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University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado

From Mexico to the USA:
Mental Trauma Throughout the Migrant Journey

A Thesis/Capstone
Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment for Graduation with Honors Distinction and
the Degree of Bachelor of Arts / Science

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May 2022

Abstract

The journey across the U.S.-Mexico border symbolizes a transcendental rite of passage for many Latino migrants in their search for the “American Dream”. Anecdotes about these experiences reflect both the dreams and aspirations as well as the fears and dangers faced by migrants in their route north. However, the migrant population experiences many obstacles and challenges throughout their journey that has contributed to signs of trauma such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Not much research has been conducted to examine the reasons behind migration or the effects on their mental health. The purpose of this inquiry is to explore and understand the reality behind immigration and help information provide better services and support to these individuals.

Acknowledgments

As a first-generation Latina, it feels rewarding finishing my thesis, McNair manuscript, undergraduate research, legislative internship at the Capitol, earning my bachelor's degree, and being accepted into 7 graduate schools and programs. I can proudly say that I am a scholar and I'm so excited for what's to come, especially in graduate school. First of all, I wouldn't be where I am without God's guidance in every step of my journey. I would also love to thank my family who has always supported me in every moment of my academic journey, without my family I would be lost. I want to thank the McNair staff because without them I wouldn't be where I am. They have guided me through my research from the proposal to the IRB process to my presentations and especially my graduate school process. Lastly, I want to thank every professor within the Hispanic Studies department. They became my support system, mentors, and friends. I am so thankful to have taught and guided by the best professors, they have made my time at UNC memorable.

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Introduction

In 2019 a story made headlines across media channels of a man and his daughter who died crossing the Rio Grande in efforts to make it to the United States, a place that migrants view as a land of opportunities. The family sold all their belongings, such as their motorcycle, in order to move their family from El Salvador to the United States. The family's goal was to save up for a home in the United States and have safety and more opportunities (Velarde et al., 2019). They had traveled more than 1,000 miles when the family encountered a tragic obstacle. The father, Óscar Alberto Martínez, and 23-month-old daughter, Valeria, were found face down along the banks of the Rio Grande, while her tiny head was tucked inside his shirt and arm wrapped over his neck (Ahmed & Semple, 2019). The image represents a disturbing reality migrants face on their perilous journey to the United States, as well as the tragic consequences that often go unseen throughout the experience (Ahmed & Semple, 2019). Cases like this are very common along the border. ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents are constantly gathering bodies of men, women, and children that do not make it to the other side of the U.S.-Mexico fence (Valencia, 2017).

The migrant journey is an essential component of many Latinos' migratory history in the United States. The voyage begins even before their departure when individuals experience stress, depression, or a violent event in their place of origin. Then the mental burden carries on through their dangerous trek, particularly if they experience traumatic events such as witnessing death, rape, and dehydration, to mention a few. The trauma continues with the aftereffects in the U.S. Not every migrant endures a similar journey, but many have experienced traumatic events that left a mark on their everyday lives. Any migrant who chooses to take the journey has the fear of

what lies ahead of them. It is essential to recognize the trauma of what has been experienced throughout this migratory trail.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this research is to allow individuals to share their migrant story in order to give them a platform and help find different ways in which they can be better assisted throughout their journey. This research can help create advocacy for a topic that tends to be forgotten in the Latino community, as well as inform other individuals about the reality of the migrant journey. Overall, my goal is to give my participants a platform and share their stories to a larger audience. The purpose of this study, in the form of interviews, is to understand the phenomenon of the migrant's journey through the perspective of individuals who experienced every aspect of the journey from beginning to end. In my research, I am seeking to understand what kind of mental trauma occurs during the migrant journey among individuals from Mexico. This research can help communities provide better services and support to individuals, because mental trauma tends to be forgotten about in the Latino community.

Literature Review

Much of the population in the United States comes from a different nation, and since the birth of the country, the United States was primarily built by immigrants who came from Europe. People from all over the world continue to migrate from their place of origin and make their way to the United States. Mexico is the top origin country of the migrant population, and in 2017, 11.2 million immigrants living in the United States were from Mexico, accounting for 25% of all U.S. immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2019). Immigrants usually seek entrance into the United States for an obvious reason; they are seeking a better life in different aspects. However, the migrant journey has caused trauma among immigrants in different forms. The migrant journey

begins before their departure, then carries on through their traveling journey, and finishes at their destination with the aftereffects. It is important to shed light on the experience many migrants face during their journey for a better life. Not much research has been conducted to examine the reasons behind migration, or the medical and mental health of these migrants. This research can help people provide better services and support to these individuals, because mental trauma tends to be forgotten about in the Latino community.

Mental Trauma

There are many illnesses, diagnoses, and other criteria that fall under mental trauma. For the purpose of this research, it is important to understand and define what falls under mental trauma during the migrant journey. It seems that recurring patterns of depression, anxiety, and stress tend to be the most common trauma among immigrants during their journey (Helu-Brown & Barrio, 2020). According to the fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA, 2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), there are a variety of disorders that fall under depressive disorders. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) included "disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, dysthymia, depressive disorder due to another medical condition, and other specified depressive disorder" under the category of depressive disorders. These disorders tend to have similarities and differences that distinguish them. These disorders share the common emotions of sadness, emptiness, or irritable moods, accompanied by somatic and cognitive changes that cause an effect on the individual's capacity to function throughout their daily routines (APA, 2013). However, duration, timing, or presumed etiology tends to differentiate the disorders from one another. The diagnostics for depressive disorders tend to be similar, and some symptoms are more visible than others. Some of the different symptoms include: severe recurrent temper outbursts manifested verbally and/or behaviorally

that are out of proportion in intensity or duration, temper outbursts are inconsistent with developmental level and occur, on average, three or more times per week, and these outbursts tend to be observable by the people who spend a significant amount of time with the individual (APA, 2013). Combinations of these symptoms and other factors help distinguish the exact depressive disorder among an individual.

Another common mental disorder that is found among immigrants is anxiety, and this disorder is seen in different forms as well. Anxiety disorders usually include emotions of excessive fear, tension, and wariness. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), “fear is the emotional response to real or perceived imminent threat, whereas anxiety is anticipation of future threat” (para. 1). Threat is felt through anxiety and fear, which creates a similar sense of tension within an individual. Fear and anxiety overlap, but they also differ because fear tends to be associated with “surges of autonomic arousal necessary for fight or flight, thoughts of immediate danger, and escape behaviors”, while anxiety is often associated with “muscle tension and vigilance in preparation for future danger and cautious/avoidant behaviors” (APA, 2013, para. 1). Within an anxiety disorder there are different categories that help distinguish a form of anxiety experienced when tied to an individual. Some examples of anxiety disorders include panic attacks, phobias, and other detailed disorders.

The final common disorders among immigrants are trauma and stress related disorders. Trauma and stress related disorders fall under the category in which individuals have exposure to a traumatic or stressful event. Some examples of these disorders include reactive attachment disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), acute stress disorder, and adjustment disorders. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), “psychological distress following exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is quite variable” (para.2). Although, many individuals

who have experienced a traumatic or stressful event “exhibit a phenotype in which the most prominent clinical characteristics are anhedonia and dysphoria symptoms, externalizing angry and aggressive symptoms, or dissociative symptoms” (APA, 2013, para.2). An example of a stress or trauma related disorder that is common among the migrant population is PTSD. Individuals are exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence by directly experiencing or witnessing the event (APA, 2013). Traumatic events tend to occur before the migrant journey because individuals experience violence, hunger, etc., in their place of origin and traumatic events occur during migration when crossing the border. Some of the most common symptoms associated with the traumatic event include: (1) recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the event, (2) recurrent distressing dreams related to the event, (3) dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks), (4) psychological distress at exposure to internal/external cues that symbolize or resemble the event, (5) avoidance of internal/external reminders, or (6) persistent negative emotional state (APA, 2013). However, individuals experience some symptoms more than others, so it is important to seek help from professionals to diagnose any disorder.

The Migrant Journey

The migrant journey begins at one’s country of origin. Migrants come into the United States from all over the world for a variety of reasons. One of the common theories that explains the reason for migration is the push-pull theory. This theory emphasizes that the economic conditions in the sending and receiving country create push-pull factors. For example, people in Mexico could have a hard time having a stable wage, so they are pushed to migrate to the United States, and they create a pull effect in offering a stable wage that isn't offered in Mexico. However, that is an example and some common push factors include low productivity,

unemployment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement, while common pull factors include things that seem promising to a migrant such as opportunities for better employment, and higher wages. (Clauss & Ehlers, 2019). This theory is relevant to the cause of migration because it gives an explanation to some of the reasons why migrants are pushed out of their country of origin.

Violence has pushed many migrants to flee their hometowns, because they face extortions, rape, gangs, and other serious crime. A study conducted by Keller et al., (2017) sought to examine pre-migration trauma exposure, such as the reasons for leaving their home country and migrants' current mental health function. Traumatic events including violent acts, sexual violence, death threats, murder of family members, extortion, and kidnapping were common in their place of origin. One third of participants (32.2%) reported that a family member had been murdered, death threats towards themselves (45.4%) or their family (51.9%), extortion (33%) and domestic violence (29%). However, violence is not the only traumatic event that migrants encounter, because migrants are financially unstable which causes stress among their households.

Yohaina, a twenty-three-year-old woman from Villanueva Cortes, described her condition in her hometown as financially insecure and high criminal activity from the gang, which was traumatic for workers like herself (Galindo & Lusk, 2017). The final straw for Yohainia was being raped, and she did not report it to the police, because it was dangerous for her family. According to Yohainia, "Sometimes they would leave them (the bodies) out for display; other times they would 'disappear' people after they dismembered them and inter them in clandestine cemeteries." (Galindo & Lusk, 2017, p 15). An individual can experience PTSD from this experience, because one of the symptoms includes exposure to death, serious injury, or

sexual violence by directly experiencing or witnessing the event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The second part of the migrant journey includes the actual migration to the United States. Traveling to the United States tends to be the hardest and most traumatizing part of the journey, because migrants encounter many obstacles such as dehydration, injury, pain, violence, fear, and death. Exposure to physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual violence during the migration crossing has been reported among undocumented immigrants (Peña et al., 2017). There are many tactics that are enforced at the U.S.-Mexico border that makes the journey harder for migrants. According to Jusionyte (2018), fences, bridges, drainage structures, observation zones, boat ramps, lighting and ancillary power systems, and remote video surveillance are used by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection as tactical infrastructure. This allows them to capture illicit activity on the border.

Many of these tactics have led migrants to take more dangerous trails in which their life is at greater risk. Migrants are being pushed into geographically and environmentally difficult desert and mountain areas, and they rely on guides that tend to lead to robberies, kidnapping, physical abuse, and rape (Jusionyte, 2018). The death of migrants along the Tuscan border is common; between June 2013 and December 2016, 616 bodies were discovered (Koleski et al., 2019). Environmental factors have led migrants to encounter harsh physical injuries or death, such as dehydration from their exposure to prolonged heat. The efforts to secure the U.S.-Mexico border have made the immigration journey risky that various migrants would turn themselves over to the ICE officers to avoid dying on the border (Valencia, 2017). Every year, thousands of individuals are forced to engage in this journey seeking a better life, and as efforts to secure the

U.S.-Mexico border increase, so does the number of deaths (Valencia, 2017), because the journey becomes so intense that migrants cannot handle it anymore.

Many individuals have suffered during the journey, including experiencing dangerous heat or lack of water. A lack of physical needs along the anxiety of the journey, a lack of shelter, and the physical exertion through the journey tend to contribute to physical exhaustion, often coupled with a lack of physical support, such as shoes (Clauss-Ehlers, 2019). “A nurse, who regularly assists distressed migrants, states that the stressors of crossing the desert on foot are so intense, that ‘if migrants have crossed the desert, their emotional health is very affected by that experience’” (Crocker, 2015, p. 4). According to Crocker (2015), fear and trauma were the most common emotional experiences related to the crossing, which migrants described as a period of extremely heightened anxiety. Migrants tend to lack control in improving their own conditions, and traumatic experiences cause feelings of helplessness, anxiety, guilt, and deep sadness during the journey across the border (Crocker, 2015).

Post-Migration

The final step of the migrant journey includes the arrival in the place of destination in the United States. Migrants not only face the physical demands from the journey, but they also face acculturation, assimilation, and the possibility of deportation. Despite arriving in a country that they believe will offer protection and opportunities, migrants continue to be haunted by their past and by recurring traumatic experience, such as losing friends, leaving families behind, meeting unreliable coyotes, and beginning a new life in a foreign place (Patt & Green, 2017, p. 783). Many migrants are left to heal their own wounds, because they do not have the funds to seek medical attention (Patt & Green, 2017).

However, much of the stressors and trauma that migrants face in their place of destination are associated with a number of factors such as the lack of hospitality, social seclusion, isolation, unemployment, financial instability, limited job skills or English proficiency, a lack of control over life, and culture shock (Patt & Green, 2017, p. 785). Securing stable employment has been one of the biggest challenges for the migrants because they lack proper legal documentation. Many immigrants become frustrated and impotent towards the legal barriers that prevent them from securing more stable and remunerative employment (Crocker, 2015). Migrants tend to work long hours and multiple jobs in order to survive financially, thus many migrants experience feelings of stress, hopelessness, sadness, and even trauma during periods of transition (Crocker, 2015). According to Crocker (2015), some of the common stressors include evictions, overcrowded living conditions, temporary homelessness, and reliance on soup kitchens and food banks. Furthermore, many migrant families face financial stress because they send remittances to their families in their home countries.

Another event that causes anxiety among immigrants is the possibility of detention and deportation. According to Crocker (2015), “deportation and detention carried acute emotional responses, which include trauma, loneliness, fear, and sadness, both for the person directly involved as well as for family members who faced concomitant emotional and financial challenges” (p. 6). Undocumented individuals tend to be most commonly detained during their initial crossing, on routine traffic stops, and raids within their workplace. In detention centers, human rights violations such as physical and verbal abuse, lack of legal counsel, and inhumane conditions have been reported (Androff & Tavassoli, 2012). For example, a woman that was held overnight in a detention center begged for water and border patrol officers refused to provide water while they mocked her (Androff & Tavassoli, 2012). In short-term custody, some of the

tactics used against immigrants tend to include the denial of using the restroom or the denial to call a family member. Additionally, deportees and their families are confronted with the emotional stressors of family separation, such as feelings of isolation, shame, and guilt, and living in uncertainty (Pena et al., 2017). Thus, family separations create an impact on an immigrant family because the possibility of being detained or deported grows stronger.

Family separation not only occurs when a family member is detained or deported, but many migrants experience depression from leaving their place of origin, customs, and traditions. The primary emotions migrants associated with family separations were loneliness, frustration, and sadness, which led to longer-term depression (Crocker, 2015). In the study conducted by Crocker (2015), 40% of participants were separated from a child or spouse for at least one year during their migration experience or faced on-going separation from siblings and parents. Migrants make the effort to stay in contact with their family via regular phone calls or internet communication, but the physical distance creates strained emotional connections with children, siblings, and parents (Crocker, 2015). However, many migrants face challenges in trying to communicate with family members due to the limited access of technology, electricity, or services (Crocker, 2015).

Methods

The central focus of this study is to engage a small narrative inquiry in which I collected narrative data in the form of an interview. The oral history behind the interviews is significant to the research because the storyteller is both the interpreter and the central figure and gives meaning and interpretation to lived experiences (Bruner, 1991). Oral history is able to use imagery and metaphors that allow the researcher to understand how the storyteller makes meaning of their lived experiences (Kirmayer, 2000). A narrative interview differs from the

structured interview, which has a detailed series of questions, while a narrative interview is more open than that of a semi-structured one. Thus, the goal of the narrative interview in this study is to get the interviewee to feel free and share their experiences, stories, and anything else while adding a question if needed.

Participants

The central participant for this narrative inquiry will be recruited from community organizations working with Latino migrants in rural areas of Colorado. Alianza NORCO, whose mission is to strengthen and empower the immigrant community by providing them valuable resources, and the Immigrant and Refugee Center have shown interest in working on this project. Within these organizations, the main investigator will get in contact with supervisors in order to set up a time to present the significance of the project and address any questions regarding the research. The presentation will most likely be given in Spanish in order for the community to fully understand the significance of the research. After the presentation, the main investigator will directly speak with individuals who have shown interest and collect their contact information. In order for them to have confidentiality from the start, the investigator only collects their first name, and if they choose to move forward with the interview, then they will be assigned a pseudonym. Flyers will be hung up throughout the organizations that explain the purpose of the research and contact information in case individuals rather speak with the investigator at a different time.

Before continuing with the interview, consent shall be gained by handing out a consent form that will be reviewed before it is signed. The consent form will be explained in both languages in order for interested individuals to fully understand the details of the research and interview. The main investigator will answer any other questions that interested individuals may

have before consenting and guide them towards proper consent. Once the explanation is over, the investigator will give the interested individual a form to sign if they agree to continue, and it will be handed back to the investigator. No specific individual will be chosen to be the central participant for the study, but they must meet the requirement for being a migrant from Mexico and above 18 years of age. At the beginning of the interview, the investigator shall remind the participant that they can withdraw consent at any time, and that they can share what they only want the investigator to know, as well as skip any question that they do not wish to answer.

Data Gathering

The interview will be through either through a phone call, Zoom call, or in-person if the regulations allow it. There are new regulations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that focus on social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), some of these regulations include smaller gatherings in which individuals remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear masks, implement hygiene rules such as frequent hand washing and sanitation, do not share objects, and come from the same local communities/towns. The interview will take place in the most comfortable location for the participant, whether that's via the internet or in person, to encourage them to share as much as they would like to. Possible locations include an organization center, via ZOOM, or anywhere that allows for a formal yet comfortable interview. There will be a collection of data through recordings and writing documentation of emotions or body language reactions. There is not a specific length of time needed during the interview, and it will go for as long as it needs to be. The only cost associated with this research is the cost of any meal or coffee during the interview with the participant and a 20-dollar gift card for participating in the interview, so there is no significant funding required.

Data Interpretation

After the data is gathered, the interview will need to be transcribed and translated. Then, NVIVO, which is a coding software, will be used to code the transcriptions. The interview will be analyzed, and the goal is to find connections with the literature review and better understand the reality of the migrant journey.

An important aspect of ensuring protection to the participants is maintaining confidentiality. Keeping that in mind, any data that will be used to identify the participant and their narrative inquiry will be kept under careful protection. Therefore, pseudonyms will be used to insure their protection. Information such as birthdays, visa number, legal status, address, or name will not be collected. My advisor and I will be the only ones to have access to any information the participant has provided, however, everything will be saved on my laptop which is secured with my fingerprint and a password.

The potential risks for this study are significant, meaning that any harm or discomfort felt during this study can occur at any period during the interview. These may arise in the form of emotional discomfort, the possibility of connecting to any unpleasant memories attached to their experience and potential trauma. The participant will be reminded that they can withdraw consent at any time, and they can share what they want us to know. At the end of the interview, there will be debriefing in order to ensure that the participant feels comfortable with what happened during the interview. The participant will be provided resources and guidance to anything that can help assure that they will be at peace after the interview.

Discussion

Through the analysis of the narrative there were 3 factors that emerged during the journey. They form the basis in how we can understand the journey from the point of view of the migrant and how each factor played a role in trauma that was endured. After coding and reviewing the interview transcriptions and notes, there were three emergent factors in each point of the journey:

1. *Financial struggles in place of origin*
2. *Border abuses*
3. *Unstable employment in the United States*

Financial Struggles in Place of Origin

There are many reasons why immigrants decide to leave their country of origin. In the case of our participant, who will be referred to as participant 1, financial struggles were the number one reason why they decided to immigrate to the United States. Participant 1 left their country of origin because they stated, “Quería un mejor vida”, which translates to “I wanted a better life”. Participant 1 believed that their life in Mexico was too hard to make a living wage and believed that their best chances to a better life was in the United States. Participant 1 stated, “Me vine porque en México no haces vida. El dinero no rinde, y con lo que ganas jamas podras hacer casa”, which translates to, “I came [to the United States] because in Mexico you can't make a living. The money doesn't last and with what you earn you'll never be able to build your own house”. Migrants believe there is little to no social mobility in Mexico, so their best hope is to migrate to the United States. The participant emphasized that their ultimate goal was to make

enough money to build a house in Mexico and simply have a much better way of living, this was their ‘American Dream’.

Another reason as to why they struggle financially was because they had limited room to advance in their country of origin. Participant 1 believed that they would not be able to progress in society without family status, education, or money. Participant 1 stated, “En México no avances si no vienes de familia con dinero porque quizás compras tu lugar, y los que avancen sin familia de dinero probablemente consiguieron ese dinero de una manera que no es honrada”, which translates to, “In Mexico you do not advance if you do not come from a family with money because you can buy your place [within society], and those who advance without a family of money, they probably got that money in a way that is not honorable”.

Border Abuses

As mentioned in the literature review, the border crossing tends to be the hardest and most traumatizing part of the migrant journey. Immigrants arrive in the United States in different ways. Some examples include a working visa, tourist visa, asylum, or illegally, which is the case of many migrants. Individuals who enter the United States illegally experience a migration journey that can be dangerous for several reasons. Participant 1 was able to share their border crossing experience and how it has affected them.

Participant 1 stated,

“Yo cruce por un desierto. Camine 5 días por el desierto en huaraches porque estábamos comiendo (descansando) y me quite los zapatos, en ese momento llegó la migra, me eche a correr y no alcancé agarrar mi mochila con mis zapatos” ... “uno sube monañas, por

las piedras y espinas en tierra caliente” ... “cuando llegue, aun a los cinco meses todavia me salian espinas de los pies”.

In other words, the participant walked five days through the desert in sandals because the border patrol found them, and they began to run. There was so much adrenaline in trying not to get caught by border patrol, so he forgot his backpack that had his tennis shoes. The participant walked through mountains, rocks on a hot surface, and even after five months upon his arrival, he was still picking splinters out of his feet. Participant 1 stated:

“En el momento no sentia dolor, pero horas después mire mis pies llenos de sangre y me pulsaban, sentía que en cualquier momento me iba dejar caer. Pero no dije nada porque si digo algo me dejan ahi, y no pensaba quedarme a morir o regresar porque ya estaba aquí”.

This translates to, “In the moment I didn’t feel any pain, but a few hours later I saw my feet covered in blood and pulsed from pain, I felt that I was going to let myself fall at any moment. But I didn’t say anything because if I did, they would leave me, and I didn’t plan on dying or turning around because I had made it this far”. In the literature, it was common for them to hold the pain in or not vocalize it because there were other individuals around that had it worse than them. It is important to let our participant know that anything encountered during their crossing experience is valid and should not be undermined simply because ‘it wasn’t as bad as others’.

In the literature it was noted that immigrants are exposed to physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual violence during their border crossing and that was the case among the participant 1. They stated,

“Yo me fui con el poco dinero que tengo, pero los que están a cargo hacen lo que sea para quitarte lo poco que tienes. Un día tenía hambre y me dijeron que había huevos, pero serían 50 pesos cada uno cuando en mi pueblo el kilo cuesta 30 pesos. Es triste porque deberían echarte la mano pero solo te joden”.

In other words, the participant explains how they left their hometown with very little money, but the people who are in charge of crossing you find a way to take that money away from them. The participant describes how one day he was very hungry, and the person in charge said there were eggs, but they were 50 pesos each, while in his hometown a kilo (about 14 eggs) is worth 30 pesos. Participant 1 emphasized how it's sad because those people should lend a hand and support you, but instead make the journey so much harder on you. In the literature we found that “many immigrants must pay large sums of money to hire guides and then also risk mistreatment by these guides who can easily exploit them” (Ornelas et al., pg. 291, 2020).

Unstable Employment in the United States

Throughout the literature, we have seen that unemployment continued to be a form of trauma once migrants arrived in the United States. One of the most common factors in securing more stable and remunerative employment is legal status. This was the case for participant 1. Participant 1 stated, “Llegando aquí, te conformas con cualquier trabajo, maltrato, o lo que sea porque lo menos que quieres es llamar la atención” which translates to “arriving to the United States, you conform to whatever job, maltreatment, or whatever because the last thing you want is to draw attention to yourself”.

Another reason that was common among the participants was “under the table” employment, which essentially are jobs that require no legal documents such as social security

numbers or tax information. Participant 1 stated that, “Mi primer trabajo fue cuando tenía 16 años, y en ese tiempo mi nombre era otro porque no tenía papeles; estuve trabajando bajo una falsa identidad en el campo donde me pagaban una miseria”, which translates to “My first job was when I was 16, and during that time I had another name because I didn't have papers; I was working under a false identity on the fields where they would pay me a misery”. This is something that is very common among immigrants because they do not have any way of holding a job without having proper identification. Most of these “under the table” jobs are very unstable and exploit immigrants, so they tend to conform.

Conclusion

In this interview several factors were noted that shape undocumented Latinx migration journey and mental health. During the journey across the border, they faced hardships that left a mark on them. Through suffering migrants have taken many risks and endured pain, trauma, and adversity to make it to the United States Border. However, our participant never stated seeking resources or help for the trauma that was encountered. It is quite obvious that more research is needed to inform public health programs about the trauma gained from the journey. Policies and programs should be enforced that can help address the negative effects of trauma, immigration enforcement, and discrimination within the United States. Overall, scholars should engage with these communities to understand, address, and advocate for their mental health needs.

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