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Transnationalism and Leisure: Mexican Temporary Migrants in the U.S.

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The goal of this study was to investigate how Mexican migrant workers' transnational status affected their leisure behavior. Twenty one in-depth interviews with Mexican migrants, temporarily residing in a large metropolitan center and a smaller city in Illinois, were conducted between August and November 2003. Findings suggest that factors such as specific family status, unique work arrangements, economic, social and cultural networks, and unique legal status, conditioned the leisure of interviewed Mexican migrants. Findings were analyzed in light of the theory of transnationalism. We also introduced the concept of transnational leisure, which we defined as leisure that is maintained by transnational migrants to foster ties with their countries and communities of origin.

KEYWORDS: *Transnationalism, leisure, Mexican, ethnicity.*

Introduction

Immigrants constitute an integral part of the American landscape and their role in the cultural, political, and economic life of this country is likely to increase in the future. It is commonly acknowledged that immigration permits people to improve their lives while at the same time strengthening the economic and social fabric of the U.S. (Ley, 2003). There exists, however, another side to immigration that has been gaining increasing attention over more than a decade. As industries across the U.S. have in recent years been shifting to a mixed legal and illegal foreign work force, illegal immigration to the U.S. has expanded significantly. Workers now routinely travel from Mexico and other regions of the world in search of jobs and income they can transfer to their home countries (Durand & Masssey, 2001; Lindstrom, 1996; Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Massey & Parrado, 1994; Roberts, Frank, & Lozano-Ascencio, 1999). These temporary migrants often present a challenge for American communities unaccustomed to dealing with the cultural, social, and economic changes brought by the increasing numbers of newcomers (Kammer, 2003). As indicated by the 2000 U.S. Census, more than nine million foreigners were admitted as legal immigrants to the U.S. between 1991 and 2000 (Martin & Midgeley, 2003). In 2000-2001 alone,

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1,064,318 immigrants arrived to the U.S. legally and an estimated 350,000-500,000 illegally. The majority of them (51%) came from Latin America and approximately 30% from Asia. The recent projections from the U.S. Census Bureau anticipate a net addition of 820,000 immigrants a year until 2050, including 350,000 Hispanics (Martin & Midgeley, 2003).

Over the last two decades, a significant volume of research on the issues of ethnic and racial minorities has developed in the field of leisure studies (e.g. Allison & Geiger, 1993; Carr & Williams, 1993; Floyd & Gramann, 1993, 1995; Washburne, 1978). Despite the increase in number and sophistication of studies in this area, there remains certain epistemological and methodological problems. Studies have often relied on people's ascribed racial or ethnic backgrounds, assumed homogeneity of ethnic populations, and rarely provided in-depth descriptions of their participants' backgrounds, settlement history, ties maintained with their country of origin, and reasons for migration. Moreover, while leisure researchers have begun to acknowledge the distinctions between first and second generation and more or less assimilated ethnics (see Carr & Williams, 1993; Chavez, 1991; Floyd & Gramann, 1993, 1995), they have largely failed to appreciate the existence of other profound variations *within* immigrant communities. For instance, while the majority of existing studies have focused on permanent immigrants, they have failed to investigate people who migrate to the U.S. only for a limited period of time and thus are likely to be characterized by profoundly different family structures, spending patterns, lifestyles, and leisure behavior.

Thus, the goal of this study is to provide an in-depth analysis of the effects of transnational status on leisure behavior of temporary migrants from Mexico. Mexicans have been chosen as the participants in this study for two reasons. First, Mexican migrants constitute the largest migratory workforce temporarily residing in the U.S. (Martin & Midgeley, 2003). Second, due to the strong ties that they maintain with their country of origin, they constitute an ideal population on which the effects of transnationalism on leisure behavior can be investigated.

Theoretical Framework

The great majority of research on ethnicity and migration conducted in the fields of geography, sociology, and ethnic/migration studies up to the mid 1990s focused on *immigrants* and assumed that after settlement they followed a unidirectional path of assimilation. In the early to mid 1990s, however, the main focus of theoretical and empirical research shifted and studies began to acknowledge the existence of different sub-groups within the migrant population (Pries, 2001). Transnationalism, a new approach to understanding issues of migration and migrants' adaptation, came to the forefront of research and was heralded by some as the most promising new theory in the field of migration studies (Portes, 1997). The concept of transnationalism was proposed in 1992 by Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szaton. According to them:

> A new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field . . . a new conceptualisation (sic) is needed in order to come to terms with the experience and consciousness of this new migrant population. We call this new conceptualisation (sic) "transnationalism." (p.1)

The issue of whether transnationalism is truly a new phenomenon and whether the "new" transmigrants are in fact different from contemporary immigrants and from their predecessors from the turn of the 20th century has been a subject of some debate (Alba & Nee, 1997; Vertovec, 2001; Nagel, 2002). According to proponents of transnationalism, the "new" transmigrants face an entirely different set of circumstances rooted in globalism than their predecessors (Nagel, 2002). A large portion of contemporary migrants do not develop firm ties to their new homelands, but instead maintain social, political, and cultural linkages to their countries of origin. Unlike immigrants, the success of transmigrants depends not on their abandonment of traditional language and customs, but on preserving their original culture and ties to the country of origin (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Moreover, the distinctive feature of the new transnational spaces is the "nearly instantaneous character of communication across space" (Portes, 1997, p. 813), and the extent of the process that makes the participation in transnational flows "normative" among some groups (Portes, 1997; Vertovec, 2001).

Transnationalism has led to the development of migrant communities whose members maintain presence in more than one state (Nagel, 2002). In a sense, these new migrants live dual lives—they are often bilingual, they frequently maintain homes in both countries, and they easily move across cultural and national borders (Portes, 1997; Portes et al., 1999). Traditionally, the concept of transnationalism has been applied to temporary migrants residing in developed countries (e.g., the U.S., U.K., Germany, Italy) and temporariness of residence along with networks maintained with the country of origin has typically been used as the defining traits of transnationalism (Pries, 2001; Riccio, 2001). In recent years, however, the definition of transnationalism expanded and the concept has been applied to study behavior patterns of migrants residing in the host country for prolonged periods of time and even among second generation immigrants (Menjívar, 2002). Thus, while the temporariness of stay is losing its prominence in the transnational literature, the networks maintained with the home country are increasingly considered to be the core aspect of transnationalism.

Although there is no clear typology of what constitutes transnational behavior (Al-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001), there have been numerous attempts to provide categorizations and typologies of transnational activities (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Nagel, 2002; Portes et al., 1999). Both Al-Ali et al. (2001) and Portes et al. (1999) distinguish between the economic initiatives, political actions, and socio-cultural enterprises of transnational migrants (Table 1). Economic transnationalism encompasses regular monetary remittances (money trans-

TABLE 1
Classification of Transnational Activities by Type and Geographical Focus

	Home Country Focus	Host Country Focus
Social	—Visits to friends and family	—Participation in discussion groups (e.g. Internet bulletin boards)
	—Social contacts with friends and families	—Membership in social clubs and community organizations (mostly leisure-oriented)
	—Travel to (vacationing in) the home country	—Attendance at social gatherings
	—Social remittances (ideas, values, cultural artifacts)	—Maintaining links with other organizations (e.g. cultural, leisure/sport, religious and other refugee organizations)
	—Contributions to newspapers circulated in the home country	—Contributions to newspapers
Cultural	—Attending musical, artistic, literary, and sporting events that include visiting performers from the home country	—Attending events to promote culture (e.g. concerts, theatre, exhibitions, festivals)
	—Attending ethnic festivals	—Education
	—Celebration of national religious and secular holidays	
	—Listening to home country music	
	—Watching home country movies	
	—Cooking national foods	
	—Teaching children national language (reading, writing and speaking skills) and the history and geography of their home country	
	—Participation in cultural, leisure and sport clubs and associations	
Economic	—Financial remittances	—Charitable donations
	—Other remittances (e.g. medicine, clothes)	—Donations to community organizations
	—Investments in land or business	
	—Charitable donations	
	—Taxes	
	—Purchase of government bonds	
	—Purchase of entry to government programs	
Political	—Participation in elections	—Attending political rallies and demonstrations
	—Membership in political parties	—Mobilization of political contacts in host country

Adapted from: Al-Ali, N., Black, R., & Koser, K. (2001). Refugees and transnationalism: The experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 27,* 615-634.

fers) sent to relatives abroad, circular labor migration, informal cross-country trade, and small businesses created by returned migrants in their home countries (Al-Ali et al., 2001; Riccio, 2001). Political transnationalism describes migrants taking part in their home-countries' political activities, and activities of home countries aimed at getting political support from the expatriates. The socio-cultural category comprises:

> Socio-cultural enterprises oriented towards the reinforcement of a national identity abroad or the collective enjoyment of cultural events and goods. This type of transnationalism includes the travels of musical folk groups to perform before immigrant audiences, the organization of games in the national sport between immigrant teams and those from the home country . . . and the celebration of holidays abroad with participation of prominent political or artistic figures who travel to immigrant centers for that purpose. (Portes et al., 1999, p. 221)

According to Al-Ali et al. (2001), the social and cultural category also includes visits to the home countries, maintaining contacts with friends and families, flow of "social remittances," such as ideas, values and cultural artifacts, as well as attempts at preserving traditional language. Leisure activities, such as travel to the home country, watching home country movies and listening to the home country music, participation in immigrant social clubs and organizations as well as in cultural and sporting events, also play an important role among transnational activities. While most of those activities take place in the host country, many of them have both home and host country foci. At their core, however, lies an attempt to maintain social and cultural links between the migrant community and the home country (Al-Ali et al., 2001).

Literature Review

The literature on the leisure of immigrants can be divided into three distinct categories: changes in leisure related to post-settlement adaptation, constraints on leisure, and the influence of distinct cultural backgrounds on leisure of immigrants. Changes in leisure caused by the immigration have been dealt with in a number of projects. Juniu (2000) showed that immigration led to changes in behavior of Latino immigrants, including their socialization patterns, views about work, and their perception of time. In a study that focused on recent immigrants from Poland, Stodolska (2000) attributed post-arrival leisure participation changes among immigrants to past latent demand, new leisure opportunities, and the decreased role of certain interpersonal constraints. Stodolska and Yi (2003) found that the leisure of immigrant teenagers from Korea, Mexico and Poland became more commodified after their arrival to the U.S., that they began to display work patterns uncommon among young people in their home countries, and that they adopted new leisure activities and ways of organizing their leisure time. Yu and Berryman's (1996) study revealed that the leisure of young Chinese immigrants was less organized, less expensive, and less physically active than

that of mainstream Americans. Participants in their study preferred to speak Chinese and to maintain a network of relatives and friends of the same ethnicity.

Constraints on leisure have also surfaced in studies on leisure behavior of immigrants. Results of studies by Stodolska (1998, 2000) and Tsai and Coleman (1999) have shown that immigrants experience certain unique types of constraints, such as language difficulties and being unfamiliar with the lifestyles of the host country, that are related to their minority status. Other studies have indicated that immigrants also experience constraints typical to the mainstream population, such as lack of time and lack of money, more intensely than their mainstream counterparts. For instance, Juniu (2000) and Tsai and Coleman (1999) reported that the leisure of recent immigrants was severely constrained by lack of time, being overworked, family responsibilities, and limited financial resources. Similar findings were obtained by Stodolska (1998) in her study of Polish immigrants. Discrimination was also suggested to significantly constrain leisure of immigrants (Tirone, 2000).

The influence of distinct cultural backgrounds on leisure of immigrants has also been examined. Tirone and Shaw (1997) found that immigrant women from India negatively evaluated leisure of the mainstream population since, in their view, it was selfish and separated people from their homes and families. In another study, Allison and Geiger (1993) found that some of the leisure activities in which Chinese elderly immigrants engaged, such as sewing, reading and cooking, were filled with cultural content and were based on their ethnic traditions. Similarly, in a study by Stodolska and Livengood (2003), the effect of religion on leisure behavior of Muslim immigrants was evident in their emphasis on strong family ties, the need to teach and supervise children, in the requirement of modesty, as well as in the restrictions placed on mix-gender interactions, dating, food, and alcohol.

In addition to the thematic areas that can be isolated in the research on immigration and leisure, one can also distinguish groups of studies that have focused on specific immigrant populations. For instance, a number of research projects have focused on the recreation patterns of Mexican Americans. In general, the findings have shown that Mexican Americans have significantly lower rates of involvement in outdoor recreation and active sports while exhibiting a preference for engaging in family oriented activities, such as visiting with others, relaxing, being with family and playing with children (Hutchison, 1987; Murdock et al., 1990). Moreover, Mexican Americans have been found to exhibit a preference for participation in large groups with a significant proportion of women, children and elderly (Hutchison, 1987). Chavez (1992) found that ethnicity played a significant role in the type and level of expectations people had toward natural recreation sites. In addition, Carr and Williams (1993) found that more acculturated Hispanics were more likely to visit outdoor recreation sites with their friends and less with their extended families; while individuals of Mexican ancestry, and

those with lower acculturation scores, were more likely to visit the sites with their immediate or extended families.

Background—Mexican Transnational Migrants in the U.S.

Hispanic Americans are the largest minority group in the U.S. accounting for 14% of the population, or 40.4 million people (U.S. Census, 2004). Among the Latino population, 26.6 million people (67%) are of Mexican origin, including 10.6 million first generation immigrants from Mexico (U.S. Census, 2004). It is estimated that about 40% of Mexican migrants living in the U.S. are undocumented (Roberts et al., 1999). Remittances sent home by Mexican migrants each year (estimated at $10 billion) constitute Mexico's second largest source of foreign currency, behind petroleum revenues and ahead of the country's tourism industry (Kammer, 2003). The money sustains economically struggling regions of the country helping to maintain political stability and consequently temporary migration is promoted even by the political and economic elites in Mexico (Roberts et al., 1999). Many American companies also welcome the influx of illegal Mexican migrants and are eager to hire illegal migrants who work for low pay, do not require medical insurance, and are not in the position to demand fair treatment in the workplace (Kammer, 2003).

The research on U.S.-Mexico labor migrations suggests that a majority of Mexican migrants come to the U.S. to earn money and eventually return to Mexico (Pries, 2001). Their frequent trips between the U.S. and Mexico seem to be undeterred by the difficulties, dangers and costs associated with border crossing. On average, Mexican migrants have low educational background, are low-skilled, and many come from semi-subsistence rural economies (Alba & Nee, 1997; Roberts et al., 1999). Most illegal aliens from Mexico have no more than elementary school education, and a sizable number has no formal schooling at all (Alba & Nee, 1997). As a result, they are disproportionately represented in low-wage, blue-collar and service jobs such as restaurant, factory, hotel, landscaping or construction jobs that offer low wages and no insurance (Farley, 1996). The remittances sent home to their families provide cash needed to invest in land, animals, seed, and fertilizer, as well as to build a house or start a small business (Roberts et al., 1999). Our study focuses on these predominantly undocumented, temporary migrants from Mexico who reside in Chicago, Illinois and Champaign-Urbana (a smaller town in central Illinois).

Methods

This study seeks to elaborate on the theory of transnationalism by examining the encompassing social forces and interlocking systems involved in the leisure of migrants. Transnationalism was approached as a conceptual framework providing useful insights into data gathered through in-depth

interviews, informal conversations with employees of migrant organizations, community members, and direct observations. A grounded theory approach was utilized because it allows "one *to* begin(s) with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Therefore, grounded theory is an inductive process which allows for the development of theory by systematically gathering and analyzing data so as to identify relationships that explain social processes (Glasser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently allowing researchers to continuously introduce, develop and compare emerging categories and their properties in subsequent data collection stages.

Data Collection Procedures

Potential participants were identified by personnel associated with organizations that assist migrant workers. In total, community leaders and their personnel identified 37 study participants. Of these, 21 agreed to participate, nine refused because they did not believe they had anything to contribute, and the other seven were later dropped. Particularly, these seven participants were dropped because they were documented migrants. Initially, both documented and undocumented migrants were interviewed to provide us with a broad understanding of the transnational Mexican migrant population and allowing for a variety of experiences to be represented and identified. As sampling decisions evolved during the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), categories developed revealed the need to conduct further interviews with undocumented migrants; hence, we did not continue to interview documented migrants. Therefore, seeking to reach theoretical saturation, data collection evolved from general sampling to relational sampling (i.e., seeking to understand relationships) and ended with discriminate sampling (i.e., seeking to differentiate relationships) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Consequently, the choice regarding who to interview was made after each interview session was transcribed and analyzed. Thus, analysis allowed the researchers to introduce clarification and elaboration questions in subsequent interviews.

Overall, our sample was composed of Mexican migrant workers representing various age groups, occupational categories, documentation status, and length of stay in the U.S., as well as migrants residing in a large metropolitan center (13 interviews were conducted in Chicago) and a smaller city in Illinois (eight interviews were conducted in Champaign-Urbana). Participants were composed of 16 men and 5 women, age 18 to 54 (average age 34 years). They included factory workers, construction workers, restaurant workers, cleaning staff, a cab driver, a salad chef, a cook, and a gardener. Regarding documentation status (i.e., whether the participant resided in the U.S. legally or illegally), five participants were documented, and 16 participants were undocumented. Overall, participants' length of stay in the U.S. ranged from two months to 32 years (average length of stay 8.1 years). All participants have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study.

Individual in-depth interviews served as the main source of data in this study. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. The interviews took place between August and November 2003. They were conducted in the participants' homes, in the homes of their friends, at the office of one of the organizations that assisted migrant workers, and in a parking lot where migrant workers congregate daily while awaiting work. All interviews were carried out in Spanish, with the exception of two interviews which were conducted in English. Questions explored concepts of migration, family, transnational networks, and leisure. Among others, research questions posed included: What kind of contacts do you maintain with your home country? In what ways do you feel your temporary status in the U.S. affects your leisure? The term "leisure" needed to be explained to participants in more detail, as there exists no direct equivalent of this word in the Spanish language (the closest translation is "osio" which carries some negative connotations). Thus, instead of using the word "leisure," we referred to "recreation" [solaz, recreo, recreación,] or "things you do after work" [cosas que usted hace después de trabajar] or "for pleasure" [por placer] and we provided participants with examples that could be relevant to both Mexican men and women such as playing sports or going for a walk. Participants were also queried about whether or not they eventually intended to go back to their home country or to remain in the U.S. indefinitely. Out of 21 participants, 19 (including the ones with the longest residence in the U.S.) indicated that they will eventually go back to Mexico. Two workers interviewed in Chicago indicated that they were unsure, but that they will "probably go back." Once participants exhausted their own ideas, categories and properties derived from ongoing analysis and comparisons, and which had not been raised by the participant, were introduced by the interviewer. These categories included: social mobility, community life, and social and family relationships. Each was introduced in a neutral question, allowing participants to reflect on their own experiences. By taking this approach, participants were able to confirm or contest whether these categories had any significance. All participants raised the following without prompting: family, finances, work, and legal status.

Treatment and Analysis of Data

All interviews were conducted and transcribed by the primary researchers and by two Mexican-American graduate students properly trained in data collection techniques. As much as possible, an attempt was made to have the interviews tape recorded. However, due to the delicate nature of participants' legal status, it was not always possible to have the interviews tape recorded. In the case of eight interviews where tape recording was not possible, detailed notes and observations were taken. Each interview was transcribed verbatim immediately after it took place. The resulting transcripts were then reviewed for accuracy by re-listening to the interviews whilst reading the transcript and checking for anomalies. After this, transcripts were translated into

English by a Mexican-American graduate student and one of the researchers fluent in Spanish; each transcript was then verified independently by both. Data analysis was performed by the researchers; as a validity check, each transcript was coded separately by the researchers. All text resulting from personal in-depth interviews, informal conversations with organization leaders and their personnel, and observations was coded sentence-by-sentence. This process generated and developed a number of categories and properties. As Miles and Huberman (1994) advised, "clusters . . . must be held lightly in the analyst's mind; you have to ward off premature closure" (p. 250); so, we proceeded from a rough to a defined grouping seeking to be as inclusive and attentive to emerging categories and properties as possible. Therefore, we progressed from an *open coding* to an *axial coding* (i.e., relating categories to their properties), and finally to a *selective coding* (i.e., defining core categories, relating them to each other, validating relationships, and refining central categories). This process was repeated until the researchers arrived at the stage where no further categories or properties emerged and added to the data. Any differences in findings were discussed seeking to reach a final agreement regarding the properties of the core categories identified, and the circumstances under which they are connected. Core categories of transnational social life that were identified included "family status," "work arrangements," "economic, social and cultural networks," and "legal status."

Findings

In this section we will discuss the effect of transnationalism on leisure behavior of interviewed Mexican migrants. As our interviews have shown, four core categories—specific family status; unique work arrangements; economic, social, and cultural networks; as well as unique legal status affected leisure behavior of Mexican participants.

Specific Family Status

Specific family status was one of the core categories identified in this study as affecting the leisure of migrants. Under this core category, prolonged separation from family and the need to have substitute families were the properties identified in the narratives used by participants to address the interconnectedness of leisure and transnationalism.

The separation of the family affects one very much. A majority of participants (17 out of 21) indicated that they migrated to the U.S. alone leaving spouses, siblings, parents, and children back in their home country. While initially many intended to stay in the U.S. only a few months, most extended their stays to several years. Two of the male participants had not seen their children in over 14 years. In a sad and apologetic tone, they described how they missed seeing their children grow, and how they were afraid that they would not be able to re-enter their lives. A great majority of participants remarked that separation from families constituted *the* most severe obstacle to their

leisure engagements and the satisfaction from leisure. Pedro, a cab driver in his thirties has been in the U.S. for over nine years. Even though he had an American wife and a child, he confessed that the separation from his Mexican family contributed to his depression:

> I wanted to spend time with my family. The separation of the family affects one very much . . . it is one of the worst negative effects that there can be. One feels bad without them. This separation changes our culture. Our culture in Mexico values family; the family has a lot of value for us . . . when you are separated from them you get depressed and sad.

Such feelings of depression, loneliness and crying spells were mentioned in numerous interviews. They affected participants' quality of life and their desire to participate in leisure activities. Particularly, interviewees expressed feelings of guilt and remorse when participating in any sort of leisure because they were not doing it in the company of their families. Petra, a 44 year-old female factory worker, recalled that she came to the U.S. after her Mexican husband had left her with four children. She managed to bring two of them to the U.S. through a *coyote* [smuggler], but has been separated from her remaining two children for the last 10 years. She described in an apologetic and regretful tone that the "only" barrier to her leisure in the U.S. was her desire to reunite with her children. Overwhelmed by guilt of not being able to be a "good mother," she found it hard to enjoy the time that she did have with her children living in the U.S.

We play with "the guys." The lack of family members and companionship in the U.S. made migrants look for "substitutes" they could share their thoughts, experiences and leisure time with. This was particularly pronounced among male day laborers who usually lived in the same apartments with five or seven other workers, waited together on the parking lots for jobs (see discussion of the work arrangements later in the paper), and spent all their free time together. During our observations it became apparent that those who occupied the same parking lot in their wait for jobs established small communities. They knew everything about everybody; they had their own nicknames, and shared their family problems and news from the home country. On any given day, those who did not get a job spent the rest of the afternoon together—hanging out in the nearby park, playing soccer or basketball or occasionally going drinking. When asked what he did in his free time, Guillermo, a day laborer in his forties, replied: "Free time, what free time? Sometimes we go play some basketball . . . [We play] with the guys, with whoever is available [on the lot]." These friendships seemed to be undeterred by sporadically occurring fights for jobs when contractors pulled their cars and were selecting workers in a chaotic scene that often resembled a physical combat. Since there were far more migrants willing to work than the jobs available, the competition was fierce. Some of the workers were even physically pushed out of the contractors' vehicles by their parking lot friends.

Lack of family in the U.S. also led some, particularly young, male workers to look for approval, companionship and family-like support in street gangs. On the one hand, the existence of gangs served as a basis for leisure

activities of their members. On the other hand, however, it severely constrained leisure activities of others. As Rosa, a 23 year-old mother described,

> They [gang members] don't have anyone here. This is their family, and they are always causing trouble for others who don't belong to it. So, we don't go out too much around here. It's worst here than in other communities. For us, other Mexicans are the most dangerous. Here, among the Mexicans, we have to be very careful. You have to think about how you dress, what colors you wear, and how you wear your hat. If you wear your hat with the bill in the back it says something different than if the bill is in the front. If they think you are with a gang they will try to start things up with you.

Her views were echoed in several other interviews with migrants living in the inner-city communities of "Pilsen" (Lower West Side) and "Little Village" (South Lawndale) who remarked that they were reluctant to go out dancing, or visit clubs and bars as they "didn't want to get into trouble." In this respect, their experiences were typical to many other participants.

As these findings show, in order to understand the interconnectedness of leisure and transnationalism we must consider the unique family status of most migrants. Overall, long-term separation from loved ones exacerbated by feelings of loneliness and frustration lead to bouts of depression and drove some to search for substitute families, at times in the form of street gangs. High demands placed on migrants by their families back home also led to frequent conflicts between spouses, high divorce rates, and cases of alcoholism mostly among young males.

Unique Work Arrangements

The second core category identified in this study was the unique work arrangements of migrants. Migrants interviewed in this study could be divided into three main occupational categories. The first, and numerically the smallest group, were those who found jobs through their individual networks in the U.S. and who were semi-permanently employed in restaurants, hotels, factories, and in landscaping businesses. The two other numerically larger groups were comprised of day laborers who found their jobs on their own, and those employed through the employment agencies. Due to safety concerns, the second group (day laborers who found their own jobs) was comprised of men only. Mexican migrants gathered daily around 6-7 AM in one of several places in Chicago and waited for contractors to come and select workers to work at their construction sites in Chicago and its vicinity. The places where workers congregated were well known to both the workers, contractors, and the local police—several police cruisers were "assigned" to monitor activities at each place where our interviews were conducted. The jobs that these migrants took were relatively well-paid, almost solely related to construction (roofing, drywall, plumbing, electrical) and lasted between several hours (great majority of jobs) to a week or several weeks. Finally, the third group was comprised of those employed through the local employment agencies. These agencies were often run by other Mexicans and operated on

the brink of law, often knowingly brokering jobs to migrants with fake Social Security cards. In order to work for the agencies, men and women gathered daily around 4-5 AM at the door of the agency and waited to sign up on the agencies' waiting list. Thereafter, agency workers assigned them to day jobs, usually at local factories, office buildings or other venues.

They totally control you and your time. Regardless of the way in which Mexican migrants obtained their jobs, their work was extremely tiring and physically demanding. A majority of those interviewed worked 70-80 hours a week, and, as they recalled, after a full day of work they were too exhausted to do anything else besides watching TV. Maria, a 42 year-old female who worked 75 hours a week in a restaurant as a salad chef, commented, "I'm so tired I can't think of leisure. I watch news on TV, but have little time or interest for anything else." When asked what he does in his leisure time, Ricardo, a construction worker in his late thirties, working as a day laborer, replied, "Leisure? I have no leisure. I do nothing. We wait here [on the parking lot] for work. I work. I stay here waiting for someone to come so I can work. When I get home I am very tired. I may watch TV, that's all I do."

Lack of time and physical exhaustion were particularly pronounced among women who were also responsible for the upkeep of their households. Veronica, a mother of six in her mid fifties, spent the last 32 years in the U.S. working as a day laborer in the factories. She did not speak English and her cold basement apartment had only basic furnishings. She commented, "We have no free time. You need to shower, prepare a meal, eat and sleep. We turn the TV on and we fall asleep because we are so tired . . .because we have to get up so early." She continued, "On weekend I will clean the house and I will try to spend time with the family. But normally we are so tired . . . we need to sleep and work and that consumes us and our lives." Veronica described that her physically demanding job did not only made her too tired to engage in leisure, but also that her employer had total control over the short moments of free time during the day.

> During lunch time, when you think that it would be your time, for those 10 minutes, you should be able to do what you want . . . but if you spend a minute away they get mad at you. So you need to be there always even when you are on break. They totally control you and your time. You need to take your break in front of them. You cannot be out of sight or they will not ask for you to come back.

Although Veronica was documented, her lack of English fluency and her never-ending belief that one day she will return to Mexico prevented her from finding a better job. She recounted that she and her undocumented friends had little choice, but to endure the demanding work regimes set by their employers. Other participants also recalled being called disparaging names, being forced to work overtime yet not being paid for it, not being paid for the work done, and even being robbed by the agencies' henchmen. Pablo, a factory worker in his mid fifties, described that when his employer wanted him to do overtime, the agency drivers would simply "forget" to pick

him up at the worksite, forcing him to stay 24 hours on the job. He later commented,

> The problem is that we are dependent on them and they know that. If you go directly to the places they will not hire you because you don't have papers. They [the agencies] rent us as if we were slaves. If you complain they will send you out. And they will call the other agencies and tell them about you and then they will not give us work. People have to spend a lot of money to get here. Close to $2000. . . . So, because of that they will not say anything . . . they don't want problems with them because they owe so much money that they need to keep their mouth shut and just work.

There is no fixed time to start and end. Participants recalled that they began their work days early in the morning on the parking lot, or around 4-5 AM at the door of the employment agency. The lucky ones got their job assignments, while those who did not find employment usually stayed at the parking lot or at the agency until 12-1 PM and then either returned home or "hanged around" with their friends in a local park or on the street. As Veronica commented,

> The agencies want us to spend all our time there. You have to go there and fill out an application, and then you have to go there everyday and spend all your time waiting for them to decide what they will do with you. They [the agencies] will send you to the hotels or where they want you to go. They decide when you go to work and where you go to work . . . so you wait from 5 AM until they decide they need you. They do not care about your time.

Lack of set work hours brought uncertainty to the migrants' lives and prevented them from participation in any structured leisure activities. Pedro commented in a regretful tone: "There is no fixed time to start and end. So I cannot make plans. It makes it harder to have leisure. This affects my family time . . . It also affects my kid, because I cannot spend as much time with him."

The lack of set work hours, worksite discrimination, and physically demanding, low paying jobs were found to condition the nature of leisure engagements of interviewed migrants. Their leisure was found to be low-cost, unstructured, and spontaneous in nature. On the other hand, however, lack of set work hours and uncertainty about employment also facilitated the unstructured leisure engagements of many male workers. In the words of Guillermo, a day laborer, "If we don't get a job, we do something, you know. Sometimes we play soccer or basketball or we go swimming." Other day laborers also commented that in cases when they did not get a job, they would go play soccer with their friends or simply "hang out in the park."

Economic, Social, and Cultural Networks

The third core category identified in this study was the economic, social, and cultural networks of migrants. Under this core category, two properties were identified—the financial remittances and the desire to maintain social and cultural networks with the home country.

Beer is like a tile on my floor. All of the participants stressed that they came to the U.S. only for a limited period of time and that their goal was to earn money to build a house or start a small business upon their return to Mexico. Some of the interviewees' goals included establishing small bakeries, clothing factories, and carpenter shops. For instance, 28 year-old Antonio, who worked as a cook and a gardener, planned to save money to build a house and establish a bakery. Similarly, Maria had been in the U.S. for only a few months but intended to stay three to four years until she saved enough money to buy a house in her hometown. What was typical of these participants was that their goal was not to settle down in the U.S., but to suspend their regular activities for a period of time, make as much money as possible and return home. This temporariness of stay in the U.S. was one of the most important factors affecting their leisure. Migrants remarked that they tried to save almost everything they made in the U.S. in order to better their lives in Mexico. As such, their tight budgets had a profound effect on their leisure engagements. Most avoided going to movies, bars and any leisure places that required paying a fee. Not only were expensive leisure activities out of reach, but they also tried to limit all unnecessary expenses, including spending money on items such as alcohol, cigarettes, or soda. As Mano, a day laborer introduced earlier stated, "I don't go drinking in my free time because drinking costs money. It's expensive. I can't afford to spend money. My goal here is to buy a house." Similarly, Andrés, a 21 year-old construction worker commented,

> Beer is like a tile on my floor. If I spend money, I don't have that tile, I have to work more to get that tile. Everything has value. I spend money on a bottle of coke, or I buy that tile for our floor. I want that tile because that's why I am here.

These sacrifices were not limited to several months of the participants' stay in the U.S. As mentioned earlier, although originally a majority of participants came to the U.S. with the intention to return to Mexico after a short period of time, the necessity to pay high fees to cross the border with a *coyote,* rising prices of building materials in Mexico, demands from families back home and their own growing consumerist tastes made them stay often in excess of 10 years. These extended stays lead to a situation where migrants' "suspended" lives slowly became the norm, changing their behavior patterns, leisure attitudes, and often their entire outlook on life.

Participants not only remitted money in order to establish a small business or build a house in Mexico, but also to provide for their extended families. Several of the interviewed migrants left their young children back in Mexico and thus needed to pay for their living costs. Others supported their elderly parents and siblings. As previously introduced Jose described,

> It is hard life; we need to always think of all the moneys and what we spend it on . . . you must think of *familia.* The dream of the business and house . . . everything else you forget about. [pointing to other people waiting on the parking lot] . . . some of these guys have wives there and no matter what they do

> [they] have to send money every time, cause these guys have families that depend on them.

Furthermore, strong family relations typical to Latino culture strengthened the obligations to take care of families back home. For instance, 21 year-old Juan Carlos came to the U.S. when he was 15 and spent most of his teenage years working in factories and restaurants trying to support his nine siblings. Similarly, Jose remarked that he felt obligated to support not only his family in Mexico, but also the wife and children of his friend who died while in the U.S.

The necessity to remit seemed to be strongest among migrants who arrived to the U.S. relatively recently and among those who migrated as adults. While all interviewees maintained regular financial remittance, those who emigrated 20 or 30 years ago expressed a decreased intensity of financial transfers. Similarly, some of the younger migrants began to resent the notion of sending away all of the income they made in the U.S. Many young migrants, immersed in the highly consumerist American culture fell into the temptation of trying to maintain the standard of living comparable to "mainstream" teenagers or to more established members of their own ethnic group. They were far more likely to spend their money on durable goods such as cars, stereos and clothes, and to limit their transnational contacts than those who migrated as adults and who had to support their immediate families back home. As Mano, a construction worker in his forties, explained,

> Sometimes they [young migrants] meet someone here and they stay here with them . . . then they start buying things and they like it. They get into the American lifestyle and they feel that if they leave they would not have the same. You have to help your family, but you still want something for yourself . . . you want to show what your work gets you.

Interestingly, all of the younger workers that we interviewed remarked that they preferred to watch American television and American movies, while their older counterparts showed a strong preference for watching Spanish-langue TV transmitted via satellite from Mexico. Moreover, narratives of many younger Mexicans showed less concern about their life after return to Mexico and were more focused on their materialistic goals such as buying stereo equipment and cars. For instance, Juan Carlos, a 21 year-old factory worker commented about his dreams of "being legal," as this would allow him to buy a car and "be more public, attract more girls."

I want him to know that I'm his father. Besides sending financial remittances home, our interviewees also maintained social and cultural networks with their families and communities of origin. These contacts usually included weekly or bi-weekly phone conversations, sending photographs, and sometimes videotapes and audiotapes. Asked why he walked six miles every week to a phone booth in rural Illinois to call his family, a Mexican father (Guillermo Jose) replied, "He's six years old and I want him to know that I'm his father, you know? I want to be a part of his life. I think when you can't live with somebody they go away." These regular phone calls were described by

some as the high points of their life in the U.S., something that "kept them going" and, by others, as their most pleasurable pastimes. Describing her thoughts about being separated from her family, Rosa, a young Mexican mother of a four month old girl stated,

> It's very sad. I would like to be with them. That is why we always send photos and videos to our family . . . and they send us photos and that is how we see each other . . . by pictures or by videos. We want to go home especially because of her (*daughter*), but that is the only way we can do this now. It's very difficult to do be away from our family, but we think of her.

She also commented, "I read [Mexican] newspapers. We watch the news and we talk with our families. So, we know what happens there." Similar leisure activities were engaged in by all participants. Most of them watched Spanish-language TV, read newspapers brought from the home country or Latino press published in Chicago, and listened to Mexican music. Many also utilized local ethnic services to keep in touch with the events that took place at home.

As our interviews revealed, all participants had developed and maintained economic, social, and cultural networks with their home country. These networks either directly incorporated leisure activities, such as phone conversations or staying in touch with the Mexican culture and current events through the use of the media, or indirectly affected migrants' leisure behavior (through reducing the amount of disposable income).

Unique Legal Status

The last core category that surfaced with respect to the effect of transnationalism on leisure of Mexican migrants had to do with their legal status. A majority of those interviewed resided in the U.S. illegally. Fear of being discovered by immigration officials and being deported to Mexico constituted a significant constraint on their leisure. It made most of the participants stay within the "safety zones" of their communities and utilize recreation resources, such as neighborhood parks, only within the immediate vicinity of their residence. As 28 year-old Sara recalled, she feared to go out for leisure because of her lack of documents. Maria stated that one of her major constraints on leisure in the U.S. was lack of money and fear of deportation. Likewise, Pedro who was introduced earlier, commented,

> I will also go to the dances . . . once in a while. But not many people here go to it. It can be more trouble . . . so, you avoid it. You just have fear. People are not involved in our community . . . it is something very bad with our community . . . it makes me sad, but it is true. I don't know what it is . . . it could be a problem with trust . . . . You never know who to trust around here.

His comment was partly made in reference to gang activities in the inner-city Mexican neighborhoods, and to the fact that many illegal Mexicans were reluctant to establish too close of a contact with other Mexicans living in the community for fear of being reported to the US Citizenship and Immigration

Services (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Service). As it had been pointed out, living among many thousands of other undocumented migrants lowered their chances of being detected and removed from the country. At the same time, however, it increased their chances of being spied upon and reported to the authorities by their fellow ethnics, often competing for the same jobs and sometimes envious of others' material success. Interviewed Mexican migrants were very selective in their choice of friends. They remarked that their *only* leisure companions were people from their home country or even region and that they were reluctant to share their secrets with other Mexicans whom they did not know very well.

Legal status also affected travel behavior of interviewed Mexican migrants. Many of them recounted that due to their illegal status in the U.S., and the dangers and costs associated with crossing the border they rarely traveled for pleasure to their home country. For instance, when asked if he sometimes "goes back" to Mexico, Mano replied,

> I went once. Some of us have not been there for two or three years. It is not easy to go back. We don't have papers and we always think of how much it costs. We need to save the money and send it home. You need to think of everything you spend. You can't just leave, you don't work and it costs money.

Nevertheless, the desire to visit their families was strong enough to make some of the migrants risk imprisonment, inability to come back to the U.S., and significant financial expenses. For instance, 28 year-old Antonio had visited his home town three times over the last 10 years. Each time he stayed in Mexico for about three months and then returned with a *coyote.* His main motivation to travel back home was to see his wife, two children, and his mother and father. Also Ricardo commented, "Yes, I have traveled a few times during the years. Not many, but I go to Mexico when I can." Such trips usually allowed migrant workers to invest some of their money, check on their business matters at home and, most importantly, visit with their families.

Legal status also had an effect on the mobility of migrants within the U.S. The great majority of those interviewed did not have a car. When asked about the reasons, they mentioned lack of money for gasoline and, most importantly, their inability to obtain a driver's license. Lack of a car partly precluded them from utilizing recreation resources, such as parks, beyond the confines of their ethnic communities. Moreover, two of the interviewed workers who did have cars felt reluctant to use them for "unnecessary" leisure trips since, as they described it, they were afraid to be stopped by the police and have their papers checked.

Discussion

The Model

The findings of this study provide an insight into the lives of temporary Mexican migrants by demonstrating relationships between transnational

status and leisure activities. By introducing transnationalism to the study of leisure, we propose a conceptual framework that maintains that transnational status serves to significantly affect leisure motivations, leisure constraints, as well as leisure styles and participation patterns of migrants (Figure 1).

As extant studies using transnational theory show, the main goal of migrants in the host country is to fulfill their migration objectives (usually money transfers) and return home (Pries, 2001). Moreover, the majority of transnational migrants maintain regular networks with their communities of origin. Our study has shown that these specific goals of migrants also lead to their unique *motivations* for leisure. Mexican interviewees used leisure to recuperate after strenuous workdays and to maintain contact with their families and communities of origin. Frequent phone calls, sending cards, tapes and videos were aimed to achieve this goal. Moreover, the desire to travel back to Mexico and to maintain contact with their country through reading Mexican press and regularly watching Mexican news was intended to facilitate their re-integration after their stay in the U.S. was over.

The numerous categories and properties identified in this study also suggest that leisure of Mexican migrants was significantly *constrained* by their transnational status. Separation from families was reported by some as the most severe obstacle to their leisure engagements. It led to depression, lack of desire to participate in leisure and frequent feelings of guilt among those who were involved in recreation while away from their families. Strenuous work conditions made many of the participants too tired to be involved in any leisure activities besides watching TV and resting. Moreover, unstructured work days and the resulting inability to plan in advance significantly restricted their range of leisure options. Since the majority of studies em-

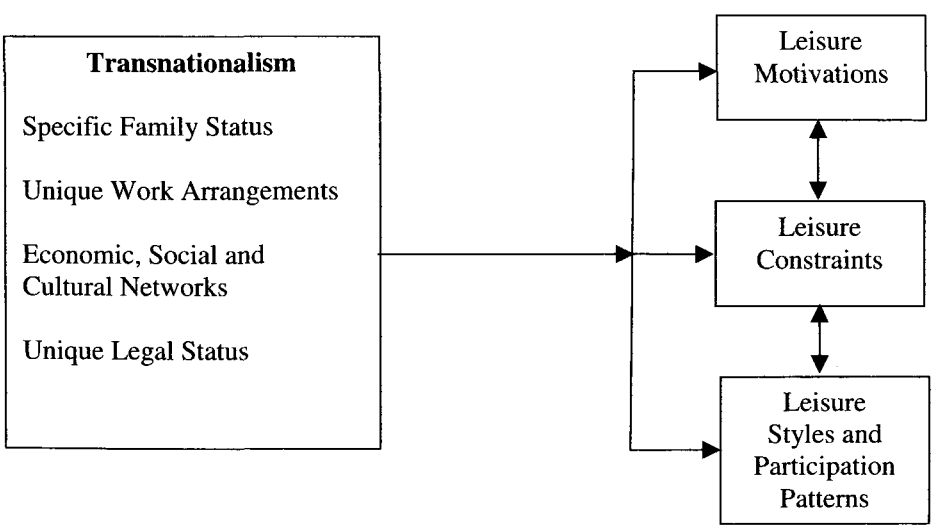

Figure 1. The effect of transnational status on leisure behavior

ploying the transnational framework focused on the effects of transnationalism on the migrants' communities of origin (Bailey, Wright, Mountz, & Miyares, 2002; Riccio, 2001), our findings regarding their quality of life at the place of destination offer a unique contribution to the transnational discourse. What is consistent with the existing transnational literature, is the significant financial remittances that the participants in our study were involved in. The financial burden caused by the necessity to transfer money limited leisure spending of migrants and thus restricted their participation in certain activities such as frequenting clubs and sporting events. Similarly, lack of proper documentation made the illegal migrants unable to obtain a driver's license and thus prevented them from leisure participation outside of the boundaries of their ethnic communities.

Our study has also shown that transnational status is likely to affect *leisure styles and participation patterns* of migrants. Separation from families made leisure of participants to be mostly solitary or undertaken with other members of their "substitute" community. Moreover, due to the fact that many participants did not have stable employment and that they had to remit most of their money abroad, their leisure was usually unplanned, unorganized, and restricted to activities that required limited outlay of resources. Fear of discovery and deportation among undocumented migrants restricted their mobility and made them limit their contacts with other ethnic minority members and mainstream Americans. Restrictions on the lives of undocumented migrants are consistent with the majority of studies on other transnational populations (Bailey et al., 2002; Riccio, 2001). However, taxonomy of transnational activities developed by Al-Ali et al. (2001) suggests that transmigrants are likely to be involved in ethnic clubs and associations, while our interviewees did not participate in any organized ethnic events that would require blocking off time and financial expense. We may speculate that the involvement in cultural transnational activities might be highly dependent on the specific characteristics of the migrating population (e.g., educational background, age structure) and thus different types of transnational activities may be engaged in by different groups of migrants.

Although the population of transnational migrants is quite diverse and ranges from undocumented Mexican laborers to temporary employees of the high tech industry, we can argue that due to their transnational status they share certain unique experiences that affect their leisure. Separation from families, temporary residence, unique work arrangements and legal status, and networks maintained with their home countries condition their lives and leisure. Thus, based on our findings we propose the concept of *transnational leisure,* defined as leisure that is maintained by transnational migrants to foster their ties with their countries and communities of origin. It often takes a secondary role to work and it usually involves other members of the same ethnic group. Transnational leisure may include the following activities: maintaining social contacts with friends and family abroad, travel to the home country for pleasure, attending ethnic events that foster the development of networks with the home country, participation in ethnic so-

cial clubs and organizations, participation in leisure-related discussion groups, reading ethnic books and newspapers, listening to ethnic music, and watching ethnic movies.

The Contribution to the Leisure Literature

Our study suggests that Mexican migrants are a unique population even within the broader category of minorities and immigrants living in the U.S, and that their leisure is quite distinct from the one experienced by immigrants from other countries. These differences stem not only from their specific socio-economic position or cultural background, but from their temporary status in the U.S. The goal of immigrants is integration into their new homeland where they intend to stay indefinitely (Pries, 2001). The existing literature has shown that many immigrants undertake low skilled, physically demanding jobs after their arrival to the U.S., but in time they tend to improve their language skills, obtain additional qualifications and move up the socio-economic ladder (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). This change in status has a significant effect on their leisure behavior that shows clear dynamic characteristics and evolves along with changing socio-economic position of immigrants and with their growing assimilation into the host country (Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). For the great majority of temporary migrants, however, the goal is not establishment and adaptation to life in the new country, but rather the fulfillment of their migration objectives so that they may return home. Thus, they do not have the need, motivation or opportunity to learn the ways of mainstream America, better their language skills, improve their living conditions, find better jobs, and move along the assimilation continuum. Unlike immigrants, their living conditions in the U.S. are unlikely to improve with the passage of time and their leisure is likely to remain significantly limited both in terms of time, resources, and priority.

In contrast to permanent immigrants, temporary migrants suspend many of their day-to-day activities for the duration of their stay in the host country. This process is complicated by the fact that, for many transmigrants, these "temporary lives" can last for decades. Some of the interviewed Mexican transmigrants spent in an excess of 30 years in America. Although with the passage of time they were able to obtain American citizenship and establish new families in the U.S., this "permanent temporariness" (Bailey et al., 2002) had a significant impact on their everyday experiences. When asked about their future plans, they still declared return migration to their home country as their ultimate goal. In their 30 years in the U.S. they failed to obtain even a basic level of English proficiency, they still hold on to the lowest level temporary employment and their assimilation levels were minimal.

What the existing ethnic leisure literature also failed to observe, is that the social structure of temporary migrants is significantly different from those of the majority of permanent immigrants residing in the U.S. For in-

stance, instead of arriving with nuclear or extended families, which is typical to permanent immigrants (Martin & Midgley, 2003), temporary migrants from Mexico are comprised of mostly young to middle age males. The very social structure of this migrant group may affect its leisure patterns. It is likely that leisure activities such as "hanging out," drinking, watching TV, or occasional sport participation are typical not only to temporary migrants from Mexico, but also to other single men of the same age. Thus, when analyzing leisure activities of minority populations it is necessary to not only pay attention to their unique cultural patterns, but also to the gender and age composition of the group.

Conclusions

This study provided an in-depth look at a subgroup of the large Mexican population residing in the U.S. Our findings suggest that ethnic and migrant groups are highly heterogeneous and comprised of individuals with various socio-economic backgrounds, different goals and life histories. Since these factors may ultimately affect their leisure behavior, it is imperative that we do not homogenize minority populations in leisure research. This study employed the theory of transnationalism to evaluate the effect of the life conditions of temporary Mexican migrants on their leisure. It needs to be stressed, however, that patterns discovered in this study may be significantly different among migrants of diverse socio-economic backgrounds and lengths of stay in the host country. We may conjecture that migrants who have lived in the U.S. for limited periods of time may participate in different activities than those who resided in the host country longer and thus developed feelings of nostalgia for their home country. The legality of status and the financial resource available may also allow for more extensive travel to the home country among certain groups. Moreover, leisure patterns of temporary Mexican migrants with low educational levels, whose migration was triggered by economic reasons, are likely to be significantly different from migrants who emigrated because of a political situation in their home country. As studies of Cuban émigré community in Miami, and Polish Solidarity wave immigrants in Chicago indicate, these populations are more likely to engage in political and cultural activities within their ethnic community abroad (Erdmans, 1998; Portes, 1984).

This project had some limitations that could be addressed in future research. The data collection process was hindered by the unique type of population under study. Many of the Mexican migrants, and particularly those who reside in the U.S. illegally, are reclusive, hard to reach, and quite reluctant to share the information with outsiders. Thus, it is unlikely that such study could have been conducted without the help of local agencies serving Mexican migrants. Moreover, this project focused more on the immediate ways in which *transnational status* affected leisure of Mexican migrants and put less emphasis on the ways in which culture and environment

of the host country influenced their leisure engagements. The transnational literature, however, clearly shows that immersion in the host society, which is characterized by distinctly different values and ways of life than the home countries of migrants, affects their outlooks on life for long periods of time even after the emigration experience is over (Bailey et al., 2002; Golbert, 2001). Thus, future research could benefit from a more detailed examination of the ways in which leisure of transnational migrants is shaped by the multiple cultures of home and host countries at their communities of temporary residence *and* following their return to the home country.

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