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Department of Sociology and Criminology

A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES OF

MIGRANTS’ CHILDREN IN PARAGUAY

A Thesis in

Sociology and Demography

by

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ABSTRACT

International labor migration is a powerful social process that not only affects countries but individuals, families, and communities. The migration of a parent often has influential consequences for the family that remains behind. One of the debated consequences is the impact that parental migration has on children’s education. Using qualitative data obtained from 20 in-depth interviews with children of migrants and their resident parents and caretakers in Tobatí, Paraguay, this study employs grounded theory methodology to explore the consequences of labor migration of parents for the experiences and aspirations of children who remain in the country-of-origin across two intersecting life domains; family and education. This approach demonstrates three changes in children’s lives as a result of migration. First, children and caretakers describe a shift in family structure and power dynamics. Second, respondents portray supportive familial and communal relationships both in the community-of-origin and abroad that ameliorate some of the negative aspects of changes in family structure. Lastly, this study describes the tangible consequences of migration on children’s current and future educational aspirations and plans for migration.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

International labor migration is a powerful social process that not only affects countries but individuals, families, and communities. Macro-level economic forces such as wage differentials and unemployment push and pull individuals across borders and away from their families. While households in the country-of-origin deal with the migration of parents, communities and countries lose potential workers. Despite this loss, families can increase their economic mobility through remittances as communities and countries reap the benefits of an influx of foreign capital along with the release of surplus labor. Thus, a driving question in research on migration and development in the country-of-origin is whether the benefits of migration outweigh the disadvantages.

Many scholars explore this question by examining the effects of remittances on the economic mobility of families. Focusing on the connection between remittances and the ability of families to improve their economic position and provide opportunities for education, previous research seeks to quantify the link between the migration of parents, remittances, and children’s educational attainment in the home country (Edwards and Ureta, 2003; Schapiro, 2009; Hanson and Woodruff, 2003). However, there is a dearth of qualitative research that illustrates the social mechanisms that lead to disparate educational outcomes between children whose parents have migrated and those with non-migrant parents. Where quantitative studies identify mechanisms, qualitative work can tell a narrative of how families experience migration and reveal the motivations behind children’s academic and familial aspirations.
My study explores the educational and family experience of the children of migrants who remain behind in a South American community. Specifically, this case study focuses on how children balance their educational aspirations with the pull of possible migration to reunite with their parent(s). Using qualitative data obtained from 20 in-depth interviews with children of migrants and their caretakers in Tobati, Paraguay, this investigation employs grounded theory methodology to describe the academic and family life of children whose parents have migrated. This approach demonstrates three changes in children’s lives as a result of migration.¹ First, children and caretakers describe a shift in family structure and power dynamics. Second, respondents portray supportive familial and communal relationships both in the community-of-origin and abroad that ameliorate some of the negative aspects of changes in family structure. Lastly, this study describes the tangible consequences of migration on children’s current and future educational aspirations and plans for migration.

Two interrelated questions are answered: (1) How does the migration of parents affect the educational and familial experiences of children? (2) How does this migration affect their aspirations? Given the lack of investigation of these questions in South American countries, this research adds depth to the available literature on how migration impacts families in this region. However, the study of migration and its relationship with education first needs to be situated in the setting of the region and the country. South American migration, and to a lesser extent migration in Paraguay, is expansive and varied. Thus, research exploring education and migration must be understood in the context of regional migration dynamics.

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, “migration” will refer to the migration of parents (not children).
South America and International Migration

The Latin American and Caribbean region has experienced two broad phases of migration (Durand & Massey, 2010). The first phase included settlement and colonization of the region. Starting in the sixteenth century and stretching to the early twentieth century, this phase was characterized by the influx of migrants from Europe. The second phase is marked by the transition of Latin America from a migrant-receiving region to a migrant-sending region.

Following a similar pattern, South America experienced three distinct phases of migration; European immigration, intra-regional migration, and finally emigration to other regions (Martínez Pizarro & Villa, 2005). The first phase parallels that of migration to Latin America as a whole. Inspired by increased industrialization in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, immigrants came to take advantage of a regional open-door policy that promoted opportunities to profit off of the expansive and undeveloped continent. From the start of the nineteenth century to 1970, 13.8 million immigrants traveled to South America, primarily from southern Europe (Massey et al, 1998; Lattes, 1983 & 1985). However, the need for labor in Europe that accompanied the close of World War II and the growing wage gap between the two regions stemmed the tide of immigration to South America and in some cases spurred return migration (Martinez Pizarro & Villa, 2005).

The second phase of South American migration started after immigration from Europe slowed. Here, South Americans moved between developing countries within the region. While there are exceptions, after the 1950’s Argentina was the locus of a regional sub-system of migration in the Southern cone.² Migrants from Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, and Chile poured into Argentina initially as seasonal laborers working in the agricultural sector in the 1940’s and 50’s, but over time these migration streams turned to Argentine metropolises (Massey et al, 1998).

² Columbians have also historically migrated to Venezuela (Clark et. al, 2004)
Looking closer at the nexus of regional migration, Carrón (1979) argues that the job opportunities that initially drove migration into the cities of Argentina through the 1970’s eventually declined. However, migration into the cities persisted despite a lack of jobs, creating a segmented-labor market in which immigrant jobs were no longer associated with economic expansion. During the “Lost Decade” of the 1980’s, reoccurring economic crises and stagnation curtailed migration in South America. Still, intra-regional migration reached and surpassed previous levels towards the end of the 1990’s (Martínez Pizarro & Villa, 2005).

The third phase of South American migration involves emigration to other regions, especially America and Europe. This most recent wave of migration to non-Latin American destinations must also be placed in the context of Latin American emigration as a whole. Clark and colleagues (2004) compare determinants of emigration rates to the United States for the world and for Latin America. Although there are differences in magnitude, the same determinants that drive global emigration fuel Latin American emigration as well. The most important factors that are negatively related with immigration are relative income and schooling, as well as distance from the United States, whereas the proportion of the population aged 15-29 in the source country is positively associated with immigration. Not surprisingly, in comparison to the rest of the Latin American region, South America sends significantly fewer immigrants to the United States. In fact, according to the 2010 U.S. American Community Survey (2012), the stock of U.S. immigrants originating from South American countries totals only 2.7 million, comprising roughly 13 percent of all immigrants from Latin America in the United States.

This is due, in part, to the increasing attractiveness of Europe (primarily Spain) as a destination for migrants from South America. The 2001 Spanish census enumerated over 700 thousand immigrants of South American origin, comprising approximately 84 percent of the

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3 The authors focus on the United States since over 80 percent of Latin Americans living outside of Latin America live there.
Latin American immigrant population in Spain (Martínez Pizarro & Villa, 2005). The foreign born population as a whole in Spain began growing in the 1990s and continued its increase, rising from 350,000 in 1991 to 3.69 million in 2005, roughly 8.4 percent of the population at the time (Carrasco et al. 2008). This shift in the proportion of immigrants, both documented and undocumented, can be traced to certain structural characteristics of the Spanish economy and government’s attitude toward immigration (Ortega Pérez, 2003). Spain’s aging population, the demand for unskilled labor, and a large informal economy combined to create a labor market for immigrant workers who could speak Spanish (Arango & Jachimowics, 2005). Thus, Spain emerged as an attractive new destination for South American immigrants.

Paraguay’s pattern of migration mirrors the region’s historical phases, but at a much lower volume. Specifically, a historical benchmark is the Triple Alliance War of 1864-1870 between Paraguay and the allied nations of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. This war depleted Paraguay’s male population. As a consequence, the government officially incentivized immigration to increase the population and to promote agricultural development. In the late 1800’s, the government enacted legislation to bring in and financially aid agricultural cultivators (Souchaud, 2010). After the Triple Alliance War, Argentines living in the border states settled in Paraguay. Foreign direct investment there increased. Argentines, Brazilians, North Americans, and Europeans bought great tracts of land for development. Despite these initiatives, immigration into Paraguay was never substantial, with between 50,000 to 60,000 immigrants registering with the government from 1870 to 1959 (Souchaud, 2010).

Argentina is the primary destination for Paraguayan immigrants. Prior to 1960, emigration from Paraguay to Argentina was caused by political instability from wars in 1936 and 1947 and a subsequent military dictatorship. Additionally, foreign direct investment in real estate from Brazilians and Argentines made land ownership difficult for Paraguayans, causing further emigration (Richards, 1996). This pattern is consistent with claims that foreign direct investment
is an impetus for future migration into the investor country (Sassen, 1988). Moreover, economic opportunities in the Northern Argentine states that border Paraguay provided a receptive destination for labor migrants (Richards, 1996). The accelerated growth of the Paraguayan population in the 1940’s along with the comparatively slow process of domestic industrialization intensified issues of limited land availability initially caused by foreign investors purchasing large portions of the Paraguay’s developable land (Gillespie, 1983). Using 1940’s Argentine registration data, Souchaud reports that nearly 200,000 Paraguayans were living in Argentina, composing 13 percent of the total population of Paraguay at the time. This phase of migration allowed Paraguayan immigration into Argentina to gain a solid foothold that would eventually spread into the Argentine cities. As labor opportunities in the North of Argentina began to disappear, the migration flow was deflected to the Argentine capital, signaling a shift in the pattern and the start of the post-1960 phase of Paraguayan migration to Argentina. Buenos Aires absorbed rural migration that had previously been directed towards Northern Argentine states. The slow pace of domestic industrialization in Paraguay meant that internal migrants were not pouring into its cities for employment.

Although in recent history Paraguay has had more emigrants than immigrants, Table 1 presents information on net migration for the country.\(^4\) There has been a recent dip that can be associated with the financial crisis in the 1980’s in Argentina. During the early 1990’s, over 85 percent of the Argentine population lived in urban areas. High levels of urbanization were accompanied by substantial employment in the industrial sector and this demand for labor resulted in the change from rural to urban migration for Paraguayans immigrating to Argentina (Parrado & Cerrutti, 2003).

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\(^4\) According to the Eurostat Glossary on Demographic Statistics (2000), net migration is the difference between immigration into and emigration from the area during the year
Table 1-1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>69195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>73170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2012 World Development Indicators, The World Bank

Despite being the primary destination, Argentina is not the only one for Paraguayan immigrants. According to the World Bank (2010), the top destination countries for the over half million Paraguayan emigrants are Argentina, Spain, Brazil, and the United States (Table 2). In fact, 60.2 percent of Paraguay’s emigrants live in Argentina, in comparison to 15.4 percent and 5 percent in Spain and the United States respectively. The percentage of Paraguayan emigrants in Spain and the United States has risen sharply from 2000, when the countries contained 0.4 percent and 3.4 percent of the total emigrants respectively. As such, Paraguay’s migration patterns mirror that of the South American region, with initial immigration by European colonists, intra-regional migration, and recently a shift to expand migration into Europe and the United States.
Given the historical primacy of Argentina as a destination, few studies focus on relatively recent flows to European or North American locations. Indeed, Paraguayan migration is infrequently studied and research typically focuses on migrants to Argentina. Parrado and Cerrutti (2003) employ data from the Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) to explore factors that influence Paraguayan males to migrate.\(^5\) Approximately 39 percent of the households interviewed in the Paraguayan communities of origin had migration experience, with Argentina as the main destination. Moreover, this migration is cyclical with the average number of trips per household slightly over four. Consistent with cumulative causation theory, the authors find that having a family member who migrated was associated with having 60 percent greater odds of migration in comparison to those without migrant family members. Similarly, studies of Paraguayan immigrants also show men and women have an equal propensity to migrate (Cerrutti and Gaudio, 2010). These findings illustrate the roles both household networks and gender play in influencing future migration. Thus, research on Paraguayan migration must pay attention to both mothers and fathers.

\(^5\) The LAMP survey studies only two Paraguayan communities in the same department of Paraguari.
The Causes and Consequences of International Migration

Although migration decisions are frequently complex, this study focuses on labor migration. Stark and Bloom’s New Economics of Labor Migration (1985) provides a conceptual framework for viewing migration as a household decision used to diversify risk. This theory proposes that households, foreseeing financial difficulties or reacting to emergencies, use migration to mitigate exposure. Households send members to other labor markets, either internally or internationally, to lower the potential impact of a local economic downturn. In this sense, migration is a safety valve to alleviate pressure from economic conditions.

Migration is also a way to overcome faulty credit markets in the country of origin, using remittances when access to investment capital, consumer credit, or various forms of insurance is not available or only available at a high cost (Massey, et al. 1998). In destination labor markets where the expected wages are higher, migrants can provide substantial remittances to the household. These remittances limit families’ risk as well as allow them to improve or maintain their economic position. Remittances can be used for investment in current household consumption (Durand and Massey 1992) or be spent on productive assets such as physical or human capital (Schapiro 2009).

Migration and Educational Attainment – A Theoretical Perspective

There is disagreement in the empirical literature on whether the consequences of migration for children are positive or negative. For scholars whose research shows a positive relationship between a migration and children’s educational success, remittances are a key mechanism. Remittances provide families with extra money to invest in children’s education and limit the need for children to work to help support their families. Specifically, remittances can be
used to pay for post-secondary tuition, granting migrants’ children an academic opportunity they might not have had. Adams (2010) analysis of household survey data from Guatemala shows that families use remittances for investment in education (school fees, cost of attendance, transportation, etc.), as opposed to personal consumption. Therefore, migrants sending remittances would be able to finance the schooling of their children with the goal of higher educational outcomes and increased opportunities in the home country labor market.

Remittances may have both direct and indirect benefits for children in migrant households. Not only do they serve to directly fund children’s education, they also relieve economic strain on households. This reduction in strain, in turn, frees the children of migrants to focus on their education instead of working. Child labor to help support families may also increase children’s risk of academic disruption or dropout. Edwards and Ureta (2003) use household survey data from El Salvador to analyze the correlation between dropping out of school and remittances. Their study suggests that remittances decrease the likelihood of dropping out of school. Similarly, Acosta’s (2007) analysis of Salvadoran household surveys determines that after controlling for household assets and wealth and correcting for selection effects, girls and younger adolescent boys from households that receive remittances are more likely to be enrolled in school than those from households that do not receive remittances. He also finds that child labor is negatively associated with remittances, indicating that remittances provide capital for educational investment and decrease the need to employ younger members of the family as workers. Hanson and Woodruff (2003) use 2000 Mexican census data to examine disparate educational outcomes between children who are in “migrant households” and those who are not. They conclude that migrants’ children do end up with more years of education than children from non-migrant households, although these results only hold when household education is low. Thus, these studies support the assertion that remittances promote higher levels of school enrollment and educational attainment, as well as lower likelihood of child labor for migrants’ children.
In addition to providing capital for educational investment, remittances may also affect academic aspirations. Nobles (2011) uses the 2005 Mexican Family Life Survey to examine the relationship between children’s years of education, children’s educational aspirations and migrant fathers’ financial or non-financial support. This analysis shows that higher educational attainment and academic goals are positively linked with migrant remittances. Similarly, Dreby and Stutz (2012) analyze survey data and interviews with Mexican migrants’ children who have remained in the country-of-origin to examine how the gender of a migrant parent impacts children’s educational aspirations. Their analysis indicates that maternal migration is associated with higher educational aspirations for children, whereas having had both parents migrate lowers educational goals. These studies bolster theoretical claims that migration is associated with greater financial support for children’s current and future schooling, lowered necessity for child labor, and higher educational aspirations, although the relationship may vary by parental gender.

In contrast, some scholars question the positive relationship between migration and children’s educational success. Although migration may increase discretionary income that can be used to invest in education, children of migrants may be more likely to leave school. This is because labor migration becomes viewed as a more viable avenue for economic success. These theoretical claims are embodied in the ‘culture of migration’ thesis (Kandel and Massey, 2002). The authors show that increased aspirations to work and live in the United States as well as decreased aspirations to complete an additional year of schooling are associated with paternal migration. Similarly, Kandel and Kao (2001) find that children in migrant households have lowered aspirations to attend university despite better grades. They claim that the presence of a migrant family member acts as a mechanism for changing educational aspirations by providing an alternative model for economic success. As such, students may view further time spent in school as an opportunity-cost.

Looking beyond aspirations, other scholars focus on the relationships between migration,
enrollment, and years of education. McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) use the 1997 Mexican National Survey of Demographic Dynamics to show that living in a migrant household has a negative effect on schooling attendance and outcomes for boys aged 12-18 and girls aged 16-18, proposing that perceived opportunity-costs and diminishing returns to education cause children at older ages to dropout. Building on this analysis, McKenzie and Rapoport (2011) find a significant negative association between years of schooling and migration. The authors expand the previous study by describing possible mechanisms for lower school involvement, noting that older boys (aged 16 to 18 – the age labor migration is viable) are more likely to migrate and older girls are more likely to spend time doing housework. In a similar study, Halpern-Manners (2011) analyzes the 2000 Mexican census to show that children with migrant family members are less likely than their non-migrant counterparts to complete schooling transitions and more likely to work while in school. These studies assert that the possibility of migration and the social capital that comes from having a migrant parent coupled with the need to take over household duties discourage children of migrant parents from remaining enrolled and completing schooling.

Adding to the body of literature that supports a negative relationship between migration and education, Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2010) examine Dominican LAMP data in an attempt to isolate the impact of remittances from the effect of familial migration. When the authors expand their universe to include children who have family members living abroad they find that school attendance is negatively associated with migration. Examining Peruvian LAMP data, Frisancho-Robles and Oropesa (2011) explore the effect of past migration on years of schooling and educational disruption for children. The authors find a linkage between decreased schooling and “household migration risk level.” Increase in risk level is also positively associated with the increased likelihood of children experiencing an educational disruption, either dropping out and returning again or being held back a grade. Utilizing data gathered from a multi-site study in Mexico, Lahaie and colleagues (2009) find that having a non-resident migrant parent results in
children having greater odds of an academic or behavioral problem. Additionally, children of migrants demonstrate higher odds of having an emotional problem in comparison to children whose parents have not migrated. In a similar vein, Antman (2011) uses data from Mexico’s *Encuesta Nacional de Empleo Urbano* (ENEU) to test how children’s time is spent after migration. This analysis suggests that young adolescent boys (12-15) initially invest less time in schooling and more in employment shortly after paternal migration. Thus, some research frequently links having a migrant parent to lower schooling or dropout, as the children of migrants aspire to migrate themselves or are forced to help out more in the house.

In summary, it is clear that there is a lack of agreement on migration and children’s academic outcomes. Research that suggests a positive relationship highlights the direct and indirect benefits of remittances as a mechanism to allow for greater investment in education and less economic strain on the household that could require child labor. Contrasting studies point out that children of migrants may be at greater risk of dropping out despite remittances, as migrant parents represent an alternative model for economic success to educational attainment. Needless to say, educational attainment and aspirations only describe one facet of the personal and academic experiences of migrants’ children. These experiences must also be understood in the context of family dynamics in general.

**Impact on Family Life**

The loss of a family member or parent through migration potentially has significant social ramifications for children. Parental absence may transform roles within families in a number of ways. For example, older children may assume duties normally associated with adults (such as childcare) and increase their household responsibilities. Moreover, migration may cause change in the family power structure, and children of migrants may find that they have more
avenues to express their power after the migration. In addition, migration has a tangible impact in the community-of-origin. Analyzing the consequences of parental migration in the context of families and their communities is crucial to a deeper understanding of migration’s relationship with development in the country-of-origin. However, the empirical literature examining this topic is limited and plagued by difficulty in measuring impact.

Performing mixed-methods analyses of interviews with more than 40 Caribbean adults whose parents had migrated when they were children, Smith and colleagues (2004) link migration during childhood with psychological difficulties for children later in life. The authors show that children of migrants have lowered self-esteem, difficulty in identifying with their parent(s), and attachment to surrogate caregivers. Similarly, Borraz and colleagues (2010) analyze Ecuadorian survey data to show that self-reported happiness for family members in the country-of-origin is negatively associated with the migration of a household member and that increased household income as a result of remittances does not ameliorate this effect. This lends more support to the literature that paints the migration of a family member as a stressor on the family that remains behind, but fails to explain the mechanisms the lead to increased stress.

Qualitative exploration of children of Mexican migrants sheds light on the family dynamics for children in the country-of-origin. Dreby (2010) interviews Mexican children that have remained behind when one or both of their parents have migrated to the U.S. for work. She highlights that children whose parents have migrated often exhibit feelings of abandonment, rebellious attitudes towards family control, and depression. In addition, the influx of money through remittances changes how migrants’ children are perceived in the community, giving children greater social standing (Dreby, 2010; Schmalzbauer, 2005). Dreby (2007) also explores issues of how children who remain in the country-of-origin use strategies to influence their roles in the household as well as their transnational family relationships. She finds that depending on the child’s stage in adolescence, children show signs of indifference, deferring to caregivers for
questions of authority, acting out, and refusing to migrate as strategies to influence both caregivers and migrant parents. These represent some of the mechanisms through which children adapt to their new family structure.

Dreby (2010) notes that migration not only affects the child, but also the caretaker, who is frequently a grandmother. Grandparents who assume the responsibility of caring for grandchildren can grow very attached and often end up influencing the relationship between the child and migrant parent. When children reject their parents’ attempts to reunite, they often describe not wanting to abandon their grandparent and note that their caretaker also dissuades reunification. Moreover, grandmothers frequently benefit economically by caring for their grandchildren as they receive support from remittances. Thus, the parents’ migration can change their relationship and influence with their child by granting more power to a grandparent caretaker.

In addition to changing family dynamics, past research examines transnational processes for migrant families and the influence migrants can maintain in the country-of-origin (Schiller et al., 1995). This line of inquiry examines the roles migrant parents have in their children’s lives and the frequency and method of communication, probing how frequently migrant parents have visited, stayed in contact, or resumed parental roles from afar. In fact, previous research indicates that the roles parents maintain across borders are often related to gender, as migrant mothers are more likely to seek to remain in their children’s lives. The academic discourse on transnational families highlights the importance of broadening cultural context regarding family structure and incorporating new units and actors into studies of migrant families (Mazzucato & Schans, 2011). These studies assert that despite migration, parents and children still resume regular family roles, although they are necessarily transformed by distance.

This research demonstrates the consequences of migration felt by families. Moreover, it reveals the limited treatment this subject has received. Due to difficulties of collecting qualitative
data in other countries, the schooling and personal lives of children of migrants remains understudied. Although previous quantitative studies examine the consequences of migration for education and families, few view this relationship through the eyes of children and caretakers. This investigation adds to this literature, not only focusing on how migrants’ children experience school, but also how their changed home life impacts their education, aspirations, and perceptions of migration. Furthermore, this study increases sociological knowledge of an infrequently studied country in an understudied region.
Chapter 2

Tobatí as a Case Study

Elman and Helen Service (1954) first introduced Tobatí, Paraguay to the rest of the world in their ethnography Tobatí; A Paraguayan Town. The Services described the religion, economy, and customs of a town chosen because of its supposed representativeness of Paraguay. Founded in 1539 by Domingo Martínez de Irala, Tobatí has played an important part in the nation’s history. In fact, Juan Pedro Caballero, one of the heroes of the move towards independence from Spain, came from the district. As part of the department of Cordillera, Tobatí is located approximately ten miles from the department capital of Caacupe. The district of Tobatí has grown considerably, from approximately 7,600 people in the 1950s to over 23,000 in 2002.

Approximately 10,000 people live in the urban city center (DGEEC, 2002).

The main industries in this self-proclaimed “City of Ceramics” are brick and tile manufacturing from clay mined in the surrounding countryside (Cabrera, 2012). Although brick-making has historically been a part of the Tobateñan economy, Hay (1993) links a surge in production with the capital city of Asunción’s urbanization in the 1960s along with the construction of the Itaupu hydro-electric damn and its surrounding communities. The district also produces rice and cattle for export and is nationally famous for its artisan villa and the woodwork produced by local craftsmen. Tobatí has several banks or communal financial cooperatives where consumer and commercial credit is available, although access is not universal or easy to obtain.

Comparing the current economy with that described by Service, Dana and Dana note, “Tobatí is undergoing a transition, gradually reducing its relative reliance on subsistence agriculture as non-

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6 Paraguayan Departments represent a state-level government between federal and district spheres
7 The District of Tobatí includes the city of Tobatí as well as the surrounding rural areas
farm occupations gain importance with the growth of the monetary economy.” (Dana & Dana, 2008, p.529).

Unfortunately, a comprehensive statistical portrait of Tobatí is difficult to generate due to the dearth of information at the district level in government sources. However, some insights are available from published information on the department of Cordillera, located in the center of the nation and bordering the populous Central department. The 2004 Paraguayan Permanent Housing Poll reveals that Cordillera has an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent that matches the national average. Of the working population, nearly 45 percent list self-employment in “own account” work or small enterprises. This is higher than the national average of 37.9 percent. Moreover, 25 percent of economically active Cordillerans report working as manual laborers for private businesses, in comparison to the national average of 19.3 percent. Approximately 54 percent of the employed population in Cordillera work in the first and second departmental economic sectors, which includes agricultural and cattle production as well as mining and industrial manufacturing. Nationally, only 42 percent work in these sectors, indicating the importance of agricultural and manufacturing production for the economy of Cordillera.

Official statistics also reveal that the average number of years of formal education for the population older than 25 in Cordillera is approximately 6 years. Similarly, of children between 6 and 14 years old, roughly 95 percent are currently attending school whereas 66.5 percent of children between 15 and 18 are enrolled in school. However, Cordillera only trails Asunción and the Central Department in proportion of households with unsatisfied basic needs in education. In fact, Cordillera reports only 17.9 percent of households with unsatisfied basic needs in education.

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8 The department of Cordillera covers approximately 1900 square miles, including the 366 square mile district of Tobatí
9 According to the General Department of Paraguayan Statistics, the index for unsatisfied basic need in education consists of indicators for the pursuit of studies and literacy. Households with unsatisfied basic needs have members between the ages of 6 – 14 that do not pursue studies or never attended school. Literacy for members of the household ages 15 and above is measured by completion of the 2nd grade as well as ability to read and write.
in comparison to the national average of 20.3 percent. Furthermore, among Cordilleran districts, Tobatí lists only 16.6 percent of households as having unmet basic needs in education. In addition to educational measures, statistics on cumulative living standards that follow the Demographic and Health Surveys wealth index can describe the overall quality of life in the department. In general, 95 percent of households in Cordillera have electricity and 75 percent possess a television, in comparison to the national average of 93.2 percent and 76.1 percent respectively. However, only 0.2 percent of Cordilleran households have a computer connected to the Internet as opposed to 1.4 percent of the Paraguayan population as a whole. Thus, Cordillera has similar levels of wealth even though Internet penetration in the region lags behind the national average. Yet recent migration, remittances, and the diffusion of technology throughout Paraguay may contribute to increased wealth in future reports.

Paraguay is a bilingual country. Spanish and the indigenous language Guaraní are official languages, while small percentages of the population speak Portuguese or other regional dialects. Despite both Spanish and Guaraní being taught in public schools, many in the country speak a mixed dialect known as Jopara. In Cordillera, 43 percent of households report habitually speaking Guaraní, in comparison to 5.6 percent of households in the capital of Asunción and the national average of 33.9 percent. In fact, in Cordillera only 14.4 percent of households speak Spanish exclusively in contrast to Asunción or the national average, where 56 percent and 25 percent of respective households speak Spanish exclusively. Instructively, Jopara is the dialect that Cordillera most shares in common with its country and capital. In Cordillera, 43.2 percent of households speak a mixture of Spanish and Guaraní, similar to the 37 percent in Asunción and across the country. The high level of Guaraní spoken in Cordillera illustrates some of the cultural distance between the capital and the interior department.

Cordillera also boasts a higher proportion of emigrants than the country as a whole. According to the 2008 Paraguayan Reproductive Health Survey, 14.9 percent of households in
Cordillera reported having a family member living abroad in comparison to the national average of 12.2 percent, making Cordillera the department with the fifth-highest level of emigration. Moreover, 11.7 percent of households in Cordillera listed receiving economic help from those living outside of Paraguay, in comparison to the national average of 8.4 percent. While internal migration to the capital, Asunción, and international migration to Argentina has always been prevalent, recent increases in labor migration to Spain makes the district of Tobatí an ideal site to study the consequences of migration to different destinations. Furthermore, the department of Cordillera’s consistency with national averages for unemployment and measures of wealth suggests that the site is economically representative of Paraguay in general.
Chapter 3

Research Objectives

This study explores the consequences of parental migration for the experiences and aspirations of children who remain in the country-of-origin across two intersecting life domains. The first is family. Because labor migration involves the separation of family members, this inquiry examines how children describe the impact of migration on relationships with their parents and primary caregivers. The second domain is education. Because migration may simultaneously impinge on the ability of parents to supervise children and increase awareness of opportunities that exist elsewhere, this investigation also focuses on children’s descriptions of their experiences in schools before turning to how schooling and migration fit into their own aspirations for the future.

Sampling Design

This investigation addresses the research objectives with non-probability samples of four groups: children of migrant parents (n = 20), their resident parents or primary caregivers (n = 18), children with non-migrant parents as a comparison group (n = 4), and their parents (n = 4). Interviews with each group were conducted in the summer of 2012. The children of migrants were recruited from the three main public high schools in the town of Tobati: El Capitan Pedro Juan Caballero, Conadomi, and Santa Teresita. I recruited students from these public schools because the great majority of secondary education in the state of Cordillera is through public schooling, and these are the only public schools that offer a combined junior high school and high school in the urban center. From these schools, I selected students from the basica (junior high
school) spanning seventh to ninth grade and the *media* (high school) from tenth to twelfth grade. Ages for students ranged from 12 to 19, which allowed for survey administration and regular conversation during the interview without the interview assistance typically needed for children of younger ages. Needless to say, relying on schools misses children who have dropped out. Identifying and locating of non-students with migrant parents was logistically impractical.

As noted, I also recruited resident parents and primary caregivers into the study.\(^\text{10}\) The motivation for interviewing the resident parents and caregivers in addition to children was not limited to simply corroborating students’ accounts. Instead, I interviewed this group to gain another perspective on the migrant household that may play a role in future migration or education plans. The caregivers that I interviewed were primarily grandparents and close relatives (uncles/aunts). Similarly, I conducted four interviews with the parents of the control group children to compare their responses with those of the resident parents and primary caregivers for children of migrants.

**Recruitment**

I recruited potential subjects over the course of three and a half months with the assistance of the principals and secretaries of the public high schools in Tobati. Specifically, all three principals used school resources to create a list of possible candidates and arrange initial recruitment interviews on-site. To be included on this list, students were required to have at least one non-resident parent known to be living outside of Paraguay. During recruitment interviews, I met with over 100 candidates and apprised them of the risks and benefits of involvement in the

\(^{10}\) Resident parents have stayed in Paraguay while their current or former spouse has migrated for labor
study. This investigation includes only those students who obtained parental/caregiver consent to participate.

Methodological Limitations

The data from this inquiry is gathered from a single-site, non-probability sample of children of migrants in Tobati, Paraguay collected over three months. As such, there are limitations to the inference that can be drawn from data collected in one district with a unique migration experience. Furthermore, the small size of the comparison group limits its representativeness. Future studies should seek to obtain representative multi-site probability samples of both children of migrants and non-migrants. These systematically gathered samples can be used to disentangle the effects of varying migration prevalence, educational disparities, and regional differences.

Survey Instrument Design

This study is based on a semi-structured interview that is modeled on the ethnosurvey (Massey, 1987). Specifically, the survey instrument is divided into six sections with open and close-ended questions that cover: demographic information, personal and family migration history, academic and personal life, future education and migration plans, migrant parent-child interaction, and caretaker interaction.

In the field, I proctored surveys with a team of bilingual research assistants, fluent in both Spanish and Guarani. Interviews with children averaged 45 minutes and caregiver interviews averaged 15 minutes. Responses were documented both manually on the survey instrument and also via digital recording to produce transcriptions for later analysis.
Method of Analysis

This study uses Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) as a framework to code relevant data from interview transcripts; that is, to reveal reoccurring ideas and themes in responses to questions. Specifically, three levels of coding and data analysis were employed. First, was the identification of repeating ideas. Second, repeating ideas were then grouped together into themes by making logical and empirical connections. Third, themes were aggregated into theoretical constructs that describe their inter-relationship and answer research questions. In this methodology, the author excerpts, codes, and integrates the respondent’s answers into repeating ideas and themes, used as the building block for a conceptual description of the experience of having a migrant parent. This description, though not generalizable, can be used as a basis for future testable hypotheses.

GTM is a strategy to describe an understudied process or culture (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Since its introduction, various scholars have promoted this methodology as a systematic and creative method to explain the processes or actions of subjects at an abstract and conceptual level (Creswell, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this technique as a way to potentially generate theories about a set of relationships that fall within a substantive research area. They expand on this description in subsequent works, labeling theory as a “… set of well-developed categories (i.e. themes) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, education, nursing, or other phenomenon.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.22). As such, GTM is an analytical tool for managing large amounts of textual data in a systematic and creative manner. This aids researchers in discovering alternative explanations of processes, and identifies, develops, and integrates repeating ideas from data to be used as components of a sound theory or description of

11 Hereafter, Grounded Theory Methodology will be shortened to GTM
To expand on the previous description of the methodology, GTM uses three levels of coding to realize analysis. The first level, known as open coding, is the process of reading interviews and excerpting relevant text that expose implicit repeating ideas (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The excerpts of relevant data are then categorized into repeating ideas. The second level of data analysis is to group like repeating ideas into themes, constructing the basis of a complete description by reintegrating data that were fragmented during the open coding process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This consists of relating repeating ideas to fit themes, providing nuance to themes by explaining the process of relation, and examining and including variation among themes (Brown, Stevenson, Troiano & Schneider, 2002). These themes are constructed through a series of empirical and conceptual comparisons that are explained as part of the findings (LaRossa, 2005). Saturation is obtained when no further repeating ideas emerge for existing themes, when the theme is intense enough to cover variations, and when themes in these categories have been sufficiently distinguished (Brown, Stevenson, Troiano & Schneider, 2002). The third and final stage of coding consists of grouping like themes and further abstracting them into “theoretical constructs”. These constructs then can be turned into the basis of a narrative to describe the phenomenon when new aspects are present in the interviews (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Moreover, themes and theoretical constructs are grounded in existing theory and used confirm or expand previous research.

This study presents results by describing the way the author grouped repeating ideas and themes and by presenting the empirical connections between repeating ideas (i.e. how often ideas appeared in the same interviews and in the same excerpts). Furthermore, informants from the studied group reviewed the analysis to ensure that the coding reflected the lived experience of having a migrant parent.
Chapter 4

Results

This section introduces descriptive statistics for the sample of children as well as presents results of text-driven repeating ideas, themes, and constructs (listed in Appendix B). After describing the sample of students, I present themes organized into three theoretical constructs. Through these constructs, I seek to comprehensively explain how migration has impacted children’s schooling and personal life as well as their familial and educational aspirations. I use the findings to engage with previous research, and bring together the re-occurring themes from the interviews. In these sections, I explain how I constructed themes by grouping repeating ideas, which are included in the body of text in italics.

Descriptive Statistics

Our research team collected data (shown in table 4-1) from 20 students with a migrant parent or parents and 18 primary caregivers\(^\text{12}\). The sample for children of migrant parents was 65 percent female, with 60 percent of students living in urban residences. Moreover, the sample is split fairly evenly across the *basica* and *media* sections of the schools. Among children in the migrant sample, the majority indicated that only their mother migrated (60 percent) whereas the remainder was evenly split between those with two migrant parents or just a migrant father (20 percent each). The modal response for country-of-destination was Spain (55 percent) followed by Argentina (30 percent), the United States (10 percent) and Chile (5 percent). This ensures broad coverage of the experience of having a migrant parent for children in Paraguay, as Argentina,

\(^{12}\) The primary caregiver sample has 18 respondents due to 2 sibling pairs in the student sample.
Spain, and the United States are in the top five countries of destination for Paraguayan immigrants (Table 1-2).

Eighty percent of children of migrant parents reported that their parents had divorced, with only one respondent noting that her parents were still married. This contrasts with the parental marital status of the comparison group of students, all of whom reported that their parents were still married. The high prevalence of divorce in the sample of children of migrants inherently raises issues of disentangling family structure effects from the impact of parental migration. This is empirically noteworthy because respondents in the migrant sample indicated a continuum of family dissolution scenarios, as children reported that their parents divorced before or after migration. In addition, the majority of respondents (55 percent) indicated that their caregiver was their grandmother or their grandparents. The sample also includes resident mothers and fathers as well as aunts, older siblings, and neighbors, representing a diversity of caregiver experiences and perspectives.

Academically, both migrant parents and resident parents and caregivers indicated higher educational attainment than the Cordilleran average of six years. Migrant parents had an average of 8.1 years of education, a figure that is nearly identical to the 7.8 years for resident parents and caretakers in the migrant sample. This could represent slightly higher educational levels in Tobatí in comparison to Cordillera, since parents in the non-migrant sample had an average of 11.8 years of school, or simply reflect that parents in the sample are younger than many of the residents included in the Cordilleran census.
Table 4-1: Selected Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Migrant Sample</th>
<th>Non-Migrant Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample of Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conadomi</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Teresita</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitan</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Patricio</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent That Migrated</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country-of-Destination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The United States</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents’ Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or Divorced</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship of Caregiver to Child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Father</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Mother</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Years of Education for Migrant Parents</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Years of Education for Resident Parents and Caretakers</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family and Migration

This section presents themes regarding how migration affects children’s family life. The themes, listed as subsections, are compared with previous research. Specific sections in the interview schedule address what familial changes occurred as a result of parental migration. Thus, themes comprised of groups of repeating ideas excerpted from children’s responses are presented and contrasted with past research to explicate the relationship of migration with children’s family life.

Children Lack Power in Migration Decision

The New Economics of Labor Migration describes the choice to migrate as a household decision, taken to relieve economic pressure on families (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Past research on family migration decisions indicates that where cyclical migration is common, children can actually influence parents’ subsequent migration decisions (Dreby, 2010). These findings contrast with children’s responses in Paraguay where cyclical migration is less prevalent, especially for parents living and working in Spain. This theme reflects a seemingly omnipresent relationship with parents leaving prior to the start of adolescence or during early adolescence and children not being included in the household migration strategy. Early adolescence, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.), spans ages 11-13. When asked to recall the time that their parent(s) left, the overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they left prior to or during that age range. In fact, only one child indicated that her parent left after early adolescence and this coincided with the participant noting that they were more involved in the
family migration decision. In this study, when asked to describe how involved they were in the migration decision, the majority of respondents noted that their parent made the decision to migrate and notified them after the fact. Indeed, in the interviews the repeating ideas *child had no voice in migration decision* and *child found out about migration decision after the fact* co-occurred in the same excerpt 10 times as well as co-occurring in 50 percent of the same interviews. When asked if children had a voice in the decision, they stated, “…We found out he (the parent) was leaving the day he was leaving. I didn’t have anything more to say because he was going to leave that day.” Recalling her mother’s decision to migrate one participant stated, “…I found out after my mother left, I was very little.” Others recounted when family members broke the news, claiming, “…My grandmother simply told me that my mom had gone…” Thus, in the context of Paraguayan migration, children appear to have little influence over the initial migration decision.

Similarly, the repeating idea *child approves of migration decision* appears as a consequence of the migration decision, rather than a contributing factor in the parent deciding to migrate. Children may also mention being included in the *family migration decision*, but often this inclusion comes in the form of parents breaking the news to children. When asked if she was involved in a family migration decision, one child responded, “…Yes, but truthfully she never really spoke with us (children), she let my dad and my older sister know.” Another participant, recalling the family migration discussion and responding as to whether they had a voice in the decision noted, “In truth, I didn’t, but she (my mother) did. We didn’t want her to go, but she had to go given the circumstances.” Moreover, children responding that they approved of the migration decision may have done so retroactively. When asked if her father included the family in his decision to migrate one participant stated, “…he told my mom, not me… (she told me) a few days after he left… (I thought) it was for the best that he went to help us, it would be better.” Thus, this theme demonstrates the limited power children recall having in their parent’s choice to
leave the family to work in another country. Despite the benefits gained in the form of remittances, the absence of their parents and limited power they had in deciding their future often cause emotional consequences for children that are manifested in both their personal lives and their schooling.

**Emotional Distance from Migrant Parent**

Parental absence due to migration necessarily changes the relationship between parents and children. Previous studies indicate that separation due to migration can result in children expressing apathy or indifference towards their migrant parents (Dreby, 2010). Findings in this theme illustrate the emotional distance between migrant parents and their children. It can be evidence of a relationship that was weak from the start, or the consequence of the migration decision, distance, and passage of time. However, these ideas appear to be the exception to the rule in Tobatí, as they occur infrequently in interviews. For example, only three children mentioned having infrequent communication with their parent (*limited communication with migrant parent*). Thus, although past research portrays parental migration as a mechanism in creating emotional difficulties between children and parents, a minority of children in this study report feeling emotionally distant from migrant parents. While this may not suggest closeness to migrant parents, it does indicate that the role of communication for parents and children in Tobatí may differ from other regions.

A lack of common topics of conversation (*nothing to talk about*) is one indicator of emotional distance between parents and children. Yet, when asked what children talk about with their migrant parents, only two respondents mentioned that they did not know what to say or had nothing to talk about. Although this may not be the only category for the repeating idea *no desire to migrate*, (present in 35 percent of child interviews) the lack of desire to reunite with the
migrant parent in the country-of-destination on some level shows that children prefer their homeland and the family they have grown up with to the idea of migrating to reunite with their parent. The repeating idea *child only provides minimum information* (present in 55 percent of child interviews) also represents a distance between parent and child and a withholding of information or presentation of information to parents as only what is necessary or requested. Students stated, “I tell her what she wants to know, nothing more.” And when asked what information they provide they said “only what’s necessary…” or “only what my mom asks about…” This repeating idea is the most prevalent of the theme and emphasizes that barriers can still exist despite migrant parents’ presence in children’s lives, consistent with previous research on emotional distance between children and migrant parents (Dreby, 2010).

In contrast, all of the students in the control group professed telling parents about schooling issues, stating, “I always tell them everything.” and relating that they tell their parents, “…what I have, what I’m going to memorize, what I’ll study.” Similarly, control group respondents said, “If I have a question, I’ll ask them (my parents) for help.” In this sense, the dynamic of relaying school information between children and their migrant parents may be distinct from the experience of children whose parents have not migrated. Although the repeating ideas in this theme occur infrequently, they represent variation in the relationship between migrant parents and their children. They also indicate that there are indeed differentiating aspects of the parent-child dynamic between children with and without migrant parents. These findings provide some support for past research regarding the emotional distance between migrant parents and children, but reveal that children mainly demonstrate emotional distance by limiting the amount of information they convey about schooling.
Child Asserting Power

Parental absence can also offer children opportunities to increase their influence in the household. Past studies of children in migrant households describe shifting relational power dynamics in families with migrant parents (Dreby, 2007). This theme represents how children use strategies to exercise power and influence in their relationship with their migrant parent. One way that children exercise influence is by placing financial expectations regarding schooling on their migrant parents. As such, children stated that their conversations with their migrant parents about schooling always turned to financial matters and how children would fulfill regular obligations they had to complete their class work. When I asked participants if their migrant parents help them with school costs, (captured in the code *child asks for money to cover school costs*) half of them responded with an expectation that their parents will help them financially. Thus, children were able to use their parents’ obligation to support them in their schooling to influence both conversations regarding schooling and the use of remittances.

Denying parents’ requests for children to migrate may also represent children’s true desire to remain in the country-of-origin. However, it also illustrates another strategy through which children exercise power in the parent-child relationship. When asked if they had plans to migrate, 35 percent of children said “no.” A direct denial to migrate or insistence that they do not want to go indicates that they recognize that their parent cannot make them leave. Children explained this experience in conversations with their parents, saying “I told him ‘no’ and afterwards he didn’t ask me anymore, and it stayed like that.” Others echo this sentiment, saying, “She (my mom) told me to come (to Argentina) but I don’t want to, I just want to stay here.”

Children often reported not wanting to leave the comfort of their friends, families, and community. Denying parents’ requests is potentially the strongest rebuke children possess. This corresponds with past research that finds that children can influence parents’ future migration
plans by refusing to migrate with them (Dreby, 2010).

Additionally, the repeating idea *child only provides the minimum information* relates to how children remaining in the country-of-origin can use their position to exercise power. In this case, only providing minimum information to parents regarding their schooling, or only telling their parents what they want to hear (present in 55 percent of interviews), reinforces their power over the information they provide. This inherently differs from *children telling parents about schooling issues*, a repeating idea that indicates that children participate in a meaningful two-sided dialogue regarding their schooling with the migrant parent.

Furthermore, the concept *child denies migrant parent’s influence on future plans* also embodies children separating from migrant parent’s influence. Here, we asked children what influence their migrant parents had over their future plans. Most participants responded noting that their parents did not influence them in their choice of study and only potentially influenced them in the location where they would be studying. As such, this idea applied as a sign of independence from parental influence and combined with other repeating ideas in this theme to corroborate past research that details children of migrant parents using strategies to exercise both their influence over parents and their power in the parent-child relationship.

**Child Involves Migrant Parent in Life**

In contrast to children asserting power, students may also involve their migrant parents in their academic life beyond only what is asked of them from their parent. Yet, this does not contradict findings about children exercising strategies to increase their influence or power, but shows that children of migrants both involve and exclude their parents at different times. Furthermore, children not only confide in their migrant parents, but depend on them for support as well. This indicates that some students include their parents in their lives despite their absence.
As mentioned in previous categories, the code *child tells migrant parent about schooling issues* (present in 60 percent of interviews) connotes that migrant parents and their children engage in meaningful dialogue about their schooling. When asked about what they talk about during conversations, one respondent explains, “We talk about my studies, my health, everything like that. (He asks me) how I’m doing in school, if I’m getting ready for tests, how they’re going. He usually gives me advice and I ask him how he’s doing in his work and what things are like there…” However, conversations frequently turn to factual updates on schooling and grades, with parents emphasizing the importance of maintaining or improving academic performance. In addition to conversations, when children admit that migrant parents have influenced their future plans, they recognize their parent as a traditional influence (economically or geographically) in their envisioned future. One participant responds to a question regarding the impact of his parents’ migration, saying, “(It had) a positive impact, so we could study well and have a career in the future.” Another respondent notes the influence her father’s migration has in her own migration plans, claiming, “Because he’s there (abroad), I want to be there and he’ll be there helping me.”

The repeating idea *frequent communication* (occurring in 75 percent of interviews) shows that children still reach out to parents and make themselves available to converse and make time for their parents in their life. This repeating idea co-occurs with code *child tells migrant parent about schooling issues* in 45 percent of interviews, indicating that conversations usually turn to schooling. When children state a desire to help parents or help bring them home, they also actively involve them in their life and in their future plans. While desire for parents to come home may be present with or without a plan for children to migrate, this concept reveals that children still hold a place of importance for their migrant parents. For example, one respondent stated, “The goal I have is to finish high school and later enter college. And when I work, I want my mom to be able to stop working so I can support her instead.” Only two children mentioned this
idea, but it nonetheless serves as an example of how migrants’ children may not only set educational goals but also plan to use their future success to help reunite their family. Taken as a group, these repeating ideas illustrate the mechanisms that children of migrant parents use to involve their parents in their personal and academic lives.

Downplaying Importance of Parent’s Migration

In addition to questions of power and influence in the child-parent relationship, children may downplay migration’s influence in their lives as a technique to cope with the loss of a parent. During interviews some caregivers and children provided cues that diminished the importance of the migration of the parent and the welfare of the child or the child’s future plans. When asked if their household responsibilities changed after migration, 75 percent of respondents indicated that they experienced no change in chores or were too young to have had chores when their parents left. This contrasts with past research that posits that children of migrants shoulder more responsibilities in the house (Halpern-Manners, 2011; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011).

Regarding parental influence on future plans, 35 percent of children stated that their parent had very little influence. In fact, some respondents envisioned no change in their family or academic life regardless of their parent’s migration. When asked if they could imagine a familial or academic difference if their parents had not migrated, three respondents said their family life would not have changed, whereas nine children predicted no academic difference. Respondents explain this sentiment, saying, “I think if my mom were here, I’d still study just the same…” detailing that “…when they were here, my grades were good as well.” This can be due to limited parental involvement prior to migration, a content family life in the country-of-origin, or a sense of being self-made academically. When caregivers note that there has not been a personality or behavioral change they are typically communicating that the child has been “normal” in their
opinion despite the migration. Indeed, half of the caregivers indicated that the parent’s migration had not affected the child’s personal nor academic life. Thus, these repeating ideas group together to describe how children and caregivers assert that migration has not had a dramatic impact on the children’s lives. This assertion, however, applies more to chores, academics, and children’s behavior and personality, rather than migration or schooling plans.

**Importance of Caregiver in Child’s Life**

Many children also recognized the influence their caregivers have had on their lives. This coincides with previous studies that detail the important role the primary caregiver can evolve into after a parental migration (Dreby, 2010). The repeating ideas in this theme highlight the importance of caregivers in children’s lives. These ideas also describe the caregiver-child relationship and its interaction with children’s migration plans. When caregivers are listed as the principle source for academic questions it demonstrates children’s dependence. This code, however, only occurred in 20 percent of student interviews. In contrast, 60 percent of children mentioned that their caregivers would attend mandatory academic meetings, assuming an official parental role in the children’s lives and revealing a part of school where children do depend on their caregiver.

Another important characteristic of this category is the closeness that children can express for grandparents that act as caregivers. Children describe that their relationship with their caregiver changed as a result of migration and that they have grown more accustomed to their grandparents. As a whole, 11 students (55 percent) have either their grandmother or grandparents listed as the primary caregiver, all 11 indicating their adaptation to their grandparents as a parent figure. When asked if their relationship with their caregiver changed after their parent’s migration and if so, how, students claimed, “…I became closer with her…” and that “my grandmother is
practically like my mother now.” In fact, the repeating ideas adaptation to grandparent and relationship with caregiver changed are present in the same interviews 25 percent of the time, co-occurring in the same excerpt six times. Furthermore, when we asked children about their plans to migrate, three children said that they would not migrate because they would be abandoning their grandparent(s). Although this is a small percentage of the total children interviewed, it represents over 25 percent of those children who list their grandparent(s) as a caretaker. Moreover, it shows a concrete mechanism that ties children to the country-of-origin and dissuades reunification in the country-of-destination. This also illustrates the importance that the caregiver can reach in the lives of those they care for. Indeed, 45 percent of all child interviews state that the relationship with their caregiver changed after the migration of their parent. Thus, this category embodies the change in family structure and relationships that can happen due to migration. These findings also corroborate studies that highlight the important role grandparents have in caring for children of migrant parents, as well as the influence they can exercise over children’s migration plans.

**Parenting From Afar**

Whereas previous themes describe the how children assert their power in the parent-child relationship, this theme describes how parents reinsert themselves into their children’s lives post-migration. Moreover, the repeating ideas in this theme describe mechanisms migrant parents use to remain involved in their children’s lives, which supports previous research that asserts that migrant parents use tactics to manage separation (Dreby, 2010). To gauge this, we asked children how frequently they talked with their migrant parents, how they communicated, what they talked about, and how often they talked about schooling. The repeating idea internet as communication details a primary strategy for migrants to assume their role as parents. Internet communication, which appeared in 85 percent of interviews, allows for parents to retain a presence in children’s
lives more so than with scheduled phone calls. Parents can even see their children via the Skype Internet video service (common when households have computers). One participant recounts scheduled video calls with parents, when responding to how they communicate, stating, “Through Facebook on Sundays, we have a computer here…” noting that they can see photos of their parents and vice-versa. Moreover, with Facebook on computers, parents can leave messages and chat. With messenger services, children say their parents are in frequent communication, offering them the ability to stay attached to their children and have a presence in their lives. When asked how often they talk with their parents, 75 percent of respondents noted that they are still in frequent contact with their migrant parent, with the most common response being that they talk “every single day” even if it is just a text message. In fact, frequent communication and internet as communication co-occur in 70 percent of interviews and are present in the same excerpt 18 times, indicating the prevalence of migrant parents utilizing the Internet to stay in contact with their children.

The code migrant parent(s) inquires about schooling points towards parents resuming the family roles they had prior to migrating or even taking a greater interest in their children after migration, co-occurring with the code frequent communication in 80 percent of child interviews. When asked about conversations with parents, one student says, “He asks how I’m doing in high school… (for) two or three hours every Sunday.” Another student notes, “He asks me how I’m doing and how I’m doing in high school and my (extra-curricular) dance classes…. sometimes we speak for just a little bit, but there are times when we speak a lot…” noting that these are the only topics the two ever speak about. Conversations like these also reveal that migrant parents are inserting themselves into their children’s educational growth despite their physical absence. The repeating idea migrant parent offers academic guidance shows that migrant parents assume parenting roles by offering advice about school or making academic demands of their children. When asked about what their parents say about school, one student recalled when her mother
offered guidance, saying “She told me to try and do more… and this made me want to study more.” Furthermore, the repeating idea *migrant parent asking for news* shows attachment to the hometown and interest in how life is for their child in the community.

Similarly, 45 percent of interviewees reported that their migrant parents had visited home. One child remembers that her mom “…came back for my fifteenth birthday party (similar to a sweet sixteen party) and later she left again.” Here, it reveals a connection still exists between the migrant parent and his or her hometown, the place where the migrant’s remaining family is. Of the nine times when children said their parent(s) came back to visit, six of the parents returned from Argentina while three returned from Spain, illustrating perhaps the difficulty in returning from overseas. Returning to visit, even if briefly, shows a concrete continued attachment, even if one may exist without visiting. Visiting also offers the ability to resume the physical role of parenthood that is lost through migration. Lastly, the repeating idea *migrant parent wants to bring child*, a code present in 80 percent of interviews, shows that parents want to reunite their families in the country-of-destination, demonstrating a desire to continue the parenting role by bringing family to them. In sum, this theme describes a number of mechanisms through which migrant parents try to maintain parental influence in the lives of their children. Furthermore, these findings support past research that details how migrant parents resume their parental roles after migration.

**Education and Migration**

This section demonstrates the relationship between migration and children’s education. Children responded to questions about their past and current academic performance as well as how migration has influenced their ability to complete schoolwork. Therefore, repeating ideas
and themes in this section engage with previous research to describe mechanisms that aid or inhibit children’s educational success.

**Inspiration from Migrant Parent**

Past studies raise doubts about the mechanisms through which migration can positively influence children’s educational success. Some studies note that children with migrant parents report high academic aspirations (Dreby, 2011). In contrast, the “culture of migration” theory posits that instead of gaining inspiration in their schooling, children of migrants see their parents’ economic success as a reason to stop investing in education in the country-of-origin (Kandel and Kao, 2001: Kandel and Massey, 2002). Children in this study revealed that they gained motivation to succeed in school from their migrant parent, either as a way to pay them back or to make them proud. Thus, the repeating ideas in this theme represent a source of inspiration from migrant parents as demonstrated through children’s academic commitment. When asked how they value their studies in light of their parents’ migration, respondents talk about wanting to study more (*motivation from migrant parent to study more*) and inspiration (*migrant parent inspires greater value of education*) based on having a migrant parent. Indeed, these codes co-occur 90 percent of the time in interviews and appear in the same excerpt three times. Respondents acknowledge wanting to be able to tell the parent that they are doing well, reporting, “I think about her all the time, if I do something I say ‘I’m going to do this for her.’”

Children also indicated a desire to make the parent feel proud of them (*child wants parent to feel proud* – present in 25 percent of interviews) while they were far away, claiming, “(I want to study) more, in order to compensate them for the sacrifice they make for me.” One respondent states, “I value (my education) more because with her effort I’m making it ahead in life.” Other respondents state both motivation and fear due to migration, saying, “I think (it makes me) study
more, because if not, we’ll end up like my mom too, going to another country to work.”

Additionally, children frequently talked about their parents’ sacrifice (in 65 percent of interviews), stating that performing well in school was the least they could do to make up for what their migrant parent does for them. When children mention that their parents’ inspire more value in their education, they demonstrate the shared importance both children and parents place on education. When asked about the value they place on education, children also mention that they value it more because without education they will not be able to control their life. In fact, some respondents state that they do not want to follow the path their parent had to take due to not having an education. Therefore, these repeating ideas describe the inspiration students claim to receive in their academic pursuits from their migrant parents. In fact, these findings contrast with some of the assertions in the “culture of migration” theory, that posits that academic aspirations will be negatively associated with having a migrant parent. This may, however, represent regional differences between Paraguayan and Mexican migration, where cyclical migration (at least to and from Spain) is less common and migration may be seen as permanent.

Recognizing Impact of Parent’s Migration

Throughout interviews, children acknowledged the impact migration has had on both their academic and personal lives. The repeating ideas in this theme tie together the ways that children recognize the effect migration has had. Children often talked how they feel their parents left for the benefit of the family, and how they can study thanks to this. For example, the codes *child professed economic benefit of having a migrant parent* and *child admits migrant parent’s influence on future plans* are present in the same excerpt nine times and co-occur in 55 percent of student interviews, indicating the similarity these concepts share. One student, when asked to describe how migration has influenced her future, states, “I don’t think I would be able to go to
college, because I have another sister that is studying and we have a lot of costs also.” Another student mirrors this idea when asked about the influence migration has had on her life, claiming, “Yes, a little, because if she hadn’t gone, I don’t know if I would be able to go to college.” The repeating idea acknowledgment of sacrifice also appears frequently. Here, when asked how their parents’ migration has affected them, children talk about the impact migration has on their own future plans, while noting the sacrifice their parent has made and the benefit they have gained from the migration. One child, reflecting on how her mother’s migration affected her, says, “Little by little I realized the sacrifice she makes is only for us.” Additionally, the repeating idea motivation to study co-occurs in the same excerpt with the concept acknowledgment of parent’s sacrifice 14 times, revealing the similar territory these ideas occupy. For example, when asked about her motivation to study, one child says, “And now that he went and we stayed, I have to put in a little more effort in order to get ahead in life.” Another child echoes this sentiment, stating, “(I want) to study more, so that her effort isn’t in vain.” Thus, when asked to reflect on their parents’ migration and its influence, children often recognize what the parents have done as a sacrifice and note the influence it has had on their lives.

Similarly, the code child envisions familial change if parent had not migrated demonstrates children’s reflection on personal life and what changes might take place if their parents had not migrated. Children often reflect about what they are able to do with their future, despite the drawbacks of not having their parent present. Furthermore, child envisions familial change co-occurs in the very same excerpt as child professes economic benefit of having a migrant parent in 25 percent of student interviews. For example, one student reflects on his mother’s decision to migrate, saying, “Truthfully, it’s ok, because if she didn’t go, things here would be different. We’d work more. Our studies? I don’t know what would have happened.” In this manner, students frequently describe that the sacrifice their migrant parent made had a substantial impact on their familial wellbeing.
Finally, the repeating idea *child envisions better academic performance if parent had not migrated* represents variation in the category. In this sense, children reflect on the fact that they believe their studies would have been improved if their parent had not migrated, recognizing the impact of their parents’ migration but with the caveat that their grades suffered. When asked about what change children envision in their lives if their parents had not migrated, one student recalls, “Things would’ve been better, my grades would’ve been higher last year, because she would’ve taken better care of me.” Tellingly, this sentiment co-occurs in the same excerpt with *child professes economic benefit of having a migrant parent*, where the student admits the economic relief provided for their education but feels that they would have had more success in their studies if their parent had not left. When asked if she views a positive or negative impact of migration, one student responded, “Both sides. She always helps me… I don’t lack anything. But, I also don’t have time to do my homework or go to my friend’s home to study.” Thus, this theme reflects recognition of the migration’s impact on the student’s life, although the consequences can be both positive and negative.

**Investment in Education**

One of the driving questions in the debate on migration and development is whether parental migration and subsequent remittances translate to greater educational outcomes for children. Past research provides support for both sides. Some scholars find a positive association between children’s school enrollment and remittances (Edwards and Ureta, 2003; Schapiro, 2009; Hanson and Woodruff, 2003). Others note that despite aid of remittances, having a migrant parent makes children more likely to invest less in education and view migration as a valid avenue to achieve financial success (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006 & 2011; Halper-Manners, 2011; Frisancho-Robles and Oropesa, 2011). This theme refers to the investment in education
from students, migrant parents, and primary caregivers. Unanimously, students state their intent and desire to finish their secondary education in Paraguay. Furthermore, migrant parents also plan for their children to finish high school in Paraguay or to migrate in order to finish their schooling in the country-of-destination. These desires are shared and show child-parent agreement regarding the secondary education of children. Instructively, all of the respondents indicated that they intended to complete high school in Paraguay and that their migrant parent(s) also expressed an expectation that they finish their high school in Paraguay.

In addition, children and migrant parents almost unanimously state that they plan for the child to attend college, with these concepts co-occurring in 90 percent of interviews. This shared perception and investment in college education demonstrates the importance placed on post-secondary education by children and migrant parents in Paraguay. Moreover, it shows that net of migration plans both child and parents have post-secondary education as a concrete goal. The importance placed on education is reinforced when students state that they had never thought of leaving school, a frequent repeating idea occurring in 45 percent of interviews despite the question being added to the interview schedule during the process of data collection. This corroborates a value placed on children’s education that may supersede or coincide with their plans to migrate.

Caregivers also emphasize the importance placed on their children finishing their secondary education, as 95 percent of caregivers indicated that they had specific plans for the child to finish high school in Paraguay. Students and caregivers also occasionally mention that they are investing in extracurricular education in the form of dance classes (to be a dance instructor/professional dancer) or professional development programs that augment their high school education.

Finally, respondents frequently mentioned that their college plans and desired careers would not change in the event of migration, stating, “If I go to another country, I would choose
the same concentration as if I were here.” One respondent, reflecting on their choice of career, claims, “I’d like to be a lawyer… if I go to Spain I’m going to want to be a lawyer there too.” This emphasizes the desire to study and to not change children’s planned academic investment despite migration. Furthermore, many students (60 percent) felt that their Paraguayan education would be honored as a credential in the event that they were to migrate, showing again the belief in completing secondary education despite a potential migration decision. In addition, caregivers frequently (65 percent) state that children will not have to work while they are completing high school, as this is viewed as a detriment and impediment to their education. When asked if her grandson would work while he studied, one caregiver responded, “I don’t want him to work while he studies. What happens is that here in Tobatí the jobs that exist for young people are harmful.” Others mention the possible conflict between work and study, stating, “No, he’ll only do chores here for us, because if he works he won’t be able to study.” These findings contrast with previous research that suggests that child labor is positively associated with migration (Halpern-Manners, 2011). These repeating ideas illustrate that education is integral to the children who have remained in the country-of-origin. They also demonstrate that while there may be increased likelihood to migrate for children of migrants, both children and parents in Paraguay emphasize the importance of finishing high school and plan for post-secondary education.

**Uncertainty of Academic Future Post-Migration**

One of the assertions in the “culture of migration” thesis is that children of migrants in the country-of-origin may begin to invest less in school in their home country as they fear limited return-on-investment in the event that they migrate (Kandel and Massey, 2002). The repeating ideas in this sub-theme infrequently occur, but they do represent a certain amount of uncertainty and variation in the academic future for children of migrants. When children were asked if they thought their schooling plans would change if they migrated, four children mention that their
college plans or at least their preferred concentration and career may have to change if they were
to migrate. One participant asserts, “If I go to Argentina, I might end up changing what I want to
study.” Furthermore, almost half of the children also note that they are unsure as to whether or
not their Paraguayan high school diploma will serve as an educational credential in the event that
they were to migrate. When asked if they thought that their Paraguayan high school diploma
would be accepted in another country, one respondent expressed doubt, saying, “In Spain I don’t
think it would serve me. I’d have to start over.” Others mention uncertainty, saying, “I don’t
know, it depends if they accept what I’m bringing.” This may represent information they have
received from their migrant parent or general information they have come across through their
community networks that may shed doubt on how their Paraguayan high school diploma would
serve as a means of human capital in another country. Therefore this theme demonstrates that
although there is extraordinary priority placed on education, there is still uncertainty about how
education in the home country relates to migration.

Migration and the Intersection of Family and Education

This section presents themes that describe how migration interacts with both family and
academic life. They show how changes in the family life for children of migrants can have
consequences for their educational and professional aspirations. Moreover, these themes are
compared with past findings to describe how findings from this study move the academic
discourse on migration, education, and family life.

Emotional and Academic Toll of Parent’s Migration

Previous qualitative research suggests that migration can have a lasting negative effect on
the emotional wellbeing of children (Smith et al., 2004; Dreby, 2010). Moreover, this emotional fallout can have consequences in school, as children cope with the loss of their parent during school hours and suffer distraction. This theme ties together the detrimental consequences of migration on children’s academic and personal life.

The fallout of migration for children initially manifests itself emotionally. Children frequently linked responses regarding the emotional impact of their parent’s migration with a period of depression that they were eventually able to overcome. In fact, the repeating idea *migrant parent’s absence affected child emotionally*, was present in 90 percent of interviews.

When asked if they felt an emotional response to their parent’s migration, children stated, “Emotionally, yes, right after she left. I missed her, because before I spent more time with her…. (I was) sad, yeah, for a time, about a year… But I got used to it.” However, children also profess missing migrant parents and thinking about them frequently, whether during class hours or at night. They say, “I think about her almost the whole day.” Others mention the relationship missing their parent has with their choice to migrate, stating, “Yes, I miss her, at odd times. Or sometimes I need something, and I think of her. Sometimes I think if I had gone (with her) everything would’ve been different.” Thus, children note that after migration they suffer through a period of depression that varies in intensity and duration. Caregivers also note that children were sad after their parent(s)’ migration, hesitant to use the word “depressed” as it appears to have a stronger connotation in Tobati.

Although this study does not provide evidence for a causal relationship, often respondents who admit lacking a motivation to study indicate that they were also sad or depressed for a period of time after the migration. Instructively, when asked if they had ever had problems with their grades, 40 percent of respondents mentioned that they felt a lack of motivation to study after their parent migrated due to depression and feelings of distraction. This corresponds with past research that finds feelings of abandonment for children of migrants (Dreby, 2010).
addition, 70 percent of student interviews indicate lowered grades after migration. One participant recalls, “Yes, all my grades went down…” and when probed as to a relationship with her parent’s migration stated, “I think so, it was like that for a year without her.” These two repeating ideas of lowered grades after migration and lack of motivation to study co-occurred in five interviews and were present in the same excerpt four times. Respondents recounted their struggles, saying, “It hurt me a lot that he left… for a time it hurt me… My grades went down, I didn’t attend class.” Other students recalled difficult academic times, saying, “Last year I didn’t want to study, just since last year…My mom was already in Argentina.” A few students mentioned considering leaving school. Other respondents, however, link lowered grades to entering junior-high school in seventh grade, questioning the proposed relationship between the migration of their parent and lowered motivation or grades (although they admit increased motivation from their parents as part of a recovery of grades). Indeed, these results reveal that while children may eventually find academic motivation from their migrant parents, the initial consequence of migration is often detrimental.

Caregivers also comment on this drop in grades and corroborate or offer their opinions of a probable reason. Instructively, only two caregivers reported bad behavior in school or having difficulty with behavior. These ideas, although uncommon, tie into the repeating idea of rebelliousness (more common, occurring in 35 percent of interviews), which indicates that children challenge authority in the household. These results correspond with past research that show that children often test their limits with a caregiver as opposed to resident parents (Dreby, 2010). When caregivers were asked if they saw a change in personality or behavior in the child after migration, 30 percent responded that it had a notable impact on the child’s life, both from a behavioral and personal level. As a whole, these repeating ideas provide a spectrum of emotional and academic struggles that children often relate with parental migration.
Practical Change in Life due to Parent’s Migration

This theme reflects the increased responsibility, or rather, division of responsibility that can occur after migration. Previous research links migration with an increase in both child labor and informal responsibilities in the household (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011; Halpern-Manners, 2011; Antman, 2011). Thus, the expectation would be that children would report increased household chores and greater adult responsibilities as a result of parental absence. During the interviews, we asked students who would accompany them if they had a meeting with the principal or a teacher that required a parent’s attendance. When students note that they would attend parenting meetings alone that would normally require a parent, they are pointing to an assumption of role that previously would have been filled by their parent. However, this code was only present in 20 percent of child interviews, as the majority of respondents note that their caregiver would accompany them to any meeting. We also asked children where they sought academic help. The repeating idea seeking academic help from a non-caregiver shows that children do not look to their caregiver first as a means of solving an academic problem. This code is present in 75 percent of interviews (although only 50 percent in the control group).

In contrast, seeking academic help outside the house does demonstrate that students feel their help for academics must come from beyond their household and cannot be answered by the primary caregiver. When asked where they find academic help, students say, “I ask my classmates, those that have the best grades, those that understand more. I usually go over to their house.” Other students note that they specifically avoid their caregiver, saying, “I ask my classmates if I need some help, because I’m the oldest here (in the house), but with my grandmother? No, no.” At times, students feel that they cannot depend on their caregivers for school help or that their caregivers simply will not know the answer. These excerpts, however, may highlight a dynamic that is unique to being raised by a grandparent, which was common
among the interview sample (55 percent).

Although infrequently mentioned, when caregivers mention that the child may have to work prior to completing their high school they illustrate an increased shouldering of responsibility by the child (this work may be for spending money and not to support the family). Yet this code came up in only 20 percent of interviews, and was present in 25 percent of control interviews. As such, it appears to not be a substantial facet of having a migrant parent, which challenges previous empirical findings regarding child labor in migrant households. When students admit that the amount of chores or responsibilities they have in the house changed after the migration of their parents, they are also acknowledging an increase in responsibility related with their parent’s absence. Although not a majority, 25 percent of respondents mentioned that the amount of chores changed after a parent’s migration. Respondents admit that prior to their parent leaving, the migrant parent had done everything in the house, stating, “When my mom was here, I almost didn’t have chores. She did everything.” With the parental absence, children may find they have more responsibility in the household. One child notes, “Yes, (the amount of chores) changed a lot. Before, I would get up relaxed at 8:00am and do a few things…. Now it’s not like that, I have to do everything, when the end of the month comes I have to pay all the bills. Sometimes I feel like I can’t do it, I feel too tired.” However, this may be the exception since the majority of respondents reported no change in chores or indicated that when their parents left they were too young to have chores.

Respondents describe the repeating idea of children envisioning familial change (present in 75 percent of interviews) if their parent had not migrated, frequently noting that their family would be closer and happier if it were not for the migration. When asked how she thought her life might have been different, one respondent weighed the benefits and downsides of her mother leaving, recalling, “I don’t know if we’d be here if she hadn’t gone (economically) but (we would have had) more motherly advice and moral support.” Although this may not relate to
responsibility, it portrays the direction children feel the family has taken post-migration and how their life might be different, or even better, if not for migration. As a group, these repeating ideas describe practical changes in children’s lives after migration. Instructively, they reveal that in Paraguay migration does not often come with increased household responsibilities or demands to work to support the family as previous research promotes. Instead, the greatest practical changes appear to be in how children seek help with their schoolwork as a result of parental absence.

**Social and Familial Support**

Previous qualitative and quantitative work in Mexico describes the “culture of migration” as the process through which a community adapts to the increasing prevalence of emigration in their population (Kandel and Massey, 2002). In addition, studies report that the increased popularity of migration can alter class dynamics, as families react to the influx of foreign money (Dreby, 2010; Schmalzbauer, 2005). This study expands on this notion of community change and posits that communities adapt to labor migration by supporting those who remain in the country-of-origin. During the children interviews, the theme of communal and familial support came up often. We asked students about academic problems they had and all those who mentioned a drop in grades also talked about a recovery of grades through dedicated effort and familial and extra-familial support. As such, the repeating idea family members offering supportive advice applies to personal and academic support for migrant parents’ children. This can come in response to an academic struggle or it can be preventative advice from family members in order to support the child. In the same vein, the code recovery of good behavior, although only occurring in one case (due to infrequency of reported bad behavior), also relates to the idea of abandoning bad behavioral traits and improving attitudes in school.

The previously mentioned code migrant parent offers academic guidance, present in 35
percent of interviews, also contributes to this theme and describes the social network of support available to children of labor migrants, and the role that migrant parents play in helping aid in the recovery of grades and good academic behavior. When responding to questions about how migrant parents offered academic help, one respondent recounts that her mom has told her, “Please explain (school subjects) to your sister.” Others note personal help saying, “Sometimes I tell her that I’m going to have low grades because I don’t understand a certain thing and she tells me ‘If you questions, you have to ask a professor or I won’t send you any more (gifts)’.”

The repeating idea no mention of migrant parents in school is related to this group of codes because children reported that classmates very rarely participated in mocking or humiliation of students based on the fact that their parents had migrated. Responding to a question about if classmates ever mention the fact that the child’s parent migrated, 90 percent of children said they never heard anything negative in school and only one respondent indicated ever being insulted. This could be a sign that migration has become so accepted in the community as to be a regular part of the local economy with a prestige that does not invite insults. In fact, more frequently the idea of classmates offering support or advice was mentioned, indicating that classmates and friends may offer understanding or positive reinforcement of the migration decision. This may be because of the increased prevalence of migration in Tobatí, which has made migration an accepted norm in the society. Moreover, it shows that other classmates not only accept migration but support students dealing with the migration of their parent. One child recounts her friends’ aid, saying, “Sometimes I would go to school and I wouldn’t feel right. (my friends) asked me why and I told them because I missed my mom. They told me she was going to come home soon and that I should behave well and study.” These repeating ideas together demonstrate the communal and familial support system present for students, both from classmates and from parents and other family members. This theme also contrasts with past themes, noting that while there is an emotional and academic toll to migration, families and friends work to help
Future Envisioned in Home Country

A minority of students we interviewed admitted that despite their parents having migrated, they did not plan to follow them. When asked about their future plans, 35 percent of children responded that they had no desire to migrate, with 65 percent indicating ambitions to migrate. Thus, these findings correspond with “culture of migration” theory and research that supports a positive association between parental migration and increased likelihood for children to migrate (Kandel and Massey, 2002; Kandel and Kao, 2001; McKenzie and Rapoport, 2011; Frisancho-Robles and Oropesa, 2011). Indeed, this theme describes how and why some children envision their future in Paraguay. When asked if they envisioned professional or economic success in Paraguay or more so in another country, some students picture themselves having a viable future in their home country. Although these codes sometimes correlate with the repeating idea of professional success envisioned more so in other country or economic success envisioned more so in other country, they are indications that although children may understand that other countries may offer greater rewards in the labor market, they feel they can find success without leaving. One quarter of respondents mentioned that they felt they could have both economic and professional success in Paraguay. These repeating ideas tie in with a lack of desire to migrate. For a minority of students in our sample, despite professing the economic benefit of their parents’ migration they still feel they are better served by staying at home and using their education to have professional and economic success in Paraguay.

The repeating idea of having a planned future to not migrate also relates to envisioning professional or economic success in Paraguay. Substantively, students who perceive success may not have spent time planning a future in another country or envisioned migration as a strategy for
having future success. Caregivers will also echo the students’ opinions regarding migration if they do not foresee or plan for the student to migrate. Moreover, children who deny their parents requests to migrate also frequently note that they envision economic or professional success in Paraguay, with child denies parent’s request to migrate co-occurring 25 percent of the time in conjunction with one of the home country “success” codes. The emblematic case for this theme is a fourteen-year-old boy who lives in Paraguay with his grandmother, while his mother works and lives in Argentina. This respondent views success for himself in Paraguay, has no plan or desire to migrate, and wants to be able to bring his mother back home to reunite his family in Paraguay as opposed to traveling to reunite in Argentina. Therefore, although this theme represents a minority of respondents, it shows that some children reject the idea of labor migration. Despite their parents’ labor migration, they feel they will be able to find success in Paraguay. Given that only a minority of students envision staying in Paraguay, these findings support previous studies that link parental migration with future migration for children.

**Future Envisioned in Another Country**

As a more common alternative to envisioning the future in Paraguay, this theme shows that many children of migrants envision their future in another country. Importantly, these repeating ideas cover not only a desire to follow one’s migrant parent but the desired or planned adulthood in a country other than Paraguay. Illustratively, 65 percent of children interviewed stated a desire to migrate, with 40 percent having already made a sincere plan to migrate in the future. When asked if they would leave Paraguay, participants stated, “Truthfully, yes, I would like to go one day to know the place, to visit, and possibly to work as well.” Others mention that they would “…like to try it” noting that they would “like to go, but later on in the future.”

These repeating ideas are also related to responses where respondents feel they could
have greater professional and economic success in another country more so than in Paraguay, showing that children recognize the economic benefits of migrating. Moreover, when respondents indicate that they do not envision professional or economic success in Paraguay in conjunction with envisioning more success in another country, they visualize a better economic and professional future for themselves only in another country. Respondents express doubt of success in their home country and parrot what they have heard in the community, saying, “In other countries, there’s more (success) that’s what the whole world says. I think so too, that here in Tobatí there isn’t any work, here in Tobatí there isn’t a future, that’s what my classmates say.” Others mention local conditions, noting “In truth, (I see professional success) more in another country. They always say that here you have to have someone who speaks for you in order to have success.” One respondent concisely summarizes the opinion when responding to a question about where they envision their professional success, stating “Here? No. In another country? Yes.” Indeed, 40 percent of respondents mentioned that they did not envision professional success in Paraguay and only thought they could find it in another country. Comments regarding their economic future were similar. When asked where children envisioned their economic success, they frequently stated, “In another country, because here in Paraguay there isn’t any work.” or more directly “In Argentina.” Children also mention their migrant parents’ help, saying, “…there I’ll be with my father and he’ll help me more.” This can be influenced by having a migrant parent that migrated for labor as well as a general sentiment about labor success in Paraguay.

Beyond professional and economic success in the workforce, children also indicate that they can migrate to capitalize on foreign degrees. Interestingly, the repeating idea of migration to study represents respondents’ views that migration is not only an avenue for increased success in the labor market but also an opportunity to take advantage of better educational systems. 35 percent of respondents mentioned immigrating to the country that their migrant parent resided in
order to attend college in that country. Some noted this would be a stepping-stone to working in
the country-of-destination. When asked about plans to migrate, one respondent indicated that they
would be tied with studying, stating, “I’d like to go see her (my mother) and then it depends if I
stay to study.” Others said “I’d like to go to study, and then work” indicating that they would go
after finishing high school to start their college and professional life. Additionally, some children
related that foreign degrees are highly valued in Paraguay, saying, “If I go, I go to study and then
come back here again.” This demonstrates envisioning a future where migration is a tactic used
not only for increased economic or professional success in the labor market but as a tool to gain
valuable human capital that could not be gained in the country-of-origin. Therefore, this theme
shows the ubiquity of a motivation to migrate both for labor and educational gain.
Chapter 5

Conclusion and Implications for Future Research

The overarching goal of this study is to describe the experiences of children with migrant parents who remain in the home country, with special attention to how migration influences children’s family lives, their perceptions of migration, and their perceptions of the value of education in Paraguay. Building on past studies, this investigation is unique in that it features South American regional migration to Argentina and Chile as well as migration to new-immigrant destinations in Spain and the United States. This broad coverage distinguishes this inquiry from narrower studies that focus on migration to one destination. Furthermore, including caretakers in the sample not only makes the findings more robust but provides a different perspective on child development in migrant households. In conjunction with the ongoing debate on the relationship between migration and development, this study provides ample room for empirical exploration of the mechanisms that produce disparate educational outcomes for children of migrant and non-migrant parents.

The first issue is the consequences of migration for family structure as well as family power dynamics. Typically, children describe a lack of power in the direction their family takes. As a consequence, a minority of children mentions having an emotional distance from their parents, supporting studies that report indifference from migrant parents (Dreby, 2007). Children also use strategies to exercise influence and power over their migrant parents by demanding financial support and limiting the depth of information they share regarding their schooling. Moreover, children sometimes downplay the practical change migration has had on their lives, possibly as a technique to cope with parental loss. Finally, children demonstrate the increased importance of their caregivers in their family lives, which corresponds with past studies that
describe role non-parental caregivers have in families (Dreby, 2010).

This study also suggests that migration influences the priority placed on education by children, caregivers, and migrant parents. At times, this coincides with a desire to migrate or use migration as an avenue for post-secondary study. Respondents observe that their parents invest in education by providing economic support, which supports research that shows a positive relationship between remittances and educational gains (Nobles, 2011; Hanson & Woodruff, 2003; Acosta, 2007; Edwards & Ureta, 2003; Adams, 2010).

Beyond recognizing the impact of migration, children and caregivers corroborate the importance the family has placed on education and the inspiration they have received from migrant parents. Children, caregivers, and migrant parents all express a desire for the child to finish high school in Paraguay and commonly indicate that children had no intentions of abandoning their education. This contrasts with previous studies of Mexican migrant communities, which show that having a migrant parent is related to having lowered educational aspirations due to viewing migration as another vehicle for success (Kandel & Massey, 2002). This could represent regional differences in educational priority. Furthermore, the distance and cost to finance migration to Spain or the United States from Paraguay could be viewed as a milestone only undertaken after achieving a certain level of education. Given that parents and children stress the importance of education, future qualitative or quantitative studies must include longitudinal components with the potential to measure whether academic disruption is due to mere dropout or is instead associated with migration specifically to study in the destination country. Similarly, research that finds higher prevalence of dropping out of high school should seek to also show why dropout occurs in the face of children’s and parents’ educational aspirations, thus expanding theory on the processes involved in academic disruption and migration. Future studies that span the country-of-origin and destination should examine whether children of immigrants that followed their parents have used or intend to use their academic
credentials to pursue post-secondary study in the country-of-destination in cases where enrollment is affordable and feasible. This would then present a new aspect to the culture of migration, which would be the use of migration by children as a vehicle to obtain foreign degrees that carry more value in the home country.

Parents and children also report plans for college education, with financial support coming directly from migrant parents. These findings coincide with research that posits a positive relationship between migration and the education of children in the country-of-origin (Edwards and Ureta, 2003; Schaprio, 2009; Hanson and Woodruff, 2003). Notably, this study finds that post-secondary education can be pursued in Paraguay or the migrant parent’s country-of-destination, but it is evident that there is current and planned investment in education. In fact, the majority of caregivers in this study place priority on education and deny that children will have to work while in high school, which contrasts with previous empirical findings relating migration with higher likelihood of child labor (Halpern-Manners, 2011; McKenzie & Rapoport, 2006, 2011).

Lastly, this study describes how migration creates a powerful change in the family structure of migrant families, with consequences in children’s educational and familial aspirations. Children describe the emotional and educational impact of losing parents to migration, noting their absence affected them emotionally, supporting previous studies on the emotional toll of migration and its relationship to school life (Smith et al., 2004: Dreby, 2010). While children do note some practical changes in their lives, these changes tended to be related to how students sought help for schoolwork as opposed to increased responsibilities in the household that might inhibit their ability to study. Respondents also describe the existence of a familial and community support system that may be specific to communities with high prevalence of out-migration. Students mention receiving help from migrant parents, family members, and classmates in the event of a period of lowered grades or lowered motivation in school. In fact,
instead of having a perceived stigma in the community, children with migrant parents describe receiving support from classmates and friends, indicating a communal familiarity with labor migration. This is consistent with studies that emphasize how remittances benefit households and facilitate gains in education (Nobles, 2011: Hanson & Woodruff, 2003: Acosta, 2007: Edwards & Ureta, 2003: Adams, 2010). It also presents the idea that in addition to remittances, migrant parents may inspire greater educational effort in their children. Studies focusing on parent-child dynamics in transnational settings must be cognizant of both the importance of migrant parental roles in the children’s lives without ignoring the community and family support structures that exist in the home country.

Moreover, plans for migration or plans for remaining in Paraguay tend to hinge upon perceived ability to have both economic and professional success either in Paraguay or more so in another country. While the majority of respondents indicate a desire to migrate, even those who have a planned future not to stay in Paraguay recognize the impact migration has had on their future educational plans. Those who state a desire or plan to migrate also indicate that this migration will be made easier by the presence of their parents. Perhaps unique to this study, certain respondents mention a desire to pursue their education in their parent’s country-of-destination, highlighting the perceived prestige of foreign degrees in Paraguay and linking migration and educational aspirations directly. Thus, to answer the question of how migration affects children’s familial and educational aspirations, this study finds that the majority of children want to complete their schooling and have plans to pursue college degrees, but these plans are usually connected with aspirations to migrate as well. Interestingly, all respondents stated their future plans to either migrate or not migrate, indicating that their parent(s)’ migration has influenced them one way or another in deciding the setting for their plans after graduation from high school.
In closing, the findings in this study should be examined in future studies of migration and development in the country-of-origin. Empirical hypothesis testing will be able to build a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that relate migration and education. Specifically, studies that probe the relationship between development and migration must consider the implications of an increased prioritization of children’s education in conjunction with positive perceptions of migration. While children of migrant parents can reap the educational benefit of increased economic support for school, positive attitudes towards migration may result in a continued cycle of loss of human capital for countries-of-origin.
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# Appendix

## Table of Theoretical Constructs, Themes, and Repeating Ideas

**Theoretical Constructs, Themes, and Repeating Ideas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage occurs in interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Migration and Family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Children Lack Power in Migration Decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Parent Leaves Before Adolescence</td>
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<td>2. Parent Leaves at Start of Adolescence</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Parent Leaves After Start of Adolescence</td>
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<td>4. Child finds out about migration decision after the fact</td>
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<td>5. Child had no voice in migration decision</td>
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<td>6. Child approves of migration decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Family migration decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Emotional Distance from Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Limited communication with migrant parent</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Child denies migrant parent's influence on future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Nothing to talk about, doesn't know what to say</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. No desire to migrate</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Child only provides the minimum information</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Child Asserting Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Child denies parent's request to migrate</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Child asks for money to cover school costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Child only provides the minimum information</td>
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<td>4. Child denies migrant parent's influence on future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Child Involves Migrant Parent in Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Child tells migrant parent about schooling issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Child asks for money to cover school costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Child admits migrant parent's influence on future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Frequent communication</td>
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<td>5. Desire in future to help parent or bring them home</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Downplaying Importance of Parent’s Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Amount of chores did not change due to migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Child denies migrant parent's influence on future plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Child envisions no familial change if parents hadn't migrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Child envisions no academic difference if parent hadn't migrated</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Caregiver does not note behavioral change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Caregiver does not note personality change 50%

F. Importance of Caregiver in Child’s Life
1. Caregiver as principal source for academic questions 20%
2. Caregiver would go for a child’s academic meeting 60%
3. Adaptation to grandparent 55%
4. Child won’t migrate to abandon grandparent 15%
5. Caregiver relationship changes due to migration 45%

G. Parenting From Afar
1. Internet as communication 85%
2. Migrant parent inquires about schooling 100%
3. Migrant parent offers academic guidance 35%
4. Frequent communication 80%
5. Parenting from afar 60%
6. Migrant parent has returned to visit 45%
7. Migrant parent asking for news 85%
8. Migrant parent wants to bring child 80%

II. Migration and Education

A. Inspiration from Migrant Parent
1. Motivation from migrant parent to study more 95%
2. Migrant parent inspires greater value of education 95%
3. Acknowledgement of parent's sacrifice 65%
4. Child wants parent to feel proud 25%
5. Parents completed less schooling than child's current grade 45%

B. Recognizing Impact of Parent’s Migration
1. Child professes economic benefit of having a migrant parent 85%
2. Child admits migrant parent’s influence on future plans 60%
3. Child envisions familial change if parent hadn’t migrated 75%
4. Motivation from migrant parent to study more 95%
5. Acknowledgement of parent’s sacrifice 55%

C. Investment in Education
1. Child wants to finish high school in Paraguay 100%
2. Migrant parent wants child to finish high school in Paraguay 100%
3. Shared desire to complete high school in Paraguay 100%
4. Child plans to attend college 100%
5. Migrant parent plans for child to attend college 90%
6. Shared desire to attend college 90%
7. Never thought of leaving school 45%
8. Investment in extracurricular education 15%
9. Caregiver plans for child to finish high school in Paraguay 95%
10. College area of predicted study does not change 70%
11. Paraguayan High school degree will serve in other country 60%
12. Child will not work prior to completing high school 65%

D. Uncertainty of academic future post-migration
1. College area of predicted study changes due to migration 20%
2. Paraguayan high school degree may not serve in another country 45%

III. Intersection of Family and Education

A. Emotional and Academic Toll of Parent’s Migration
1. Lowered grades after migration 70%
2. Lack of motivation to study 40%
3. Bad behavior in school 10%
4. Difficulty with behavior 10%
5. Rebelliousness 35%
6. Migrant parent’s absence affected child emotionally 90%
7. Child professes missing migrant parent 95%
8. Caregiver notes that child’s grades fell for a period 20%
9. Caregiver notes behavioral change due to migration 25%
10. Caregiver notes personality change due to migration 35%

B. Practical Change in Life Due to Parent’s Migration
1. Attending parenting meetings alone 20%
2. Seeking academic help from non-caregiver 75%
3. Seeking academic help outside the house 45%
4. Child may have to work prior to completing high school 20%
5. Amount of chores changed due to migration 30%
6. Child envisions familial change if parent hadn't migrated 75%

C. Social and Familial Support
1. Recovery of grades 55%
2. Family members offering supportive advice 20%
3. Recovery of good behavior 5%
4. Migrant parent offers academic guidance 35%
5. Classmates offering support or supportive advice 50%
6. No mention of migrant parents in school 90%

D. Future envisioned in home country
1. Professional success envisioned in Paraguay 60%
2. Economic success envisioned in Paraguay 30%
3. No desire to migrate 35%
4. Planned future to not migrate 30%
| 5. Caregiver does not foresee that child will migrate | 45% |
| 6. Caregiver does not want child to migrate       | 5% |
| 7. Child denies parent's request to migrate       | 35% |

E. Future envisioned in another country

| 1. Desire to migrate in the future | 65% |
| 2. Planned migration in the future | 40% |
| 3. Professional success envisioned more so in another country | 65% |
| 4. Economic success envisioned more so in another country | 70% |
| 5. Professional success not envisioned in Paraguay | 45% |
| 6. Economic success not envisioned in Paraguay | 30% |
| 7. Migration to study | 35% |

N = 20  Percentages refer to frequency of code occurrence in the interview sample