perfect example of how talking to the men could result in both meaningful cooperation and frustrating setbacks. As mentioned earlier, Rodrigo refused to do the interview with me, even though he became very used to my presence, knew me by name, and at least claimed to enjoy my visits. One day near the end of my study, he asked me to help him translate a document describing the sanitary codes he needed to follow in the shop from English to Spanish. To me, this gesture represented his willingness to admit that his English was limited and that he needed my help. During this conversation, I attempted to identify with Rodrigo by sharing that I was learning Portuguese and also needed help with my studies. Instead of connecting the parallel situations, he cheekily responded: "If I spoke Portuguese, you could come over to my apartment and we could practice all the time." Such conversation-stopping innuendos often limited my ability to pry deeper into what the barbers told me, especially when they asked me about my boyfriend and when I was going to get married. For this reason, though having a male researcher would not eliminate all the boundaries in the researcher-participant relationship, it could be very helpful in shifting the conversation away from the researcher's personal life.

In addition to new research methods, I would like to propose future areas of study that relate closely to this one. Though I have done my best to represent my respondents' experiences

as they were told to me in this thesis, it was impossible for me to include every detail shared with me. Moreover, since the necessity of preserving my respondents' anonymity was crucial to my study, it made follow-ups with most of them impossible. In future studies, I would like to further explore the exceptional cases among my participants and dissect the ways in which their responses differed from the general pattern. Due to the puzzling nature of the outliers in this study—both women who did not maintain *amigos* here and men who did—it is clear that more research needs to be done to determine if individualistic or structural factors are driving these differences.

An important aspect of the migration not covered in the scope of this thesis is the way immigrants are treated by contacts at home when they maintain communication, or, if they are documented and have the resources to do so, when they visit their countries. Due to a prevalent expectation that migrants—and especially men—in America earn large sums of money, respondents often feel torn or distressed when dealing with people at home who frequently ask for gifts or loans. The situation is made worse by the fact that "[r]eturning migrants are often conspicuously laden with prestigious consumer items. They downplay the exploitative or humiliating conditions they may have endured and instead portray the United States as a comfortable place to make easy money" (Walter et al 2004: 1165). Their minimizing of difficult conditions perpetuates the beliefs about the "easy money" that can be made in the United States. When migrants are unhappy in Boston, but also feel uncomfortable returning to their home communities as a result of a shifted identity, they may feel that they do not belong anywhere—a thought that can certainly depress self-esteem and make immigrants less likely to form bonds with *amigos*. Rodrigo, the owner of the barbershop, told me on the first day we met: "You know why I hate going to the Dominican Republic? They all want money, and I can't give it to them."

The same men who are clinging to the "myth of return" may lose their sense of belonging in either country when confronted with such unattainable expectations for economic success. Therefore, the context of reception upon the migrants' return home is equally important as factors in the United States for shaping self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Not only do interactions with needy friends and family members at home affect immigrants' willingness to engage with social networks in the country of origin, but like the formation of social networks here, the process is also gendered. Men reported feeling more uncomfortable with their compatriots from home's expectations of their financial stability than did the women. Though some women also mentioned such interactions, they were not so emotionally taxing as to make them feel that they didn't want to return home.

The effects of gender on social networks and overall development of Latino immigrants in East Boston cannot be over-stated. Not only are the differences important for sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists, but they are important for policy makers as well. Walter and his colleagues contend that: "the gendered experience of the international migrant labor system is rarely assessed in policy making," and based on the conclusions of my thesis, this is a gross oversight (2004: 1160). As I have demonstrated, social networks are beneficial to immigrants in two ways. First, they provide immigrants with instrumental ties, or *amistades,* who facilitate migration and initial settlement for both men and women. Second, *amigos*, who are long-term, loyal friends, can be essential for providing support in the context of conditions unfavorable to the immigrants, such as low wages, discrimination, language barriers, and undocumented status. Though men are more resistant to forming these ties, in the long run strong social networks are essential coping mechanisms for dealing with these unfavorable conditions in healthy ways. The advantages of social networks for immigrants, as outlined in this thesis, need

to be considered by social service agencies dealing with Latino immigrant populations, and strategies to include men in beneficial networks need to be devised. It is also important not to overlook the potential drawbacks of relationships with *amigos*. As demonstrated in my thesis, the potential for betrayals is real, especially in the context of the low-wage labor migrants. Activists in the community need to extend their reach to both men and women, but they must be careful to integrate them slowly, so as to avoid quick, categorical rejection of participation by the men.

In conclusion, this thesis serves to trace some of the mechanisms and processes that create a gendered discrepancy in social networks within the Latino community in East Boston. My study proves that gender is one of the most important factors involved in shaping social networks and establishing roots in this country. Overall, social networks provide positive outlets for coping with the exceedingly difficult realties of being a wage-labor migrant, and the benefits of these outlets trump the possibility for negative betrayals. Though my research provides an in-depth look at the factors that shape these networks, there is still far more to be studied if both male and female immigrants are to be included in the system and becoming willing to engage with both *amistades* and *amigos* in this country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ainslie, Ricardo C. 2002. "The Plasticity of Culture and Psychodynamic and Psychosocial Processes in Latino Immigrant Families." Pp. 289- 301 in *Latinos: Remaking America*, edited by Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and Mariela M. Páez.

Alba, Richard and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Almeida, Joanna, Beth E. Molnar, Ichiro Kawachi, and S. V. Subramanian. 2009. "Ethnicity and nativity status as determinants of perceived social support: Testing the concept of familism." *Social Science & Medicine* 68 (10): 1852-1858.

Bashi, Vilna Francine. 2007. *Survival of the Knitted: Immigrant Social Networks in a Stratified World.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Domínguez, Silvia. 2011. *Getting Ahead: Social Mobility, Public Housing, and Immigrant Networks*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Domínguez, Silvia and Amy Lubitow. 2008. "Transnational Ties, Poverty, and Identity: Latin American Immigrant Women in Public Housing." *Family Relations* 57: 419-430.

Durand, Jorge and Douglas S. Massey. 2006. "What We Learned From the Mexican Migration Project." Pp. 1-14 in *Crossing the Border: Research From the Mexican Migration Project,* edited by Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Espinoza, Roberta. 2010. "The Good Daughter Dilemma: Latinas Managing Family and School Demands." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 9 (4): 317-330.

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (6): 1360-1380.

Gutman, Matthew. 1996. *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Hardy-Fanta, Carol. 1993. *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Itzigsohn, José and Silvia Giorguli-Saucedo. 2005. "Incorporation, Transnationalism, and Gender: Immigrant Incorporation and Transnational Participation as Gendered Processes." *International Migration Review* 39 (4): 895-920.

Jones-Correa, Michael. 1998. *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

———. 1998. "Different Paths: Gender, Immigration and Political Participation." *International Migration Review* 32 (2): 326-349.

Levitt, Peggy, and B. Nadya Jaworsky. 2007. "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 129-156.

Marrow, Helen B. 2011. *New Destination Dreaming: Immigration, Race, and Legal Status in the Rural American South*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. 2002. "Principles of Operation: Theories of International Migration." Pp. 7-23 in *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration.* New York: Russell Sage.

Menjívar, Cecilia. 2000. *Fragmented Ties: Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

———. 2002. "The Ties That Heal: Guatemalan Immigrant Women's Networks and Medical Treatment." *International Migration Review* 36 (2): 437-466.

Noguera, Pedro, Aída Hurtado and Edward Fergus (Eds). 2012. *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys*. New York: Routledge.

Portes, Alejandro and Patricia Landolt. 1996. "The Downside of Social Capital." *The American Prospect* 26:18-21.

Portes, Alejandro and Rubén Rumbaut. 2006. *Immigrant America: A Portrait.* 3d ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California.

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sánchez G., Gonzalo. 2001. "Introduction: Problems of Violence, Prospects for Peace." Pp. 1- 38 in *Violence in Colombia 1990-2000*, edited by Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda, and Gonzalo Sánchez G. Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc.

"U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts." Quickfacts.census.gov. Last modified 08 July 2009. http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25/2507000.html.

Valenzuela, Abel and María C. Olivares Pasillas. 2012. "Searching for Ideal Masculinity." Pp. 79-97 in *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys*, edited by Pedro Noguera, Aída Hurtado, and Edward Fergus. New York: Routledge.

Walter, Nicholas, Phillippe Bourgois and H. Margarita Loinaz. 2004. "Masculinity and Undocumented Labor Migration: Injured Latino Day Laborers in San Francisco." *Social Science & Medicine* 59: 1159-1168.

Way, Niobe, Carlos Santos, and Alexandra Cordero. 2012. "'Sometimes You Need To Spill Your Heart Out To Somebody.'" Pp. 255- 275 in *Invisible No More: Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Men and Boys*, edited by Pedro Noguera, Aída Hurtado, and Edward Fergus. New York: Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Respondents

Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Current Occupation/ Place of Employment	Country of Origin
1.	Rosa Ferrera	Female	33	Convenience Store Owner	Colombia
2.	Carlos García	Male	25	Barber	Dominican Republic
3.	Fernando Marín	Male	39 (?)	Barber	Dominican Republic
4.	Laura Gómez	Female	33	Convenience Store Employee	Colombia
5.	Óscar Hernández	Male	28	Restaurant	El Salvador
6.	Gerardo Ávila	Male	32	Restaurant	Colombia
7.	Pablo Ferrera	Male	51	Restaurant Owner	Colombia
8.	Manuela Cruz	Female	39	Daycare Assistant/ Cake-Maker	Colombia
9.	Yeison Mendoza	Male	22	Barber	Dominican Republic
10.	Gabriel Vasquez	Male	22	Barber	Dominican Republic
11.	Silvia Padilla	Female	21	Waitress	El Salvador
12.	Juan Guillermo	Male	23	Server/Bartender	Colombia
13.	Miguel Ruiz	Male	24	Restaurant	El Salvador
14.	Alejandro Sandoval	Male	30 (?)	?	El Salvador
15.	Melisa Reyes	Female	37	Party Rental Company	Colombia
16.	Paula Álvarez	Female	31	Hair Stylist/ Beautician	Dominican Republic
17.	María Santiago	Female	30	Hair Stylist/ Beautician	Dominican Republic
18.	Jazmín de la Vega	Female	27	Hairstylist/ Beautician	Dominican Republic
19.	Camila Maldonado	Female	41	Currently unemployed (due to an injury)	El Salvador
20.	Lucía Valdez	Female	27	Religious Book Seller	El Salvador

Appendix B: Interview Guide

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION HISTORY
1.   Can you start by telling me who you are, what brought you here, a little bit about yourself? (Ice breaker question)
2.   Where are you from?

Initiation of Migration Process
3.   When did you come to this country? To Boston?
      a.   How did you initially get the idea to come to the U.S.? To Boston? When did you first start thinking about it?
      b.   Did you know anyone living in the U.S. and/or Boston when you made the decision?
      c.   Who did you talk to about moving? Did those people support you? Did anyone *not* want you to migrate here? Why not? Did anyone really want you to?

Migration Process
4.   To what part of the United States did you arrive? How did you decide on that neighborhood/city? Did anyone help you along the way?
      a.   Did you live anywhere else before you came to Boston? If so, what made you decide to move here? Who helped you make the change?
5.   Did you come with anyone else? If so, whom?
6.   Are you married/Were you ever married?
7.   Do you have children? How many? Where are they?
8.   Did you leave anyone behind? If so, whom? (Probes: Grandparents, parents, children, friends, spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend)

Settlement Process
9.   How did you feel when you first arrived? (Probes: Scared, excited, optimistic, pessimistic?) Can you go back to that moment and remember what you were doing?
10.   Did you know anyone when you arrived?
11.   Where/with whom did you live when you arrived?
12.   Did everything go smoothly? Were there challenges that you weren't expecting? Who helped you deal with them?
13.   How did you get basic information (where to get groceries, how to apply for jobs, information on public transportation?)
14.   Did you experience any problems that you weren't expecting?
15.   Who helped you to adjust to life here over time? Both at the beginning and then even as you got more settled in?

LIFE IN BOSTON (POST-MIGRATION)
Living Arrangements Now
16.   Where do you live now? How did you find your apartment/house? Who helped you? Do you remember how long it took to find your home?
17.   Do you live with anyone else?
18.   What language do you usually speak at home?
19.   Does anyone else share the apartment or house that you live in?
20.   Do you live close to any friends and/or relatives?
Employment

21. Were you employed in _____ (home country)?
      a. If so, what did you do there?
      b. How much money did you make?
      c. Was it hard to leave your old job?
22. Are you employed now?
      a. If so, where do you work and what is your job there?
      b. How much money do you make now?
      c. Can you tell me what other jobs you have worked in and when since you've lived here?
      d. Have there been any periods when you didn't have a job?
            i. If so, what were those times like? Who did you rely on for help?
           ii. Can you remember what you did during the day while you were unemployed?
      e. Do you like the people you work with? Do you ever talk to them outside of work? Have they ever helped you personally (if you were sick, had to miss a day, needed childcare, etc)?

Ties to Home
23. Do you keep in touch with friends or family in your place of origin?
      a. If so, how do you keep in touch? (Phone, email, letters, etc.) How often? With whom?
      b. Do you ever wish you could talk to them more often?
      c. Do you send anything to your family? Do they send anything to you? How much and how often?
      d. Do you plan to return?
      e. Have you purchased a home or land or property there?
      f. Do you or anyone in your family return for visits?
      g. Do you participate in any groups or clubs related to _____(country of origin)?
24. What do you miss most about _____ (country of origin)?
25. Do you ever feel lonely living far away from home? What helps you to deal with those feelings the most?
26. Have you ever helped anyone from home move here? Can you tell me more about that? What kinds of conversations did you have with that person? How did you help?

Social Networks in Boston
27. When you have down time, who do you like to spend it with?
      a. Who are your closest friends/relatives?
28. When you are with your friends and family, where do you like to go? (Probes: Restaurants, parks, movie theaters, community centers, cafés, bars, churches, etc)
29. When you are with your friends, what language do you usually speak in? Do you ever speak "Spanglish"?
30. Are you friends with any immigrants from other countries?
      a. Any other regions? (Brazil, Haiti)
31. Are you friends with any (native-born) Americans? Probe if needed: whites/blacks/specify ethnicities
32. When you hang out with friends, are there usually only _____ (men/women) there? Or is it mixed?

33. When you need a favor (ie babysitting, buying groceries, getting a ride, a problem with a friend or a child) who do you call?
    a. Are they usually men/women?
34. The last time you had a serious problem, who did you call? Can you remember how it felt to ask for help from that person?
    a. Was this person able to help? How?
35. Do you feel supported by these friends and relatives?
36. Do you feel comfortable asking your friends/relatives for help?
    a. Are there any times when you would not feel comfortable asking? Can you describe why?
37. Do you think a (man/woman-- opposite gender of participant) would ask for help in the same way?
38. Anything else?