

# **Caravans, microchips, organ trafficking, and Donald Trump: Circulation, use, and limitations of rumors among Central American youth during the migrant journeys**

## **Abstract**

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Three elements shape the journeys of youth migrants traveling alone through Mexico; 1) vulnerability 2) violence, and 3) space. As a result of these elements, the movement of unaccompanied migrant youth through Mexico is often chaotic and cloaked in uncertainty, and youth migrants tackle these challenges by circulating informal knowledge in the form of rumors. The rumors shared by migrants function as repositories of what other migrants have seen, experienced, or heard and provide migrants information that is otherwise inaccessible or unavailable to them during their journeys. However, informal knowledge is limited, ambiguous, manipulated, and sometimes untrue, and while it can be helpful to youth migrants, it can also lead them into (more) dangerous situations. In this chapter, I analyze the circulation of rumors among migrant youth while moving through Mexico and their role in providing youth migrants a framework to understand the violence and precariousness they suffer. This study of informal knowledge shows how, while social and economic macro forces are the primary drivers of the migration of Central American youth, their understanding of the journeys occurs at the micro-level through the circulation of informal knowledge that ultimately provides them with an understanding of their journey and gives shape to their movement.

## **Author's Bio**

**Angel A. Escamilla García** is a Migrations Postdoctoral Fellow at Cornell University. His research focuses on children and youth living in high-risk environments, especially migrants. His current project uses ethnographic methods to explore how Central American youth navigate the constant threat of unpreventable violence as they traverse Mexico on their way to the United States. His other research interests include indigenous youth migrants and the history of Sociology.