Original Article

Predicting Unauthorized Salvadoran Migrants' First Migration to the United States between 1965 and 2007

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Executive Summary

Although Salvadoran emigration to the United States is one of the most important migratory flows emanating from Latin America, there is insufficient information about the predictors of first unauthorized migration from El Salvador to the United States. In this study, we use data from the Latin American Migration Project–El Salvador (LAMP-ELS4) to perform an event history analysis to discern the factors that influenced the likelihood that a Salvadoran household head would take a first unauthorized trip to the United States between 1965 and 2007. We take into account a series of demographic, social capital, human capital, and physical capital characteristics of the Salvadoran household head; demographic and social context variables in the place of origin; as well as economic and border security factors at the place of destination.

Our findings suggest that an increase in the Salvadoran civil violence index and a personal economic crisis increased the likelihood of first-time unauthorized migration. Salvadorans who were less likely to take a first unauthorized trip were business owners, those employed in skilled occupations, and persons with more years of experience in the labor force. Contextual variables in the United States, such as a high unemployment rate and an increase in the Border Patrol budget, deterred the decision to take a first unauthorized trip. Finally, social capital had no effect on the decision to migrate; this means that for unauthorized Salvadoran migrants, having contacts in the United States is not the main driver to start a migration journey to the United States.

We suggest as policy recommendations that the United States should award Salvadorans more work-related visas or asylum protection. For those Salvadorans whose Temporary Protected Status (TPS) has ended, the United States should allow them to apply for permanent residency. The decision not to continue to extend TPS to Salvadorans will only increase the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States. The United States needs to revise its current immigration policies, which make it a very difficult and/or extremely lengthy process for Salvadorans and other immigrants to regularize their current immigration status in the United States. Furthermore, because of our research findings, we recommend that the Salvadoran government — to discourage out-migration — invest in high-skilled job training and also offer training and credit opportunities to its population to encourage business ventures.

Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations estimated that there were 6.4 million people living in El Salvador, and the American Community Survey estimated that there were 2,171,894 people of Salvadoran origin living in the United States (US Census Bureau 2015; United Nations 2016). By 2012, Salvadorans comprised the second largest group of unauthorized migrants in the United States, while Mexico had the most unauthorized migrants in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2014); and, by 2013, Salvadorans were

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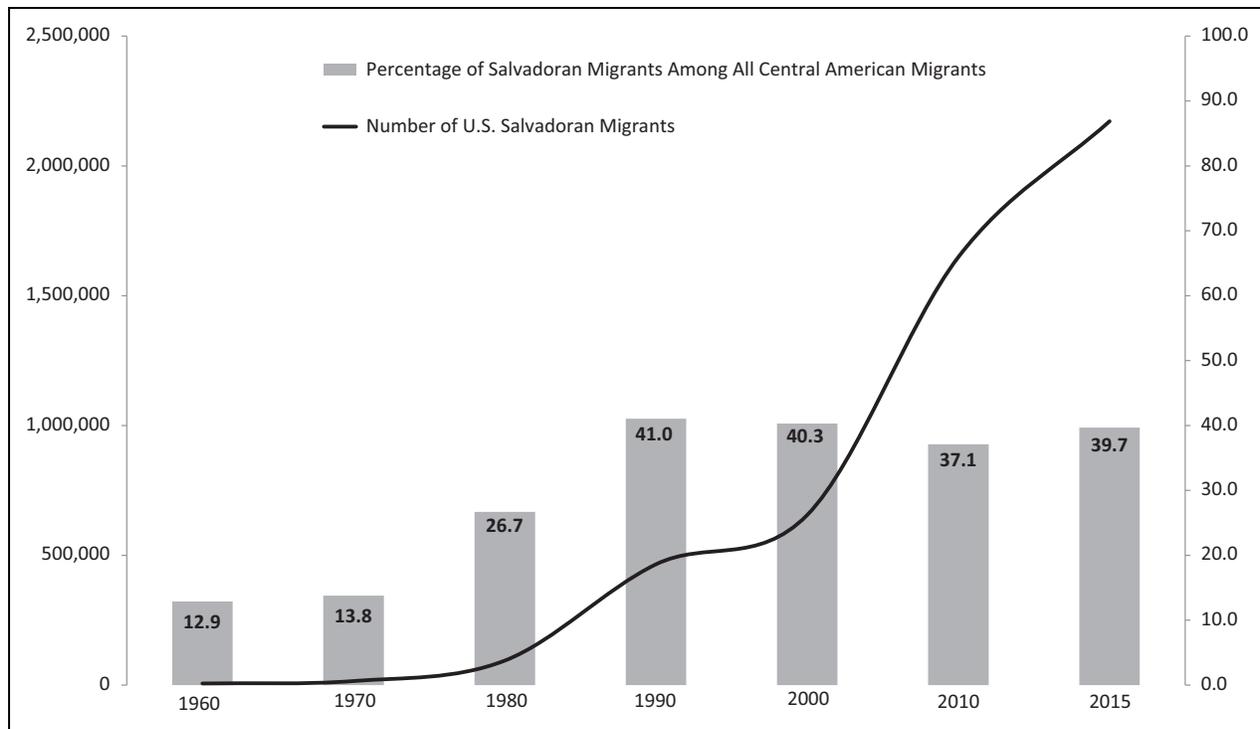Email: nadia.flores@ttu.edu

Figure 1. Salvadoran Migrants and Their Share among All Central American Migrants to the United States.
Source: Own tabulations using the 2015 American Community Survey (1 percent), and Stoney and Batalova (2013).

the fourth largest population of Hispanic origin living in the United States (López 2015). Between 2000 and 2010, Central American immigrants were the fastest growing segment of the Latin American population in the United States, and for the past 30 years, about 4 in every 10 migrants from Central America has been from El Salvador (see Figure 1; Stoney and Batalova 2013; Zong and Batalova 2015).

Even though Salvadoran migration is one of the most important flows of Latin American migration to the United States, most of the studies that focus on Salvadoran migration are qualitative. Abrego (2014), using ethnographic methods with Salvadoran families, concluded that extremely harsh economic conditions and lack of economic alternatives at home were two of the most important reasons why Salvadoran mothers decided to migrate to the United States, leaving their children behind. Rodríguez and Hagan (2004), through qualitative surveys and phone interviews in Texas, Mexican border cities, and El Salvador, found that Salvadoran deportees not only had to deal with the stress of the deportation process and leaving family members behind in the United States, but also had to face carrying a new label as a "criminal" deportee in their home country. Menjívar (2000) studied Salvadoran social networks through qualitative surveys and found that Salvadoran networks transform and malfunction at times, depending on the social structure and economic forces at play in the destination country.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a few important quantitative studies sought to determine whether Salvadoran migration flows had economic roots (Jones 1989), political roots (Stanley 1987), or a combination of the two forces (Hamilton and Chinchilla 1991; Menjívar 1993). Stanley (1987) created a statistical model to understand month-to-month variations in Salvadoran migration to the United States. By combining Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data and monthly measures of political violence from El Salvador between 1979 and 1982, Stanley concluded that political violence was an important motivation in the decision to migrate to the United States. Nevertheless, he also argued that the local economy might have influenced international migration to the United States due to El Salvador's civil war, which created an economic decline and lack of economic prospects for its citizens during that time. In contrast, Jones (1989) used spatial analysis to create various indexes to map political killings and out-migration numbers by department in El Salvador. He then reviewed Stanley's arguments and refuted those findings by stating that civil war and political reasons could not by themselves be blamed for out-migration. Jones concluded that Salvadoran-US emigration did not originate from places where political killings had taken place, but from urbanized departments instead. He argued that to start migrating, a person needed economic funds, which the damaged economy could not provide. Thus, neither political violence nor the weakened economy alone triggered international migration. Jones concluded that motivations behind the individual decision to migrate remained unidentified.

These studies shine a light on our understanding of Salvadoran-US migration during the 1980s, because they were published during the civil war years in El Salvador. The most recent quantitative article that studied Salvadoran migrants was written by Donato and Sisk in 2015; they analyzed migrant children from Mexico and Central American countries — including El Salvador. By constructing life histories of migrant children and matching them to their parents' migration history, they found that older boys from rural areas were more likely to take a first trip. More generally, they also found that children's likelihood to migrate is closely related to the depth of their and their parents' social networks in the United States.

Salvadoran-US Migration over Time

Early Flows of Salvadoran Migration and Pre–Civil War (Late 1800s–1979)

Salvadoran-US migration began as early as the turn of the twentieth century; that flow consisted of a small number of elite coffee growers who traveled as tourists to San Francisco, and later settled there (Menjívar 2000). This migration flow continued as El Salvador and the United States established trade relations and when the United States had demand for workers during World War II (PNUD 2005). Salvadoran migration continued years after the war; these migration flows were very small and highly polarized, consisting of either wealthy expatriates or low-skilled workers sponsored by diplomats (Gammage 2007; Zong and Batalova 2015). Out-migration from El Salvador continued through the 1960s and 1970s due to economic and political instability (Menjívar 2000). For decades, thousands of Salvadorans either were persecuted by the military or became landless, unemployed, exploited, or displaced, resulting in numerous deleterious effects, including very long periods of separation among family members and the weakening of the family enterprise and "the institution of *compadrazgo* (co-parenthood)" (Menjívar 2000, 42, *emphasis in original*). During that period, many peasants moved from El Salvador to Honduras to work at the banana plantations, but between 200,000 and 300,000 Salvadorans were repatriated as a result of the El Salvador–Honduras war in 1969 (Menjívar 2000). After returning to El Salvador, they encountered economic instability, insufficient labor opportunities, unavailable agricultural lands, and political chaos. As a result, Salvadoran migration to the United States "increased from 45,000 between 1951 and 1960 to more than 100,000 between 1961 and 1970, exceeding 134,000 during the 1970s" (US Bureau of the Census 1980 in Menjívar 2000, 54).

Civil War Period (1980–1992)

Unauthorized migration to the United States became more common beginning in 1979, right after the US intervention in the Nicaragua Contra War and its support of right-wing regimes in Central America (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014). When the civil war in El Salvador began in 1980, there was an increase in violence and political persecution, leading to a still larger exodus of migrants to the United States — mainly unauthorized migrants — who were escaping the war (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014; Giorguli-Saucedo, García-Guerrero, and Masferrer 2016; Menjívar 2000; Pederzini et al. 2015). This political unrest and armed conflict lasted for 12 years, until the peace accords were signed in 1992.

Few legally authorized modes of migration to the United States were available to Salvadorans. The majority of Salvadorans have been unable to procure a visa given the large number of people fleeing El Salvador and the numerical limits on the number of visas that the US government issues to nationals of each country. In theory, even though they entered without documentation, Salvadorans fleeing political violence during the 1980s should have qualified as asylum seekers; unfortunately, given the key role that the United States played in the political conflicts in Central America, the United States failed to recognize Salvadorans as political refugees and denied the majority of their applications (Menjívar 2006). Indeed, during that period, only 2 percent of all Salvadoran asylum applications were approved. Another 146,000 Salvadorans living in the United States were granted legal status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 (Gzesh 2006; Gammage 2007; Terrazas 2010).

Tourist visas have never been easily accessible to the majority of Salvadorans. The tourist visa requirements are not easy to meet. US government officials often deny tourist visa applications when the applicants cannot prove that they have substantial ties and investments in their home country that would encourage the traveler to return home after his or her vacation. In most cases, prospective travelers are asked to show that they have substantial sums of money in bank accounts in their home country, and to submit proof of income, tax payments, property or business ownership, and a letter from their employer describing in detail their position, employment history, and salary (Menjívar 2000).[1] Salvadoran migrants were labeled "economic" migrants, receiving fewer opportunities to apply for legal entry (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2016). Indeed, mostly those with extraordinary abilities were able to qualify for a working visa or a green card (or legal permanent residency).

Estimates show that more than 25 percent of the Salvadoran population fled the country during the 1980s, and most of this migration was male (Andrade-Eekhoff 2006; Gammage 2007). Data from the US Census reveal that the Salvadoran population in the United States quintupled in size during the 1980s, going from 94,447 in 1980 to 465,433 in 1990. Most Salvadoran migrants entered the United States during the second half of the 1980s (Davy 2006; Gammage 2007; Menjívar 2000). Most Salvadoran migration

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[1] http://www.ustraveldocs.com/sv/sv-niv-typeb1b2.asp.

during this period was unauthorized (PNUD 2005; Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014; Giorguli-Saucedo, García-Guerrero, and Masferrer 2016).

Post–Civil War (1993–2007)

The Salvadoran Civil War ended with the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords in 1992, allowing migrants to return to their land of origin (PNUD 2005; Gammage 2007). However, the post–civil war scenario in El Salvador was not encouraging. The war resulted in high unemployment, a lack of opportunities for productive activities, a budget deficit, and high levels of social and economic inequality (Pederzini et al. 2015). Moreover, the re-initiation of political instability prompted Salvadorans to immigrate to the United States, even those without prior migration experience (PNUD 2005; Abrego 2014). Other factors that possibly contributed to the post-war emigration include (1) a downturn of the Salvadoran economy beginning in 1996; (2) a crisis over the leasing of agricultural land; (3) the plunge in global coffee prices, which historically was one of the main exports from El Salvador; (4) damages caused by natural disasters such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and two strong earthquakes and a severe drought in 2001; and (5) perhaps the most widely reported in recent years, the resurgence of extreme violence (PNUD 2005; Davy 2006; Mahler and Ugrina 2006; Pederzini et al. 2015).

Migration was considered a viable option, and about 4.7 percent of Salvadorans continued emigrating every year during the 1990s (Gammage 2007). In 1990, Salvadorans became eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS)[2] due to the civil war (Messick and Bergeron 2014). This TPS designation by Congress ended in 1992. Some Salvadorans were able to legalize their status through a set of discretionary measures, including the 1997 Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central America Relief Act (NACARA)[3] (Zong and Batalova 2015). Moreover, after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and two earthquakes that hit El Salvador in 2001, El Salvador was granted its second designation for TPS (Gammage 2007; Terrazas 2010, 2011). Salvadorans had to document continuous presence in the United States and good moral character to avoid deportation (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014). As of 2015, about 204,000 Salvadorans had benefited from TPS (Zong and Batalova 2015). On January 8, 2018, the Trump administration announced that Salvadoran TPS will expire on September 9, 2019. The decision will affect about 195,000 Salvadoran TPS holders, because they could face removal after their TPS expires (Warren and Kerwin 2017; Chappell 2018).

Salvadoran migration has been mostly unauthorized, involving the dangerous crossing of three international borders and expensive smuggling fees (PNUD 2005; Andrade-Eekhoff 2006; Menjívar 2006). Nonetheless, a combination of the need to leave El Salvador, the stories of migrants' success in the United States, and the availability of social networks has promoted more international migration (Menjívar 2000; Flores-Yeffal 2013; Donato and Sisk 2015).

International Migration Theories

International migration theories take into account social and economic forces that influence migration choices, such as push and pull factors. Neoclassical economics theory follows the cost–benefit calculation taken by individuals to maximize their earnings net of various costs (Sjaastad 1962). Higher wages in the United States would increase the likelihood of the decision to migrate (Borjas 2007). Thus, under neoclassical economics theory, we would expect that Salvadorans migrate because they make a simple mental calculation in which the difference between their future earnings in the United States and their future earnings at home would exceed the cost of moving to the United States (Todaro and Maruszko 1986). In addition, neoclassical economic theory at the macro level argues that migration is the result of push-pull economic factors responding to natural supply-and-demand economic factors, such as the lack of labor supply at the place of destination (Massey et al. 1998). In contrast, the new economics of labor migration argues that an individual does not make the decision to maximize earnings alone, but it is more of a household decision made by the family members collectively through internal bargaining (Stark 1991). In this arrangement, families send one member of the household abroad to a different labor market while others stay in the local labor force, therefore diversifying their labor portfolio. In this way, the family members insure themselves against future economic risks. The family unit has been found to act as a prime decision maker and protector of those escaping gang violence in the Northern Triangle, including those from El Salvador (CMS and Cristosal 2017).

Furthermore, the social capital theory states that interpersonal contacts create a self-perpetuating dynamic in which the risks and costs associated with international migration are reduced (Massey 1990). At least in the Mexican case, while the costs associated with international movement may be higher for first-time migrants, subsequent migrants seem to benefit by the social support and information provided by those contacts who are already abroad (Flores-Yeffal 2013). Previous research has found that, in the case of Salvadoran migration to the United States, the social capital theory can malfunction because these migrants experience

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[2] Temporary Protected Status (TPS) was created as part of the Immigration Act of 1990. It is granted to those migrants who cannot safely return to their country due to an ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, an epidemic, or any other extraordinary conditions. Those individuals granted TPS are not removable from the United States, can obtain employment authorization, and may be granted travel authorization (US Citizenship and Immigration Services 2018).

[3] The Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central America Relief Act (NACARA) applies to certain individuals from Guatemala, El Salvador, and the former Soviet Union countries who entered the United States and applied for asylum by specified dates.

Table 1. Communities Surveyed in El Salvador.

Community	Population Size[a]	In Agriculture (%)[b]	Low Education (%)[c]	Date of Survey	Number of Households Surveyed	Refusal Rate
Ideal	7,500	10.1	76.7	2007	121	6.9
Flores	434,000	7.4	64.3	2007	89	8.0
Minas	434,000	7.4	64.3	2007	77	1.2
Villa	12,600	12.9	75.3	2007	95	1.0

[a]Population is at the Municipio level in 2007.
[b]Percentage given at the Departamento level.
[c]People aged 15+ with fewer than six years of schooling at the Departamento level.

unfavorable conditions in the receiving society (Menjívar 2000). Labor shortages, lack of resources, and poverty[4] were among the unfavorable conditions experienced by Salvadorans after arriving to the United States (Menjívar 2000, 2006). According to the cumulative causation migration theory, social networks function regardless of the reasons why people decide to emigrate. Once migration begins in a community, the changes in the context of the sending community (due to relative deprivation), together with the availability of social contacts abroad, lead to the perpetuation of international migration flows. This same theory states that once migration reaches a certain level, it tends to decline due to the demographic composition of the people left in the sending community (Massey et al. 1998; Lindstrom and López-Ramírez 2010).

Various social, political, economic, and natural forces have fueled Salvadoran-US migration throughout the years. The lack of reliable data — at the individual, household, and country levels — has made it difficult to assess the causal factors of this important migration flow. In this study, we seek to shed light and understand the factors that play a role in the decision making of first-time unauthorized migrants from El Salvador to the United States, and we evaluate if any of the theories outlined above have any relevance to this migration flow.

Data and Methods

To predict the first unauthorized trip, we draw on detailed labor histories compiled by the Latin American Migration Project in four communities surveyed in El Salvador in 2007 (LAMP-ELS4).[5] Following LAMP protocols, Salvadoran communities were chosen to provide a range of population sizes, economic structures, and social backgrounds. The communities were located in the southern and eastern regions of El Salvador. Fieldwork took place in Flores and Minas, two neighborhoods located within a large urban area in the Department of San Miguel, as well as in Ideal and Villa, two smaller communities in the Departments of La Union and Cabañas, respectively, yielding a sample size of 382 households. Sampling frames were constructed by undertaking a complete census of dwellings within the community or neighborhood prior to fieldwork. Once the census was completed, households were selected randomly and interviewed regardless of whether any resident in the particular household had international migration experience. Refusal rates were low, ranging from 1 percent in Villa — a small rural area — to 8 percent in the community of Flores, located in a large city (Table 1).

The ethnosurvey follows a semistructured format and does not have a specific question order. This approach allows both the head respondent (who are in most cases male respondents) to narrate his or her life history and the interviewer to tailor the phrasing and order of questions to each particular respondent. The questionnaire gathers basic social, economic, and demographic information about the household and its members. It also compiles a complete year-to-year life history for the household head and spouse, progressing from the year of birth to the year of survey, which records yearly longitudinal data on internal and international moves, physical capital owned, housing quality, employment, childbearing, and union formation (Massey 1987).

Table 2 describes the independent variables and their operational definition used in this analysis. Independent variables are defined in year t, while the dependent variable to predict first unauthorized migration is defined in year $t+1$. We use the life histories provided by household heads and follow them from their 10th birthday to the year of the first unauthorized trip or to the year of the survey. This was done to include in our sample three additional heads of household who had migrated by age 12. Preliminary analysis showed that 83 percent of the heads were unauthorized immigrants, 13 percent traveled with a tourist visa on their first trip, and 4 percent traveled either with a green card or as refugees. Thus, we define our dependent variable as dichotomous, with a value of 1 when the person took a first unauthorized trip and 0 otherwise. We define an *unauthorized trip* to include both migrants who

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[4]Poverty resulted from a combination of factors, such as high smuggling fees paid to cross three international borders and unemployment due to lack of proper documentation.

[5]The Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) is a collaborative research project based at Princeton University and the University of Guadalajara, supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Ethnosurvey, codebooks, and datasets for El Salvador (LAMP-ELS4) are available at http://lamp.opr.princeton.edu.

Table 2. Definition of Independent Variables Used in Analysis of Unauthorized Migration from El Salvador to the United States in Year *t*.

Variable	Operational Definition	Source
Demographic Indicators		
Female	1 = Female, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Married	1 = Married or in consensual union, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Age	Age in years	LAMP
Minors in household	Number of children aged less than 18 years	LAMP
Urban community	1 = Community in urban setting, 0 otherwise	
Human Capital		
Labor force experience	Years of labor force experience	LAMP
Education	Years of schooling	LAMP
Tourist visa	1 = Migrated with tourist visa, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Head's occupation		
Agricultural job	Agricultural occupation — reference category	LAMP
Unskilled job	Unskilled nonagricultural occupation	LAMP
Skilled job	Skilled nonagricultural occupation	LAMP
Out of the labor force	Stay-at-home wives, students, unemployed, etc.	LAMP
Pension	1 If received social security or pension, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Spouse employed	1 If spouse is employed in person-year, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Social Capital		
Family in United States	No. of immediate family with US migration experience; this includes spouse, parents, and siblings	LAMP
Migration prevalence ratio	Proportion of persons in community aged 15+ ever migrated to United States in person-year	LAMP
Physical Capital		
Home	Number of properties owned in person-year	LAMP
Farm land	Number of land parcels owned in person-year	LAMP
Business	Number of businesses owned in person-year	LAMP
Personal Crisis		
Economic	Number of economic crises in person-year	LAMP
Violence or political	Number of political violence crises in person-year	LAMP
US Social Context		
Border Patrol budget	Border Patrol budget (in 2010 US dollars) divided by 1000	MMP / US Department of Homeland Security
Average weekly earnings	Expected average weekly earnings (in 2010 US dollars)	US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Unemployment rate	Yearly US unemployment rate	MMP / US Statistical Abstracts
El Salvador Context		
Fertility rate	Yearly total fertility rate	World Bank
Civil violence index	Index from ProQuest Historical Newspaper Series	ProQuest
Period		
Pre-war	1 If person-years in 1965 to 1979, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Civil war	1 If person-years in 1980 to 1992, 0 otherwise	LAMP
Postwar	1 If person-years in 1993 to 2007, 0 otherwise	LAMP

travel without documents and those who travel with a tourist visa and subsequently work in the United States (the latter being a violation of that visa). Using life history analysis, we predict the likelihood of taking a first unauthorized trip to the United States from 1965 to 2007. We start our analysis in 1965 because (1) that was the year in which the United States created a permanent immigration preference system that favors family reunification and labor-related migration (Giorguli-Saucedo, García-Guerrero, and Masferrer 2016), and (2) the Immigration Act of 1965 (the Hart–Cellar Act) imposed a first-ever annual cap of 120,000 visas for immigrants from countries in the Western Hemisphere (Massey and Pren 2012).

Our models include demographic indicators such as age, gender, marital status, number of minors in the family, and community location. Human capital indicators include labor force experience, education, occupational skill, and a dichotomous variable for when the spouse is in the labor force. Given that social capital is usually a strong predictor of migration, we include a similar variable used in previous studies that counts the number of immediate family members living in the United States (Espinosa and Massey 1997; Massey et al. 1998; Cerruti and Massey 2001). Even though the family structure in El Salvador may include a large number of female-headed households and more extended family traditions as suggested by Menjívar (2000) and Abrego (2014), our definition of *immediate family* considers only spouse, parents, and siblings, because only these categories are included in the questionnaire. In addition, we also include the migration prevalence ratio for each community, which was first defined by Massey, Goldring, and Durand (1994, 1495) as "the number of people with international migratory experience divided by the total number of people alive." The migration prevalence ratio is calculated retrospectively year by year, and it is a proxy to measure the

community's involvement in the migration process in a given year. The migration "prevalence ratio partially controls for the effect of differences in the history and timing of migration" (ibid.). Ownership of physical capital not only is important to understand the standard of living in the country of origin, but also may be a relevant asset for some migrants because this physical capital may be sold to finance a trip or serve as an incentive to stay (Cerruti and Massey 2001; Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014).

The ethnosurvey applied in El Salvador included additional questions for the household head and spouse designed to gather information relevant to any personal crises that may have resulted from the economy, violence, political unrest, or natural disasters. All of these questions were asked in a yes-no format.[6] When a particular crisis question received a positive answer, a year was recorded. The year allowed us to pinpoint the event to a specific person-year in the life history of the household head. Thus, if a question had a positive answer in a specific year, a dummy was coded 1, and otherwise 0. There were eight questions in the economic crisis section regarding possible economic hardships. Due to the small number of positive answers in response to crises due to either violence or political persecution, we combined those answers into one variable, which we labeled *violence–political crisis*.

As prior research has shown, the decision to migrate is not only determined at the personal level, but also influenced at the household and community levels (Massey et al. 1987). The likelihood of someone deciding to migrate also depends on the contextual circumstances that prevail in both the country of origin and the country of destination (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014). We used three variables to measure the US context: the US Border Patrol budget adjusted for 2010 US dollars to control for border enforcement and, most importantly, for the massive increase of Border Patrol resources at the Mexican-US border over the years (Haddal 2010); expected average weekly earnings, also adjusted to 2010 US dollars; and yearly unemployment rate as an indicator of economic stability (or instability) in the United States. If the unemployment rate is high, we expect that it will act as a deterrent of international migration.

To assess the contextual circumstances that have prevailed in El Salvador, we use the total fertility rate and a civil violence index. Since migration is driven in part by population dynamics, high population growth rates create demographic pressure on the local labor market, while a growth in the local aging population may slow migration (Giorguli-Saucedo, García-Guerrero, and Masferrer 2016). Finally, due to the lack of data that measure violence trends in El Salvador, we followed the example of Lundquist and Massey (2005) and Massey and Pren (2012) to construct a civil violence index. Using the ProQuest Historical Newspaper Database, we conducted a search for newspaper articles that contained the words *war*, *killing*, or *death* plus the country of interest — El Salvador. Thus, we generated an annual count to measure political violence in El Salvador. We predicted that higher violence indexes would positively influence first unauthorized trips. Lastly, to control for period effects, we specified three dichotomous variables: prewar (1960–1979), civil war (1980–1992), and postwar (1993–2007).

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for first-time unauthorized migrants and nonmigrants, marked with an asterisk when the *t*-test was statistically significant from each other. The research found that only 18 percent of the first-time unauthorized migrants who entered the United States were female. (Andrade-Eekhoff 2006; Gammage 2007). On average, only about one quarter of migrants from urban areas migrated internationally without legal documents for a first time versus three-quarters who were from rural areas of origin. Also, among nonmigrants, about half were from rural areas, and the other half from urban areas of origin. Also, those who never migrate have on average 23 years of labor force experience compared to only 14 years for unauthorized migrants. In general, education levels in El Salvador are low, with an average of just six years for unauthorized migrants and seven years for nonmigrants. These low levels of education are consistent with previous findings that more than half of Salvadoran migrants do not possess a high school diploma (Davy 2006; Terrazas 2010, 2011). Our unauthorized migrant sample reported that 83 percent lacked legal documents on their first US trip, while 13 percent entered with a tourist visa, again confirming that most Salvadoran migrants enter the United States without inspection (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014).[7]

Regarding occupation prior to migration, 32 percent of first-time unauthorized migrants had worked in agriculture versus 12 percent of nonmigrants, 6 percent of unauthorized migrants had a skilled occupation versus 27 percent of nonmigrants, and about 10 percent of first-time unauthorized migrants and 20 percent of nonmigrants reported being out of the labor force; those who were out of the labor force included housewives (some of whom never intended to participate in the labor force), the unemployed, and those who were already retired. The difference was significant for all occupations, except for those employed in unskilled jobs. There were no significant differences on the social capital variables; and both unauthorized migrants and nonmigrants had the same number of immediate family members in the United States. Nonmigrants tended to have more physical capital than first-time unauthorized migrants did: 54 percent owned a home, and 52 percent owned a business. In contrast, at the time of first trip, only around 20 percent of unauthorized migrants owned a home, and 2 percent owned a business. Finally, the number of personal crises revealed no major differences between unauthorized migrants and nonmigrants.

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[6]The detailed questions can be found at the LAMP website: http://lamp.opr.princeton.edu.

[7]As we have mentioned earlier, entering the United States with a tourist visa allows them to enter with inspection of immigration authorities, but they are not allowed to work in the United States. Once Salvadoran immigrants enter the labor force in the United States or overstay their visas, they become unauthorized according to our definition of unauthorized immigrants in this study.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables (for Migrants and Nonmigrants) Used to Predict the Likelihood of Taking a First Unauthorized Trip to the United States (1965–2007).

	Unauthorized First-Time Migrants		Nonmigrants	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Demographic Indicators				
Female	0.1746*	0.3784	0.4158	0.4936
Married	0.4921	0.5036	0.6222	0.4856
Age of household head	28.9*	11.5	48.6	17.2
No. of minors in household	1.1	1.5	1.1	1.4
Urban community	0.2539*	0.4483	0.4762	0.5002
Human Capital				
Labor force experience	14*	12.3	33.2	18.6
Education	6.3	4.7	7.1	5.5
Tourist visa	0.1269*	0.3453	—	
Head's occupation				
Agricultural job	0.3174*	0.4774	0.1174	0.3224
Unskilled job	0.3492	0.4877	0.4031	0.4913
Skilled job	0.0635*	0.2535	0.2667	0.4429
Out of the labor force	0.0952*	0.2808	0.2031	0.4030
Pension	0.0635	0.3626	0.1809	0.3856
Spouse employed	0.1429	0.3626	0.3365	0.4732
Social Capital				
Family in United States	0.5238	1.3436	0.5587	1.0937
Migration prevalence ratio	7.3*	4.8	7.8	4.0
Physical Capital				
Home	0.2063*	0.418	0.5428	0.5177
Farm land	0.0317	0.1825	0.1079	0.3923
Business	0.0158*	0.1301	0.5238	0.6145
Personal Crisis				
Economic	0.0317	0.1825	0.0952	0.3619
Violence or political	0.0317	0.1825	0.0285	0.1668
US Context				
Border Patrol budget	0.6609	0.4623	0.6875	0.5703
Average weekly earnings	624.73	16.7	630.5	46.3
Unemployment Rate	5.8	1.2	5.9	1.5
El Salvador Context				
Fertility rate	4.1	1.9	4.3	1.3
Civil violence index	306.11	335.6	236.38	330.85
Period				
Prewar: 1965–1979	0.2222	0.4290	—	
War: 1980–1992	0.3968	0.4829	—	
Postwar: 1993–2007	0.3809	0.4954	—	
Number of Observations	63		315	

*Indicates value is significantly different (*p* < .05, two-tailed test) between unauthorized first-time migrants and nonmigrants.

Determinants of First Migration

Table 4 shows the results of discrete time–event history analysis predicting the likelihood of taking a first unauthorized US trip between 1965 and 2007. We discuss these findings in terms of odd ratios by applying the formula $(e^{\beta}-1)*100$ to yield the percentage change in the odds of initial out-migration per unit of change in the independent variable (Allison 1999). To model a first unauthorized trip, we selected all person-years lived from 1965 onwards. We followed all household heads from their 10th birthday up to the date of first trip or the survey, whichever occurred first. Originally, we controlled for those who traveled with a tourist visa. However, its confidence intervals did not exist, so that variable is excluded from this analysis. Our results show that female household heads are 63 percent less likely to make a first unauthorized trip compared to males. This is consistent with previous findings stating that Salvadoran migration is male driven (i.e., Gammage 2007). For each additional year of age, Salvadoran heads were 15 percent more likely to take a first unauthorized trip. Also, those from urban areas were less likely to migrate for the first time than those from rural areas of origin, although this effect is only marginally statistically significant. The fact that these first-time

Table 4. Discrete Time Event History Analysis Predicting Likelihood of Taking a First Unauthorized US Trip (1965–2007).

Independent Variables	β	SE
Demographic Indicators		
Female	−0.9984**	0.4087
Married (or in union)	0.2127	0.3282
Age	0.1407**	0.0615
Age squared	−0.0012	0.0008
Minors at home	0.0245	0.1036
Urban community	−0.6266*	0.3632
Human Capital		
Labor force experience	−0.0777**	0.0399
Education	−0.0011	0.0381
Agricultural worker	—	
Unskilled worker	−0.0052	0.3185
Skilled worker	−1.1157*	0.6574
Out of the labor force	−0.3624	0.5342
Pension	−0.5916	0.7013
Spouse employed	−0.1474	0.3813
Social Capital		
Family in US	0.1001	0.0978
Migration prevalence ratio	0.0198	0.0349
Physical Capital		
Home	−0.1944	0.3584
Farm land	−0.7390	0.6745
Business	−2.2315**	1.0288
Personal Crisis		
Economic	1.2002*	0.6402
Violence or political	0.6896	0.6883
US Context		
Border Patrol budget	−1.6455*	0.9814
Average weekly earnings	0.0131	0.0108
Unemployment rate	−0.3409**	0.1331
El Salvador Context		
Fertility rate	−1.0427*	0.5771
Civil violence index	0.0014*	0.0008
Period		
Prewar: 1960–1979	—	
War: 1980–1992	−0.2794	1.2035
Postwar: 1993–2007	−0.1046	1.0252
Intercept	−7.4383	1.3494
Likelihood Ratio	75.3039***	
Wald	56.423***	
Number of Person-Years	12,979	

*p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .001.

migrants were less likely to be from urban areas supports the idea that once development in the area of origin reaches a certain level, migration tends to decline (Massey et al. 1998). In addition, urban areas tend to provide more access to credit, and labor markets tend to be more diversified in case of a market failure. Results also show that for each additional year spent participating in the labor force in El Salvador, the likelihood of taking a first unauthorized trip is reduced by 8 percent. Still, it is important to take into account that gang extortion began after we collected these data; therefore, we are not sure to what extent this finding is still true today. It is possible that gang extortion discouraged people from participating in the labor force. Still, these findings suggest that those with more experience in the labor force and more stable jobs may have lower incentives to migrate for the first time. In addition, those who are skilled workers are less likely to embark on a first trip than those who work in agricultural jobs in El Salvador. This effect is also marginally statistically significant. Therefore, work experience and greater human capital might also help to deter out-migration.

Surprisingly, the social capital variables had no important statistically significant effects toward predicting the first unauthorized migration trip for Salvadoran household heads, thus providing no support for the social capital theory. This suggests that some of

these first-time unauthorized migrants could be considered pioneer migrants — those who play a role in developing migration streams for the region and who are also the cornerstone of the cumulative causation theory in which networks continue to function once migration begins (Massey et al. 1998; Lindstrom and López-Ramírez 2010). This is important because Donato and Sisk (2015) used the same set of data to predict the first trip of migrants' children; they concluded that social capital was important for migrant children's first trip, and their social capital happened to be these first-time unauthorized migrant household heads. Thus, we can argue that these first-time migrants are the pioneers who later assisted others in the migration process, and they may well represent the beginning of Salvadoran migration networks.

Regarding physical capital, our results show that those heads who owned a business in El Salvador were 89 percent less likely to take a first unauthorized trip than those who did not own a business. This suggests that physical capital in the form of a business in El Salvador is an important deterrent for international migration.

The estimates reported in Table 4 suggest that first-time unauthorized Salvadoran migrants are driven to migrate by a personal economic crisis. Household heads who reported an economic crisis in a given person-year were more likely to migrate than those who did not; this effect was marginally statistically significant, whereas violence–political crisis had no effect. A separate first-stage model was done to predict the number of economic crises; the variables for violence–political crisis, postwar period, and number of minors were positive and statistically significant.[8] The number of minors is a way to understand the household composition; thus, if the household has a large number of minors — also known as *dependents* — this may easily explain the reason for the economic crisis. A crisis due to violence and political unrest may lead to an economic crisis. Furthermore, as previous research has suggested, the civil war left El Salvador with such an economic deficit and a lack of opportunities that the economic crisis was at its height during the postwar period. Thus, we argue that the number of minors, the crisis due to violence and political unrest, and the postwar period all had indirect effects on the likelihood of taking a first unauthorized trip to the United States, since these factors also led to economic hardships among Salvadorans. This may also suggest that crises resulting from violence and political persecution do not have a uniform effect but that the impact of the crisis depends on broader economic and political conditions both at origin and at destination (Alvarado and Massey 2010). In addition, this may prove the fact that violence due to gangs increased after 2007 (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014); since our data end in 2007, we are unable to make any conclusions about the impact of gang-based violence on migration choices.

Regarding the US context variables as predictors of first migration trip, we found that each unit increase in the Border Patrol budget had a marginally statistically significant effect on deterring first-time Salvadoran migrants by reducing their likelihood of migration. The militarization of the Mexican-US border that has taken place during the past 25 years has been very intense, making it more expensive and difficult to embark on an unauthorized trip. This effect may indicate that such militarization of the border has had some effect on deterring unauthorized migration. In addition, US unemployment rates had a negative effect on taking a trip; for each unit increase in the unemployment rate, the likelihood of Salvadoran heads of household taking their first trip is reduced by 29 percent. This supports previous findings that the initiation of unauthorized migration is driven by labor demand in the United States (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014) and also supports neoclassical economic theory at the macro level. Average weekly earnings in the United States had no effect on the decision to take a first trip, which would have provided evidence for the neoclassical model at the micro level.

As for context variables in El Salvador, as noted above, population dynamics may play an important role in migration. Our results show that for each unit increase in the fertility rate, the likelihood that a head of the household takes a first unauthorized trip is reduced by 65 percent. This counterintuitive effect is only marginally statistically significant. One would have expected a positive effect between the two: that more children would lead to more migration. The contrary finding may be due to the fact that unauthorized emigration is accompanied by so much risk and uncertainty regarding when parents would be able to reunite with their family, or that parents may be more reluctant to leave when they have larger families. Finally, the civil violence index also showed a marginally statistically significant effect; for each additional unit increase in the civil violence index, there is a 10 percent increase in the likelihood of taking a first trip. This finding suggests that people who have migrated from El Salvador for the first time without authorization may have done so because of civil violence. In the end, none of our control variables for periods was statistically significant in any of the models. This is an important finding because it suggests that Salvadorans have been leaving El Salvador and performing a first migration trip without legal authorization to enter the United States for a variety of different reasons throughout the years.

We also calculated the predicted probabilities of our average first-time unauthorized household head migrant. We used the mean values to calculate these probabilities, which are shown in Table 3. We assumed that the average migrant had first migrated during the postwar era, worked in an unskilled occupation, and received no pension. If single, we assumed that the individual had no children. As shown in Table 5, we calculated these probabilities, taking into account the type of place of origin (rural or urban) and also whether they were male or female heads. The probability that a male household head coming from a rural area during the postwar era took a first unauthorized trip is between 13 and 15 percent, compared to 8 percent for a male coming from an urban area. For

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[8]Model is available on request.

Table 5. Predicted Probabilities for First US Migration Trip from El Salvador during the Postwar Era by Marital Status, Sex, and Rural or Urban Area of Origin.

Marital Status and Gender	Rural Origin	Urban Origin
Married male	0.1459	0.0837
Married female	0.0592	0.0326
Single male	0.1348	0.0769
Single female	0.0543	0.0298

Note. Predicted probabilities were calculated using the mean values shown in Table 3. We also assumed that single males and females had no children. Also, everyone worked at unskilled occupations and received no pension.

female first-time unauthorized urban migrants, the probability is 3 percent, and for female rural migrants the probability of taking a first trip is between 5 and 6 percent. Marital status does not make a difference.

Conclusions and Implications

A couple of implications result from this analysis. First, although Salvadoran-US migration has been happening for at least 60 years, this migration stream does not necessarily follow the pattern of other migration streams, such as the Mexican-US migration stream. Salvadoran migrants do not follow the curvilinear age pattern on migration, which suggests that migrants leave El Salvador mostly during their working years and not at older ages.[9] Second, this analysis finds no evidence that social networks play a role in providing support to those taking the first unauthorized migration trip, perhaps either because a good bulk of these migrants are pioneer migrants for their respective communities or because of the difficult context of reception due to their unauthorized status. Still, recent research from the Center of Migration Studies (CMS) and Cristosal (2017) has found that Salvadorans often rely on family support networks at the place of origin and the place of destination (in the United States) to escape from civil violence. More research needs to be performed to reevaluate in detail the impact of social networks from El Salvador. We also found marginally statistically significant effects that support the argument that first-time migrants left El Salvador because of personal economic crisis and civil violence. Therefore, Salvadorans may benefit more from policies that award work-related visas and that favor those escaping civil violence. One of the considerations for US policy is that the United States cannot treat all unauthorized migration from Latin America in the same way.

Although our data could not be used to test all the international migration theories that exist, we did find evidence that the micro and macro neoclassical economic theories help to explain Salvadoran migration. Greater work experience in the labor force in El Salvador, having a skilled occupation, and owning a business in El Salvador all make the cost–benefit calculations of migration less favorable to a decision to migrate. In addition, neoclassical economics theory at the macro level is supported by high unemployment rates in the United States — fewer available jobs in the United States meant it was less likely that Salvadorans would embark on their first unauthorized trip. These findings suggest that to discourage out-migration, El Salvador should invest in high-skilled job training and also offer training and credit opportunities to its population to encourage business ventures.

Even though we recognize that the small sample size may be a disadvantage and that we are only looking at the first unauthorized migration trip of household heads, we are still able to shed light on the complexities of Salvadoran first-time unauthorized emigration. These findings indicate that Salvadoran-US unauthorized migration will continue due to not only economic factors but also factors related to civil violence in El Salvador. Currently, we are witnessing the consequences of one-way (as opposed to circular) Salvadoran migration to the United States resulting from US militarization of its southern border and the lack of legal migration options for Salvadorans (Menjívar 2006). Together, these factors deter migrants from returning to their home country. A clear consequence of one-way unauthorized migration is longer stays in the United States, resulting in either long-term family separation or alternative family formations, in which some family members have legal status while other family members remain unauthorized and live in fear of deportation (Abrego 2014).

Ending TPS for Salvadorans will only increase the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States. The 195,000 Salvadorans who currently hold TPS status have been told by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that during the 18-month period extension, they should either return to El Salvador or try to regularize their immigration status (Chappell 2018). Research has shown that current policy does not provide enough visas for unskilled migrants, has restrictive numerical quotas per country, and enforces practices that cause lengthy periods of family separation (Gubernskaya and Dreby 2017). For many, returning to El Salvador — after having lived in the United States for almost 20 years — is not an easy decision. During all these years, all these Salvadorans have gained other qualifications and experience, making it difficult to be reinserted into El Salvador's

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[9]This result is due to the fact that the age squared variable was not statistically significant in Table 4.

economy. El Salvador's economy is simply not prepared to take all these Salvadorans back (Mcevers 2018; Saenz and Menjívar 2018). Such polices as denying the TPS to Salvadoran immigrants can make the situation of out-migration from El Salvador even worse, if those TPS holders were to be repatriated.

The removal of Salvadoran TPS holders from the United States has the potential to slow down the level of remittances to El Salvador (Kerwin 2017). According to the World Bank, more than $4.5 billion were remitted to El Salvador from the United States in 2016 (McEvers 2018), an amount equivalent to one-sixth of the country's 2016 gross domestic product. Ending this stream of payments has the potential to increase the levels of poverty in El Salvador, which itself has the potential to send more unauthorized migrants to the United States.

Returning to El Salvador may be very dangerous for this population due to the current high levels of civil and gang-related violence in that country (Carlson and Gallagher 2015). The gangs (or *maras*) would probably want to target those returned TPS holders for extortion given that they would expect them to have financial resources with them; they also would want to recruit their young children into their gangs (Kerwin 2017). This has the potential of increasing the gang or civil violence even further in El Salvador, causing further out-migration to the United States. Unfortunately, another disadvantage of this research is that its data were collected in 2007 — the year before the drop in labor demand in the United States due to the Great Recession, and around the time in which civil violence began to be more prominent in El Salvador (Massey, Durand, and Pren 2014). Future research should look into collecting more quantitative and qualitative data, which can continue to shed light both on the complexities associated with Salvadorans leaving El Salvador to go to the United States with or without authorization and on the social, economic, and/or psychological struggles of living with TPS or losing that status.

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