

Typology of Journeys of Honduran Migrant Men in Transit Through Mexico¹

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Abstract

The objective of this work is to analyze the types of journeys undertaken by Honduran migrant men in irregular transit through Mexican territory to the United States, by focusing on a set of characteristics of the journeys that are directly shaped by the agency of migrants: the use of *coyotes* (smugglers), the selection of routes, modes of transport, the support of assistance networks, and being employed en route. Based on data from the Survey on Migration on the Southern Border, a latent class analysis is used to identify groups (classes) of migrants who made the same types of journeys, that is, they had similar response patterns with respect to the selected indicators. Additionally, the article analyzes how the types of journeys are stratified according to migrants' socioeconomic status. As a result of the analysis, three types of migrations in transit are identified: migrants who travel "supported by *coyotes*"; those "supported by assistance networks" and those who migrate "autonomously".

Key Words: patterns of migratory transit, transit migration, Emif Sur, latent class analysis, Hondurans.

Introduction

Over the past decades, transit migration from the North of Central America (NCA) through Mexico and to the United States (US) has been characterized by its great magnitude and predominantly irregular character². A visible expression of this large-scale mobility were the migrant caravans of late 2018 and early 2019 (Capps et al. 2019). However, most Central American migrants have continued to make their journeys through Mexico in the same way for decades, alone or in small groups, employing various strategies (using *coyotes*, certain routes, and modes of transport, etc.) and trying to transit clandestinely (El Colef et al. 2020a).

At least since the 1990s, the governments of the US and Mexico have responded to these flows with containment migration policies that aim to stop and discourage migration to the US (Campos-Delgado 2021). The US has militarized its southwestern border and established a deportation regime that criminalizes migrants (Argueta 2016; Capps et al. 2019). Mexico has virtually become a "vertical border", with a plethora of migration control points throughout the Mexican territory, which has resulted in hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants being detained and deported (Red de Casas de Salabrini 2000; Espin

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² Irregular migration is one that does not comply with the norms that the States impose for access and permanence in their respective territories. Therefore, it is the States that makes illegal migrants with their norms and policies. The condition of irregular stay is an undesirable situation for migrants, many of them are forced to flee their countries of origin due to violence.

Ocampo 2021). The number of deportations of Central Americans carried out by Mexico has increased so significantly that in some years they have even exceeded the number of deportations carried out by the US (El Colef et al. 2020a).

In recent years, the emphasis on stopping migration flows from the NCA has been even greater. In the US, the government of Donald Trump was particularly prolific in promoting actions to stop migrants—particularly Central Americans—who seek to reach that country, even if they were in need of international protection, or if prohibiting their movement meant intervening in the policies of third countries (Pierce et al. 2018; Pierce 2019). In Mexico, with the exception of a brief truce in January 2019, the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador continued to contain migratory flows in irregular transit, especially after the signing of an agreement in the summer of 2019 to avoid the imposition of tariffs in exchange for a deployment of National Guard forces to Mexico’s southern border (El Colef et al. 2020a; Espín Ocampo 2021).³ While their effectiveness in reducing flows is widely discussed, the migration policies of both countries have had a harmful effect on migrants, since they have driven them towards the most inhospitable routes and the most dangerous modes of transportation; additionally, these policies are fundamental to the formation of a scenario of structural violence, exposing migrants to social risks (for example, being victims of robbery or assault) and risks from nature, for example, drowning while trying to cross rivers (París Pombo 2016; Torre Cantalapiedra 2021). Faced with this scenario full of obstacles and adversities, Central American migrants in transit to the north demonstrate their capacity for agency by carrying out different actions to overcome the dangerous situations they are forced to endure—searching for and hiring *coyotes*, selecting routes and transportation, appealing to assistance networks, or stopping to work en route—thus defining the characteristics of their journeys.

The literature has focused on the characteristics of such journeys and how they translate into greater or lesser risks for migrants. Some works focus on just one of these characteristics: the use of *coyotes* (Izcara Palacios 2017), the routes used (Casillas 2008), the use of shelters (Candiz and Bélanger 2018; Merlín-Escorza et al. 2021), etc.; others emphasize several of them at the same time (Basok et al. 2015; París Pombo 2016). Nevertheless, typologies of journeys have been scarcely developed in the literature, especially in quantitative research. The generation of typologies of journeys based on how their main characteristics are manifested and related is relevant for the knowledge about transit migration in several ways: firstly, it allows for a narrowing of the great diversity of modes of transit to a few key types, which are similar in terms of their characteristics. Secondly, the types of journeys can be compared with each other, as well as associated with independent variables of interest—e.g., the financial resources required. Thirdly, identifying different ways of traveling contributes to a better understanding of the risks faced by migrants in their transit through Mexico. Fourthly, various types of journeys involve groups of migrants with differing levels of vulnerability and risks faced during the journey; this may lead to tailored public policies to reduce vulnerabilities based on the journey type.

The objective of this work is to quantitatively analyze the types of journeys of Honduran⁴ migrant men in irregular transit to the US through Mexico, which take shape based on a series of main characteristics of

³ Visiting Cards for Humanitarian Reasons (Tarjetas de Visitante por Razones Humanitarias) were given to migrants who arrived through the Southern Border in early 2019—many of them members of the caravan that arrived in January from Honduras. These cards allow free transit through the Mexican territory and permission to stay in the country for one year.

⁴ This flow of Honduran migrants is chosen because: 1) It promotes understanding that the ways of traveling are different according to national origins. 2) As in other works, the Honduran population is of great interest due to their

such journeys that are molded by the agency of the migrants. This work is divided into three parts: first, through a broad review of the academic literature, some of the main qualitative and quantitative findings on the characteristics of the journeys of migrants in irregular transit and on the typologies developed are synthesized. Second, the data sources used from the Southern Border Migration Survey (Emif Sur) and the methodology this study utilizes are presented. Third, using the Emif Sur data, a latent class analysis is carried out to identify groups (classes) of migrants who made the same type of journey, that is, who had similar response patterns with respect to the indicators used. Likewise, in order to analyze how the types of travel are stratified, a latent class regression model is estimated to analyze how socioeconomic status is associated with undertaking each type of journey. In our analysis, we identify three types of journeys: “supported by *coyotes*,” “supported by assistance networks,” and “autonomous journeys.” The last type of journey could be explored in futures studies since it is a form of transit through Mexico to which little attention has been paid. Those who transit without any support have a similar socioeconomic status as those who are "supported by assistance networks" and lower than that of those who transit "supported by *coyotes*".

The Study of the Characteristics of Journeys and their Typologies

The more than two decades of studies on migration in transit through Mexican territory have made important advances and several aspects have been extensively addressed: 1) the experiences of migrants in transit according to individual characteristics such as vulnerability, agency, or resilience; works that have focused on women (Morales Hernández 2014; Willers 2018); and the LGBTQ community (López Fernández 2018; Valenzuela Barreras 2020) whose migratory transits are considered very different from those of heterosexual men; 2) The violence, risks, and dangers they face on their travels (Vogt, 2013; Torre Cantalapiedra unpublished); 3) American and Mexican migration policies regarding transit migration (Mena Iturralde and Cruz Piñeiro 2021; Faret et al. 2021); 4) The characteristics of transit migration through Mexico that are shaped by the agency of the migrants (Casillas 2008; Basok et al. 2015); 5) Recent and other issues: the solidarity and support network (Candiz and Bélanger 2018; Parrini Roses and Alquisira Terrones 2019), immobility within transit migration (Brigden and Mainwaring 2016; Frank-Vitale, 2020), migrant caravans (Rizzo Lara 2021, Torre Cantalapiedra 2021), and the COVID-19 pandemic (Bojorquez et al. 2020), among others.

Despite difficult conditions of precarity, marginality and insecurity, migrants find ways to display their agency and take control over their lives (Mainwaring 2016; Crawley and Jones 2020), even when this agency is limited by the ambiguous position they occupy between emancipation and slavery with respect to international borders (Brigden and Mainwaring 2016). In the case of Central American migrants in irregular transit through Mexico, their agency capacity is evidenced in the deployment of a series of resources and actions to achieve their migratory goals that are reflected in the fundamental characteristics of the trips. These characteristics of the journeys shaped by the strategies of migrants are shown below, with emphasis on the case of those from Honduras:

high degree of vulnerability in transit, which leads them to a broader use of certain strategies in transit, such as using freight trains, and others (Sladkova 2016; Yee Quintero and Torre Cantalapiedra 2016. 3) Due to the relevance, it acquired in 2019, 43.2 percent of the deportations carried out by Mexican authorities corresponded to migrants from Honduras (UPMRIP et al. 2020). 4) Furthermore, the first migrant caravans at the end of 2018 emerged in Honduras and were made up mostly of Hondurans.

Coyotaje services

Human smuggling or *coyotaje* is an unlawful activity that mainly consists of the *coyote* or smuggler facilitating the crossing of borders and/or territories in an irregular manner in exchange for a certain amount of money. According to US and Mexican authorities, *coyote* networks are focused on deceiving, stealing, and abandoning migrants to their fate, as well as maintaining fluid relationships with transnational criminal organizations (Díaz et al. 2020). In contrast, most research has found that trust prevails over abuse in the relationships between *coyotes* and migrants, since *coyotes* strive to offer better services to stay in business (Guevara González 2018; Slack and Martínez 2018). Likewise, the use of *coyotes* can be considered as a strategy used by migrants who are seeking to increase the probability of success in reaching their migration objectives and / or trying to reduce the risk of suffering violence or criminal acts en route (Reyes Miranda 2014; Sanchez 2017). The process of hiring and selecting *coyotes* is produced by both the economic capital and the social networks that migrants have. Some migrants can hire *coyotes* with good references, while others are forced to employ *coyotes* without any references, or simply do not have the resources to do so (Martínez 2015; Hernández Campos and Torre Cantalapiedra unpublished). In the sections that are transited with *coyotes*, the ability to decide regarding other variables of the journey (routes, transport, etc.) may be partially or completely reduced.

Routes

The choice of routes depends on many factors: migration control policies, economic resources of the migrant, nationality, the intended destination in the US, the modes of transport used, among others (Torre Cantalapiedra and Mariscal Nava 2020). In recent years, most Central American migrants follow the Gulf route, which involves a shorter distance traveled through Mexican territory, but entails a greater number of violent situations against migrants (Amnesty International 2010). In fact, security was pointed out as the reason why some migrants have opted for the Pacific route—considered the safest because it has a lower presence of organized crime—despite being the longest route.

Modes of transportation

Migrants in transit through Mexico use various modes of transport—which vary in economic cost and risks—to reach their destination: buses, railways, trucks or trailers, and cars or motorcycles, etc. (Paris Pombo 2016; El Colef et al. 2020b). Those with fewer resources are forced to use the famous freight trains, such as “La Bestia” (The Beast) clandestinely and for “free”; this is considered the most unsafe mode of transport of all those used by migrants to travel across Mexico, because it involves a high risk of crime (e.g. robberies and assaults, extortion, physical aggression) and of suffering accidents that can seriously damage the physical integrity of migrants, including injuries, amputations and deaths (Basok et al. 2015; Torre Cantalapiedra unpublished). At the other extreme, some migrants with economic and social resources are able to obtain a Mexican visa, which allows them to buy plane tickets to travel to the north of Mexico (Sladkova 2016).

Assistance network

Throughout migratory routes, migrant human rights defenders have established a complex and extensive network of assistance for Central American migrants in transit (Parrini Roses and Alquisira Terrones 2019), whose main nodes are shelters. These facilities offer accommodation, food, legal services, and guidance for the journey and its potential dangers, along with other forms of assistance (Olayo-Méndez et al. 2014).

While many of the most vulnerable migrants structure their journeys based on the shelters and services they can find along the routes, others are reluctant to use them because they consider that going to shelters makes them visible and carries risks (Candiz and Bélanger 2018). In recent years, it is generally Honduran migrants who have used shelters and the assistance network to a greater extent (CNDH et al. 2018; El Colef et al. 2020b).

Employment en route

Although it is not the most frequently used option, some migrants stop along the way to perform certain temporary jobs that allow them to obtain the necessary money/funds to continue their travels (Casillas, 2008). Sometimes the initial immigration plan incorporates a stop to work for days, weeks, or months, in a city or town in Mexico, before trying to cross the US-Mexico border. This is a strategy employed by those who have fewer resources, but at the same time have greater social skills to find and take advantage of these economic opportunities.

The experiences of Central American migrant men and women regarding the use of *coyotes*, the way they select routes, the use of shelters, among other issues, have been analyzed in detail by numerous studies (for example, Casillas 2008; Izcará Palacios 2017; Candiz and Bélanger 2018). A large part of the publications that address one or more of these characteristics of the journeys of migrants in transit, either as their main or secondary objective, are qualitative in nature. These qualitative studies have pointed out the various abuses and violence that migrants suffer in their transit through Mexico in relation to the types of journeys made (Vogt, 2013; Doering-White 2018; Willers 2018).

Some of these works have sought to connect the different characteristics of the journeys⁵ or have even developed typologies based on them. In this sense, it is worth highlighting Sladkova (2016) who develops a typology of journeys of Honduran migrants that is made up of five categories: 1) “direct flight to the US”; 2) “flight⁶ to Mexico and with a *coyote* (smuggler) to the US”; 3) “overland without visas and with a *coyote* all the way”; 4) “with *coyote* only to cross the US-Mexican border” and “without visas” and; 5) “alone or with other migrants”. These categories imply a stratification of journeys based on access to resources that migrants obtain and deploy on their journeys and are linked to the variety of dangers to which migrants are exposed (Sladkova 2016). The last three categories, which are the ones of greatest interest in this work⁷, are constructed mainly through the variables “use of the *coyote* to transit through Mexico” and “use of *coyote* to cross into the US” and are also related to the modes of transportation used in each case. Qualitative typologies like this offer a deep understanding of a variety of journeys through Mexico, but the representativeness of its results is very limited and considers a reduced number of travel characteristics to build the typology, leaving aside others that may also be important to understand the phenomenon.

The studies that use quantitative sources, with a greater or lesser degree of representation, resort to descriptive statistics to obtain estimates of the main characteristics of migrant journeys for different populations (the entire Central American population, or subpopulations of these, for example, migrant

⁵ Based on 78 semi-structured interviews, one of these studies constructs four profiles of migrants according to their degree of vulnerability (moderate, medium, high, and extreme) and how this is related to certain characteristics of the journey (González Arias and Aikin Araluce 2015).

⁶ With estimates of the flow of deported Honduran migrants by US from the Emif Sur, the percentage of Honduran migrants who use flights is around one percent (El Colef et al. 2020b).

⁷ In this work we focus on migrants who crossed Mexican territory irregularly, as they are the vast majority and suffer greater difficulties during transit.

women, Honduran migrants, etc.). Some studies have stood out for their high degree of representativeness regarding the study of the characteristics of migrants' journey, such as the Emif Sur which allows us to measure the prevalence of travel characteristics and has shown how these vary according to sex, age, nationality, and the economic resources available to the person (Reyes Miranda 2014; París Pombo 2016). Additionally, other studies have demonstrated how the characteristics of the journeys increase or decrease the risks that migrants face in their transit through Mexico, such as the degree of victimization for migrants who have suffered robbery or assault (Torre Cantalapiedra unpublished).

In quantitative research on the characteristics of migrant journeys, one of the least developed aspects is typologies. Some types of journeys have been outlined according to the use of *coyotaje* services, use of routes and other characteristics. In general, these typological proposals tend, to some degree, to be developed in an arbitrary way, and consider only one or two of the characteristics of the journey; they also tend to use descriptive statistics that consider the Central American population or its subpopulations as if they were homogeneous. For example, those who have economic resources tend to hire the services of *coyotes*, use better transportation, and do not make stops to work en route; those who lack them frequently cross the country using a whole series of strategies such as: using the cheapest transport, going to shelters and working en route (El Colef et al. 2020a).

This paper aims to strengthen the knowledge we have about the typologies of journeys of migrants in transit through Mexico through latent class analysis. In addition to the general advantages of the development of typologies that were pointed out in the introduction, this statistical tool has several additional strengths: first, it allows us to make inferences about the groups of migrants that are included in each type of journey from the data by using a probabilistic model that presupposes the existence of a categorical latent variable (types of journeys) that explains the relationship between the observed variables (in this case the characteristics of the journeys), which gives rise to the choice of a number of groups following less arbitrary criteria than with other statistical tools. Second, it takes into account the heterogeneity of populations (or subpopulations) in terms of the different ways of traveling that migrants adopt, in that they share a set of characteristics in a way that is theoretically significant and that distinguishes subgroups from each other (Nurius and Macy 2008; Scotto Rosato and Baer 2012). Third, it permits an adequate explanation of the associations observed between the various characteristics of migratory transit, which can be better understood according to the type of journey than for the entire population in general.

Data and Methods

The Emif Sur is made up of a set of surveys that capture various migration flows from the NCA following a probabilistic sampling design of mobile populations: the flows of migrants deported by the US authorities to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, the flows of migrants deported by the Mexican authorities to those same countries, and the cross-border labor flows of Guatemalans on the southern border of Mexico. It should be noted that these are event surveys, so there is the possibility that a person is surveyed on more than one occasion.⁸ In this paper we focus on the flow of migrants deported to Honduras by the US authorities, through which we indirectly recover the experience of migratory transit through Mexico, in particular the characteristics of the most recent journey.

⁸ However, in the case of a flow of migrants deported to Honduras by US authorities, this possibility is limited.

Surveys of deported migrants are representative of the variety of transits through Mexico. Many quantitative and qualitative studies that conduct interviews or surveys with informants and transit migrants in safe places, particularly migrant shelters (Infante et al. 2012), exclude migrants that do not have contact with humanitarian organizations while in transit through Mexico. The sample size of this survey is considerably larger than in other similar studies, which allows a precise selection of the population of interest: first, to select those Honduran male migrants who stayed a year or less in the US, therefore, who crossed recently to that country, that is, the year the survey was conducted or in the previous year. This filter is essential because among the deported migrants there are people who had been residing in the US for several years and whose journeys were carried out in scenarios of migratory transit through Mexico that are very different from the current ones. The historical series of the Emif Sur show that indeed the characteristics of migrants' journeys vary considerably over time. Second, this time frame avoids the memory problems that might accompany the recollection of experiences by migrants who traveled through Mexican territory decades ago. Third, we exclusively select those who lack documents to transit through Mexico, since those who cross with documents are a very small percentage of the total and are not exposed to the same kind of risks.

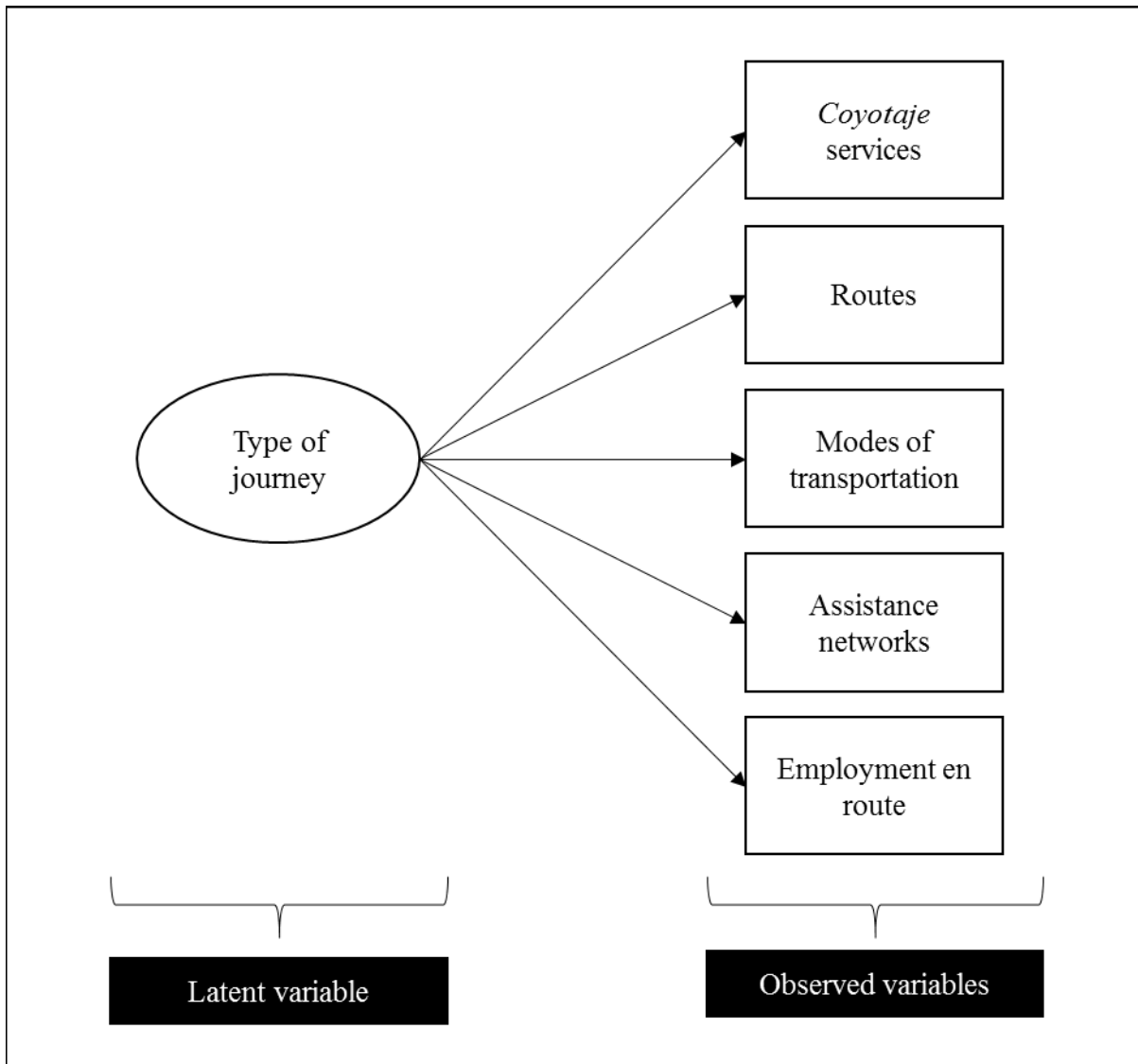
The use of the flow of migrants deported to Honduras by the US authorities and the selected target population entail possible sources of bias in the representation of the varieties of journeys through Mexican territory that the group of Honduran migrants undertake. First, we are excluding the population that was successful in their migratory journeys and that was not deported during their first year. Second, we are excluding the flow of deported migrants to Honduras by the Mexican authorities, despite the fact that Mexican authorities increased their volume of arrests and deportations; it was preferred not to use this flow, since it is made up of people who could have traveled very different distances within Mexico, and thus it is impossible to know the true characteristics that their entire journeys would have had, had they traversed the entirety of the country. Third, this study does not attempt to capture those journeys that go from transit through Mexican territory to settlement in that country, either because of the hardening of migration policies or because migrants find an opportunity to stay in Mexico. Despite not including those who were successful in reaching the US and those who stayed in Mexico after settling or being detained by Mexican authorities, this may have little impact on the crucial aspect of this work, which is to capture the diversity of journeys of Honduran migrants through Mexican territory. In contrast, this limitation of the data will affect to a greater extent the dimensioning of the number of migrants who make each type of journey. In this sense, the results of this work regarding the percentage of migrants who travel in each form are exclusively representative of the flow of those deported by US authorities.

To achieve the objective proposed in this work, a latent class analysis is carried out to identify the groups of Honduran men over 18 years of age, who stayed in the US for up to one year, who share similar migration patterns, that is, they carried out the same type of journey.⁹ The basic idea underlying latent class analysis is that the parameters of a proposed statistical model vary between unobserved subgroups; these subgroups are the categories of the latent categorical variable (Vermunt and Madigson 2004). In this work, I argue

⁹ We consider males exclusively for two reasons: first, they account for the bulk of Honduran deportations from the US (El Colef et al. 2020a). Second, migration strategies for transit and border crossing differ substantially by sex. Regarding nationality, only the Honduran population was selected because of the relevance it has acquired in recent years quantitatively and politically. As well as its greater vulnerability in the crossing and lower prevalence in the use of *coyotes* to transit through Mexican territory (El Colef et al. 2020b).

that the relationships between the main characteristics of migratory transit through Mexico (observed variables) can be explained by the type of journey (unobserved categorical variable), as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Latent Class Model for the Types of Travel of Migrants Through Mexico



Source: Author's elaboration.

The latent class analysis applied to the case presented in this article involves identifying a certain number of groups (classes) of Honduran migrants whose members have a high probability of having made the same type of journey, that is, of having similar response patterns in terms of indicators of the characteristics of their journeys. The types of migrants' journeys can be described, according to this method of analysis, in terms of the probabilities of presenting or reporting each one of the characteristics of the journeys, given the migrant's belonging to a certain group. These conditional probabilities are the same for all members of the same group, but different from members of the other groups. The specific goal of latent class analysis is to identify the fewest number of latent classes that describe the associations between the set of indicators using posterior probabilities (Clogg 1995 in Scotto Rosato and Baer 2012). In addition to the conditional

probabilities, the resulting class structure is made up of another set of parameters: the proportion of migrants belonging to each group or class.

Regarding the model construction strategy, there are three important points to consider: first, models with different numbers of classes were adjusted, starting from a single class model; second, the models were compared to determine which of them best fit the data. To compare the goodness-of-fit we use two different statistical criteria, BIC and AIC—in both cases the model that yields a lower value is preferable. Third, we examine whether the number of classes solution makes sense by inspecting the probabilities for each class membership in relation to each indicator variable (Williams and Kibowski 2016).

The latent class analysis incorporates 958 cases corresponding to the surveys of the years 2018 and 2019. The reason for choosing these two years is to achieve greater statistical robustness and because the transit migration behavior was similar in both years, presenting similar frequencies regarding the fundamental characteristics of journeys. The latent variable of the model is type of journey, that is, latent classes or groups of migrants who are identified as having the same pattern of migratory transit, the number of which will be known after performing the analysis. The five observed variables are operationalized with a total of nine dichotomous indicators.¹⁰ Regarding *coyotaje* services, we have: “used *coyote* to transit through Mexico” = 1, if migrant hired someone (*coyote*, *pollero*, guide, etc.) to guide them when traveling through Mexican territory and arriving to the US border and the “used *coyote* to cross into the US” = 1: if migrant hired someone (*coyote*, *pollero*, guide, boatman, etc.) to guide them when crossing into the US.¹¹ As can be seen in Table 1, in the period between 2018 and 2019, the percentage of Honduran migrants deported by the US that used *coyote*, either to transit through Mexico (23.8%) or to cross into the US (33.6%) is less than that of migrants from El Salvador and Guatemala (Torre Cantalapiedra and Hernández Campos 2021).

Table 1. Distribution of the Flow of Honduran Men Returned by US Immigration Authorities, According to Main Characteristics of Transit Through Mexico, 2018 and 2019 (Percent)

Used <i>coyotes</i> to transit through Mexico	23.8	76.2
Used <i>coyotes</i> to cross into the US	33.6	66.4
Crossed the border by the east	77.6	22.4
Used railroad	44.6	55.4
Used bus or van	72.5	27.5
Used car or motorcycle	5.3	94.7
Received assistance	30.6	69.4
Stayed in a shelter on the border	22.6	77.4
Worked en route	19.1	80.9

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from Emif Sur, 2018 and 2019 (El Colef et al. 2020c).

Note: Only returned male migrants who stayed in the US for up to one year are included.

¹⁰ As these are nine dichotomous indicators, there are up to a maximum of 512 response patterns. As Masyn (2013) points out, latent class analysis can be understood as a reduction method that groups response patterns together by reason of similarity.

¹¹ By dividing the use of the *coyote* between the transit through Mexico and the crossing to the United States, we recognize that frequently migrants only hired *coyotes* just to travel part of the way. However, the variety of use of *coyotes* within these parts of the journey cannot be captured with the survey.

Regarding the routes, we use the crossing point that roughly approximates the general route followed by the migrant; whether it is the eastern or western route is relevant in terms of the different risks these routes entail. “Crossed the border by the east” = 1, if the migrant crossed through a federal entity from the east (Tamaulipas, Nuevo Laredo, or Coahuila) to the USA. “Crossed the border by the east” = 0, if the migrant crossed through a federal entity in the west (Chihuahua, Sonora, or Baja California). Most of the Honduran migrants (77.6%) crossed to the east, the region that is considered the most dangerous, though it is also the one that minimizes the distance traveled through the vast Mexican territory.

In their transit through Mexico, Honduran migrants make use of different modes of transportation: “used railroad” = 1, if they used railroad to get to the Mexico-US border, “used bus or van” = 1 if the migrant used bus or van to get to the Mexico-US border, and “used car or motorcycle” = 1, if the migrant used a car or motorcycle to get to the Mexico-US border. The transport most used by Honduran migrants is the bus or van (72%). Likewise, 44.6% of the flow of Honduran migrants deported by US authorities used the railroad, which makes the Honduran population possibly the most exposed to en route risks (Torre Cantalapiedra 2021; unpublished). Just over 5% used a car or motorcycle, the mode of transport that is considered to be the safest.

The Emif Sur contains two variables that allow us to approach the assistance networks of Honduran migrants: “received assistance” = 1, if the migrant received assistance or help from an organization, institution, or person; and “stayed in a shelter at the border” = 1, if the migrant stayed in a shelter for the night(s) before crossing into the US. 30.6% of the migrants declared having received assistance in their transit through Mexican territory, while 22.6% used a shelter at the border. It should be noted that it is possible that the questions related to the assistance networks underestimate the percentage of migrants who have contact with it, because there may be information biases in that respondents could be reluctant to share that they used assistance networks due to shame or other reasons. In particular, it may be the case that not all of those who are assisted by shelters within the territory identify themselves as having received assistance. For 19.1% of migrants, being employed en route is essential to obtaining the resources with which to be able to continue their journeys. In this sense, “Worked en route” = 1, if the migrant worked during the journey through Mexico to the US.

Finally, in order to analyze how journeys are stratified, we explore how the socioeconomic status of Honduran migrants is related to belonging to previously identified groups that share the same type of journey, for which a latent class regression model was carried out using the covariate educational level in a dichotomous way (education = 0, if the person has an educational level of up to primary; education = 1, if they completed primary school). Educational attainment level has been identified as a key indicator of the socioeconomic status of migrants (Telles and Ortiz 2008) and is a key factor to understanding the way in which migrants deal with transit migration (Terrón-Caro et al. 2018).

Results and Analysis

a) Identification of Groups of Male Migrants with Similar Migratory Transit Patterns

The first step in this analysis was to determine the number of latent classes underlying the observed variables. The three-class model was considered the best, for three reasons: 1) it is the one that obtains the lowest value in terms of the BIC goodness-of-fit criterion, 2) four or more class models are difficult to

interpret from a theoretical point of view and the new classes are not distinguishable based on existing knowledge about the transit through Mexico, despite the improvement in the adjustment according to the AIC criterion, and 3) the model with fewer classes is preferred following the parsimony criterion (see Table 3). The entropy in this case is 0.8, which indicates a good classification of the cases into the classes (Clark and Muthén 2009; cited in Nylund-Gibson and Choi 2018).

Table 2. Results of the Evaluation of the Basic and Covariate Models

Models	BIC	AIC	Entropy
1-class	9137.9	9094.1	1.00
2-class	8606.1	8513.7	0.82
3-class	8539.6	8398.6	0.80
4-class	8566.3	8396.1	0.80
5-class	8547.4	8338.2	0.79

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from Emif Sur, 2018-2019 (El Colef et al. 2020c).

Note: Only returned male migrants who stayed in the US for up to one year are included.

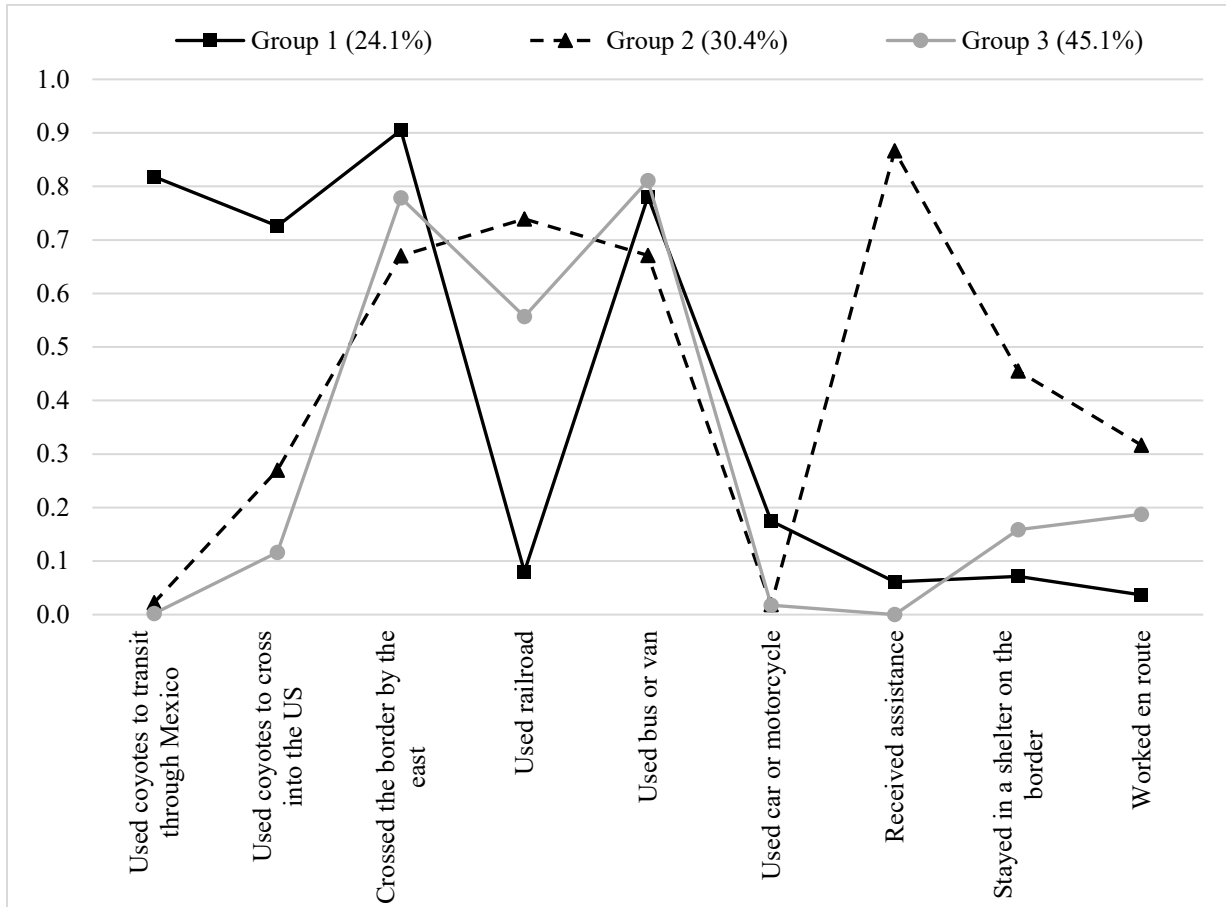
Note 2: BIC: Bayesian Information Criterion. AIC: Akaike Information Criterion. Entropy: an instrument that measures how well the latent classes are identified, the higher the entropy, the more clearly the latent classes are identified (Asparouhov and Muthén 2018).

Next, the three types of journeys made by both groups of migrants are described and analyzed, corresponding to the three-class model.¹²

Type 1. Journey supported by coyotes. It is estimated that this class incorporates 24.1 percent of migrants. This type of journey receives its name because it corresponds with the only group of migrants that has a very high probability (0.818) of using a *coyote* to transit through Mexico and a high probability (0.726) of using a *coyote* to cross into the US (see Graph 1). As can be seen with regard to transport, people belonging to this first group have a low probability of using freight trains (0.080), a high probability of using buses (0.781) and although it is still low, they are the group with the highest probability of traveling by car or motorcycle (0.175). Moreover, they have the highest probability of selecting the most dangerous route. In terms of receiving assistance, they have low or very low probabilities of staying in a shelter on the border and working en route; none of them exceeds 0.100.

¹² The numerical estimates of graph 1 can be found in Table A1 in Appendix A.

Graph 1. Group Size and Conditional Probabilities that Describe the Types of Journeys of Honduran Migrants for the 3-Class Model



Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from Emif Sur, 2018 and 2019 (El Colef et al. 2020c).

Note: Only returned male migrants who stayed in the US for up to one year are included.

Type 2. Journey supported by assistance networks. This type of journey incorporates 30.4 percent of migrants. Although several characteristics stand out in this type of journey, it was decided to name it according to the characteristic that most distinguishes it from the Type 3 journey, which is very similar (in particular, both make little use of *coyotes* to transit through Mexico and make extensive use of the railroad): its high probability of receiving assistance (0.866) and relatively high probability of staying in a shelter the night before making the crossing (0.455). It should be noted that the probability of using the railroad in this group is 0.739; on the other hand, it is the type with the lowest probability of using the bus (0.671) and of using a car or motorcycle. Although the probability that these migrants will hire *coyotes* to cross Mexican territory is very low (0.022), the probability that they will use their services to cross into the US is higher (0.270). The probability of working during their journey is less than 0.200.

Type 3. Autonomous journey. This incorporates 45.1 percent of migrants. In contrast to the two previous types of travel whose members resort to *coyotes* (in the first case) or to assistance networks (in the second case), the members of this group have low or very low probabilities of using *coyotes* for the transit through Mexico (0.001) and for crossing into the US (0.116), receiving assistance (0.000) and staying in a border shelter (0.159); therefore, they are people who transit through Mexico independently or autonomously.

Perhaps most surprising of all is their self-sufficiency when crossing the US-Mexico border. The probability of their crossing through an eastern state falls in between the other two patterns (0.779). Regarding transport, they have a somewhat lower probability of using the railroad (0.557) and somewhat higher probability of using the bus (0.812) than those who transmigrate supported by assistance networks. The probability that they receive assistance is practically null. However, they have a probability of staying in a border shelter of 0.159. The probability that they will work during their migratory transit is higher, though not substantially so.

b) Stratification of Journeys by Socioeconomic Status

Before proceeding with the stratification of the journeys of Hondurans through Mexico, it should be noted that the population of this national origin that transits through Mexico has a low educational and socioeconomic level, even more notably during the period 2018-2019 when the percentage of Honduran migrants with primary education or lower in the flow of deported by US authorities was very high (63.5%).

As noted in the literature, one of the key factors to understanding the different modes of transit through Mexico is the socioeconomic status of the migrants. Through a latent class regression model, the way in which the educational level is associated with belonging to each of the three groups and their respective types of travel through the country is analyzed. Table 3 shows that people who have more than primary school compared to people who have not completed primary school have a 45 percent lower propensity to belong to the group of those who travel assisted by the “assistance networks” than to the group of those who migrate “supported by *coyotes*.” Additionally, the propensity is 42 percent lower to belong to the group of those who travel “autonomously” compared to the group of those who do so “supported by *coyotes*.” Although these results are not shown, when comparing groups 2 and 3, no statistically significant difference was found between the two. In this sense, we would have a stratification with only two strata, where groups 2 and 3 would share the same stratum.

Table 3. Results of a 3-Class Latent Class Regression Model with the Effects of Educational Level

		Coefficient	Standard error	p-value	Odds ratio
Group 1 (Reference)	Supported by <i>coyotes</i>	0.00	---	---	1.00
Group 2	Supported by assistance networks	-0.59	0.20	0.002	0.55
Group 3	Autonomously	-0.54	0.19	0.004	0.58

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from Emif Sur, 2018 and 2019 (El Colef et al. 2020c).

Note: Only returned male migrants who stayed in the US for up to one year are included.

c) Discussion of the Typology and Stratification

The three types of journeys, or groups of travelers, resulting from the latent class analysis and the relationships between the characteristics of each journey corroborate various findings that have been observed in the qualitative and quantitative literature on journeys through the Mexican territory. The relevance of the use of *coyotes* throughout the journey is a key element to understanding the types of journeys of migrants in transit (Sladkova 2016; Reyes Miranda 2014). The fact that those who traveled “supported by *coyotes*” had to have more resources to be able to afford the high costs of the *coyotes* helps to explain why they used, to a greater extent, the modes of transport that have the highest cost (bus or van, car or motorcycle). It is unlikely for this group to resort to freight trains, to make use of the assistance

resources present along the way, or to stop and work to obtain resources needed for the journey (El Colef et al. 2020b); in this sense, they are the “most favored” of the “disadvantaged” or as Sladkova (2016) points out: the “premium economy class”. This typology shows that a significant portion of Honduran migrants who do not use *coyotes* to transit through Mexico, rely on the assistance networks that exists along the way, combining it with other strategies such as working en route to be able to stay in transit (González Arias and Aikin Araluce 2015; Candiz and Bélanger 2018).

However, the typology developed in this work introduces new ways of seeing and understanding transit migration. While Sladkova's typology (2016) differentiates the irregular journeys of those who are not accompanied by *coyotes* when crossing through Mexico according to those who at least hire them to cross into the US—with the purpose of stratifying the journeys according to their cost—the classification obtained through the analysis of latent classes, once those that are likely to cross Mexican territory and cross the border with the US “supported by *coyotes*” have been distinguished, divides the rest of the population into two groups according whether or not they used the assistance networks: journeys “supported by assistance networks” and journeys made “autonomously”. The regression analysis used indicates that the difference between these two types of travel does not lie in socioeconomic status, but rather points towards a different degree of agency capacity or possession of social networks to cope with the transit through Mexico. The most striking finding is that among those who at least managed to cross Mexican territory successfully and were later arrested, the highest percentage is occupied by the group of people who made the journey “autonomously” without practically making use of the assistance networks or employing *coyotes* until they reach the US-Mexico border, where the probability of using *coyotes* is the lowest of all migrants. This type of travel has been much less studied in the literature, which has focused to a greater extent on migrants who travel following the network of shelters or those who do so using *coyotes*; something that is directly related to the other two ways of traveling.

Another aspect on which the types of journeys can shed light regards the various kinds of risks to which migrants are exposed in transit through Mexican territory. Journeys supported by *coyotes* imply risks associated precisely with this controversial figure, as it may be that in some cases, they criminalize migrants (Izcara Palacios 2017). Although they avoid the high risks of using transport such as freight trains, they can be overcrowded in risky ways in freight transport like box trucks. Additionally, the vast majority of these journeys are made through the eastern region, which would imply a greater probability of encountering organized crime. On the other hand, those who travel supported by the assistance networks are the migrants who possibly assume the greatest risks in transit, since they are the ones most likely to use dangerous railways (Basok et al. 2015; Torre Cantalapiedra unpublished). Going to shelters implies support that can mark a line of separation between life and death for migrants. However, it has also been revealed that in the vicinity of shelters, there are criminals who seek to take economic advantage of migrants (Candiz and Bélanger 2018; Merlin-Escorza et al. 2021).

Conclusions

In the last two years, a significant portion of the flow of Honduran migrants returned by the US was made up of people with low socioeconomic status. This fact is confirmed by the transit characteristics of this population: little use of *coyote* services (especially during transit through Mexico), widespread use of the railway, resorting to a greater extent to the assistance networks that extends throughout the transit routes

through Mexico, as well as resorting, to a lesser extent, to en route employment in order to obtain the economic resources with which to continue their journeys to the North.

The multivariate analysis reveals the heterogeneity of Honduran transit migration in terms of the modes of transit through Mexico. While previous quantitative research is only enough to describe the characteristics and outline basic typologies—such as those who travel with *coyotes* of those who do not—, the latent class analysis carried out in this work that considers nine indicators allows us to account for three groups of migrants identified with their respective types of travel: “supported by *coyotes*”, “supported by assistance networks” and “autonomously”. The first group includes the group of people with the least degree of vulnerability and who carry out a type of journey that possibly implies conditions of less risk and danger since it is highly probable that they employ *coyotes* and it is unlikely that they travel by train. In contrast, a greater degree of vulnerability is experienced by the last two groups, and their types of journeys take shape with characteristics that imply greater risk, since it is highly probable that they travel on dangerous freight trains. Also, one of the distinct characteristics of this typology with respect to the previous ones is its identification of a distinction between these last two groups that is not based on the use of *coyotes*, but on whether the migrants relied on the assistance networks.

A limitation of this work when using the flow of migrants deported by the US authorities is not having the cases of the migrants that were successful and did not end up being deported by the US authorities, as well as the failure to capture those who did not reach the US (mainly due to having been detained and deported by the Mexican authorities). As noted, this is expected to have little effect on capturing the diversity of ways in which migrants travel through the territory but rather would affect the relative size of each group of migrants according to the type of journey they took. Despite this possible source of bias, the results of this study may serve to better contextualize research that deals with migrants who mainly undertake one type of journey and delimit with greater precision its scope and limitations. For example, with regard to studies that gather their data in shelters, migrant houses, cafeterias, and other nodes of the assistance networks that supports migrants, it must be taken into account that not all migrants use these institutional resources. Additionally, migrants who use these resources have particular sociodemographic characteristics (lower educational level) and their journeys have specific characteristics of transit (using trains to a greater extent, the vast majority do not use *coyote* for transit through Mexico, etc.), which are very different from those who do not make use of assistance networks. This translates into a population more victimized by criminals en route and that suffers more accidents and bodily injuries.

The results of this work invite other studies to pose new inquiries about transit migration according to the types of travel such as: corroborating that the categorization used in this work is indeed adequate; researching “autonomous” migrations more deeply, since this group of migrants and their way of transmigrating has been much less addressed in the literature; the way in which social capital is associated with different ways of traveling, something that the literature has pointed out on several occasions and that is very relevant when it comes to understanding both the decision to mobilize of migrants and the way to do it (Massey and Espinosa 1997; Martinez 2015; Brigden 2015); the influence of repeated journeys on the way migrants travel, since migration policies have led migrants to require more attempts if they want to reach their destination in the US (Frank-Vitale 2020; Torre Cantalapiedra 2020); among others. Likewise, future research could replicate this methodology to better understand the journeys of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants. The high percentages of Guatemalans and Salvadorians that use a *coyote*, together with low percentages of train use, use of the assistance networks, and working on the road allow us to

propose a hypothesis that other studies could contest: that there will be two most prominent types of journeys, resembling those identified in our study, namely, “supported by *coyotes*” and “autonomously”.

Appendix A

Table A1. Results of the 3-class model

	Grupo 1	Grupo 2	Grupo 3
Size of the group	24.1%	30.4%	45.1%
Used <i>coyote</i> to transit through Mexico			
No	0.182	0.978	0.998
Yes	0.818	0.022	0.002
Used <i>coyote</i> to cross into the US			
No	0.274	0.730	0.884
Yes	0.726	0.270	0.116
Crossed the border by the east			
No (Crossed by the west)	0.095	0.330	0.221
Yes	0.905	0.670	0.779
Used the railroad			
No	0.920	0.261	0.443
Yes	0.080	0.739	0.557
Used bus or van			
No	0.219	0.329	0.189
Yes	0.781	0.671	0.811
Used car or motorcycle			
No	0.825	0.981	0.983
Yes	0.175	0.019	0.017
Received assistance			
No	0.938	0.134	1.000
Yes	0.062	0.866	0.000
Stayed in a shelter on the border			
No	0.929	0.545	0.841
Yes	0.071	0.455	0.159
Worked en route			
No	0.963	0.683	0.812
Yes	0.037	0.317	0.188

Source: Author’s elaboration based on data from Emif Sur, 2018 and 2019 (El Colef et al. 2020c).

Note: Only returned male migrants who stayed in the US for up to one year are included.

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